



Archdiocese of Southwark
Commission for

Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation

Newsletter – Summer 2011



Following our Autumn Assembly Archbishop Peter's talk was printed in *The Universe* and attracted interest and comment. Paul Donovan, in particular, has maintained a steady stream of commentary on issues of social justice, leading to a piece on the role of CSAN. (Their Director, Helen O'Brien also spoke at our Assembly).

Joining the debate our steering committee member, and JPIC stalwart, Phil Kerton had a letter published in *The Universe* recently.

Finding a way forward on social justice

Paul Donovan (*Universe* April 24) seems right to question how well official Church agencies are prepared to be involved in the "Big Society" debate.

Caritas Social Action Network is now responsible for carrying out the social mission of the church and mandated to be the Church's voice on social justice and care in our countries. One might therefore have expected more contributions to recent debates on the treatment of asylum seekers and other migrants, to name but one issue.

It has, of course, a potentially vast scope for work for its five staff, and must prioritise its matters. Sadly, it inherits a history of non-sustained effort and inadequate resources from one of the bodies from which it was formed in 2003: the Catholic Agency for Social Concern ("CASC").

CASC was launched as a coordinating body back in 1996 (with some ceremony), just before the original *Common Good* document appeared. It aimed to help welfare agencies, groups, networks and local initiatives to come together to discuss priorities and share support services. Also, to provide links with CARITAS Europe and relevant EU funding structures. A first project sounds very like one that CSAN started off with: a thorough "social audit" of the Church, to give an accurate picture of welfare resources and how they were deployed.

CASC failed to find enough funds to persist with all its efforts, shedding staff after a couple of years and cutting back on work. CSAN is unlikely to provide a clear and coherent voice if this history is repeated. As Paul points out, the economic downturn will raise challenges about justice in the workplace and this has not been an obvious focus of attention from our bishops in recent years. Improved collaboration with grass-roots activists – subsidiarity in operation – may be key to success.

Phil Kerton. (Longfield, Kent)

Solar panels on the roof of your church?

The possibility of installing forms of renewable energy on church or home buildings seems to be gaining more interest, particularly as energy prices look set to increase dramatically.



Liverpool and Shrewsbury diocese have done a lot of work on this and have produced a comprehensive dossier with information designed to promote not only the

environmental benefits of these schemes but also, for the financial secretaries, the promotion of photovoltaic systems as a viable investment for parishes.

Most churches have a suitable south facing roof and whilst listing buildings may not gain approval and some roofs may require the bringing forward of repairs which would, in any case, be needed eventually it does seem a viable prospect for the majority.

The dossier, which has been put on the Resources section of our web site www.southwarkjandp.co.uk, contains sections on basic PV information (which has a comprehensive list of questions to ask), how feed in tariffs work and fair deal feed in tariffs, a renewable energy guide and renewable heat incentives (payment for space heating rather than electricity generation).

If you do not have the facility to download this information the office would be happy to print and post copies.

Pope dedicates 2012 Peace Day to the young



Pope Benedict XVI will propose ways of educating a new generation of peacemakers in his message for the next World Day of Peace, the Vatican has announced. "Educating Young People in Justice and Peace" is the theme the Pope has chosen to mark the Church-wide celebration, which is

observed each 1 January. A communiqué said the Pope would also address those "responsible for public policy", urging them to help create institutions, laws and environments that would enable young people to fully realise themselves through jobs and education.

JPIC office will be closed from 4th to 20th July. For urgent enquiries please contact Fr Michael 020 8854 0359

The Big Society – A call to true Apostolate

by Fr Michael Scanlon (JPIC Chair)

The biggest society on the planet is the Christian Community. There are at least one billion Catholics in the world, not to mention other denominations. The political use of this term as a means of getting people in the country to serve their neighbour and be aware of other needs is against a backdrop of cuts; service restrictions which make it impossible for some of the organisations (public, social and charitable) to function, let alone grow and develop.



Whatever one's political view on this we must return to the original statement - we, the Christian community, are a Christ-centred and charitable body of people who do not need, or should not need, to be reminded that the core of Christian life is a lifelong commitment to serve both God and neighbour; loving as Jesus Himself loved us. We are called to bring the gospel to others by our actions and witness as well, when necessary, with proclamation. Indeed the chief commandment, central to all others, is defined by Jesus Himself as love of God and Love of neighbour. (Matthew 22:34-40).

It is undoubtedly true that many people do this in big and smaller ways and how wonderful have been the examples of those who setting out on this path, often alone with only God as guide. There have been missionaries of many congregations who set up schools, hospitals, clinics and churches in far off lands, often paying the price with their lives. There have been champions of causes which have changed our laws and practices. They have abolished child labour and slavery and started rights to many things we now accept as natural, like education and health care. Some like Blessed Mother Teresa have led others to serve the poorest of the poor by simple charity.

There are those who contribute financially and use their wealth to allow others to use skills and talents, and of course where would we be without the daily donations of the less prosperous and poor to fund projects? How many churches and schools have been maintained by the pennies of the poor...? While this continues and financial generosity continues it is also true that there has been a decline in response to attend to the needs (practical, physical and emotional) of our neighbours.

These acts of course are not restricted to the Christian community and it is often pointed out, quite rightly that many good people who are non-believers also do these things. Charity is not restricted to the Godly. Yet the nature of the 'call' of a Christian to serve is not just the love of Man but the love of God who loves us so passionately that He ignites love in our hearts not just for Himself but our fellows.

It is an Irony that in a 'Me' society which takes self-love to extremes of intolerance of others we have forgotten that the more we say we have to love ourselves all the more we should love others. To be other – centred and able to forget self – is not a negation of our importance or uniqueness but recognition of our purpose. Why is it

that people who serve are such happy people and truly inwardly joyful? It is because true happiness can only be found in living for others as Jesus manifested so wonderfully throughout His life.

Now we live in a country that has immense differences in the wealth of different groups. We have unemployment and loneliness. We have people cared for by strangers and not families. We have a growing (one in three are over 65 year old) elderly population. We dispose of the 'innocent' and want to cut short the lives of those who we see as a burden to us, or who see themselves as a burden, or who cannot tolerate suffering. We are on an ever increasing downward slope to an unjust and almost uncaring, unloving society.

Pope John Paul II made it abundantly clear in *Christi Fideles Laici* that the call to service is in essence the Call to Service of lay people in the world. *“The Church owes it to humanity to proclaim the simple powerful truth that the Lord Loves every human being, that Christ came on earth in every one of them as the way, the truth and the life. This is the time when Laity have to bear witness that the only valid responses to human hopes and problems is the Christian faith. They can give such witness if they learn how to integrate the Gospel teaching with the way they live their lives...”*

... so how do we react to this? We are members of the Big Society of Jesus. We are also members of family, communities both Church and lay, and nations. Do we really see what is happening around us - ask what we can do, and pray about our response? The Big Society, in the political sense, gives us no means as to how to respond as human beings to one another – it gives us neither resources nor guidelines on how this should be done – it is vague to say the least and essentially requires us to be neighbourly or get involved and do things. Even if this is not a bad idea, and indeed many people do work for a charity or group – The Church gives us true guidelines, these are in the Gospels. For Jesus makes it clear how we are to respond to others.

As Christians we are called to change things. When we encounter problems and see a lack or a need in something that needs providing or a way of giving a helping hand – our response should be a 'YES'. There are many ways of helping from the very ordinary ways of giving someone some company, listening to them, cheering them up, to giving assistance in times of trouble. Sometimes this calls for an even deeper response – actually setting up a group of helpers either in a parish, workplace or community.

Years ago small apostolic works abounded. We have lost the heart for this yet the Second Vatican Council reminds us that the role of lay people is to be apostolic and recognises many such groups in the Church. Have you ever said 'what we really need is...' and then left it to 'a somebody or other' rather than respond yourself. God is calling you to do something for Him in love. There is no age limit to such generous giving of self, indeed we must value the contribution of both young and elderly.

(this is an edited version - the full version is on our website)

In Christi Fideles Laici – it is stated that the Church has never ever lacked associations of the lay faithful. Third order, confraternities, solidarities all show this even today but recent times have seen the spread of new types of movements, Group Communities. These new groups are very diverse from one another yet they have the same purpose that of sharing in the Church's mission.

Each person has a right and a duty to help others singly or in groups. Others, who by constraint of either occupation (a call in itself) or infirmity, have a duty to support those active in these apostolates.

Of course the 'Big Society' is made up of small units - families, streets, villages, parishes etc. The primary group, the family, is critical to the survival of any society and its function of child rearing is essential to the whole if it is to transmit its values and culture.

Today we fight against a culture of death, in its many forms, not life. Yet as Christians we are baptised into eternal life and light. It is the function of Christian, Catholic parents to bring fruit to ripen in the close quarters of their family.

If the 'Big Society', in the political sense, is to have any meaning or significance then supporting the family must be a top priority, for the young are custodians of the future. The vision we give them of life will then enable or disable them from developing means of helping others in their turn. Financial support, employment of parents or younger people, education and health as well as emotional development have to be priorities in any society and we all have to be responsible in our own ways ensuring this.

However a special duty lies with parents to nurture apostolic activity in their children. Parents, and rightly, are keen to develop gifts in their children in their lives and for the future. Musical, sports and academic abilities are highly prized, sadly often now for the securing of financial gain.

In many countries of the world half the entire population is made of young people and young people present a potential not a challenge to the Church's future. Vatican II referred to them as 'Hope of the future.' Young people can and should be inspired to lead in the evangelisation of society and share in its reward. Youth is a time for self-discovery for a choice of life and for growth.

It goes on to mention the special gift of the young to care for justice and peace, ecological issue and friendship with each other. They should be encouraged to participate and share this vision with others of different generations, also to act jointly for the common good and be formed and protected. Should not parents ask and encourage children to think of their lives as service and the betterment of conditions for others.

There are many instances in the Old and New Testaments which show what crucial role children can play in the building up of any social/ religious group.

One of the best examples is the curing of the leper Naaman. This high ranking officer would not have had his cure and conversion if it had not been for the little slave girl who told him of the prophet Elisha. So too the feeding of the five thousand was started by the prudence or inspiration of a little boy with five loaves and two fishes. Saint John the Evangelist was himself only a youth at the time of the life of Jesus.

Children must be encouraged to play their part in any activity which leads to commitment later on in life and shows them a way forward. And of course there's David and Goliath.

Without prayer of course all apostolic endeavours will fail. It is the soul of any apostolic work or call. In the book 'Soul of the Apostolate' Dom Chautard emphasises this point about the interior life being the springboard for external activity. He also made this statement in 1946 – before the second Vatican council. Referring to a priest involved in fostering apostolates he quotes – "Our ambition must be to form workers in whom the Lord God is strong – and after they have married they should remain apostles, eager to share their charity with the greatest number of souls. If our apostolate is to aim only at forming good Christians, then our ideal would be feeble indeed. What we have to do is create a legion of apostles so that the family, the fundamental social unit, may become in turn a centre of the Apostolate."

He goes on to say that the basis for the realisation of these aims is sacrifice and intimate friendship with Jesus. It is this that will make it possible for our influence to be felt in Society and the words of our master will be fulfilled- "I have come to cast fire upon the earth and will that it be kindled" (Luke. 12:49)

If 'Our Big Society' is to have an influence on the society in which we live we must become Apostolic. We can and must be involved in all means of bringing about a fair and charitable society. If this means self-sacrifice then it must be done with love and acceptance. The society we live in must also be made aware of the injustices and amoral aspects of its laws and judgements. It is of no use asking people to act in service and then deny them the means by which this can be achieved. A political solution which claims to encourage charity and care and then punishes the giver of such, robs itself of its essence.

However, in the Christian Society rooted in compassion we can dig deep into its resources of prayer and can bring about change.....

We live in challenging times when it is essential that a full understanding of our commitment to love and service in all its aspects is understood, accepted and realised. We are yeast in any society – we must be the means by which bread is provided for all. We must be Eucharistic people and become Holy. We have the Bread of Life – if we partake of this bread we will be able to be broken so that we can serve. We can then be sent out to provide soul-food for others.

July 2nd Time Out at Minster Abbey

An informal day organised by Kent J&P group which will provide time for quiet and reflection. All are most welcome. Tea and coffee from 10.15, guided tour at 11.00 and then a chance eat lunch (please bring your own) and chat about what we have seen and how this can help us in our endeavours. The abbey is just off the Thanet Way, Minster, Nr Ramsgate CT12 4HF and close to Minster Station. If you need a lift or can offer one please contact Phil Kerton 01474 873802. For more information download a flyer from our web site or ask the office for a copy.

August 9th 8.20pm - Nagasaki Commemoration

For the past 26 years the Kent Justice & Peace Group have organised a commemoration service at Aylesford Priory to mark the anniversary of the dropping of the first atomic bombs in 1945. This year the date has been chosen to mark the dropping of the second bomb on Nagasaki. Refreshments available after the Service. **All Welcome.** For information call John Caruana 01634 864179.

July 9th CAFOD

Campaign Energiser Day

10.30 to 4.00 at Amigo Hall. Information from marana @cafod.org.uk



July 15th to 17th - National Justice & Peace Conference "Justice at Work" at The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire

Exploring the dignity and reality of contemporary work both globally and locally, the conference will seek to raise awareness of working conditions in the context of today's economy and modern society. It will do this from a Christian perspective. For booking forms and further details please contact the office. There may be some assistance available with costs.

September 14th CAFOD Volunteers Training Day

10.00 to 4.00 at Amigo Hall. Information from Southwark @cafod.org.uk

September 17th - Progressio's Members and Supporters workshop.

An afternoon of workshops for Progressio supporters to find out more about Progressio's work on the ground and meet with others who are passionate about helping poor people overcome the barriers that keep them poor. A great opportunity to hear more about their work, and for them to hear ideas and suggestions from supporters. At Scope conference centre, Market Road N7 9PW. AGM at midday then the workshop event at 2pm.



10th September - J&P Training Day

In conjunction with Brentwood and Westminster diocese we are holding Justice & Peace training day at Amigo Hall, St George's Cathedral.

We have some excellent facilitators lined up and there will be a choice of workshops on:

- Starting a J&P group
- Re-invigorating a J&P group
- Involving youth in our J&P work
- Starting and encouraging area & deanery groups

Further information will be available nearer the day but to register an interest and let us have an idea of numbers please phone 0207 928 9742 (you can leave a message at any time) or e-mail the office

22nd October: Our Autumn Assembly Big Society? - Fair Society? - Just Society? at Amigo Hall, St George's Cathedral, SE1.

We are delighted to have Francis Davis and Alison Gelder as keynote speakers. Francis is a fellow of Blackfriars Hall, Oxford University & a director of the Las Casas Institute on Ethics, Human Rights & Social Justice. Alison is Director of Housing Justice.

Other plans include a talk from Fr. Mauricio Garcia a Jesuit priest who is Director of a leading NGO (and CAFOD partner) that works on peace and human rights issues in Colombia and the Southwark launch of "100 Days of Peace", a campaign to surround the London Olympics with peace and create a lasting legacy.

Please make a note in your diary now!

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I enclose a donation of £ towards costs (PAYABLE TO SOUTHWARK JUSTICE & PEACE OFFICE)

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