

NJPN North West Justice & Peace E-Bulletin November 2024

The e-bulletin for the North West, linked to the National Justice and Peace Network (NJPN), is produced jointly within the dioceses of Lancaster, Liverpool, Salford, Shrewsbury and Wrexham. Please send articles and diary dates to anneoc980@hotmail.com

PAX CHRISTI USA STATEMENT ON 2024 US PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Source: Pax Christi USA November 7, 2024

Pax Christi USA, the national Catholic peace movement, acknowledges that Donald Trump and JD Vance have been elected as the next President and Vice President of the United States. We offer our prayers that their leadership might be guided by a commitment to pursue the "things that make for peace" (Luke 19:42) and the justice which must be the foundation of efforts toward reconciliation and healing.

In this moment of transition, Pax Christi USA pledges to continue our work in challenging our nation's leaders to serve with wisdom, tolerance, and empathy. We will continue to advocate for the positions laid out in our 2020 Statement of Principles, meant to guide our work moving forward. To reiterate our message from 2020: Our witness is to the Gospel message of Jesus, that our responsibility is to love God through loving our neighbour, both near and far, with a preferential option for those who are impoverished and suffering.

The urgency of this particular moment continues to highlight - as we did in 2020 - a permanent ceasefire and end to settler colonization in Palestine, the cessation of military support to Israel, demilitarization of the US-Mexico border, the rejection of nuclear weapons, and an end to US policies and actions of US corporations that continue to create conditions that millions around the world are forced to escape.

We hold our newly elected political leaders, our nation, the Church, and the entire world in prayer as we advocate and work for that justice which affirms the dignity of all human beings, individually and collectively, and assures peace for all creation.

Sherry Simon, National Council Chair of Pax Christi USA said: "As we move on from this contentious election, we must stay strong to prepare for the challenging weeks and months ahead. I anticipate that we'll need patience and a willingness to continue in this struggle. The problems and issues our nation must address - the deep mistrust and gross misunderstandings that have fuelled terrible divisions across the country - didn't occur overnight. We are ready to work together for the common good, to build coalitions within our movement as well as with other groups as we seek new allies in this work for peace with justice."

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/51038>

MAKE AMERICANS GOOD AGAIN

From the moment his campaign began, Donald Trump has promised to "Make America Great Again". I'm not all that sure what he means (and to be honest it's increasingly clear that neither does he) but it apparently involves domination, toughness, bombing, roughing-up, wall building, and winning—lots and lots of winning. This grand march toward national greatness has been noticeably accompanied by a startling lack of decency, compassion, dignity, or class, which all underscores the painful truth: Goodness isn't part of the platform. Sadder still is that Trump and many of his supporters want all of this while still claiming Christ. They want to steamroll the world into greatness and they want Jesus to endorse it.

The only problem is Jesus. He apparently had very little interest in such greatness. He talked of the last being first, of becoming servant of all, of laying down one's life for one's friends, of denying oneself, of healing the hurting, of caring for the poor, of elevating the marginalised, of freeing the oppressed, of seeing the overlooked, of being peacemakers, foot washers, cheek turners, mercy givers, least-lovers. His life was and is a beautifully subversive manifesto of smallness and kindness and goodness; continually reiterating the sacredness of sacrifice, the dignity in humility, the redemptive nature of forgiveness.

But sacrifice, humility, and forgiveness don't make for effective campaign slogans do they? They don't leverage the hidden fear in people's hearts. They don't poke the tender places of anxiety and hatred. They don't stoke the fires of latent racism and homophobia. They don't manufacture easy urgency. They don't resonate when screamed from behind a podium. They don't fire up the anxious everyman. They don't appeal to the lowest common denominator. And sadly, they don't rally the Bible Belt, garner the support of popular Evangelists, or reach into the souls of most Christians anymore either—which for a person of faith is the bigger story; the growing irrelevance of Jesus in the faith tradition that bears his name.

Apparently, these days it's simply not politically sound or theologically necessary to elevate character, champion dignity, or celebrate integrity. We've grown pretty lousy as a society of lifting up such goodness as something for our children to strive for and as a result less and less of them seem to have any desire for it.

From the moment they are born, our kids are pushed and cheered and driven to the pinnacle by parents, coaches, and teachers, and by nearly every adult voice in their lives. They're taught to excel, to achieve, to be the best, the fastest, the prettiest, the thinnest, to do the most, to reach the top. They are furiously, unrelentingly, unapologetically propelled — to win. It's not surprising that our kids now see celebrity, wealth, fame, and notoriety as the things most worth possessing, regardless of the cost. More than being loving, decent, kind, or helpful — now they'd simply rather be known, to have their name in lights or maybe on a building.

This is perhaps America's gravest shared sin: whether we're religious or not we have all conspired together to sacrifice goodness on the altar of greatness, which is perhaps why Donald Trump is the perfect candidate to represent us right now. Maybe he really is the best reflection of what our nation values, desires, and seeks to be anymore. Maybe he is what we want for our children.

As a person of faith and as a father, I can only strain to keep my eyes fixed on the life and example of Jesus and allow that to be the measurement of my success. I can endeavour as best I can to emulate his life; one lived with an open hand and not a closed fist, one where the real win is found in wanting for my neighbour all that I desire for myself—and fighting for them to have it.

While speaking to a large crowd mixed with the curious, the devoted, and the sceptical (not unlike the kind Donald Trump will continue to address this Fall) Jesus asked this question: "What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?" I'm going to keep asking this question of myself, of the global Church I belong to, and of the nation I gratefully call home, because how we answer it will define us. It will show our children what we value. It will mark out the life they should seek and the people they should aspire to become. It will shape our future. It will be the shared legacy we leave the world.

I'm not at all interested in making America great. I'd rather see us make Americans good. Hold on to your soul.

John Pavlovitz August 5, 2016 <http://johnpavlovitz.com/2016/08/05/make-americans-good-again/>

• **John Pavlovitz** is an author, pastor, activist in the Raleigh area of North Carolina who posts regular blogs at **Stuff That Needs To Be Said** <http://johnpavlovitz.com>

First published in the NW NJPN E Bulletin for October 2016 – chosen to highlight how little has changed – Ed.

The Gospel for November 3, 2024 (just before the result of the 2024 US election was announced) from Mark 12:28-34 reveals the two greatest of all the commandments: love of God and love of neighbour.

One of the scribes came up to Jesus and put a question to him, 'Which is the first of all the commandments?' Jesus replied, 'This is the first: Listen, Israel, the Lord our God is the one Lord, and you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: You must love your neighbour as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.' The scribe said to him, 'Well spoken, Master; what you have said is true: that he is one and there is no other. To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and strength, and to love your neighbour as yourself, this is far more important than any holocaust or sacrifice.' Jesus, seeing how wisely he had spoken, said, 'You are not far from the kingdom of God.' And after that no one dared to question him any more.

Reflection: HENRI NOUWEN DAILY MEDITATION | NOVEMBER 17, 2024

When we love God with all our heart, mind, strength, and soul, we cannot do other than love our neighbour, and our very selves. It is in being fully rooted in the heart of God that we are creatively connected with our neighbour as well as with our deepest self. In the heart of God we can see that the other human beings who live on this earth with us are also God's sons and daughters, and belong to the same family we do. There, too, I can recognize and claim my own belovedness, and celebrate with my neighbours.

Our society thinks economically: "How much love do I give to God, how much to my neighbour, and how much to myself?" But God says, "Give all your love to me, and I will give to you, your neighbour, and yourself." We are not talking here about moral obligations or ethical imperatives. We are talking about the mystical life. It is the intimate communion with God that reveals to us how to live in the world and act in God's Name.

INVESTING IN A LIVABLE PLANET FOR ALL

Source: United Nations Climate Action

The 29th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP29), to take place in Baku, Azerbaijan, from 11 to 22 November 2024, is a pivotal opportunity to accelerate action to tackle the climate crisis. With global temperatures hitting record highs, and extreme weather events affecting people around the globe, COP29 will bring together leaders from governments, business and civil society to advance concrete solutions to the defining issue of our time.



A key focus of COP29 will be on finance, as trillions of dollars are required for countries to drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions and protect lives and livelihoods from the worsening impacts of climate change.

The conference will also be a key moment for countries to present their updated national climate action plans under the Paris agreement, which are due by early 2025. If done right, these plans would limit global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and double as investment plans advancing the Sustainable Development Goals.

<https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/cop29>

PRAYERS FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE

Prayer for collective action

Creator God,
You created a world of community,
richness, and love.

But human greed has brought
separation, destruction, and injustice.

So, we pray
for the opportunities and boldness
to act together with others,
to break down the barriers
of our selfish desires.

We pray our collective actions
will be driven by wisdom and love,
so that we your church
will be agents for justice,
seek a world fruitful for all of creation.

In Jesus' name,
Amen.

Christian Aid

https://www.christianaid.org.uk/sites/default/files/2024-09/pray-for-climate-justice_v2.pdf

Pray and Fast for Climate Change

Come, Lord Jesus.
Forgive our sins against the earth and each other,
grant us grace to reform,
and build your Kingdom amidst our brokenness
- that we and all creation may rejoice
in the peace you offer
and join in an unending chorus
of thanks and praise.

Pray and Fast for the Climate

www.prayandfastfortheclimate.org.uk

A prayer for the earth

All powerful God,
you are present in the universe
and in the smallest of your creatures.
You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.

Pour out upon us the power of your love,
that we may protect life and beauty.

Fill us with your peace, that we may live
as brothers and sisters, harming no one.

O God of the poor,
help us to rescue the abandoned
and forgotten of this earth,
so precious in your eyes.

Bring healing to our lives,
that we may protect the world and not prey on it,
that we may sow beauty,
not pollution and destruction.

Touch the hearts
of those who look only for gain
at the expense of the poor and the earth.

Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,
to be filled with awe and contemplation,
to recognize that we are profoundly united
with every creature
as we journey towards your infinite light.

We thank you for being with us each day.
Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle,
for justice, love and peace.

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*

<https://cafod.org.uk/pray/prayer-resources/prayer-for-our-earth>

FAITH GROUPS MARCH IN LONDON TO PROTECT OUR COMMON HOME

Jo Siedlecka November 17, 2024

Faith groups were among thousands of climate justice campaigners who marched peacefully through central London on Saturday, accompanied by colourful banners, chanting and drumming. They lobbied the UK government and world leaders to work towards climate justice, and to do it urgently. They included representatives of Christian Climate Action, Green Christian, Laudato Si Movement, Columban Justice, Peace and Ecology Team, Columban Sisters, Faithful Companion of Jesus Sisters, Quakers in Britain and Faith for the Climate Network.

The march was part of an annual Global Day of Action for Climate Justice which always takes place midway through the annual international United Nations Climate Conference, which this year is in Baku, Azerbaijan 11- 22 November. Other marches lobbied COP29 in 25 places across Britain, including Brighton, Southampton, Birmingham, Manchester, Newcastle, and Glasgow.

The London march - organised by more than 60 groups - started at the British Museum, which has a £50 million partnership with the oil company BP. Speakers argued that the fossil fuel industry has no place in the arts. And the route was via the HQ of Azerbaijani oil company SOCAR, co-owner of the BTC pipeline with BP, which supplies nearly 30% of Israel's oil.

At its end in Downing Street, a rally called for the UK government to end its reliance on fossil fuels and to commit to paying climate reparations. It was stressed that climate justice and human rights are inseparable. The government's complicity in Israel's destruction of Gaza was criticised and the link between conflict and climate change highlighted.

Columban missionaries are members of the Climate Justice Coalition which organised the march. Fr Kevin McDonagh SSC spoke to several media at the event of his experience of climate concerns during four decades of mission work in Peru. "The rapid melting of glaciers has meant that water supplies to major urban centres such as Lima are under threat," he said; "and the poorest people will be impacted the most." The Columban banner highlighted 'Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor', wording used in Pope Francis' landmark encyclical Laudato Si'. A group of Columban Sisters included their congregational leader Sr Anne Carbon. Alongside was Sr MaryAnne, of Faithful Companions of Jesus, who works on faith and ecological justice at the FCJ Spirituality Centre in Euston, and said she was on the march as part of the 'Care for Our Common Home' mission of the FCJ sisters internationally.

Events in the UK were part of the Global Day of Action which saw at least 150 events worldwide. In Baku itself, faith groups were among those holding a silent protest at the climate summit demanding the phase-out of fossil fuels, climate financing for the Global South, and a just transition to clean energy. And faith groups announced further divestment from fossil fuels last week, including a number of Catholic Dioceses in France and the Jesuits in Britain, Canada, Australia and Euro-Mediterranean Province. Pope Francis called for "an ambitious agreement" on climate in a message read 13 November in Baku by the Vatican Secretary of State, Cardinal Pietro Parolin.

UK-based Faith for the Climate Network highlighted that Faith leaders and advocates, gathered at a COP29 side event in Baku last week to call for a climate finance strategy rooted in justice and accountability. The event, partly hosted by the World Council of Churches, emphasised that effective climate finance must go beyond financial figures to directly support the adaptation and resilience of communities facing the harshest climate impacts. There were calls for "real finance", not just loans which will get poor countries further into debt, and for tax justice, including a wealth tax, to fund effective climate action.

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/51114>

HOW RICH NATIONS, LIKE THE UK, CAN RAISE THEIR FAIR SHARE OF GLOBAL CLIMATE FINANCE

Source: Christian Aid November 18, 2024

At COP29 rich countries are under pressure to deliver trillions in grant based, public climate finance, to meet the needs of developing countries, as laid out in the terms of the Paris Agreement.

These figures might seem bafflingly large to the person on the street, and rich countries may claim the figures sound hard to achieve. But a report by Christian Aid has shown how one developed country, the UK, could raise significant amounts of climate finance and contribute its fair share to the overall money needed, without putting major strain on the public.

These measures are based on the 'polluter pays' principle. The report, first published last year, focussed specifically on covering the UK's £12.6 billion fair share of the Loss and Damage Fund which was operationalised last year at COP28 in Dubai. The loss and damage contribution is only one part of the New Collective Quantified Goal on climate finance being negotiated in Baku so these policies below could be combined and built upon further to reach the UK's overall contribution to the new goal being negotiated at COP29.

1. Polluter producers' tax - This would see fossil fuel companies contributing towards the UK's fair share. The UK Government could increase the tax on excess profits from fossil fuel production to 95%, which according to Tax Justice UK could raise around £13bn. Fossil fuel companies have enjoyed huge profits in recent years.

2. Wealth tax - Another option would be a national Net Wealth Tax in line with the parameters set out by the Wealth Tax Commission. A rate of 0.5% on the wealthiest is estimated to raise in the region of £15bn. This has the advantage of being targeted on those who are likely to be disproportionately high polluters in their consumption and personal investments.

3. There are also numerous smaller targeted taxes, such as the existing International Air Passenger Levy (£3.5bn), the Emissions Trading Scheme (£6bn); an expanded Financial Transactions Tax (£6.5bn) and the existing Energy Profits Levy (around £5bn annually).

Sophie Powell, Christian Aid's Chief of UK Advocacy, said: "The policy measures outlined here show that there are many levers the government can use to raise these funds that don't involve taxing working people, but instead are based on the polluter pays principle. Many of these measures could be replicated by other Global North countries to raise their own fair share of the climate finance pot.

"The needs of climate vulnerable countries are acute. Devastating floods, droughts and storms are destroying economies, sweeping away homes and ruining livelihoods. On Thursday a report by respected economist Lord Stern and others showed developing country needs were in the trillions, not billions. If a reckless driver smashes into your house, they don't get off with just a partial contribution or loan you the money to fix it. They must pay for repairs. Likewise rich, polluting nations who have caused the climate crisis need to pay for the damage.

"This Labour government came into power promising to rebuild respect with Global South governments; to do so it must respond to this need and pay its fair share, as must other rich countries - not as charity or as loans that push countries deeper into debt, but as a moral duty to those who are least responsible for causing the climate crisis.

Private finance, which requires a profit in return, may have a role to play in building renewable energy but has proven completely incapable of dealing with adaptation and loss and damage. For those we need grants, that only governments can deliver, and these policy measures would help raise the funds to deliver them."

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/51120>

COP29: ADVOCATING FOR CHILDREN IMPACTED BY CLIMATE CHANGE

Source: UNICEF

Today, **one billion children are at extremely high risk of the impacts of the climate crisis.** At COP29, we have joined world leaders and policymakers to address the challenges of climate change which disproportionately impact the world's most vulnerable children.

Climate challenges include:

- Lack of adequate nutrition and clean drinking water
- Damage to infrastructure for washing and good hygiene
- Limited access to healthcare to cure diseases
- Disruption to children's education

From the floods in Afghanistan and Pakistan which have destroyed homes and schools, to the droughts in East Africa which have led to malnutrition, children's lives are at risk due to climate change.

The 2024 UN climate change conference – COP29 – is vital for helping us promote the conversation around supporting children and families impacted by climate change.

<https://www.unicef.org.uk/campaign-with-us/cop-29/>

Nancy Auld Campaigner UNICEF UK adds: The Prime Minister made some positive announcements at COP, which are a step in the right direction. The UK has committed to a new target of 81% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2035. This has been welcomed by many, and it signifies a renewed commitment to being a global leader on climate. The Government also recommitted to delivering £11.6bn to international climate finance, which will be used to tackle the impacts of the climate crisis. Keir Starmer and Ed Miliband used these announcements to urge other countries to follow the UK's lead and be ambitious with their own climate policies.

Although, we welcome the commitments, there was very little on the impacts of the climate crisis on children. Only a small portion of climate finance goes to children in the most impacted countries, despite them having the least to do with the climate crisis, and with nearly half the world's children (1 billion) being the most at risk. We are calling on the Government to use the UK's leadership to protect children from the climate crisis, please take action by writing to your MP using this link:

https://act.unicef.org.uk/page/160453/action/1?ea.tracking.id=8k0ww04t&utm_source=Unicef_UK&utm_medium=Email&utm_campaign=email_advocacy_campaign%20name

COP29 EXPERIENCE 'BOTH EMPOWERING AND CHALLENGING'

Source: Jesuit Missions November 17, 2024

A team from a Jesuit environmental and spiritual education centre in Madagascar have been taking part in COP29, thanks to support from Jesuit Missions. Representatives from the Centre Arrupe in Madagascar have been in the Azerbaijan capital, Baku, for the past week, to raise awareness of their work and the impact of climate change on their country.

Director of Programmes, Patricia Tahirindray, and Efa Ravelonantoandro and Henintsoa Nary Mihamina from the Environment and Sustainable Development department have been flying the flag for the centre. "It's been an honour to participate in COP29, bringing our mission-driven commitment to the global climate dialogue," Efa said. "Our objectives include promoting impactful climate projects, strengthening collaborations with key actors in climate justice and integral ecology and advocating for fair climate finance."

The Centre Arrupe is a partner organisation of Jesuit Missions, which was able to financially support the team's trip to Baku. It runs training and awareness raising sessions built around protecting our natural world, taking inspiration from Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato Si'*.

Efa added: "We recognise that climate action is a duty of care for our common home. In line with the Pope's message, COP29 provides an important opportunity to act on climate justice, ensuring that those most affected by climate change, including vulnerable communities, are supported through fair policies and sustainable solutions."

Patricia, Efa and Henintsoa have been providing daily updates of what they have been up to at this year's COP, including meetings with senior Malagasy politicians and sessions with other Catholic organisations at the conference's Faith Pavilion. Their reports show the opportunities that have been presented to them to highlight their work on a world stage, but they also highlight the stark divide between the Global North and the Global South when it comes to addressing climate change.

Henintsoa said: "Attending COP as citizens of the Global South is both empowering and challenging. It's motivating to share our experiences and advocate for our communities. However, it's also discouraging to see how some discussions are influenced by fossil fuel interests or the Global North, which can overshadow the needs of the most vulnerable."

Jesuit Missions was pleased to support the Centre Arrupe on their journey to COP29, having seen firsthand the excellent work they do in a country that is so vulnerable to the impact of climate change. From 'Green Weekends' centred on tree-planting, to regular education sessions for *Laudato Si'* Animators, they want to ensure the country's young people - and the wider planet - have a bright future.

Richard Solly, Advocacy and Campaigns Officer at Jesuit Missions, said: "Climate talks are targeted by the fossil fuel industry and other very influential economic interests, and it is crucial that the voices of civil society in the Global South are heard above all the background noise of lobbying. "Our friends at Centre Arrupe are working with other Jesuit organisations, others in the international Network for Catholic Climate and Environment Actors and others from Africa to make sure that COP29 negotiators listen to them."

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/51109>

CHRISTIAN AID REACTION TO LAUNCH OF GLOBAL CLEAN POWER ALLIANCE

Source: Christian Aid November 20, 2024

Responding to the launch of the Global Clean Power Alliance by the UK government yesterday, Sophie Powell, Christian Aid's Chief of UK Advocacy, said: "Global decarbonisation is essential, as a species we're currently cooking ourselves with our addiction to dirty energy. Last year was the hottest year on record and 2024 is expected to beat that. It's vital that we accelerate the global energy transition away from fossil fuels so any initiative that helps do that is welcome in principle.

"The details are currently pretty sketchy so it's vital that this initiative includes human rights and environmental safeguards, especially as it seeks to promote the accelerated use of critical minerals, like lithium and cobalt.

"In order to effectively promote energy access for the most marginalised it must come with public finance. It's easy for the private sector to make money investing in renewable energy in easy to reach, middle income countries. But for the remotest parts of the poorest countries, it will require grant funding to get the technology up and running.

"What has been announced today appears to be primarily focused on private finance initiatives. We agree these have a role to play but this is not in any way a substitute for the UK significantly stepping up on public finance. Attention must come back to the UK's responsibility to push for an ambitious new finance goal at COP29, with public finance at its core, and a strong contribution from the UK itself, which can be raised through taxing the richest and biggest polluters."

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/51136>

Global Clean Power Alliance

- Prime Minister Keir Starmer has officially launched the Global Clean Power Alliance at the G20 in Rio de Janeiro today, with 12 countries signing up to join its first mission
- Global Clean Power Alliance will unite countries to speed up the clean energy transition globally, while bolstering the UK's energy security and creating thousands of jobs
- UK continues to lead the way on tackling the climate crisis, following PM's interventions at COP29 in Azerbaijan last week

Read in full here: www.gov.uk/government/news/prime-minister-launches-clean-power-alliance-as-uk-leads-the-global-energy-transition

PRAY AND FAST FOR THE CLIMATE: PLASTICS TREATY

The final major conference of the month is the last session of negotiations for a global plastics treaty, taking place from 25 November to 1 December in Busan, South Korea.

Plastic pollution is one of the most visible forms of environmental degradation; it has a devastating impact on wildlife, and burning or dumping plastic can also harm human health. There's a climate impact, too, due primarily to the petroleum used to make plastics: Greenpeace estimates that, without a treaty that limits plastic production, the amount manufactured will triple by 2050 and use 21 to 31% of the world's carbon budget. At the last round of negotiations, the final text didn't contain a reference to limiting production.

We pray that as people prepare for and attend the conference, they will be prepared to negotiate a strong treaty which includes adequate production limits.

<https://prayandfastfortheclimate.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/PAFFTC-Prayer-Points-November-2024.pdf> (follow the link and go to page 2)

• **Pray and Fast for the Climate** is a movement of Christians praying and fasting on the 1st of each month for climate justice. We started off in the UK, but now include people from Australia, Canada, Europe and the US. And we hope to grow more – the Anglican Communion Bishops' statement on the environment 'The World Is Our Host' suggested that all Anglicans worldwide should pray and fast on the 1st of the month.

Pray and Fast for the Climate is supported by members of the 'Faith for the Climate' network, including: A Rocha UK, The Baptist Union, Christian Aid, Christian Concern for One World, Climate Stewards, Commitment for Life, Green Christian, Hope for the Future, Operation Noah, Our Voices, The Quiet Garden Movement, SPEAK, Tearfund, The Church of England and its Shrinking the Footprint Programme, The Methodist Church, The United Reformed Church, and USPG.

THE POPE, GENOCIDE & THE WAR IN GAZA

Ian Linden November 20, 2024

Last weekend, *Vatican News* and the Italian daily *La Stampa* quoted Pope Francis having said that some international experts had declared that “what is happening in Gaza has the characteristics of a genocide”, an excerpt from interviews in a book *Hope Never Disappoints*. “We should investigate carefully to assess whether this fits into the technical definition (of genocide) formulated by international jurists and organisations,” the Pope urged.

These remarks will, without doubt, have caused distress in Israel and in Jewish communities around the world with whom the Pope has worked to have better relationships. Francis visited the tomb of Theodor Herzl, the father of modern political Zionism in 2014, Auschwitz in 2016, and expressed concern about growing antisemitism on Italian television in November 2023. But tensions have been growing as the Israel-Palestine conflict escalated with religious affiliation becoming more significant. The Vatican’s attempt to achieve a balance between Islam and Judaism has become more challenging.

Last December, to some degree South Africa pre-empted the Pope’s call, filing a complaint, a ‘Memorial’, in the International Court of Justice (ICJ) against Israel for its actions in Gaza. The Genocide Convention was adopted by the UN in December 1948 as a response to the Holocaust. Alleging that a Jewish State needed to be prevented from committing the crime of genocide is particularly shocking.

The Pope is seeking clarification on whether the Convention is applicable to the situation in Gaza. So, on what grounds did South Africa institute such legal proceedings in the ICJ? There are certain international Conventions which “all States can be held to have a legal interest in their protection” and thus an obligation to intervene. The Genocide Convention, an international treaty, is one of them. This principle, *erga omnes partes* (directed at all parties), was endorsed by the ICJ in 2022 in a case of *Gambia v Myanmar* involving the plight of the Rohingya. In approaching the ICJ South Africa found legal means and precedent to express its solidarity with Palestinians. In international law the definition of the crime of genocide is highly restrictive. Nonetheless, thirteen other States, including Spain, Mexico, Ireland and Belgium, have indicated their intention of intervening on the side of South Africa at the ICJ with their own ‘Memorials’.

A look at how genocide became a crime recognised in international law sheds some light on the difficulty of establishing it legally today. The Polish, Jewish lawyer, Raphael Lemkin, coined the term ‘genocide’ in late 1942 in the context of Axis rule in occupied Europe: a process of destruction of an oppressed group “after removal of the population and the colonisation of the area by the oppressor’s own nationals”. He struggled to define the term but was clear about its historical precedents. “Bartolomé de las Casas, Vitoria [16th century Salamanca Dominican Friars who championed rights of indigenous peoples], and humanitarian interventions, are all links in one chain leading to the proclamation of genocide as an international crime by the United Nations”, he wrote in a later unpublished essay.

By the end of World War II, the crime of genocide was still not fully defined but the prosecutors in the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg (1945-1946) did not flinch from using the term. Though none of the convicted Nazi leaders were found guilty of genocide as a specific crime. The Nuremberg indictments were for one or more crimes notably ‘war against peace’ (waging aggressive war), war crimes and crimes against humanity – which covered genocide. At the time, Lemkin was defining genocide as “the criminal intent to destroy or cripple a human group” with an added emphasis on the destruction of cultures and their loss to humanity. His focus then was on the destruction of racial and national groups citing the fate of Poles, Gypsies and Jews.

In a resolution in the September 1948 session of the United Nations, the General Assembly declared that genocide was a crime that could take place in peacetime. In December 1948 the Convention defined genocide in Article II as: “a crime committed with the intent to destroy a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, in whole or in part”. Because of the imperial sensitivities of UN member States, Lemkin’s emphasis on the destruction of cultures had disappeared, nor were political groups included.

On 8 October, the BBC led on an update report from the UN’s Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory set up in 2021 by the UN Human Rights Council. The Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) had not allowed them into Gaza. The UN team of three brought considerable combined experience to a difficult task. Members were South African Navi Pillay, former President Judge of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, Miloon Kothari, a former convener of the Working Group on Human Rights in India and the UN, and Professor Chris Sidoti, an academic expert on international human rights law and formerly Australian Human Rights Commissioner and head of the Australian Justice and Peace Commission. Their report highlighted

both Israel's actions and those occurring during Hamas' terrible 7 October attack when 1,200 Israelis died, 40 children killed, and hundreds were wounded. At the Nova music festival alone 136 women were slaughtered and there were incidents of sexual violence. 251 hostages were taken.

The UN Human Rights Office has examined over 8,000 deaths in Gaza from the beginning of the war. Requiring three sources for each verification of death - for that reason mostly inside residential buildings - the Human Rights Office found 44% were children, 26% women and 30% men. Assuming for every direct killing four indirect deaths because of the war, The Lancet estimate some 190,000 Palestinians have died. In the words of the Austrian diplomat and High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, "unprecedented levels of killing, death, injury, starvation, illness and disease".

Overall, the figures support allegations of indiscriminate bombing and shelling and appear incompatible with Israel's claimed policy of legitimate self-defence: ending terrorism by targeted attacks on Hamas belligerents. An action cited by Article II as genocidal in the Convention, and relevant when considering the war, is "deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part".

Under Article III of the Genocide Convention, direct and public incitement to commit genocide is legally punishable whether or not it results in actual genocidal action. On 28 December 2023, in a letter to Israel's Attorney General, a group of former Knesset members, Israeli diplomats, academics and journalists gave details of "extensive and blatant incitement to genocide" by influential Israeli public figures and called for their prosecution. The most significant calls had come from Itamar Ben-Gvir, Minister of National Security, who declared those who "celebrate, those who support... they're all terrorists and they should also be destroyed", and from former Minister of Defence, Yoav Gallant, who said Israel was fighting "human animals" and that he was "imposing a complete siege on Gaza. There will be no electricity, no food, no water, no fuel".

In a statement on 28 October 2023 on war against Hamas, Prime Minister Netanyahu himself urged Israelis to remember their biblical enemy Amalek citing Deuteronomy 25.17. Samuel 15.3 on the Amelekites reads: "Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants..." Emotional rhetoric after the security failure and the tragic losses and hostage-taking of 7 October, or incitement and indications of intent? This is the kind of material jurists consider.

Proof of specific genocidal purpose will be critical if South Africa's case is to succeed. Genocide, like any other crime, may be committed for a variety of motives ranging from ethnic or religious hatred revenge or fear to the elimination of an enemy and acquisition of territory. But when purpose/intent is inferred from circumstances rather than directly proved, genocidal purpose must be the sole possible inference that can be drawn from the criminal actions. That would be very difficult. Restriction of medical supplies, food and water, mass displacement as well as killing of the civilian population, conditions close to siege, do not necessarily add up legally to the crime of genocide.

But South Africa's proceedings at the ICJ are looking increasingly grounded in facts. The UN's Independent Commission of Inquiry is examining Hamas' and the Israel's actions as possible war crimes and crimes against humanity, no less serious crimes than genocide in international law but more easily proven. All States have a common interest in fulfilling the purposes of the Genocide Convention. South Africa has taken the lead in upholding international law under threat today from so many quarters. The Pope was asking for the situation in Gaza to be clarified legally not claiming that the IDF is committing genocide. Any judgement from the ICJ will take a long time and is far from a foregone conclusion.

This is an acutely difficult time for a compassionate Pope seeking ways of stopping or reducing the suffering. Difficult for Catholics horrified at the plight of Palestinians, and difficult for Jewish friends too, processing the pain and insecurity of 7 October. This is an intractable conflict. Pope Francis leads a global Church not the allies of Israel or Hamas. As in the motif of the Synod, Francis would want to open the hearts and minds of both sides to each other. But for the time being that looks impossible.

<https://www.ianlinden.com/latest-blogs/the-pope-genocide-the-war-in-gaza>

• Professor Ian Linden is Visiting Professor at St Mary's University, Strawberry Hill, London. A past director of the Catholic Institute for International Relations, he was awarded a CMG for his work for human rights in 2000. He has also been an adviser on Europe and Justice and Peace issues to the Department of International Affairs of the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales. Ian chairs a new charity for After-school schooling in Beirut for Syrian refugees and Lebanese kids in danger of dropping out partnering with CARITAS Lebanon and work on board of Las Casas Institute in Oxford with Richard Finn OP. His latest book was Global Catholicism published by Hurst in 2009.

See also: <https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/51117>

WHERE OLIVE TREES WEEP

Rose Chacko writes for London Catholic Worker about life in Palestine under occupation

I lived in Palestine from 2012-13 and visited for the first time in ten years last September. I wrack my brain about what part I can play in bringing an end to the horrors going on in that beautiful, hospitable, and magical country and know that whatever we do needs to be collective. I recently watched an excellent documentary called "Where Olive Trees Weep," about the multifaceted, brutal, and non-stop oppression Palestinians face under Israeli occupation. I would recommend it to everyone.

We continue to watch in horror as the atrocities in Gaza become more vicious and depraved daily, and we continue to watch our government completely ignore the mass murder and maiming of civilians while insisting on continuing to sell arms to Israel – to "defend itself." But we also continue to see ordinary people rising in resistance, saying "not in my name," risking arrest and the derailing of their lives because they know what is happening is not OK; it is not normal, it is something evil they refuse to normalise and accept.

I asked someone I know from the occupied West Bank to give me a brief summary of what Palestinians are facing there, to hopefully offer a tiny snapshot of what life is like in the "calmer" and "safer" part of occupied Palestine. He wrote about how his generation, born in the nineties, had years of their lives stolen from them. He described the "popular schools" that were created after the massive Israeli invasion of the West Bank in 2002, which was followed by repeated incursions, making it unsafe to walk around the city. Children stayed in their neighbourhoods, and lessons were given in storerooms by a local teacher, "because in those days the internet wasn't available everywhere like today, and there was a lack of electricity". "It was not an adequate education," he said.

"We will also never forget our friends, martyred as schoolchildren, who never got to complete their educations. After the 2002 invasion, we suffered for over 10 years until the economy improved, new infrastructure had been built, and the destruction left by the invasion had faded." When he finished university, he said his dad had just set up a new project, a manufacturing plant, but "the occupation forces came and blew it up, causing us to fall into huge debt". He said it took 8 years before the family could even start repaying the debt.

He remarked on the restrictions on movement Israel places on Palestinians in the "big prison" that is the West Bank: "In this current time, in 2024, and before, if I wanted to go from Nablus to Ramallah, I'd have to wait for hours at checkpoints. And if, when I got to the front ..., I might be met with an Israeli soldier in a bad mood who makes me go back just because he's bored. But if this soldier is in an angry mood, it's very possible he could shoot me and I'd lose my life - for this reason, I prefer not to leave my city. So, after the events of October 7, I have lost my job, due to the its illegal settlements.

His final summary was this: "We Palestinians in the West Bank live a tragedy, deprived of the most basic rights to live on this land. But whatever happens, we won't leave our land just for someone else to come and enjoy it - whatever the consequences. In every Palestinian family, there is a harrowing story, a tragedy, and a deep pain inside. There are those who lost their families, those who lost their futures, and those who have been left physically disabled."

Back to the documentary. At the end, one of the main protagonists, a Palestinian Christian female journalist and activist from Jerusalem who never stops fighting for her people, says something like: "We Palestinians have long given up on hoping others will rescue us. We can rescue ourselves. But what you have to do, is stop feeding the machine, and propping up this evil system." She is talking about a settler-colonial system – Zionism – which renders Palestinians not simply worthless, but actively unwanted – to the point that Israeli soldiers habitually spray machine gun fire as they enter refugee camps at any time of day, injuring dozens with life-ruining injuries. No compensation, no acknowledgement, no redress. Not reported.

This is a system we are propping up; with every arms sale to Israel, every trade deal, and every bank funding operations on stolen land. A few years ago, the UN released a list of companies operating in Israel's illegal settlements. There are also the arms companies making millions from the mass slaughter of the trapped and starved people of Gaza, and elsewhere. And others. The Palestinian journalist was calling on us to fight our own complicity, to break those links, to stop bankrolling an unjust and violent system of oppression and appropriation. We need to think about, explore, and discuss together ways we can start to do this. The Conservative Party fought hard to get a bill through at the start of this year. Dubbed the "Anti-Boycott Bill", it was expressly about stopping public bodies, i.e. councils and universities, from divesting from Israel, or from companies operating in its illegal settlements.

However, after calling the election, parliament was dissolved, and so was the bill, which had seemed on the brink of passing. When it dissolved, just like that, when it had seemed a done deal, it felt like a weight being lifted suddenly – maybe like divine intervention. Maybe, I thought, God is giving us a boost and showing us one path to take. And at the same time, maybe He is showing how what seems to be unstoppable repression, and insurmountable obstacles, can disintegrate in an instant. What seems impossible right now, freedom for the Palestinian people, could materialise in a way we can't imagine, in a way that will seem a miracle. A number of UK universities recently announced they are divesting from arms companies supplying Israel – a testament to the determination of students who have led protests across the country. This would not have been achievable – at any rate, not so easily – if the Anti-Boycott Bill had passed. It is a huge win and should give us hope. We must take advantage of this reprieve.

Let us pray for peace, freedom, and justice in Palestine and everywhere, and let us start organising together to break our ties to the oppression of others.

Rose Chacko *London Catholic Worker* Summer 2024 Issue 76

https://www.londoncatholicworker.org/files/ugd/cf1289_01780b2168c148da81d40823e90c2d3a.pdf

THE DE-HUMANISING EFFECTS OF LIBERALISM

Jenny Sinclair November 11, 2024

Every era is characterised by an animating idea – and in our era it is liberalism. This is the sea we swim in. We don't really see it because it's all around us. Much of its influence has been positive, but it becomes a problem when it goes too far. Fundamental to this story is the idea of the "unencumbered self", in which freedom is understood as freedom from constraint. Freedom from God, from family, from place, from tradition. We've ended up with this paradigm of freedom of choice, with its greater emphasis on rights than responsibilities. And this liberalism shows up in both economic and social forms – we've got the neoliberal economic model on the right, and the hyper-liberal social norms on the left.

Both are driven by the same logic: limits are framed as regressive. There's a kind of blind spot going on on each side. The right attribute moral unravelling to excessive liberalism, but somehow the neoliberal economic system gets a free pass; the left attribute poverty to the neoliberal economic system, but they celebrate unlimited self-actualisation. To 'be who you want to be' is seen as progressive.

The key point is that liberalism has a fundamentally different anthropology to Christianity. Rather than as individuals unencumbered to do what we want, Christianity sees us as relational beings made in the image of God. When we look at what's happening in the world we see the symptoms of liberalism's dominance. We see exploitation, inequality, fragmentation, the commodification of creation, and so many signs of human distress – an explosion of loneliness, mental health crises and the breakdown of trust.

This animating idea has also led to globalisation, deindustrialisation, the off-shoring of skilled work and the discarding of places and whole communities, especially in the so-called post-industrial working-class communities. It's also led to the imposition of the knowledge economy and the service economies. Effectively, it's been a power grab from the poor to the middle class and to the rich. The consequences, not only economic, but social, have been devastating. The point to draw from this is that this type of neoliberal system has an effect on human beings. It has an effect not only on our livelihoods, but also on our behaviours, on our relationships.

In *The Genesis and Ethos of the Market*, theologian Luigino Bruni writes: "the market gives birth to and fosters its own sense of being human...it engenders the promise of interpersonal relationships without the wound of the other." It's not an exaggeration to say that this philosophy generates an anti-human system. It makes us into the ideal consumer sitting at home ordering from Amazon, separated from each other. It's an assault on relationship.

This is the same system that's reshaped our conception of work. From vocation, to low skill, low security jobs which weaken the confidence of the young in adulthood and undermine family formation. It's also reshaped our conception of welfare, from community interdependence to the transfer of funds where you're left on your own in your flat, surrounded by unpaid bills. This makes people unhappy and lonely, especially the young. It weakens social bonds. It undermines local democracy. It promotes a false freedom of "choice". It leads to a loss of the human space where we can be together and makes us vulnerable to exploitation and manipulation. There is a sense of dislocation. Our primary relationships ought to be with each other, not with the likes of Amazon, nor with the state.

I look through the frame of Catholic social thought, which began as a response of the Church to the impact of the Industrial Revolution on human beings. It provides a theological framework to critique any system that dehumanises, whether it's the unfettered market or the over-centralised, collectivist state. It looks for ways of constraining those powers and working for the common good.

The common good is the antidote to individualism and collectivism because it involves building relationship across differences at all levels. It's a better story, but it's also very practical. In political terms, it's about building relationship between labour and capital, between employer and employee, between business and unions. It involves local banking, and energy providers that are closer to people and more accountable. It involves a distribution of power and resistance against global governance. It also means building back relationship where it's been stripped out. Less of the auto checkout and more human contact. And in local terms, it means building intergenerational relationships between the old and the young, strengthening families, local businesses and local associations, and the links between neighbourhood institutions.

The church is well placed to enable different groups to act together, to generate a local moral economy – a counterweight to the big corporates. To challenge structures of sin and to build structures of grace. To defend the interests of local people. In particular, this is about solidarity with poor communities – the church is called to be incarnational. Much more than being 'a service provider', it's more about building reciprocity and supporting the leadership of people in those abandoned places.

Church-based charity should not become a handmaid of the state. We're not called to be useful, we're called to be prophetic. This may well require a countercultural challenge to the liberal narratives of both the left and the right. As Christians our conception of the human person is not individualistic – it is relational. Our vocation is to uphold and defend the human space where we can build the common good for our mutual flourishing. Like the concept of Ubuntu – "I am because we are". We are not complete without each other.

<https://gracetruth.blog/2024/11/11/the-de-humanising-effects-of-liberalism-by-jenny-sinclair/>

• This is an edited version of a talk Jenny gave at the House of Commons. Listen to the audio here:

<https://togetherforthecommongood.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Jenny-Sinclair-short-talk-31Oct2024-GEARY-event.m4a>

• **Jenny Sinclair**, Founder & Director, Together for the Common Good <https://togetherforthecommongood.co.uk/> She also co-hosts the **Leaving Egypt** podcast with Al Roxburgh exploring what it means to be God's people in an age of unravelling: <https://leavingegyptpodcast.substack.com/>

GUSTAVO GUTIERREZ 8 JUNE 1928-22 OCTOBER 2024: FATHER OF LIBERATION THEOLOGY

Ian Linden October 23, 2024

Locating turning points in history is strangely attractive. We like to account for them by the actions of great men (rarely women). Before it was like this, after it was like that, the story goes. Though in reality many slow changes and complex dynamics come between before and after.

Peruvian Dominican priest Gustavo Gutiérrez who died on 22 October 2024 aged 96, for many in the Catholic Church, was such a man. Born in the heart of Lima, wheelchair bound for much of his six teenage years, half Quechuan half Hispanic, he became known as the father of Liberation Theology. His theology is the key to understanding the most important current in Catholicism worldwide since the 1960s.

To celebrate Gustavo's life is to celebrate a key contributor to a gradual but vitally important change in the life of a global Church and its 1.36 billion members in the last half century. From the circumstances of Latin America when he was writing, and Catholic tradition, came his vision of theology's task, 'el quehacer teologica'. He posed two foundational questions that lay behind the re-discovery of the Church's "preferential option for the poor" understood as its principal pastoral concern: "How do we convey to the poor that God loves them?" and "How to speak out of the suffering of the innocent about God?" 'Hablar de Dios desde el sufrimiento del inocente', a task that has, to put it mildly, not become redundant with time.

When it comes to acknowledging great men, a Peruvian theologian may sound a surprising choice. Many of the world's Catholics, at least the older ones, would understandably pick instead Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, John XXIII, born into a sharecropper family of thirteen children from a small village in Lombardy, the Pope who called the second Vatican Council (1962-1965). This would be the turning point that – often forgotten - he opened with a speech underlining the Church's concern for the poor and suffering. A gathering that brought together bishops, leaders and theologians from around the world, largely from Western Europe, which sought to update and renew the life of the Church.

The great man story of historical change holds up quite well for the vision behind the Council. But for – what was becoming – a truly global Church, the story neglects the long process of change that had been going on not only in Europe but notably in Latin America. And the impact of the Council in many countries was muted and blocked by cautious bishops, the UK would be a good example, dashing many hopes. Latin America proved more fertile soil. Gutiérrez's *Theology of Liberation: Perspectives* published in Spanish in 1971 by the Lima Centro de Estudios y Publicaciones, and in English by the Maryknoll Fathers' Orbis in 1973, became the core inspirational text driving this process.

Latin America had a head-start in addressing the challenge of poverty. In the 1950s, 60% of the population in Peru lived in poverty with 82% of these living in extreme poverty. CELAM, the Bishops' Conference of Latin America, held its first meeting in 1955, so ideas for action responding to such acute poverty on the continent, such as radio schools, could be shared.

Catholic Action officially defined as “the participation of the laity in the apostleship of the hierarchy” drew on the simple formula of see-judge-and-act in movements such as Young Christian Workers and Young Christian Students. Gutiérrez's recognition of the importance of the economic, social and political in a Christian understanding of the world around him, like that of several other priests, came through student life in Catholic Action, in his case at the National University of San Marcos in Lima. “The poor are the by-product of the system in which we live and for which we are responsible”, he wrote later. His vocation to the priesthood seems to have been in part a response to this responsibility.

Gutiérrez's clerical training brought him to Louvain where he studied psychology and philosophy and, to Lyon, where he was introduced to 'la nouvelle théologie' and the European theologians who were later to influence the bishops in the Vatican Council. Central to the thinking in Lyon were writings from the early Christian centuries, the 'Church Fathers', a time when the appointment of a bishop could be challenged if he were not 'a lover of the poor'. That, as Gustavo later put it, the Church must be “on the side of the oppressed classes and dominated peoples clearly and without qualification” was not some leftist novelty but rooted in Church history.

On his return to Peru, after ordination in 1959, he served in the small Church of the Holy Redeemer in Rimac, a working-class area to the north of downtown Lima. This was the period when the Cuban revolution was putting Latin America into ferment. Two major forces, Marxism and Catholicism, contended for hearts and minds. In his exploration of a Christian account of liberation Gutiérrez along with other liberation theologians rejected a binary conflict and borrowed some elements of Marxist analysis for description of the reality experienced by the poor.

The year 1968 for Latin America, as elsewhere, was something of a turning point. Father Pedro Arrupe, the Superior-General of the Society of Jesus, called on his fellow Jesuits in Latin America to inform their ministry by 'an option for the poor'. In late July Gutiérrez presented a paper, '*Towards a Theology of Liberation*' at a second continentwide meeting of priests and laity in the Peruvian coastal town of Chimbote. It was one month before a major meeting of CELAM in Medellín, Colombia, which adopted the language of a preferential option for the poor.

Liberation theology saw liberation as a dimension of salvation, 'a demand that we go and build a different social order', part of building the kingdom of God of the Lord's Prayer rather than an entirely separate secular project. Gutiérrez understood full well that this could not be accomplished without conflict - deadly for many - after the succession of coups bringing to power the murderous US-supported military dictatorships and oligarchies of 1960s Latin America. The National Security States branded pastoral workers amongst the poor as “communist infiltration of the Church”, and the military and death squads killed them with virtual impunity. The martyr archbishop, Oscar Romero, came to personify their sacrifice. Despite this, in the 1980s, the Vatican sought to censure liberation theology, though through dialogue conflict was to some degree resolved.

The pastoral concern and spirituality that Gutiérrez embodied had already entered the bloodstream of the global Church. Features of it are seen in Pope Francis' teaching and approach to the papacy. It has motivated the work of countless Catholics finding their vocation in working with the poor and marginalised of their societies.

I've listened to Gustavo speaking on far too few occasions. One anecdote has stayed with me. To paraphrase what he said: “I have realised how different my life is from that of the poor. I have enough money and not enough time. They have time and not enough money”. Perhaps less true in frantic 2024 Britain. Amongst years of teaching and pioneering writing, finding time for the poor may have been his greatest gift.

May he rest in peace.

<https://www.ianlinden.com/latest-blogs/october-23rd-2024>

SLENDER-BILLED CURLEW DECLARED EXTINCT

/ Curlews, Slender-billed Curlew / By Mary Colwell

A paper published today, Monday 18th November, confirms the global extinction of the Slender-billed Curlew (*Numenius tenuirostris*). A close relation of the Eurasian Curlew (*N. arquata*), the last reliable sighting of the Slender-billed Curlew was in Morocco in February 1995, despite dedicated searches by ornithologists.

The new paper is a collaboration between scientists from the RSPB, BirdLife International (UK), Naturalis Biodiversity Center (The Netherlands) and Natural History Museum, London, and is an assessment of how likely the species is to be extinct.



Whilst there is always hope that a species not seen for decades, or even centuries, can be rediscovered (and it does happen, as shown by the Re:wild's Search for Lost Species project), this study concluded that there is a 99.6% chance that the Slender-billed Curlew is extinct, and that it likely died off around 1995. This is the first bird extinction in the mainland Western Palearctic (and only the third in the entire Western Palearctic, following two island species), and the assessment will be used by the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species to decide on whether to change the status of the Slender-billed Curlew from Critically Endangered to Extinct.

Curlew Action's Mary Colwell shares her thoughts and feelings on this heart-breaking - yet unsurprising - news: The Slender-billed Curlew has gone. It is a tragedy on a par with the Dodo and the Great Auk, and we should hang our heads in shame. Our disregard for wildlife speaks volumes for who and what we are. The Slender-billed may not have had an economic value, it contributed nothing to the bottom line of anyone's financial spread sheet, no one relied on these birds for their jobs or well-being, there was no conceivable reason to drive them to extinction. But it seems that is exactly what we have done.

The late, great Harvard biologist, E. O. Wilson, described the stages of the evolution of life on Earth with his signature devastating clarity. We have seen the Age of Sea Life, the Age of Plants, the Age of Reptiles, the recent Age of Mammals, and now we are entering the Age of Loneliness. It was a vision borne from his understanding of the decline of life on Earth, particularly in the last 200 years, a consequence of the inexorable rise of humanity and our activities. Rapid human growth in numbers, power and influence elbowed most everything else out of the way, with the consequence that we are suffering from isolation and a damaging erosion of spirit. We command the Earth while eradicating its complexity, diversity, and natural beauty. Humanity, he says, is singularly self-absorbed and destined to be alone and aloof in a sterile world.

It is a striking and distressing image. Evolution created a burgeoning of life that is as astonishing as it is wonderful, only for it to be destroyed at our hands. He asked us to imagine what it would be like to live on a planet devoid of wildlife other than those generalist scavengers that can survive on human waste and uniform landscapes, creatures such as cockroaches and rats; the rest of life on earth obliterated.

The term 'Anthropocene' has also entered common parlance in recent years, a geological description of our current age in which human activity is the dominant influence on the environment, so much so it is now visible in the deposits that will form future rock formations. Ocean and river sediments, deserts and glaciers show the signature of habitat destruction, pollution and a changing climate. We are making our mark in stone whilst we silence the song of the Earth. We live in a much quieter world than even 50 years ago, there is 60% less buzzing, croaking, roaring, scuttling, blooming, singing and erupting life. Planet Earth is increasingly threadbare; it seems E. O. Wilson was right.

I recently watched a grainy video (<https://youtu.be/tzIQhWgb3c>) of two Slender-billed Curlews, very few such films exist, and even rarer is a recording of their call. The birds potter and feed, unaware that their kind will soon have vanished from their breeding grounds in the steppes of Central Asia and the wintering grounds in the wetlands of the Mediterranean and North Africa. Hearing their song stopped me in my tracks and tears came unbidden. A soft, sweet warbling came from the speaker of my computer, more like what I imagine the song of light-hearted spirits to be, unearthly, drifting, and yet strangely familiar.

Thank goodness someone thought to record it, because we can no longer hear it for real. As of 18th November 2024, the Slender-billed Curlew is deemed extinct. The only known video of the Slender-billed Curlew, taken in January 1994 in Merja Zerga, Morocco by Andy Butler. Overlaid is the only known recording of the Slender-billed Curlew call, also made at Merja Zerga, Morocco but by Adam Gretton.

The Slender-billed Curlew was one of eight species of Curlew on Earth, but now two have gone for ever, the other two species, including our own Eurasian Curlew, are in varying degrees of peril.

The Eskimo Curlew was thought to be the most numerous wading bird in the world when it migrated between Alaska and South America, the passing flocks were said to darken the skies. It was shot in huge numbers and its feeding grounds converted to farmland; it vanished very quickly. The last confirmed sighting was in 1987 in Nebraska.

Now the Slender-billed has suffered the same fate and, yet again, excessive hunting was a major factor. They were never as numerous as the Eskimo Curlew, but they graced our planet for millions of years before we abruptly and violently ended their time. Now a video is a ghostly reminder of how easy it is to wield our power with deadly force.

We cannot bring them back, but we can learn the lesson. We can temper our overwhelming desire for growth at any cost. We can make sure landscapes are protected and nurturing. We can allow migrating species safe passage. We can soften our dogmatic assertion that we have a right to kill for no other reason than pleasure. In short, we can allow wildlife the space and peace it needs to thrive. It is within our power to do these things, but do we have the will and the imagination?

Gus Speth, former dean of the School of Forestry & Environmental Studies at Yale, has been widely attributed as saying, "I used to think the top environmental problems were biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse, and climate change. But I was wrong. The top environmental problems are selfishness, greed, and apathy."

He went on to say that, "to deal with those issues we need a spiritual and cultural transformation."

I firmly believe this to be true, and this cannot be achieved by science and conservation alone. Everyone has a part to play in turning around our thinking, with the arts and humanities playing a crucial role because they explore what it is to be human. The notions of character, responsibility, civility, empathy, inquiry, collaboration, the public good, the heroic, beauty, and truth are their bread-and-butter. They critique and they form new and surprising associations that speak to the soul and to the mind, and they do it through music, art, poetry, literature, movement, polemic and politics. While the antidote to the Age of Loneliness is not easily realised, it must include a range of responses, not just the pragmatic, because this is bigger than any one group alone.

As we ponder the tragedy that is the Slender-billed Curlew, an embodiment of the deep sadness at what we have done, it cannot lead to despair but to new, creative and fresh actions which welcome all to the conservation table. The Slender-billed Curlew will not have disappeared in vain if we now break the mould and use grief to power us through to a passion for Planet Earth and all it contains.

Excerpts from the RSPB press release:

Nicola Crockford, Principal Policy Officer for the RSPB, said:

This is the first known global extinction of a bird from mainland Europe, North Africa and West Asia. This has happened in our lifetimes. How can we expect countries beyond Europe to step up for their species when our comparatively wealthy countries have failed?

Alex Berryman, Red List Officer at BirdLife International, and a co-author of the study, said:

The devastating loss of the Slender-billed Curlew sends a warning that no birds are immune from the threat of extinction. More than 150 bird species have become globally extinct since 1500...Urgent conservation action is desperately needed to save birds; without it we must be braced for a much larger extinction wave washing over the continents.

<https://www.curlewaction.org/slender-billed-curlew-declared-extinct/>

- **Mary Colwell** is the Director of Curlew Action and is a writer, TV and radio producer and conservationist, whose massive walk across the breadth of the UK in 2016 helped raise the profile of the Curlew, and led her to write the greatly influential *Curlew Moon* (a must-read for any Curlew fan!). Mary founded Curlew Action in late 2019 after a series of talks, meetings and forums among experts discussing what was most needed to rescue the rapidly declining UK Curlew population.

STELLA MARIS APPOINTS PORT CHAPLAIN IN NORTHWEST

Source: Stella Maris Nov 6, 2024

Leading global maritime charity Stella Maris has announced the revival of its port chaplaincy service in the Northwest of England after an absence there of almost 10 years. The charity has appointed Merseyside born-and-bred Christopher Reynolds to the role with immediate effect. Christopher will initially cover the ports of Liverpool, Fleetwood, Maryport, Whitehaven and Barrow, with a view to expanding the charity's work further to Holyhead, and potentially to the Isle of Man.

"I am excited to be working in Liverpool, with its long seafaring history and ever-expanding horizons in hosting cargo vessels and passenger ships alike. I am also keen to ensure that seafaring ports such as Fleetwood, Maryport, Whitehaven and Barrow are given support too," Christopher said. "I lived in Ramsey, in the Isle of Man for a couple of years - so it would be good to provide as much support as I can to the ferry company workers and the fishing communities there. There are also two vessels I knew from my time living there that carry freight from Ramsey to England and Belfast, and I have visited these vessels before," he added.

Earlier in his career, Christopher attended Fleetwood Nautical Campus for three years and he explains that he loved every second of it. He also visited Maryport each year for Remembrance Sunday with the Liverpool University Royal Naval Unit. Christopher served as Stella Maris' Regional Port Chaplain in Northern Ireland for more than a year prior to his current appointment in Northwest England.

"I feel privileged and very grateful for the opportunity to return home to the Northwest of England in my current role. I have found in my work as Stella Maris Regional Port Chaplain in Belfast that the role brings together my previous experiences at sea and discerning a vocation to the religious life with the Redemptorists. My nautical and seminary studies have both proved useful," he said.

He adds, "I am deeply passionate about helping seafarers and fishers, whose hard work and sacrifice often go unnoticed in society. I am very keen to work alongside organisations in Liverpool and the wider Northwest that are already working to ensure the wellbeing of seafarers and fishers. Ultimately, I hope to be a source of peace and support for seafarers and fishers in the region."

Christopher hopes to visit up to 100 vessels a month once up and running but knows that this will take time as he establishes a presence in the ports he visits. He will also work at increasing the number of volunteer ship visitors in the Northwest who will provide vital support to Stella Maris' port chaplaincy service in the region.

Stella Maris UK CEO and National Director Tim Hill said this new appointment marks an exciting return and expansion of the charity's ministry in the Northwest of England. "Seafarers and fishers still face immense insecurities and dangers in their daily jobs, from wars to the risk of pirate attacks, abandonment and modern slavery," he said.

"In the United Kingdom, we have a team of 19 chaplains and over 100 volunteer ship visitors, working in nearly 100 ports across the country, who day-in day-out provide practical, spiritual, and emotional support to hundreds of seafarers and fishers. This new appointment in the Northwest of England is the last piece that completes our national coverage of UK port regions.

"We are ready to hit the ground running and to work with government departments, other maritime welfare agencies, the port communities and our supporters in the Northwest of England to ensure that seafarers and fishers there receive the support they deserve."

Stella Maris, (formerly known as Apostleship of the Sea), is a registered UK charity. It relies on voluntary donations to continue its work. 90% of world trade is transported by ship. However, the life of a seafarer can be dangerous and lonely. Seafarers may spend up to a year at a time away from home, separated from their families and loved ones, often working in harsh conditions.

Stella Maris' chaplains and ship visitors provide seafarers and fishers with pastoral and practical support, information and a listening ear.

For more information visit: www.stellamaris.org.uk
<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/51032>

COLUMBAN MISSIONARIES IN BRITAIN 2024/2025 SCHOOLS MEDIA COMPETITION

Pope Francis' has decreed that 2025 will be a year of Jubilee using the theme, 'Pilgrims of Hope'. He urges us to look for signs of hope in the world around us and to work for peace and justice. Columban Missionaries in Britain have launched their 2024/2025 Schools Media Competition entitled 'Jubilee: Pilgrims of Hope'. Encouraging creativity and faith engagement with issues in the world today, this year's competition welcomes both written and image entries until 7 February 2025, with winners being announced on 10 March 2025. Cash prizes will be awarded to the winning entrants. The competition is targeted at students aged between 13-18 years old. Students will find the Columban Competition website an essential resource with information on the theme of Jubilee and Pilgrimage plus examples of Columban projects and inspirational communities. There are also details on submission of entries and a helpful FAQ page. The website provides material suitable for students, teachers and parents. <https://www.columbancompetition.com/>

DIOCESE OF SALFORD IS SHINING A LIGHT ON SUSTAINABLE SCHOOLS STRATEGY

Source: The Catholic Network November 1, 2024

Schools across the Diocese of Salford are lighting the way to a sustainable future as updates from the diocese's solar strategy reveal an encouraging impact. Earlier this year, the diocese reported on the beginnings of a sustainability initiative regarding the allocation of an additional Devolved Formula Capital government funding, amounting to £3.3 million to address sustainability and carbon reduction in schools. Six months on and the diocese has announced that the project is "steaming ahead" with more than 125 of 160 schools having solar PV array installed of between 10 and 30 KWp. The total amount of PV installed is now more than 2MW, which will save, on average, in excess of 1500 tonnes of CO2 each year*. It is estimated that as much as £300,000 could be saved across the diocesan schools' estate.

The project is also supporting a number of other sustainability solutions for schools as an alternative to PV, with more than 20 schools opting for lighting replacements with LED, reducing electricity consumption, increasing cost savings for schools, and boosting the learning environment for children. The remaining schools in the diocese have opted for either combined projects of LED/Solar PV or improved insulation or replacement windows.

John Corrigan, Director of Property and Facilities Management, is delighted by the impact the project has made in a just a little over a year. He said: "Every penny of government sustainability funding has been spent on sustainable measures to assist our schools in embarking upon their carbon neutral pathway. The project has been an eye opener in directing the way the diocese needs to move towards its carbon zero target and the property team is now exploring ways to further contribute to reducing our carbon emissions. In addition, we are challenging any replacement heating projects to look at more sustainable alternatives, as well as looking at how we might upgrade electricity supplies to schools so we are futureproofing the potential to reach our goals."

With a successful roll-out of the scheme nearly complete, the diocesan team is now working one step ahead to explore potential opportunities to fully maximise the benefits of the project. John explained: "This project has also influenced our capital programme to ensure we implement sustainable options wherever possible – we are currently looking at improved roof insulation, double or triple glazing or vacuum glazing, taking hot water generation 'off grid' by using our PV generation and installing heat pumps and electric boilers. We are looking at possibilities of battery storage, EV chargers, and sell-back deals to support schools on their journey. We are also looking into small-scale wind generation, where practical, more as an educational tool, rather than a solution to generation."

The diocese said on its website that "not only does this project make a substantial cost saving and impact on our sustainability and carbon reduction, it sends a powerful, strong message about our diocesan commitment to be responsible stewards of creation and to pass that mandate on to future generations."

Dr Emma Gardner, Head of Environment for the Diocese of Salford, said: "What's so important about this project is the message that we're sending to our young people about our responsibility to care for God's creation. By introducing these visible reminders into the heart of their learning environment, we're demonstrating that we are taking our ecological crisis seriously but that there are many steps and actions we can take to respond in the hope that together we can make a real difference. To really drive this message home, our diocesan teams are now working with schools to look at ways we can use the information gathered through our monitoring systems to aid cross-curricular education, touching almost every subject from RE to maths, ICT, science, geography, and more." *Figures calculated from available data at time of publication

<https://dioceseofsalford.org.uk/> <https://www.thecatholicnetwork.co.uk/12101>

SALFORD LAUNCHES SPECIAL CHRISTMAS ANIMATIONS

Claire Briscoe November 13, 2024

With demand for its services supporting people experiencing poverty, homelessness and disadvantage continuing to grow, local charity Caritas Salford - which helps people from across Greater Manchester and Lancashire - is asking people to think differently about Christmas this year. The charity has joined forces with Manchester's Doodledo to create a special animation featuring bee characters in a series of light-hearted spoof Christmas adverts - but with a very serious take-home message too.

Patrick O'Dowd, director of Caritas Salford which supports people from across Greater Manchester and Lancashire, said: "Christmas is a time for celebration. It's when we spend time with those closest to us. We eat, drink and we're merry. We can all feel under pressure to buy more, spend more, consume more and respond to the never-ending call to accumulate things. But, sadly we see every day as people come to our services that many individuals and families don't even have the basics. No food for their baby, no warm clothes or heating; not even the security of a roof over their family's heads.

"The impact of the increased cost-of-living continues to cause crisis for people in our local communities, with many people forced into situations they never imagined would happen. People are facing forced evictions, having to choose between eating or staying warm, facing Christmas alone, or sleeping rough. And, sadly, this situation is not uncommon. There are more than 333,000 children in the area where we work in Greater Manchester and Lancashire living in poverty. These aren't just statistics, they are real people facing incredibly difficult times right now and that's why we've launched the #BeeThere campaign to urge people to help bring the true meaning back into Christmas. If we all pledged to help just one person this year, imagine the huge difference that could make in our communities. It could literally transform lives."

Alongside the animation, which is being shared on the Caritas Salford website and social media channels, the charity has created a range of free resources for schools, local community groups, individuals and others to access via the website: www.caritassalford.org.uk/BeeThere

They have also developed a special virtual gift catalogue of items that donations to the appeal could allow them to purchase to help local people - from bedding and warm clothes for people experiencing homelessness, to food and essentials for a family this Christmas: www.caritassalford.org.uk/virtualgift

You can find out more or make a donation on the website here: www.caritassalford.org.uk/donate

Patrick added: "Experiencing poverty or homelessness unexpectedly isn't just something that happens to other people. It could happen to any of us, at any time. It could be happening right now to your neighbour, your friend, your colleague, or someone in your child's football team.

"As a charity, we feel pressures of the cost-of-living crisis too. We need to make sure we can continue to provide a warm space for people to come for support. We need to buy food, clothing, and resources to ensure they have what they need to help them as they transform their lives with dignity. With costs rising, and demand increasing, we're asking for the support of local people, however they can help us this Christmas to help support as many individuals and families as we can. So, let's not just make this time of year about the tinsel, the parties and the supermarket queues this year."

Caritas Salford supports people across Greater Manchester and Lancashire who are experiencing poverty, homelessness or disadvantage via a wide range of community and outreach services. You can find out more about its services or get support for you or someone you know here: www.caritassalford.org.uk/how-we-help/

To view the film, access the free resources and activities or make a donation, visit:

www.caritassalford.org.uk/BeeThere

Watch the animation here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=PNs2kqvfnU&t=4s

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/51083>

CAFOD WORLD GIFTS FOR CHRISTMAS

This Christmas, give your loved ones something exceptional and life changing. Buying CAFOD's virtual World Gifts makes a real difference for our sisters and brothers facing the injustice of poverty around the world. Choose from a range of beautifully illustrated cards, each representing a gift of hope, inspired by real people and real needs. Cards can be sent by post, as an eCard, or printed at home. Purchase World Gifts and other gifts such as Advent calendars and jute bags at worldgifts.cafod.org.uk or pick up a catalogue in church.

RESOURCES

***Beyond the Two-State Solution*, by Jonathan Kuttab**, is a short introduction to the current crisis in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Zionism and Palestinian Nationalism have been at loggerheads for over a century. Some thought the two-state solution would resolve the conflict between them. Jonathan explains that the two-state solution (that he supported) is no longer viable. He suggests that any solution be predicated on the basic existential needs of the two parties, needs he lays out in exceptional detail. He formulates a way forward for a 1-state solution that challenges both Zionism and Palestinian Nationalism. This book invites readers to begin a new conversation based on reality: two peoples will need to live together in some sort of unified state. It is balanced and accessible to neophytes and to experts alike.

Jonathan Kuttab is co-founder of Nonviolence International and a co-founder of the Palestinian human rights group Al-Haq. A well-known international human rights attorney, he has practiced in the US, Palestine and Israel. He serves on the Board of Bethlehem Bible College and is President of the Board of Holy Land Trust. He is co-founder and board member of the Just Peace Advocates. He was the head of the Legal Committee negotiating the Cairo Agreement of 1994 between Israel and the PLO.

Jonathan writes: This is a critical moment and we need your help spreading the word and by so doing changing the nature of the conversation about this vital issue. We've been stuck for far too long and hope this book offers a real opportunity to imagine a different world and to work together to bring that world into being. I would like to see a conversation started around the ideas in this book. Therefore, I am willing to come to speak with a book group you organize or a class you teach. If you can get a group together to discuss this text, I'd be honoured to be in dialogue with you about the implications for the region and beyond. If this is a possibility, please contact me at: info@nonviolenceinternational.net

New Book: *Why Didn't I Know? Britain's Legacy in Palestine* By Monica Spooner

Released: November 28, 2024 **Format:** Paperback ISBN:9781836280750 **eBook** eISBN:9781836287193

A unique, factual and evocative narrative that raises awareness of Britain's historic responsibility and role in the Israel Palestine conflict. Paperback £12.99

Synopsis

In 2008 two ordinary people were invited to Jordan – and decided to visit Israel/Palestine as well. Their trip had anything but ordinary consequences. Knowing very little about the history and politics of Israel and Palestine, Monica and Roger found themselves face to face with the realities of the legacy of Britain's colonial rule. This book charts their journey of discovery on five visits to Israel and Palestine and tells the stories of the people they met along the way and the mission they embarked on when they returned home. It describes how they developed the Balfour Project to enlighten the British people about the impact of our colonial duplicity in the Middle East, and to ask if there is any solution to this entrenched injustice. Is there anything Britain can do now to make amends for its legacy of deceit? An effective solution has never been more urgent.

Why didn't I know? Britain's Legacy in Palestine is an eye opening, moving and personal story that encourages the reader to believe that they too can find a meaningful purpose which gives hope in a world so short of hope.

Order here: <https://troubador.co.uk/bookshop/autobiography/why-didn-t-i-know>

Zoom event 17 December (see diary page 20). **Register here:** <https://mailchi.mp/8ebe0502ecc2/vdkegzcbhz>

- Many items taken from the daily e-bulletin Independent Catholic News www.indcatholicnews.com an invaluable free resource for up-to-date J&P news, events and in-depth articles.
- See current NJPN news here: <https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/news/>
- Sign up for regular news and information from NJPN (plus copies of this newsletter & back issues for NJPN North West) at www.justice-and-peace.org.uk or contact ebulletin@justice-and-peace.org 020 7901 4864
- Read the AUTUMN issue of *MOUTHPEACE* the quarterly online newsletter for Shrewsbury, Liverpool and Lancaster dioceses: <https://jpschrewsbury.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/mouthpeace-autumn-2024.pdf>

The views expressed in this bulletin are not necessarily those of NJPN

DIARY ON NEXT PAGE

DIARY

NOVEMBER

23 CAFOD's online Faith in Action Day 10am - 2.30pm. Looking ahead with CAFOD to campaigning on the new debt crisis in the Jubilee Year 2025 with: Sandun Thudugala Debt expert from Sri Lanka; Maria Finnerty CAFOD's Lead Economist and Liz Cronin, our climate change policy expert, live from COP29 in Azerbaijan, and new MP Florence Eshalomi. **Sign up at cafod.org.uk/FIA If you can't make it, sign up to receive the recording link to listen later!** Patrick Gardner Community Participation Coordinator – CAFOD: Lancaster Diocese

DECEMBER

4 Free webinar from the Balfour Project: *The Palestinians of Israel: the historical development from 1948 to present with Thair Abu-Ras* Starting at 3pm. Thair Abu Ras is a PhD candidate at the department of Government and Politics at the University of Maryland. A Palestinian citizen of Israel, Thair has extensive experience in civil society in Israel. He worked for Mossawa – the advocacy centre for Arab citizens in Israel, Sikkuy-Aufoq: a shared Jewish and Arab nonprofit organisation that works to advance equality and partnership between the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel, and the European Union delegation to Israel working on employment equality for Palestinian citizens in Israel. Thair has a Masters in Middle Eastern studies from the University of Haifa and a Masters from the University of Houston in Political Science, his current research focuses on the Palestinian citizens of Israel during the Israeli political crisis 2019-2022. Register here:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_bPkHA9hXQDeB9QG5gNsjLA#/registration

8 Merseyside Pax Christi invite you to, 'Light in Dark Times' an Ecumenical Advent service for Justice and Peace at St Teresa's Church, Utting Avenue East, Norris Green, Liverpool L11 3BW .00pm. All welcome as we pray for peace in our city, our country and our world.

17 Balfour Project Zoom event. 6:00pm to 7:30pm. Denis Nowlan, Executive Director of Initiatives of Change UK, will be in conversation with Monica Spooner, founder of the Balfour Project, and Andrew Whitley, its Chair. This is an opportunity to hear how a bold individual initiative can have national and international implications. We are marking the publication of Monica's book; '*Why Didn't I Know? Britain's Legacy in Palestine*'. It charts her journey of discovery about Britain's record in the Middle East which led to the formation of the Balfour Project, in a bid to change public opinion and policy on Israel and Palestine. Andrew Whitley will take up the story of the Project in the context of the current catastrophic conflicts. <https://iofc.org.uk/events/the-balfour-project/> This event is only available to attend via Zoom. **Register here:** <https://mailchi.mp/8ebe0502ecc2/vdkegzcbhz>

23 Amnesty Chester and Wrexham will be hosting Amnesty's Write for Rights campaign 11am - 2pm at St. Peter's Church Watergate Street, Chester CH1 2LA. The café in the church will be open so coffee/tea/hot chocolate will be available and we will supply the cards, the paper, the pens and the stamps. All you need to bring is your writing arm! Write for Rights is an Amnesty campaign giving us the opportunity to write cards of encouragement to Individuals at Risk around the world (e.g. political prisoners). It enables people to write letters directly to the authorities involved, asking them to intervene on behalf of the persecuted individual(s). We welcome anyone who would like to get involved.

JANUARY 2025

9 Merseyside Pax Christi meeting 1.45 for 2.00pm start. Venue, usually St. Michael's Parish Room, Horne St Liverpool L6 5EH Contact sheilacogley@yahoo.co.uk to confirm arrangements.

18 A Year of Hope: An Introduction to the Jubilee Year: 2025 is a Jubilee year, but what does that mean? How will the Church be celebrating it? What can I do? Join us and our special guests for an exciting introduction to the Jubilee and find out how we can be tangible signs of hope and build a better world together. 10:30am-midday, online. Register here for free and please invite others in your parish who might be interested: <https://cafod.org.uk/news/events/a-year-of-hope-an-introduction-to-the-jubilee-year>

19 Peace Sunday The theme chosen by Pope Francis is 'Forgive us our trespasses: grant us your peace'. **Pax Christi will be preparing resources for all those who wish to mark Peace Sunday** on January 15 or at any time during the year. If you would like to know more or register your interest for your parish or group, please email us on peacesunday@paxchristi.org.uk

19 Archbishop Malcom McMahon with celebrate Mass for Peace at Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral 11.00am Pax Christi members will hold a stall in the entrance to the cathedral.

19 Talk for Peace Sunday in the Gibbard Room Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral at 1.30 pm. Dr Gee Walker will speak on the subject of 'Forgiveness Reconciliation and Peace'. Gee set up the Anthony Walker Foundation after her son was brutally murdered in July 2005.