



## ‘A POLITICS ROOTED IN THE PEOPLE’

*By Joe Burns, Commission Member*

This online international conference, on 15 April, was organised principally by the Centre for Theology and Community, the Catholic Campaign for Human Development and the Katholische Hochschule für Sozialwesen in Germany. However, there was a strong presence and input from people with a community organising background (so, people active in Citizens UK, for example). The conference theme was based on the title quote by Pope Francis (included in the book ‘Let us Dream’) and was all about how we reinvigorate a ‘Politics for the Common Good’.

Pope Francis had made a short video for the conference expounding this theme that politics ‘must not be **for** the people but **with** the people’. He encapsulated this idea with the phrase ‘inclusive populism’ – to distinguish it from the narrowly nationalistic trends that are seen in a number of countries today. It is about ‘securing a life for all people that is worthy of being called human’. This is something that cannot be done without taking true account of the culture and social

values of communities.



There were various elements to the conference, but one was led by Jessica Wilkinson, Youth Coordinator for the

Leeds Diocese, along with Tom Chigbo (Senior Organiser for Leeds Citizens) and Rev Dr Joe Cortis (who heads up Caritas Leeds). Youth officer Ryan Wilkinson had put together a video about the group known as ‘The Twelve’. This is a group of young people

who have been meeting regularly throughout lockdown to explore their faith and dialogue with Bishop Marcus about the issues that are important to young people.



This reminded me of one of the key messages of Diarmuid O’Murchu in the Day of Reflection the Commission organised last November. He talked about the need to better understand what is meant by ‘the Kingdom of God’ and that a number of biblical scholars now think the best translation is ‘creating empowered communities’ – communities that are confident in their own ability to question and explore and where everyone is included. This sounds very much to me like a ‘politics rooted in the people’. It also sounds very like the process that the young people in The Twelve have been experiencing. They clearly felt very empowered.

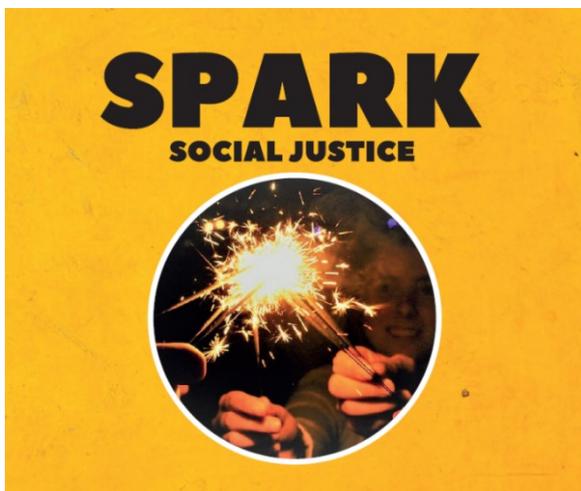
From the 70 or so people in the Leeds Diocese Zoom segment there was much deserved praise for The Twelve and how the approach is one that could be adopted across the world to build a new generation of lay leadership.

The Twelve have an invite from the Commission to come along and lead discussions at a future meeting of Commission members and we look forward to arranging that with them and deepening the work we are already doing through the SPARK Social Justice Project.



## COMMISSION LAUNCHES SPONSORSHIP SCHEME FOR CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE

As part of our SPARK Social Justice project, aimed at 18–30-year-olds in the Leeds Diocese, we have launched a sponsorship scheme for people in this age group to attend the National Justice & Peace Network (NJPN) Conference in July of this year.



Originally, the project was going to organise some larger events aimed at younger adults – but this has not proved possible because of the pandemic situation. So, the NJPN Conference seemed like the best option for inspiring some younger adults to take more action.

John Battle, Chair of the Commission commented, *“I know that younger generations are just as passionate about issues of social justice as older generations. The NJPN Conference this year is about our Climate Emergency and what more we can do, as Church, to take up the challenge of Pope Francis in ‘Laudato Si’. This scheme provides the opportunity to let younger people in the diocese, the people who will be most affected by our changing climate, lead us towards a new vision of how we can live sustainably with all other life on Earth”.*

The Conference theme is “Action for Life on Earth”. The Conference Chair for the weekend is Christine Allen, Director, CAFOD. The



conference will include a number of keynote speakers, various workshops and Bishop John Arnold, Bishop of Salford, will be the lead celebrant at the main conference mass. It takes place from teatime on Friday 23 July to lunchtime on Sunday 25 July at the Christian Conference Centre in Swanwick, Derbyshire.

Marg Siberry, a member of the Project Steering Group for the SPARK Social Justice Project, comments: *“In the company of many catholic social justice activists from across England and Wales, this conference offers a unique opportunity to share hopes and fears about our future and be inspired to take action, based firmly on Church teaching.”*

The full cost of an adult place is around £200 and the Commission hopes to sponsor the full conference costs for around ten people to attend. All we are asking of people who do attend is that they either write an article for this newsletter about their experience or make us a 3 minute video which we can share via social media channels.

***PTO FOR DETAILS OF HOW TO APPLY FOR SPONSORSHIP***



### **HOW TO APPLY FOR SPONSORSHIP TO ATTEND THE NJPN CONFERENCE**

The sponsorship process is very simple:-

1. Follow this link to the sponsorship page on our website [J&P Website Conference Sponsorship page](#)
2. Check that you are eligible (Live in the Leeds Diocese and aged between 18-30?)
3. Fill out the online application form that asks for a few basic contact details and about your interest in social justice issues.
4. Er, that's it!

### **NONVIOLENCE COURSE JOINT VENTURE WITH LEEDS DIOCESE PAX CHRISTI**

One of the Action Groups that the Commission operates is on Peace and Nonviolence. Last Autumn it worked with Leeds Diocese Pax Christi to organise an introductory course about Active Nonviolence and preface this with a Zoom meeting, open to all, with Pat Gaffney who has been heavily involved in the International Catholic Nonviolence Initiative. The course itself consisted of 5 one-hour sessions which introduced concepts of active nonviolence in a Catholic context.



The core materials (PowerPoints) were provided by Pax Christi (available from their website). Each week's presentation (quotes by Pope Francis) was amended slightly for our own circumstances – but it was largely the Pax Christi materials that were used. The format was a short presentation with a significant period then spent considering some questions in groups of 4 or 5 – followed by a plenary discussion. The active nature of the sessions helped to keep people fully

engaged – and a significant period in smaller groups enabled everyone to have the opportunity to contribute.

The Commission did the promotion for the course and the weekly emails out to attendees as well as providing the Zoom account for the meetings themselves. The Leeds Diocese Pax Christi group managed the sessions – it was a combination that worked well for both of us.

There were 21 people who regularly attended the 5 sessions. It promoted much discussion between the participants. As we have noted before, because the sessions were done via Zoom, we had people attending from well outside the boundaries of the Leeds Diocese – not only people from Nottingham and Salford, but someone from Portland in Oregon and one person joining from Lanzarote! The varied experiences of these people really enhanced the discussions that took place.

There were 15 regular attenders from the Leeds Diocese. It is unlikely that we would have had that many people if it had been an in-person event over 5 weeks somewhere like Leeds or Bradford. Our Diocese is just too geographically spread out to make this



feasible (especially in February and early March evenings!). Though we won't be abandoning in-person meetings, one of the learning points for the Commission from this course is that, organised in the right way, Zoom provides a realistic way of actually engaging with more parishioners in a number of circumstances.

Everyone attending will be invited to a follow up session in the second half of May. We are hoping that this will give us some further ideas for action – be it a more in-depth course on active nonviolence or specific ideas for nonviolent action.

From the feedback received it is clear that there is a demand for this kind of course and that sessions based mainly on discussions work well.

Below are some of the feedback comments we received – all very positive and encouraging.

***Should we be organising courses about other aspects of Catholic Social Teaching? – Let us know if you have any ideas.***

It is a thought-provoking introduction to active nonviolent peace-making that addresses both personal and institutional ways forward. The course offers positive examples of non-violent actions that have been effective, links to further reading as well as the opportunity to learn from one another. It is encouraging and hopeful.

This course offers a very open discussion about active nonviolence, allowing you to discern your own perspective and involvement..

This was an excellent example of Laity-led prayer, study, information-sharing, and action-planning on one of the most important and urgent topics today - our World needs to see Christians witness to their beliefs, sharing them with all, and validated by their actions for the good of all.

We look forward to the scheduled follow-up session and hope there will be an opportunity in our Salford Diocese, especially in our parish, to share the materials from this Active Non-violence series. Many thanks for a great initiative and for allowing us to participate

*Some of the comments received about the course*

## COULD YOU PERSUADE 2 OTHERS TO RECEIVE OUR NEWSLETTERS?

We send this newsletter to about 400 individuals – as well as all the clergy in the Diocese and all the parish office email addresses.

However, there are over 30,000 active Catholics in the Leeds Diocese. **Could you get two other people to sign up to receive it?**

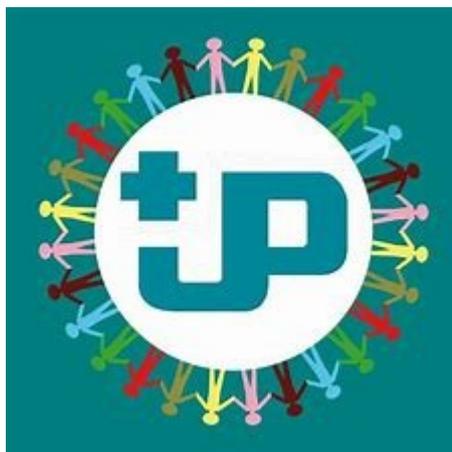
We want to reflect the great hunger for social justice that we know exists amongst our communities – but we can only do this if people know what is going on both locally and nationally. Just direct people to our website and get them to sign up – or just email the jandp email address and we can take care of the rest. It's easy to unsubscribe from our emails so people have nothing to lose.



## EASTERTIDE 2021 STATEMENT

J&P Commission Leeds

Following discussions and reflection on the past year, its challenges and opportunities, the Commission Chair, John Battle has released the following statement outlining the focus for 2021.



"This Eastertide the Leeds Catholic Diocesan Justice and Peace Commission is announcing its programme to address Britain's "Five wounds":

The reduction in our International Aid

The increase in poverty and inequality at work

The hostile policy towards refugees and asylum seekers

The investment in nuclear weapons

The lack of urgent commitment to tackling climate change

Our Five Easter Season priorities are:

### **1 To campaign for an increase in Development Aid and Humanitarian Relief**

To take positive action to ensure global access to Covid vaccines

### **2 To address the causes of poverty and work inequality** by calling for effective social

security support as well as campaigning for a real Living Wage.

### **3 Offering practical support to refugees and asylum seekers** and promoting a culture of welcome and hospitality

### **4 To campaign for Peace** by challenging investment in and increased numbers of nuclear weapons

Addressing the issue of the escalation in domestic violence by seeking appropriate resources.

### **5 Committing to a process of Eco-conversion as set out in Laudato Si.**

By promoting individual and community action by engaging with the Live Simply process.

By encouraging efficient energy and resource management.

By challenging and campaigning against global economic systems that damage the environment

This programme will steer our Diocesan and personal and public work and will be promoted throughout the Leeds Diocese of Yorkshire"

John Battle added *"The El Salvadorean martyred Jesuit Fr Ignacio Ellacuria urged us to "face the crucified people" in our world today and ask ourselves "What must I do to uncrucify them? What must I do for these people to rise again?" Our Diocesan Justice and Peace Easter programme is a call to action to us all"*

If you would like to get involved in one of these priorities please email Helen on [jandp@dioceseofleeds.org.uk](mailto:jandp@dioceseofleeds.org.uk)



## Housing the Homeless

by John Battle

Chair J&P Commission Leeds

There are scores of empty newly built flats down alongside the River Aire in Leeds City centre waiting for wealthier buyers. Perhaps they should have been handed over to the council to help deal with the housing shortage and to tackle rough sleeping on the streets. In Leeds to be fair, charities work hard with the City Council to tackle homelessness.

I should declare an interest as a trustee of the long-standing and well-respected St. George's Crypt in Leeds City centre working for years to provide the major night and day centre, hostels for those with alcohol and drug problems, and most recently, building more permanent supported flats to provide long term accommodation for the former homeless. Now the coronavirus lock down has led to the closure of shelters throughout the country as they cannot sustain social distancing.



The good news is that the Government has given local councils funds to take rough sleepers off the streets and put them in now unused Travelodges and budget hotels. The Government is paying for the rooms and local councils and charities such as St George's are providing staff support and meals. The average life expectancy for someone living on the streets is 45 years as most suffer with

underlying and serious health issues, making them particularly vulnerable to Covid19.

It therefore was only common sense for this unprecedented action to protect them and not leave them on the streets as a risk to the wider community. It is estimated that presently over 2000 rough sleepers, of an 4000 estimated by the homeless charity Crisis in England, are in supported hotels.

Councils such as Liverpool, Leeds, Bristol, London and Birmingham have all moved quickly to respond to this positive initiative to replace homeless shelters. As discussions start on an "exit strategy" from "lock down" and social isolation, can we build on this initiative to take rough sleeping seriously and continue to include them as needing proper accommodation. Funding charities to build longer term housing provision with some support would be a start. Meanwhile there are some empty unused properties. As Pope Francis urged in this crisis: "Let us not lose our memory once all this is past. Let us not file it away and go back to where we were. This is a time to take the decisive step..."

If you would to help St George's Crypt with their work tackling homelessness please see link: [How you can help | St. George's Crypt](#)





## Earth Day 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2021

By Helen Hayden, Leeds J&P Commission



The theme of this year's Earth Day is "Restore Our Earth". The organisation said: "We'll cover natural processes, emerging green technologies, and innovative thinking that can restore the world's ecosystems."

Other topics will include:

- Climate and environmental literacy
- Climate restoration technologies
- Reforestation efforts
- Regenerative agriculture
- Equity and environmental justice
- Citizen science
- Cleanups

This year Earth Day will be marked with three days of climate action.

It will begin on Tuesday 20 April with a global youth climate summit led by Earth Uprising, in collaboration with My Future My Voice, OneMillionOfUs and hundreds of youth climate activists.

In the evening the Hip Hop Caucus and its partners will present the "We Shall Breathe" virtual summit. This digital event will examine climate and environmental justice, connecting the climate crisis to issues of pollution, poverty, police brutality, and the

pandemic, all within a racial justice framework.

On Wednesday Education International will lead the "Teach for the Planet: Global Education Summit." This multilingual virtual summit will span several time zones and feature prominent activists from every continent.

Then on Earth Day itself the organisation [will hold its second Earth Day Live digital event on its website.](#)

### CAFOD: RECLAIM OUR COMMON HOME

CAFOD are campaigning for a green recovery from the Covid 19 pandemic;



"There's some way to go before the end of the coronavirus pandemic, but with the vaccine rollout well underway in the UK, plans are being drawn up for life post-Covid.

Yet Pope Francis has warned that the rush to return to normal risks leaving many of the world's problems unsolved. So that's why we at CAFOD are campaigning to reclaim our common home in 2021 – making sure the recovery from the pandemic includes everyone and tackles global poverty, injustice and the climate crisis."

To help CAFOD please click the link below

[Why 2021 is a huge year for a green recovery from coronavirus | CAFOD](#)



## EVENTS

 <b>28<sup>th</sup> April</b> <b>7.30pm-9pm</b>	<b>THE HOOK LECTURE SPRING 2021</b> - Leeds Church Institute The title of the lecture is <i>A New Moral Ecology for a World where Climate Catastrophe is Real</i> and will be given by Rev Dr Frances Ward. Book a place for this free lecture here: <a href="https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/hook-lecture-spring-2021-tickets-139433680893?aff=erelexpmlt">https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/hook-lecture-spring-2021-tickets-139433680893?aff=erelexpmlt</a>
 <b>Tue 11 May</b> <b>2 – 3:30pm</b>	<b>PROPHETIC RISK: A JOURNEY INTO NONVIOLENCE</b> This is one of a series of events organised by 'Root and Branch Synod'. The speaker at this one is Sr Katrina Alton, a Sister of St Joseph of Peace. Based in Nottingham, Katrina is about to open a 'House of Hospitality' to support women made destitute by the UK asylum system.
 <b>Wed 12 May</b> <b>7-8:30pm</b>	<b>J&amp;P COMMISSION MEETING</b> This is one of our regular meetings to review what we have done and what we are planning to do. Anyone in the Diocese is welcome to attend the meeting – which will be via Zoom. Please email the J&P Office using the address in the header of this newsletter if you would like to attend and we will send you the details nearer the time.
 <b>Wed 26 May</b> <b>7:30-9pm</b>	<b>J&amp;P ON ZOOM: MEET THE SVP NATIONAL SOCIAL POLICY ADVISOR</b> Alessandra Sciarra, National SVP Policy Manager for Social Justice has agreed to lead a Zoom-based meeting with us to discuss poverty in the UK today and what, as Church, we should be doing about it. Registration is via Eventbrite <a href="https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/alessandra-sciarra-national-policy-manager-for-the-svp-uk-poverty-today-tickets-151604650591">https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/alessandra-sciarra-national-policy-manager-for-the-svp-uk-poverty-today-tickets-151604650591</a>
 <b>23<sup>rd</sup> July-25<sup>th</sup> July</b>	<b>NJPN ANNUAL CONFERENCE: LIFE ON EARTH – MOMENT OF TRUTH</b>  There will be opportunities to take part in workshops and activities throughout the weekend as well a JUST FAIR consisting of more than 20 stalls from different agencies displaying goods and resources. <a href="https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/cms/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/NJPN-Conference-2021-Booking-Form.pdf">https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/cms/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/NJPN-Conference-2021-Booking-Form.pdf</a>

*Please forward this email E-News onto anyone else who you think might be interested. Even better, get them to send us their email address so we can add them to our contact database.*

*See our website for details of these and other events which may be of interest.*