

NJPN North West Justice & Peace E-Bulletin March 2025

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

RESOURCES FOR LENT

Finding truth and beauty

This Lent I'm drawing on two Christian writers who inspire me: Jan Richardson, artist, writer, retreat leader and ordained minister in the United Methodist Church in Florida, whose stunning paintings and series of blessings and daily reflections have guided my prayer time (see *The Painted Prayerbook* and *Circle of Grace: A Book of Blessings for the Seasons* janrichardson.com) and Sarah Clarkson, whose struggle with crippling mental illness led her to find God's grace in the midst of brokenness. Sarah reveals her journey from darkness to light in her book, *This Beautiful Truth: How God's Goodness Breaks into Our Darkness*. (sarahclarkson.com) This life-affirming story has been my early morning companion: I've read it slowly, absorbing the wisdom it contains, often re-reading a passage to let the full meaning enter my heart.

Good Friday evening: Will you not wait one hour with me?

Selected passages from these two writers form the basis of an intimate Good Friday evening gathering around the altar in my parish. This will be the fourth year for our short time of watching and waiting together in the dim candle-lit church. The small group of pilgrims who gather agree it's one of the most poignant and spirit-filled times of the Lenten season, the silence broken only by a haunting rendition of 'When I survey the wondrous cross' by the Northumbria Community from the album *Waymarks – Songs for the journey*.

You are welcome to download or adapt this service but please acknowledge the contributors who have kindly given permission for their writings to be used here and also in the other resources highlighted in these pages.

<https://jpshrewsbury.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/good-friday-evening-2025-2.pdf>

Stations of the Cross: A return to the heart of all that matters most

Reflecting on the meaning of Lent, Sarah Clarkson writes:

'Lent is the call to turn my face from the clamour of a thousand distractions, to the Beauty in which I have my being. Lent is a return, to the heart of all that matters most, the single Matter of Christ apart from whom nothing matters at all.'

This is the essence of our Lenten journey: recognising what really matters and sifting away all that weighs us down. As we travel the way of the cross each of us can identify our own particular cross — illness, grief, anxiety, loneliness, anger, despair. But this is not the end of our story. Easter brings healing, light and hope, and so I've added a fifteenth station: The Resurrection, with words from the late poet and priest John Donohue's *Walking on the Pastures of Wonder* (johnodonohue.com):

'The dawn that is rising on Easter morning is a gift to our hearts and we are meant to celebrate it and to carry away from this holy, ancient place the gifts of healing and light and the courage of a new beginning.'

Download the Stations of the Cross at:

<https://jpshrewsbury.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/stations-of-the-cross-2025.pdf>

A Journey from Lent to Easter 2025

On Ash Wednesday the prophet Joel invites us to turn to God, 'for he is all tenderness and compassion.' For a few minutes each day we can set aside time to sit quietly and listen to God, as we 'journey into love.'

Daily readings from the office of the day with short reflections as an aid to prayer:

<https://jpshrewsbury.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/a-journey-from-lent-to-easter-2025.pdf>

Reflection sheets

'In life's journey, as in every journey, what really matters is not to lose sight of the goal. We should ask ourselves: on the journey of life, do I seek the way forward? *Return to me*, says the Lord. *To me*. The Lord is the goal of our journey in this world. The direction must lead to him.' – Pope Francis

Scripture, reflections, prayers and poems to dip into as a guide for our journey:

<https://jpshrewsbury.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/lent-reflection-sheet-2025-2.pdf>

Anne O'Connor

LENT RESOURCES

ONLINE PRAYER AND REFLECTION

Fruits of the Spirit – daily offerings online throughout Lent, from the Jesuits in Scotland, with prayer, scripture, poetry, art and music, picking up on the theme of the Jubilee year, Pilgrims of Hope: <https://www.onlineprayer.net/fruits-of-the-spirit/>

Jubilee Year: Pilgrims of Hope <https://cafod.org.uk/pray/jubilee-2025>

CAFOD's Jubilee 2025 reflection guide contains four sessions, each on a different theme within Luke 4:16-21 and can be used with a small group, in the parish, or for personal reflection. <https://cafod.org.uk/pray/prayer-resources/jubilee-reflection-guide>



Pray as You Go <https://pray-as-you-go.org/> is another online resource offering daily prayer, music and reflection based on the daily readings. For Lent 2025, they will be releasing an extended reflection at the start of each week.

CAFOD's online Lent Calendar and prayers for Lent <https://cafod.org.uk/pray/len-calendar>

HOPE IN HARD PLACES Study guide. Look at stories of steadfast faith, hope and trust found in the Bible and reflect on what God's transformational love can mean for our world today. Find encouragement and strength in stories of hope that span over 3000 years of history - showing us that God remains with us at all times. Suitable for individual reflection or to use with a small group as a Lent Course.

<https://shop.embraceme.org/products/len-study-guide-2025-hope-in-hard-places>

CHRISTIAN AID Act on Poverty A six week course to help Christians gain a deeper understanding of poverty and be equipped to talk to political representatives about it.

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved/campaigns/act-on-poverty>

BOOKS

Sacred Space Lent 2025, published by the Irish Jesuits and widely available from online booksellers.

The Sacred Space website <https://sacredspace.com/> provides reflections around the scriptures each day.

For Lent the Irish Jesuits have published *Sacred Space Lent 2025*, which continues the tradition of Scripture reading, points of reflection, a weekly topic and six steps of prayer and meditation.

Healing Wounds: The 2025 Lent Book by Erik Varden, Bloomsbury Press.

Lenten reflections on the nature and meaning of suffering and how we are healed.

Doorways to Hope: Forty Days of Spiritual Wisdom by Christopher Chapman, Canterbury Press.

In forty daily reflections, Christopher Chapman invites us to a spirituality of hope that engages what is real and brings about change and redefines hope – not as wishful thinking but as a transformative force rooted in God's creative and redeeming presence.

The Little Book of Lent

Daily Reflections from the World's Greatest Spiritual Writers, compiled by Arthur Howells, HarperCollins.

An anthology of readings from spiritual writers for each day of Lent, with accompanying scripture and prayers to help guide daily reflections.

Stations of the Cross by Timothy Radcliffe, Bloomsbury Press. Through word and image, Radcliffe offers a profound experience of reflection on the Stations of the Cross that is both visually and spiritually inspiring.

The Romero Rosary by Bishop John Wilson, Pauline books & media.

Using the Scriptures and St Oscar's words, Archbishop Wilson explores the traditional mysteries of joy, light, sorrow, and glory. He then considers what he calls the Romero mysteries of charity, of compassion and mercy, and of justice and peace. The book also contains a biography of St Oscar with photos. Can be used for group study.

The Nonviolent Life by Fr. John Dear, Pax Christi Online Lent Book Club March 2025

John Dear's book will help us think through how we can meet Pope Francis challenge in his World Day of Peace Message to 'disarm' ourselves. The book asks: How can we become people of nonviolence and help the world become more nonviolent? What does it mean to be a person of active nonviolence? How can we help build a global grassroots movement of nonviolence to disarm the world and build a just peace?

The book club will run for four sessions on Wednesday evenings from 7-8.30pm starting on 12 March and you can register here: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/ROpD1A02RCCu5plnb7Aobg#/registration>

Copies of the book are available from our online shop: <https://paxchristi.org.uk/event/online-lent-book-club-1/>

ASH WEDNESDAY REFLECTION

The ashes that lead us into this season remind us where we have come from. They beckon us to consider what is most basic to us, what is elemental, what survives after all that is extraneous is burned away. With its images of ashes and wilderness, Lent challenges us to reflect on what we have filled our lives with, and to see if there are habits, practices, possessions, and ways of being that have accumulated, encroached, invaded, layer upon layer, becoming a pattern of chaos that threatens to insulate us and dull us to the presence of God. The gospel for Ash Wednesday tells us that where our treasure is, there our hearts will be also. On this day, and throughout the coming days, may we see clearly where our treasure lies, and have hearts clear and open enough to recognize the surprising forms that such treasure can take. On this day of ashes, blessings to you.

<https://paintedprayerbook.com/2009/02/22/the-artful-ashes/> janrichardson.com

A BROKEN JUDAS

“But the vicar always reads the part of Jesus!” The mild indignation in the lady’s voice was because it had always been the tradition on Palm Sunday, that the vicar (or the curate as the understudy) took the part of Jesus for the yearly dramatized reading of Jesus’ journey to the cross (through habitually cracking microphones...). Trust me to upset the apple cart by gently refusing.

Why did I do that? Well it was all because of the chapel here at the Crypt. When I came here as a trainee vicar over a decade ago, one of the things that really struck me was the beautiful paintings of Jesus and the disciples at the Last Supper that adorn the chapel walls. The artist Steve Simpson based the paintings on clients that he met at the Crypt, except for three, Jesus is a composite of everyone and our beloved founder Don Robin’s face is immortalised as a disciple. Yet the problem was Judas. How could anyone be given the label of a Judas? Steve’s answer was as sacrificial as it was elegant...he painted himself as Judas. That story stayed with me, and led me throughout my parish ministry to leave Jesus to someone else, my calling was to read the part of Judas, so no one else had to.

The other thing about the painting of Judas in our chapel, is that his painting is broken. Judas is broken and reflects the sobering reality that we are all broken in some way. Sadly, for some that brokenness is a fundamental shattering of everything they are and hope to be. Those who come through our doors are broken by life, battered and bruised by the often relentless storms of poverty, abuse, grief, addiction and homelessness. The tragedy is that their lives lie like shattered shards of glass on the pavement, and all too often the world walks over the glass, crunching it into the concrete through neglect and ignorance. Yet for all that brokenness, in God’s eyes and our eyes here at the Crypt, each person who comes through our doors are beautiful, broken but beautiful. Our calling is to see what God sees, the whole, the potential, the sparkling diamond beyond the broken glass.

Rev. Andy Muckle <https://www.stgeorgescrypt.org.uk/how-we-help/stories/a-broken-judas>

Lord have mercy...

On the ashen faced soul who turns their face away from the streetlight to snatch a few minutes sleep

On the shuffling skeleton drenched and frozen to the point that they can’t even stomach food

On the sex worker on their knees wondering how it has come to this

On the drug addict desperate for the poisoned numbness of one more sleepless fix

On the child who faced with the screaming pain of their mind slices a blade across their skin

On the pensioner who with glazed eyes stares sightlessly at the vista of their empty existence

On the lost, the lonely, the vulnerable, the addict, the hungry, the unloved, the cold, the angry, the confused

Lord have mercy

Rev. Andy Muckle <https://www.stgeorgescrypt.org.uk/how-we-help/stories/lord-have-mercy>

Read more of Rev. Andy's Reflections here: <https://www.stgeorgescrypt.org.uk/how-we-help/stories/>

• Rev. Andy Muckle is Chaplain to St George’s Crypt and Bishop’s Chaplain to the Homeless in the Diocese of Leeds. St George’s Crypt is a charity that has been working with the vulnerable and those living with poverty, homelessness and addiction in the city of Leeds since 1930.

‘I was a stranger and you invited me in’ Matthew 25:35



*God of the poor,
friend of the weak,
give us compassion we pray:
melt our cold hearts,
let tears fall like rain;
come, change our love
from a spark to a flame.*

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POPE FRANCIS: LENT CALLS US TO JOURNEY TOGETHER IN HOPE

Source: Vatican Media Feb 25, 2025

In his Message for Lent 2025, Pope Francis invites the faithful to "journey together in hope," and to take the opportunity of the upcoming Lenten Season to ask ourselves whether we are truly willing to heed God's call to change our lives.

The Pope's reflection, which ties into the broader theme of the Jubilee Year: 'Pilgrims of Hope' focuses on conversion and unfolds in three key dimensions: the importance of journeying, journeying together, and journeying with hope.

Recalling the biblical Exodus of the people of Israel from Egypt to the Promised Land, the Pope reminds us that our lives too are a journey—one that should be directed toward God. This journey is not merely a metaphorical one but involves a constant call to conversion, "to leave behind the occasions of sin" and situations that degrade our human dignity. Pope Francis, therefore, urges the faithful during this Lenten Season to examine their own lives: are they actively progressing on the path of spiritual renewal or are they held back by fear and hopelessness or reluctant to move out of their comfort zone?

Drawing a parallel between the Hebrew people's "arduous path from slavery to freedom" and the plight of modern migrants and refugees, the Pope invites us to use this period as an opportunity to consider how we relate our own lives with the struggles of those who are forced to flee "situations of misery and violence in search of a better life" and "in this way discover what God is asking of us." This, he writes, "would be a good 'examination of conscience' for all of us wayfarers."

"It is hard to think of the biblical exodus without also thinking of those of our brothers and sisters who in our own day are fleeing situations of misery and violence in search of a better life for themselves and their loved ones. A first call to conversion thus comes from the realization that all of us are pilgrims in this life."

A fundamental aspect of the Lenten Message is the emphasis on community and synodality – the idea that Christians must walk together rather than in isolation.

Pope Francis reminds us, "The Holy Spirit impels us not to remain self-absorbed, but to keep walking towards God and our brothers and sisters." "Journeying together," he writes, "means consolidating the unity grounded in our common dignity as children of God (...) without letting anyone be left behind or excluded."

Again, he challenges the faithful to reflect on whether we are capable of walking together with others in our families, workplaces, and communities, resisting the temptation to become self-absorbed. Are we welcoming to others? Do we include those who feel marginalized?

"Let us ask ourselves in the presence of the Lord whether, as bishops, priests, consecrated persons and laity in the service of the Kingdom of God, we cooperate with others. Whether we show ourselves welcoming, with concrete gestures, to those both near and far. Whether we make others feel a part of the community or keep them at a distance."

The third fundamental dimension of the Lenten journey is hope, anchored in God's promise of salvation and eternal life fulfilled in Jesus' Resurrection, the victory over sin and death.

This hope is not abstract but must be lived concretely. Pope Francis invites us to examine whether we truly trust in God's mercy. Do we believe in His forgiveness, or do we fall into the trap of self-reliance? And do we concretely experience the hope that inspires in us "a commitment to justice and fraternity, to care for our common home and in such a way that no one feels excluded?"

Quoting Saint Teresa of Avila, the message urges the faithful to remain watchful and patient, understanding that God's promises will be fulfilled in His time. "This was the prayer of Saint Teresa of Avila: 'Hope, O my soul, hope. You know neither the day nor the hour. Watch carefully, for everything passes quickly, even though your impatience makes doubtful what is certain, and turns a very short time into a long one.'"

The Pope concludes by entrusting this journey of hope to the intercession of the Virgin Mary, "Mother of Hope," praying that she may accompany the faithful as we prepare to celebrate the joy of Easter.

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/51802>

PODCAST: ALL KINDS OF CATHOLIC

All Kinds of Catholic with Theresa Alessandro A new episode, a different conversation, every Wednesday!

Email me: theresa@KindsofCatholic.co.uk Facebook and X/Twitter Give me a follow @KindsofCatholic

Listen to all episodes here: <https://kindsofcatholic.buzzsprout.com/2333035/episodes>

Episode 39 Pilgrimage: Eoin shares his experience of cycling from Canterbury to Rome following the Via Francigena pilgrimage route. Inspired by saints, by the welcome and kindness of others, he explains how he continues to be sustained by what happened - even while still processing it all.

<https://kindsofcatholic.buzzsprout.com/2333035/episodes/16681901-39-where-good-things-happened-along-the-way>

Those who feel energetic can join **THE BIG WALK 2025** <https://cafod.org.uk/fundraise/big-lent-walk>

HEARTS IN SEARCH OF GOD: WALKING PILGRIMAGE IN ENGLAND & WALES

The aim of this three-year project is to promote walking pilgrimage in England & Wales by developing Pilgrim Ways between the cathedral of each Catholic diocese and one or more shrines within the same diocese. The Ways are an opportunity for Catholics and other Christians to deepen their faith, and for people of all faiths and none to share in the experience of walking a pilgrimage in a Catholic context. The hope is that walking pilgrimage will contribute to the common good of our nations through encouraging encounter with others, hospitality, and respect for the environment.

Diocesan Pilgrim Ways

The Pilgrim Ways start at the cathedral of the diocese and end at a shrine within the diocese. The routes take in the Catholic parish churches along the Way and places of relevant historical interest. They are off-road as much as possible and incorporate existing pilgrim routes and long-distance footpaths.

In most dioceses there is no such route but ...

The Diocese of Leeds has the two day **St Wilfrid's Way** <https://www.dioceseofleeds.org.uk/walk-st-wilfrids-way/>

The Diocese of Lancaster has the six day **St Mary's Way**

https://www.stmarysandstjosephs.com/uploads/9/6/3/1/96319272/st_marys_way_pilgrimage_route_description.pdf

In Southwark there is the **Becket Way** <https://www.pilgrimways.org.uk/southwark-the-becket-way>

and the **Augustine Camino** <https://augustinecamino.co.uk/>

In Arundel & Brighton there is an annual ecumenical walking pilgrimage: **Pilgrims Live!**

<https://thepilgrims.org.uk/wp/>

Nationally there is **Pilgrim Cross** (formerly Student Cross) to Walsingham in Holy Week.

<https://pilgrimcross.org.uk/>

The new Pilgrim Ways have been planned and will be walked by Phil McCarthy, the Hearts in Search of God Project Lead, during 2023 and 2024. Walking directions and background information is available for the Ways Phil has walked. There are downloadable GPX files for all the Ways including those still 'under construction'. Feedback about the proposed routes is welcome and as well as corrections and suggestions from pilgrims who have walked the route. See more here: <https://www.pilgrimways.org.uk/>

Anne O'Connor writes: My daughter Annie, who died at the start of the Covid pandemic, loved walking on pilgrimage. She travelled the North Wales Way and, on another journey, took several days to walk from her home in Sheffield to the National Shrine to Our Lady in Walsingham. Here's an extract from an article Annie wrote about her experience of walking the Camino to Santiago de Compostela:

'One of the things I love about walking long distances is that it forces me to slow down. It helps me to be still and to practice being fully present to each particular moment.

So often we rush through life at breakneck speed, never pausing to reflect and be still. Walking the Camino to Santiago forced me to slow down. It is only when we slow down and look that we really see. By slowing down, and being more present to each moment, all sorts of lessons are learned. For some people, this might involve the healing of painful memories. For others, it could be time to discern the next stage in life. For many, it is a chance to really get away and listen to God. For me, it is an invitation to a whole way of being – one that recognizes that God is not “out there” to be sought, but already “in here” to be found.”

BISHOPS BRIGNALL AND MOTH PRAISE NEW SOCIAL ACTION RESOURCE

Source: Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales Feb 18, 2025

Bishops Peter Brignall and Richard Moth have both praised a new resource produced by the Bishops' Conference and the God Who Speaks, *Turning Tables*, <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/turning-tables-a-toolkit-for-scripture-and-social-action/> which helps Catholics use Scripture and their faith to inspire effective social justice action.

*Speak out for those who cannot speak,
for the rights of all the destitute.
Speak out, judge righteously,
defend the rights of the poor and needy.*
Proverbs 31: 8-9

Turning Tables is a resource designed to help adult Catholics across England and Wales to understand and engage with their faith, Scripture and social justice in practical ways. It will do this by covering five core themes:

- Understanding the Bible – how it lays the foundations for a just and fair world.
- Deepening our faith – how to translate our beliefs and spirituality into social action.
- Understanding social action – how to bring about change at local and national levels.
- Knowing who to contact – how and where to contact governments, policy makers and charities.
- Creating momentum and support – how to share resources and ideas, lobby and volunteer.

Catholic Social Teaching states that for everyone to be included and no one to be left behind, there needs to be a preferential option for the poor, vulnerable and marginalised.

Bishop Brignall said that God calls all of us to care for others, and that the new resource can help Catholics take action in line with the Gospel.

He said: "Taking action at local or national levels is an important gospel imperative when those around us suffer in silence or without hope of real change.

"This practical guide shows how you can help to transform society starting from the Bible and the teachings of Jesus, through to how to contact your Member of Parliament or campaign on an issue – to have a 'way of life marked by the flavour of the Gospel.'"

Bishop Brignall added: "Scripture encourages us to speak out for those who cannot speak, defend the rights of those who suffer and are vulnerable, and to challenge the status quo. This can feel like a huge challenge and not easy to achieve, so this resource helps you to put your faith into action.

"With a biblical foundation and plenty of practical examples *Turning Tables* is the ideal resource for Catholics who want to transform society with faith and integrity – to make the Word of God 'the beating heart of every ecclesial activity.'"

Turning Tables is rich with advice on how to improve the lives of those around us, and to ensure that we have a demonstrable, positive impact on society.

Bishop Moth, writing in the foreword of the resource, said that by drawing on Catholic Social Teaching, *Turning Tables* is opening up a precious gift to a wider audience: "I am pleased to commend this resource as a means to explore the riches of Catholic Social Teaching, grounded in the Scriptures.

"While it has often been said that Catholic Social Teaching is a 'well-kept secret', this is perhaps no longer the case as increasing numbers of people across society are finding in the Church's social teaching a response to the challenges of the age.

"Thanks go to all those who have been involved in the production of this new resource which will surely open Catholic Social Teaching to a yet wider audience."

<https://www.cbcew.org.uk/turning-tables-a-toolkit-for-scripture-and-social-action/>

Download the resource here: <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2025/01/turning-tables-social-action-toolkit.pdf>

CUTTING UK OVERSEAS AID - A BETRAYAL OF THE MOST VULNERABLE

Feb 25, 2025: Aid agencies are warning of the dire consequences of the Prime Minister's announcement today that the government is planning to cut international aid spending from next year.

Christine Allen, Director and CEO of Cafod (Catholic Agency for Overseas Development) said: "The decision by the British government to reduce ODA from 0.5% to 0.3% means that in some of the most vulnerable places on earth, more people will die and many more will lose their livelihoods. Coming so soon after the USAID freeze, this is another lifeline being pulled away from those in desperate need, at a time when the world feels increasingly precarious.

"The UK has a choice to make: to support those in need or turn our backs on them. what we decide speaks to the very core of who we want to be as a society. If we are seeing the decline of aid to support the world's most vulnerable communities, then the government must show serious ambition to reform the global economy - including the broken global debt system - to enable those most in need to emerge from poverty."

Christian Aid's Director of Policy, Public Affairs and Campaigns, Osai Ojigbo, said: "The world's most marginalised communities are facing a dramatic and deepening poverty crisis, made worse by conflict and the climate crisis. these cuts - a political decision echoing trump's race to the bottom on aid - are nothing short of a betrayal that will erode trust and fan the flames of global insecurity.

Osai Ojigbo added: "We must reject the false choice being spun between defence spending and fulfilling our responsibilities to people in crisis. Ministers can show global leadership by taxing wealthy polluters and compelling private creditors to cancel debts to countries in crisis, but will they?"

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/51801>

Links:

CAFOD: <https://cafod.org.uk/>

Christian Aid: www.christianaid.org.uk/

PAX CHRISTI: GOVERNMENT DECISION TO CUT AID AND INCREASE MILITARY SPENDING 'SHAMEFUL, SHOCKING AND SELF DEFEATING'

Feb 27, 2025

Pax Christi has joined others in condemning the UK Government's decision this week to cut the foreign aid budget in order to increase military spending.

It is encouraging all of us peacemakers, in this Jubilee Year of Hope, to raise our voices to protect the world's poorest and most vulnerable and to write to our MPs to let the Government know that we object strongly to this policy choice and want to see it reversed.

"The announcement that a Labour Government is cutting the UK's international aid budget by 40% to increase military spending to 2.5% is shameful, shocking and self-defeating" said Pax Christi National Chaplain Sr Katrina Alton.

"We know that war is profitable, but the blatant transactional capitalism being trumpeted by the US, and that seems to have influenced this UK policy decision, is beyond cynical. Peace cannot be bought but we know that oil, rare minerals, and prime real estate can. To build peace amidst the ruins and devastation of countries such as Gaza, Ukraine, and Syria, requires investment in people and communities. Peace is relational, never transactional."

Chair, Kathryn Lydon added: "There is a need for much debate about 'just defence' at a time when the previous 'international order' is breaking down. But should our first response be to curry favour with President Trump, who only sees the world through the lens of profit and narrow national interest?"

"Peace is a process that requires long term commitments to reconciliation grounded in justice and truth."

Sr Katrina said: "Throwing billions into the bottomless pit of military spending only does one thing - it increases the share prices of arms companies. Whereas international aid, focusing on education, health, housing, sustainability, is the only way to overcome ideologies of hate and revenge that perpetuate wars and violence. It's the only way to break the cycles of violence, poverty and injustice without sacrificing the lives of our brothers and sisters to the insatiable appetite of war."

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/51815>

G20: MORE THAN 100 WORLD FAITH LEADERS URGE FINANCE MINISTERS TO END DEBT CRISIS IN JUBILEE YEAR

Source: CAFOD Feb 26, 2025:

One hundred and twenty-five faith leaders across continents have marked the Catholic Church's Jubilee year by issuing a call for G20 finance ministers to work for an end to a debt crisis crippling efforts to tackle poverty and action on climate.

The religious leaders argue in a letter to the finance ministers that the 'Common Framework' set up by the G20 in 2020 to restructure debts for low-income countries hit by the economic shock of the pandemic "is failing to produce the timely and adequate deals upon which millions of lives and livelihoods depend."

The faith leaders say one critical element is private creditors being able to "delay negotiations" with low-income countries, leaving governments spending more on debts "than on health, education or life-saving climate measures."

The letter - signed by cardinals, bishops and leaders of religious congregations, as well as representatives of different faiths - urges the G20 finance ministers meeting in Johannesburg between 26-27 February in the Jubilee year to embody the "Biblical practice of justice, mercy and reconciliation" by establishing a "fair and functional global debt system".

This call has become especially urgent in the light of the recent UK cuts to the aid budget following on from the freezing of USAID funds. The UK must now play a key role to ensure the desperately needed financial reform to enable more spending on health, education and climate action.

CAFOD's Lead Economist, Maria Finnerty, said: "The G20 Finance Ministers and Foreign Secretaries meetings in Cape Town this week are the first major meetings of G20 governments in this critical Jubilee year. Under the first ever African Presidency of the G20, the South African and other global South governments are calling on countries like the UK to create a more functional global debt system as African countries face historic levels of debt distress.

As a global debt superpower, with more than 90% of debts owed by low-income countries to private financial firms governed by English law, the UK government must show leadership this week by heeding the powerful words of faith leaders calling for meaningful debt reform. Tinkering around the edges is not sufficient: the world needs functional debt resolution mechanisms that reduce debts down to a genuinely sustainable level and prevent predatory and irresponsible lending and borrowing."

The religious leaders from countries including South Africa, Brazil, the US and Japan write:

"As faith leaders, we are deeply troubled at the impact this current debt crisis is having on the lives of the poorest and most vulnerable across the world.

"Debt restructurings under the [common framework] take three times longer than previous processes, while private creditors - now the largest creditor group globally - are able to delay negotiations and demand higher repayments than debtor countries can afford.

"This is leaving their citizens to endure hunger, lack of access to essential services, crumbling infrastructure and the worst impacts of the climate crisis."

The faith leaders call for legislation in key G20 jurisdictions to "ensure private lenders participate in debt cancellation and suspend payments to private lenders during negotiations."

The faith leaders cite the Jubilee year the Catholic Church is celebrating in 2025 as a powerful moment for the finance ministers to act with "courage, solidarity and compassion".

The letter signatories also acknowledge calls from Pope Francis for decision makers to address the global debt crisis during the Jubilee year.

The full letter follows below.



LETTER FROM GLOBAL FAITH LEADERS TO G20 FINANCE MINISTERS ON THE GLOBAL DEBT CRISIS

Dear G20 finance ministers,

In this Jubilee year 2025, a year of both material and spiritual liberation, Pope Francis has encouraged us all to be "Pilgrims of Hope" and in doing so address one of the most urgent issues which face us, that of the acute global debt crisis.

As faith leaders, we are deeply troubled at the impact this current debt crisis is having on the lives of the poorest and most vulnerable across the world. Today, the need for action is even greater than the last Jubilee in 2000, when the first campaign for debt relief was launched: 3.3 billion people - nearly half the global population - now live in countries that spend more on debt payments than on health, education, or life-saving climate measures.

We believe the G20 Common Framework is failing to produce the timely and adequate deals upon which millions of lives and livelihoods depend. Debt restructurings under the framework take three times longer than previous processes, while private creditors - now the largest creditor group globally - are able to delay negotiations and demand higher repayments than debtor countries can afford. This inefficiency and inequity has deterred nations in urgent need of relief from engaging with the framework, leaving their citizens to endure hunger, lack of access to essential services, crumbling infrastructure and the worst impacts of the climate crisis.

We must have a fair and functional global debt system. The Jubilee tradition calls for debts to be forgiven, land restored, and slaves freed. This Biblical practice embodied justice, mercy, and reconciliation, offering a renewed covenant with God and harmony within the community. With these principles in mind, we call on you to:

Champion a debt cancellation framework that brings debt payments down to a genuinely affordable level, suspends debt payments while debt cancellation is being negotiated, offers debtors assurances of sufficient debt cancellation before they apply, and compels all lenders to participate.

Pass legislation in key jurisdictions to ensure private lenders participate in debt cancellation and suspend payments to private lenders during negotiations.

Reform International Financial Institutions, ensuring that debtor countries are properly represented and that debt sustainability assessments and policy conditions centre human and environmental rights.

Support the creation of a UN Debt Convention to agree rules on resolving/settling debt crises, responsible lending and borrowing and the establishment of a public global debt registry so that all lenders and borrowing governments are held accountable.

Taking these steps will not only address the immediate debt crisis but also lay the foundation for a more just and resilient global financial system. As faith leaders, we urge you to be Pilgrims of Hope acting with courage, solidarity and compassion in this Jubilee year.

SIGNATORIES TO THE LETTER INCLUDE:

Cardinal Stephen Brislin, Archbishop of Johannesburg; President
Cardinal Vicente Bokalic Iglic CM, Archbishop of Santiago del Estero; Member of the Dicastery of Evangelisation
Cardinal Jaime Spengler, OFM, Archbishop of Porto Alegre; President of the Latin American Episcopal Council
Cardinal Carlos Aguiar Retes Archbishop of Mexico; Primate of Mexico
Cardinal Isao Kikuchi, SVD - President, Caritas Internationalis; Archbishop of Tokyo
Rev Dr Anne Burghardt – General Secretary, The Lutheran World Federation
Bishop Susan C Johnson - National Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada
Reverend Doctor Setri Nyomi - General Secretary, World Communion of Reformed Churches
Sister Luzia Premoli, SMC - Superior Provincial, Comboni Missionary Sisters, Province of French-speaking Africa
Sister Teresa Hougnon - President, Maryknoll Sisters
Very Reverend Anselmo Ribeiro, SVD - Superior General, Society of the Divine Word
Mr Paul Chitnis Director, Jesuit Missions, UK
Bishop Brian McGee Bishop of Argyll and the Isles; President of SCIAF UK
Bishop Stephen Wright Bishop of Hexham & Newcastle; Chair of CAFOD, UK
Dr Christine Allen, Director, CAFOD UK

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/51806>

SIGNS OF THE TIMES: BOMBS, BILLIONAIRES & AID

Ian Linden 27 Feb 2025

Elon Musk's precipitate freezing of some \$58 billion in US Foreign Aid allocated for 2025 was wrong in a number of ways: morally, or as an effective economic policy or as in the 'soft power' interests of the USA. It is a telling sign of the times.

We are accustomed to Trump's lack of any concept of truth but the picture painted of development aid by him and Elon Musk still comes as a shock for anyone familiar with how aid works on the ground. But this is clearly how many in the USA imagine it.

Maybe the prevalence of such opinions in the UK influenced Sir Keir Starmer's decision to transfer 0.2% from our decreased Development Aid budget to Defence, though with a two-year run-down time unlike Trump. The need for a UK defence increase itself is another knock-on consequence of the Trump Presidency. The British Government's mantra "this is a difficult decision" avoids the choice of alternative difficult decisions, such as wealth taxes which come with greater political costs.

The world's poor will now be paying for Putin's and Trump's policies. What control have we taken back after 2016 if we accept military power, money markets, the autocrats and the feudal lords in California's and Shanghai's silicon valleys as our rulers? There is a touching faith in the free market. Right-wing politicians advance an ideological defence of unfettered capitalism in a world in which the market is increasingly unfree, controlled by the tech giants such as Elon Musk and the global corporations.

But back to massive US aid cuts to reduce national debt. Trump's acolytes point to allegedly 'woke' projects funded by USAID as justification. Even giving 'woke' the widest possible interpretation, projects that might be eligible for this description amount to an infinitesimal percentage of overall expenditure. Would funding a feminist theatre company who, amongst their performances, role play preventative health care, be 'woke'? Woman play an important role in health. If a tiny fraction of a State institution's activities are ill-judged, most people living in the real world would say such institutions were doing well.

Then there is the right-wing claim that development aid doesn't work; it hasn't jump-started the economies of poor countries. But that is principally because war, systemic corruption and bad governance blight economic development. If, for example, you need to bribe your way through several roadblocks to get to and into a port, export growth is stunted. Dealing with such problems, development aid, which encompasses a wide range of interventions, makes a major contribution.

No-one denies that despite foreign governmental and NGO funding for development in much of Africa and parts of Asia countries remain mired in poverty. But this does not justify suddenly shutting down a major, mitigating agency, as if it were a criminal enterprise, what President Trump called "the left-wing scam known as USAID".

Development aid makes a difference to economies. If half your workforce is fighting off malaria, or dying from it, this harms productivity. I've stood admiring trained senior women in West African villages, some of them illiterate, chatting to mothers as the sun went down, cleverly passing on health messages that reduce infections. The bonny babies in bathtubs were a living testimony to the effectiveness of supporting health systems, providing finance and upskilling in Africa. And HIV, Ebola (funding for prevention frozen then re-instated), Marburg, West Nile, and Dengue viruses, one way or another, can cross borders and seas. Education and good health are essential for a skilled workforce. Alongside Governments' foreign aid, the Church as an aid-giving body has made a massive contribution in this regard and still does. A left wing scam?

The US Government's only compliment to virtue are certain waivers, exemptions to the spending freeze. A few bits of infrastructure will be left standing amongst the wreckage of Federal foreign aid. The priorities are interesting. Most of the temporary exemptions relate to the spending of the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs and the State Department's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs. Since 13 February the latter has received exemption for \$5.3 billion spending of which \$4.1 billion is going to Israel and Egypt, plus more moderate sums to Taiwan and Philippines' military. Compare this to USAID exemptions of \$78 million for - non-food - aid to Gaza and \$156 million to the Red Cross for its work during the current ceasefire there.

Before this Trump Presidency, according to available figures USAID was spending a little over \$10 billion on humanitarian aid and \$10 billion annually on health, out of a foreign aid budget of approximately \$58 billion. To date, the Department of State's Bureau of Global Health, Security & Diplomacy has received a temporary exemption of \$500 million for PEPFAR, the President's Emergency Plan For AIDS. Launched by President G.W.

Bush in 2003, it is estimated to have saved 26 million lives around the world. PEPFAR is now operating on 8% of its 2024 budget of \$6.5 billion with consequences that hardly need spelling out. The waiver covers - in theory - all aspects of provision: antiretrovirals, testing, treatment and supply-chains. But the disruption already caused by a 90 day freeze, let alone the long term consequences, will cost lives.

Musk, wielding a chain-saw, now a populist power symbol, is also determined to reduce USAID manpower to a skeleton staff. Secretary of State Marco Rubio is now acting-administrator of USAID in place of Samantha Power who handled COVID and Ukraine crises under Jo Biden. At midnight last Sunday, out of a total payroll of 10,000, Rubio fired 1,200 USAID staff and put 4,200 on 'administrative leave'. Trump has repeatedly declared that the final staffing will be much less than 1,000. Meanwhile the substantial buildings occupied by USAID have been handed over to Customs and Border Patrol, not to be confused with the humanitarian focus of the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migrants which is likely to retain some funding for Latin American countries to spend on enforced returnees.

Former USAID chief, Gayle Smith, described the freeze as the "US signalling that we don't frankly care whether people live or die and that we are not a reliable partner". Washington DC District Judge Amir Ali spoke of "irreparable harm", requiring – to no great effect - a lifting of the freeze. CARITAS Internationalis, fearing millions of deaths, called Trump's proposed cuts of 90% USAID "reckless and "ruthless". The Jesuit Refugee Service founded in November 1980 responding to the needs of Vietnamese refugees, and now working in 57 countries, described, including displaced people, how "those waiting for our support were left stranded". They cite particularly Chad, Colombia, Ethiopia, India, Iraq, South Africa, South Sudan and Thailand. Money to pay local NGO staff suddenly cut globally means an immediate halt to work amongst the world's poorest people.

If and when our children and grandchildren consult the Oxford English Dictionary, do we want them to find 'archaic' in brackets next to the word 'compassion'? Will they be living in a world in which the powerful States deny our common humanity - uniquely in the case of the USA as a consequence of MAGA mania? We may not have long to find out.

<https://www.ianlinden.com/latest-blogs/signs-of-the-times-bombs-billionaires-aid>

• 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.

CAFOD'S CANCEL THE DEBT CAMPAIGN

For many Catholics around the world, Jubilee 2025 represents not only a call to spiritual renewal, but a profound rallying cry for economic and ecological justice. This Jubilee year, Catholics unite in solidarity with those suffering in debt-distressed nations to demand a global debt system that protects human and environmental rights and enables, rather than obstructs, development.

Download CAFOD's report to find out more: <https://cafod.org.uk/about-us/policy-and-research/debt-and-economic-justice/new-global-debt-crisis-and-solutions>

Sign the petition to world leaders: <https://action.cafod.org.uk/page/161357/petition/1>

CAFOD'S JUBILEE ICON

In order to celebrate and commemorate the Jubilee Year 2025, Pilgrims of Hope, CAFOD commissioned an icon from artist Mulugeta Araya in Ethiopia, for the Catholic Church in England and Wales. Ethiopia was chosen because of the strong tradition of iconography within the country and to demonstrate that this is a global Jubilee - not just something that is happening in England and Wales.

The icon portrays Jesus faithfully in the Northern Ethiopian tradition and is consistent with Ethiopian facial expressions and clothing, such as the women's head coverings.



The icon interprets Jesus' teaching of healing and liberation in the Synagogue in Luke 4:16-21, which refers to Isaiah 61:1-2. This passage is particularly relevant to the Jubilee given its emphasis on bringing good news to those who are poor, and liberty to those who are captive or oppressed. As Jesus finishes teaching, and rolls the scroll away, he declares that he has come to fulfil this Scripture.

<https://cafod.org.uk/pray/jubilee-icon>

UKRAINE: WAR FROM THE TRENCHES

Heather Kiernan writes: Feb 24, 2025

Today Ukraine marks the third anniversary of Russia's invasion amid uncertainty about its future support. Ukrainian soldier-poet, Borys Humenyuk was 57 when he vanished in December 2022. He had been fighting as a volunteer since 2014, soon after Russia began its covert takeover of the Donbas region. In 2021 he rejoined the military and became a deputy commander, in charge of a machine-gun unit.

Humenyuk's life, and possible death, invite comparison with the English poets who fought in the trenches of the first world war. He writes from a stance much closer to Wilfred Owen than to Rupert Brooke. The "high zest" for glory Owen warned against in "Dulce et Decorum Est" is replaced here too by the gruesome details of war seen from the trenches.

A TESTAMENT ~Borys Humenyuk

(Translated from the Ukrainian by Oksana Lushchevska and Michael M. Naydan)

Today we are digging the earth again	Naughty little boys
This hateful Donetsk earth	With slingshots and bruised knees
This stale, petrified earth	With failing marks on their report cards
We press ourselves into it	With shirts crammed with apples from the neighbor's orchard
We hide in it	Let our parents believe that we'll return one day
Still alive	That we are somewhere

We hide behind it	Don't return us to our wives
Sit silently in it	Let them remember us handsome
Like little children behind their mother's back	As men well-liked by women
We hear its heart beating	Who belonged to their wives alone
Its weary breath	Let them remember our warm kisses
We are warm and comfortable	Our loving embraces
Still alive	Don't let them touch our cold foreheads
	Our cold lips

Tomorrow we will die	Don't return us to our children
Maybe some of us	Let our children remember our kind eyes
Maybe all of us	Our kind smiles
Don't take us from the earth	Our kind hands
Don't tear us away from our mother	Don't let our children's lips
Don't gather our remains from the field	Touch our cold hands

Don't try to put us back together again	In these trenches
And — we beg you — don't erect crosses	Today our temporary homes
Monuments or memorial slabs	Tomorrow our graves
We don't need them	Bury us
Because it isn't for us —	
You erect these monuments for yourselves.	

Don't engrave our names,	We don't need eulogies
Simply remember:	In the silence that follows battle.
On this field	They always seem odd —
In this earth	Like punching a dead soldier
Ukrainian soldiers lie	Then ordering him to his feet

And — that is all.	We don't need funerals
Don't return us to our parents	We know where our place is
We don't want them to see us like this	Simply cover us with earth
Let our parents remember us children	And move on

It would be nice if there was a field
Where rye is swaying
A lark flies overhead
And — the sky
The endless sky —
Can you imagine the grain a field
Where warriors are lying will yield?

To remember us, eat the grain from the field
Where we laid down our lives

It would be good if there were meadows there
And many flowers
And a bee under each flower

And lovers who come in the evening
To weave wreaths
To make love till dawn
And during the day, let new parents
Bring their young children
Don't keep children from coming to us

But this will be tomorrow
Today we are still digging the earth
This cherished Ukrainian earth
This sweet, gentle earth
And with a soldier's spade we write as one
On its body
The last Ukrainian poem of the last poets
Left alive

UKRAINE: REFLECTION ON THREE YEARS OF WAR

Anka Skoryk Feb 24, 2025 Source: Depaul International

Anka Skoryk, Interim CEO, Depaul Ukraine looks back on the last three years of the war on Ukraine during which time she lost her own home and had to take refuge in the local church:

When the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine began three years ago today, I woke in my home in Kharkiv to the sound of missile explosions and quickly sheltered in the basement of my local church. I was joined by over 100 others, families sheltering with their children and many, like me, with their pets by their sides. Over the next few days, together we listened to the sound of explosions above, uncertain about what the future held, and we wondered if our lives were coming to an end. On the sixth day, I received the call I had been dreading. A missile had hit my house, which had set on fire and been completely destroyed.

Since 2007 I have been working with Ukrainian NGO, Depaul Ukraine, supporting thousands of people experiencing homelessness, including children sleeping on the streets of Kharkiv with nowhere to go. Yet nothing could have prepared me for the shock of losing my own home. The ceiling had collapsed inwards, the vast, blue sky contrasting sharply with the darkened ashes of my belongings. Remarkably, amongst the rubble, two teacups and a tea pot remained intact. It was all that was left of the place I had called home.

During the first year of the war, the impact of shelling on Kharkiv, just 30km from the Russian border, was so vast that it became known as the city without windows. If I had been told five years ago that my hometown would undergo such destruction, I never would have believed it. Sadly, my experience is not unique. Since the outbreak of the war, over two million households have been destroyed or damaged. Over 3.5 million people have been internally displaced.

Back in 2022, with so many people now in need and after supporting those who had lost their homes for decades, I was compelled to act. A response from the Depaul Group - the group of international homelessness charities that Depaul Ukraine is a part of - was never in doubt.

Helped by a small army of those using our homeless shelter and students across the city, we began by distributing food, hygiene materials and firewood. As the war became protracted, our services quickly expanded to provide more than humanitarian aid. To prevent those impacted by war from becoming homeless, we developed new programmes, including mental health services for veterans, hostels and accommodation for those displaced, and employment support. In 2007, Depaul's work began with one small minivan in Kharkiv. Now, our work reaches over 100,000 people a year across the whole country.

Despite the war causing a rise in homelessness, support for people sleeping on the streets in Ukraine remains scarce. Our recent research found that 22% accessing our rough sleeping services had been displaced due to the war, yet street homeless people in Ukraine are functionally excluded from almost all forms of assistance they need. The most frequent response was 'none' when we asked people what support they have received from other organisations.

We also know how conflict impacts mental health, levels of addiction and can heighten the risk of relationship breakdown - all drivers of homelessness. Often, people will face many of these issues and then experience the trauma of being exposed to violence whilst sleeping rough. For women, violence is sadly common, with four-fifths of women saying they have experienced violence on the street.

Prior to the war, just 0.3% of Ukraine's population were living in social housing. As the war enters its fourth year, and the rise in the complexities of homelessness becomes widespread across Ukraine, long-term, housing-led solutions are needed.

Next month in Odesa, we are preparing to open one of the only women's housing projects for rough sleepers in the country. Everyone will receive a home of their own, in a rented apartment in the community. Tailored support will address the specific vulnerabilities of women, particularly around gender-based violence, and will provide them with a secure, dignified home, where they can rebuild their confidence and be supported to exit homelessness.

Everyday, I speak to people in the most difficult, unimaginable circumstances. Mothers who after being displaced have had to tell their children that their father has been killed fighting on the front line. People who have seen their homes and belongings completely destroyed. We must all do more to help those who have had to give up so much. More social housing programmes are urgently needed in Ukraine, as government and civil society rebuilds our country.

As we mark three years of war today, I think back to the crockery set amongst the ruins of my home, and the sense of hope this gave me despite the destruction. Across Ukraine, this feeling of hope for a new life remains palpable. We just need to be innovative, ambitious and determined if we are to achieve it.

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/51794>

Depaul International: www.int.depaulcharity.org

THE SUFFERING IN GAZA CONTINUES

Heather Kiernan writes: Feb 28, 2025

While the ceasefire stopped the war on Jan. 19, the suffering in Gaza did not end. With their homes destroyed, hundreds of thousands of families are living in tents. Neither the cloth tents nor the nylon ones protect children's bodies from the cold. The tents are soaked with water, and the cold air has become very humid. Gazans used to welcome the rain for agricultural reasons. But now their lands are all destroyed and are no longer suitable for farming. The rain has become another source of terror.

Today I am posting a diary entry by Farah Thabet together with a drawing by Zena Al-Nahal

WHEN RAIN BECAME OUR UNINVITED GUEST

3rd November 2023- Winter had always held a special place in my heart—the gentle patter of raindrops against windows, the cleansing of dust from glass and souls. But I never anticipated the day when rain would transform from a comforting companion to a feared adversary. Now, I find myself praying that rain loses its way to our wretched shelter. The tent walls sag with weariness, their fabric strained by countless storms. The roof, feeble and patched, offers little protection. My fears materialized as autumn surrendered to December's cold embrace, accompanied by relentless rain.



One night, I awoke to the rhythmic tap of rain on the plastic roof. Gradually, the drops swelled, their tempo quickening. They kissed my forehead—an intimate connection to the heavens—carrying the earth's scent. Then, as if summoned by some unseen force, water cascaded from the sky like thick ropes. The wind howled, threatening to tear our fragile tents apart.

In that surreal moment, I noticed a small stream of water sneaking inside the tent. The new mattress I lay upon absorbed the intrusion, leaving me damp and disoriented. Outside, chaos reigned. Shouts and screams pierced the darkness. Mothers cradled their babies, seeking refuge from the deluge. Men and women scrambled to mend trampoline sheets and patch leaky plastic roofs praying for the rain to stop.

BALFOUR PROJECT CONFERENCE 8 MAY 2025

We are delighted to announce the first three distinguished speakers for our upcoming conference, **The Rule of Law – the route to a better future for Palestinians and Israelis**, taking place on 8 May 2025 at King's College London, The Strand, and online. This conference will bring together leading legal minds and experts to discuss the role of international law in shaping a just and peaceful future.

www.balfourproject.org/conference2025

◇ Dalal Irikat – Associate Professor of Conflict Resolution at the Arab American University in Palestine, columnist, and commentator. Dr. Irikat is a respected voice on diplomacy, governance, and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, advocating for peaceful solutions grounded in international law.

◇ Baroness Hale – Former President of the UK Supreme Court and a trailblazer in legal thought. Baroness Hale is renowned for her commitment to justice and the rule of law, with a career spanning decades of landmark rulings in human rights and constitutional law.

◇ Blinne Ní Ghrálaigh – Leading international human rights and public law barrister. Blinne has represented clients at the highest levels including, as a member of the legal team representing South Africa's proceedings accusing Israel of genocide, at the International Court of Justice. She is widely recognised for her expertise in international law and accountability.

Join Us in Person or Online

The conference will be hybrid, allowing for in-person participation at King's College London or free online access. It will be followed by a reception for all speakers and attendees.

Ticket Prices:

General admission (including reception): £20, Students/Jobseekers: £10, Friends of the Balfour Project: £10

Online access: FREE Tickets: https://billetto.co.uk/ticket_buyer/offers/151a45c2-fb90-45bd-a433-7a6398996fe0

RESIDENTIAL GROUP EVENTS AT BOARBANK HALL

All our events take advantage of the rhythm of our community prayer, the comfortable facilities of our Guest House and the beauty of the local area. We offer a unique mix of prayer, study and opportunities for social and quiet time. We welcome bookings from school or student groups or any religious or other groups who may benefit from our hospitality. We also work with schools to provide INSET days, with the option of overnight stays. If you would like help in arranging a programme for a retreat or residential event please get in touch. For residential courses we only ask the standard Guest House price plus an optional donation in lieu of a course fee. For students, the low-paid or anyone who needs it to attend, payment by donation only is available. Please don't hesitate to ask! For further information or to book please contact Sr Margaret Atkins: Tel: 015395 32288 margaret@boarbankhall.org.uk Boarbank Hall Allithwaite Grange over Sands CUMBRIA LA11 7NH

Our Lady in Latin 21st-23rd/24th March 2025. Learn about the Latin and the music of our best-known hymns to Our Lady. All welcome.

Thinking Faith 14th-16th March 2025. *Lent Zoom weekend* Evening sessions only. Time out for working Catholics.

Craft Weekend 2nd-4/5th May 2025. Bring your own arts or crafts, enjoy working and sharing together. Optional trip to the Quaker Tapestry, Kendal.

Two Wings and Some Prayers 12th-17th May 2025. Prayer, walks and birdwatching, with a focus on learning birdsong.

Celebrating Creation 27th-31st May 2025.

Time to explore how to live out *Laudato Si'* fully in our personal lives and within the Church. Talks, discussions, art, liturgy, gardening, walks. All welcome.

Thinking Faith 26th July-2nd August 2025. *Theme: St Paul* Time out for working Catholics.

St Augustine's Confessions 18th-22nd August 2025.

An introduction to St Augustine's classic spiritual autobiography. All welcome.

Celebrating Creation 4th-10th October 2025.

Time to explore how to live out *Laudato Si'* fully in our personal lives and within the Church. Talks, discussions, art, liturgy, gardening, walks. All welcome.

Magnificat! 24th-26/27th October 2025.

Follow up to Our Lady in Latin, exploring the Latin and the music of the canticles from the birth narratives in St Luke. For those who know just a little Latin!

Hope in Health 5th-7/8th December 2025 For all who support or care for anyone who is sick, professionals and others.

<https://boarbankhall.org.uk/whats-on/>

DIARY

MARCH

2 Church Action on Poverty Sunday. Sign up for a resource pack for your church here: <https://give.church-poverty.org.uk/page/156569/subscribe/1?ea.url.id=7788974&forwarded=true>

3-9 Race Equality Week <https://www.raceequalitymatters.com/race-equality-week-2025/>

5 Ash Wednesday Merseyside Pax Christi Walk of Witness through Liverpool City Centre. Start at 1.30pm at St Luke's bombed out church at the top of Bold St. stopping at various 'stations' for prayers of repentance for the sin of nuclear weapons and for peace. Ashes will be distributed. We will end at Liverpool Town Hall, as we continue to petition Liverpool City Council to support the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Enquiries and offers of help with reading and music welcome. Contact: Jan janharper20211@outlook.com

5 Green Christian No faith in fossil fuels Ash Wednesday service St John's Waterloo London SE1 8TY

5-6 Green Christian 24 hour vigil outside the Department of Energy, Security and Net Zero (DESNZ), starting at 12 noon on Ash Wednesday and overnight to 12 noon 6 March <https://greenchristian.org.uk/>

7 World Day of Prayer 2025 prepared this year by the Christian Women of COOK ISLANDS under the theme: 'I made you wonderful'. <https://www.wwdp.org.uk/2025-theme-and-country-cook-islands/>

8 CHRISTIAN AID CHANGEMAKERS CONFERENCE Main Event in London. join a regional watch party livestreaming from 10.30am to 1pm with a chance to meet others, exchange ideas and join together for a free networking lunch. **Join at home for livestream or watch in our area:** St Andrew's Church, Bedford Street, Crewe, CW2 6LE
Sandylands Methodist Church, 37 Sandylands Rd, Kendal LA9 6EU

St John's Church, Bolton Road, Pendlebury, Salford, Manchester, M27 8XS

Register for all these at <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved/events/changemakers-conference>

10 Christian Aid Lent Lunch Soup, bread and cheese 12 noon to 1:30pm Wesley Church Centre, St John Street, Chester CH1 1DA Donations to Christian Aid.

11 Cenacle Time Out on Tuesdays 10.30am-4pm. Join us for a time of prayer and quiet. Suggested offering for the day is £10 Tithebarn Grove, Lance Lane, L15 6TW LIVERPOOL +44 (0)1517 222271 cenacle.liverpool@gmail.com

12 Hope into Action's annual conference 'Restorers of Hope' The UK faces a homelessness crisis, made up of many different problems: Resources: the lack of affordable housing and the basic cost of living. Relationships: family breakdown, loneliness, isolation. Identity: low self-esteem, mental health problems and addictions. We need a hope able to respond to all three of these problems. The Hope into Action conference is for church leaders, community activists, investors, volunteers, housing and social care professionals and anyone who is interested in how the Christian faith changes lives. <https://www.hopeintoaction.org.uk/hope-into-actions-annual-conference-2025-restorers-of-hope>

Early bird tickets available here: <https://www.tickettailor.com/events/hopeintoactionuk/1436689>

14 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

14 CAFOD Quiz Night at Our Lady's Parish Centre, Ellesmere Port Town Centre at 7.30 pm Entrance £3 for adults and £1 for children and the usual raffle will take place with good prizes. Refreshments will be available at the interval. All proceeds will go towards CAFOD's latest development project. Contact Tony Walsh 0151 355 6419

15 FLAME 2025 is the largest Catholic youth event in England and Wales. Filled with inspiring speakers, incredible live music, prayer, adoration and young people from across England and Wales it's an event like no other! Booking for Flame 2025 is almost full! Don't miss out. <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/flame-2025/>

17 Christian Aid Lent e Lunch Soup, bread and cheese 12 noon to 1:30pm Wesley Church Centre, St John Street, Chester CH1 1DA Donations to Christian Aid

19 Jubilee 2025: Pilgrims of Hope An evening to find out more about Pope Francis' vision for this Jubilee Year and how we are invited to respond through our everyday lives. St Vincent's CAFOD/Justice and Peace Group. 7.30-9pm in the parish centre Westleigh, Groby Road, Altrincham WA14 2BQ (next to the Church)

20 Romero Lecture 2025 St. Edmund of Canterbury Church, Waterloo, Liverpool L22 8QF at 7 pm. Fr. Luis Orlando Perez will speak on "Excavating Hope" Fr. Luis is a Mexican Jesuit and Lawyer currently pursuing doctoral studies in the Institute of the Americas at the University of London.

22 Quiet Saturdays at the Cenacle 10.30am-4pm. Join us for a time of prayer and quiet. Suggested offering for the day is £10 Tithebarn Grove, Lance Lane, L15 6TW LIVERPOOL +44 (0)1517 222271 cenacle.liverpool@gmail.com

24 45th Anniversary of the martyrdom St. Oscar Romero in 1980

25 Christian Aid Lent Lunch Soup, bread and cheese 12 noon to 1:30pm Vicars Cross United Reformed Church, Oldfield Drive, Vicars Cross, Chester CH3 5LL Donations to Christian Aid.

31 Christian Aid Lent Lunch Soup, bread and cheese 12 noon to 1:30pm St Mary's Handbridge Centre, Handbridge, Chester CH4 7HL Donations to Christian Aid.

DIARY

APRIL

3 CAFOD and Pope Francis' call to fraternal love guest speaker Francis Stewart, CAFOD. St Vincent's CAFOD/Justice and Peace Group. 7.30–9pm in the parish centre Westleigh, Groby Road, Altrincham WA14 2BQ (next to the Church)

5 Day of Reflection on the Jubilee Year CAFOD together with Lancaster Diocesan Faith & Justice Commission 11am to 3.30pm at Our Lady & St Michaels Catholic Church, Banklands, Workington CA14 3EP. All welcome to 10am Mass beforehand. Please bring your own lunch; tea, coffee and biscuits provided. Keynote speakers: Bishop Paul Swarbrick, Stephen Garsed and Sr. Margaret Atkins, with workshops led by CAFOD and Lancaster Faith & Justice Commission. You are most welcome to attend for some or all of the day. The Day will culminate with a short afternoon Pilgrims Walk by the Solway Firth and Closing Prayer at 3.30pm. If you would like to attend, please contact Sue Grubic, Lancaster Faith & Justice Commission by email – sue.grubic@lrcd.org.uk or by text on 07791 444417.

7 Christian Aid Lent Lunch Soup, bread and cheese 12 noon to 1:30pm Hoole United Reformed Church, Hoole Road, Chester CH2 3NT Donations to Christian Aid.

7 Opening Doors to Refugees and Asylum Seekers open meeting - Evening via Zoom. Part of the NJPN Focus for the year of Jubilee

8 Cenacle Time Out on Tuesdays 10.30am-4pm. Join us for a time of prayer and quiet. Suggested offering for the day is £10 Tithebarn Grove, Lance Lane, L15 6TW LIVERPOOL +44 (0)1517 222271
cenacle.liverpool@gmail.com

10 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

26 Quiet Saturdays at the Cenacle 10.30am-4pm. Join us for a time of prayer and quiet. Suggested offering for the day is £10 Tithebarn Grove, Lance Lane, L15 6TW LIVERPOOL +44 (0)1517 222271
cenacle.liverpool@gmail.com

MAY

10 Opening Doors to a sustainable future for all people NJPN Networking Day in London (Romero House)

- 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 SPRING issue of *MOUTHPEACE* the quarterly online newsletter for Shrewsbury, Liverpool and Lancaster dioceses: <https://jpschrewsbury.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/mouthpeace-spring-2025-2.pdf>

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