



## NEWSLETTER NOVEMBER 2018

### CLIMATE CHANGE WILL BE BACK ON THE NEWS AGENDA IN DECEMBER

Just in the last couple of weeks bishops' conferences from across the world have signed a rare joint statement urging political leaders to solve climate change.

The bishops' call is clear:

***We call for ambitious and immediate action to be taken in order to tackle and overcome the devastating effects of the climate crisis. These actions need to be taken by the international community at all levels: by persons, communities, cities, regions, nations.***

The bishops' statement is aimed at world leaders who are preparing for a UN climate summit in Poland this December - the COP24 meeting at Katowice.

The main purpose of this meeting is to agree the rules around the Treaty formulated at the 2015 meeting. It's not exciting stuff to read – but it is crucial to making the Paris Treaty effective in terms of mitigating the effects of Climate Change. As Jan Pietrowski recently put it in the Economist, *“The treaty left important elements deliberately vague. It did not, for instance, spell out what climate commitments by individual countries are admissible, how to report these “nationally determined contributions” (NDCs) or who should review them. This was necessary to get everyone on board. Developing countries would have balked at being held to rich-world standards; developed Ones would have objected to guidelines so lax as to let big polluters like China or India off the hook just because they are poor.”*

So why are the bishops and other religious groups getting involved? One of these is the Franciscan missionaries. They explain their reasoning for becoming involved on their website:

*It's relevant to the Franciscans to participate in COP in any way possible. Firstly, because COP is the only space where the negotiation on the solutions to the climate crisis by the governmental delegates actually happens, and the ethical dimension must be emphasized in the solutions. Franciscans can collaborate with other inter-faith groups and NGOs especially in this respect. Secondly, such movement can be the sign and the example to raise awareness in the Church, since the ecological dimension of the (Sic) Christian conversion is not yet the famous*



*subject in the Christian community itself. The Franciscan presence in the COP can give testimony to the vision of St. Francis to the world. Thirdly, COP is an exceptional place where one can listen to the powerful testimonies of the most vulnerable in the world, various activists, and experts, and have a dialogue with them. They are the victims of the social and ecological crisis as well as the prophets of our time. Just like the encounter with the Christ in a leper has changed the life of St. Francis, it's critical for the Franciscans to be touched by those who are affected by the systematic injustice.*



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The two key tasks for the COP24 Katowice talks are the finalisation of the “implementation guidelines” of the Paris Agreement and to conclude the Talanoa Dialogue.

The Implementation Guidelines will put the Paris Agreement into practice and establish how each country will present country plans, review their commitments and implementation of actions, and assess whether governments are collectively on track for the Paris Agreement goals. This will move countries from ‘fluffy’ statements to concrete actions - along the lines of ‘what doesn’t get measured doesn’t get done’.

The Talanoa Dialogue is a shared effort by governments that is assessing the collective level of climate action in light of the 1.5°C warming

limit they agreed in Paris. The hope is that this gap assessment will spur more ambitious mitigation plans. COP24 could be a turning point from where focus shifts towards implementing actions on the ground.

The conference takes place from Monday 03 December through to Friday 14 December. As always, there are optimists and pessimists about what the outcome may be. What can we do at this point in time? Prayer is an obvious choice – and it would be good to have the conference remembered in the intercessory prayers on the Sundays around the conference time. Neither would it do any harm to write to Michael Gove, Environment Secretary, to remind him of the strength of feeling about this issue amongst the Catholic community.



SCHOOLS

# JOURNALISM COMPETITION

# 2019

Are you a budding journalist?

We are looking for students (aged 15-18 inclusive) to write an article or make a video report that informs, challenges and raises important issues on the topic:

**"The Challenge Of Climate Change"**



Do you know a young person who is passionate about climate change? – Show them this competition by the Columbans – which is open now and entries must be submitted by February 8 2019. Entries must be less than 1000 words.

***Who could you encourage to take part?***

For more details see the Columban website especially for this competition:

[www.columbancompetition.com/](http://www.columbancompetition.com/)

**CONFESSION, CLIMATE CHANGE, ASYLUM SEEKERS.....** A personal view by Joe Burns

We held our Autumn Day of Reflection last month at the Good Shepherd Parish centre in Mytholmroyd. We are very grateful to the church community there for their welcome and their practical support during the day. About half of the 23 participants came from the local area. This is a vindication of our attempts to take such events to different parts of our widespread diocese.

Part of our day ended up being quite an in-depth discussion about the sacrament of reconciliation. I don't think that was the intention- but it was what happened, and it certainly animated everyone. We reflected about the way in which the sacrament is typically administered (one on one, usually in a confessional box) and how this is inadequate for our developing understanding of the Gospel messages about forgiveness and our understanding of sin. Here are my personal thoughts arising out of that discussion

Someone brought up 'sins of omission' – what haven't we done or what have been the consequences of our inaction (always a popular topic with Catholics as we like to beat ourselves up). The crux of the matter is that, by and large, examinations of conscience are totally geared around 'personal' sin: have I murdered someone, committed adultery with someone, stolen something etc. I daresay they do exist, but I have not come across an examination of conscience that asks what we haven't done that has contributed to the destruction of God's creation, what haven't we done to challenge the Government's 'Hostile environment' policy towards strangers to our country, what we haven't done to encourage dignity in family life by challenging public policy that ensures more

and more families are having to resort to food banks to feed their children. Or, to take the issue that gets most space in the media, what systemic problems enabled priests to abuse children on the scale that we now know?.



I'm no theologian but I think these latter examples relate to what is termed 'structural' sin. My understanding of this is that these are sins where, as a community, we have colluded (either through our actions or lack of action) to create systems and policies in our country which harm God's creation or are affronts to the dignity of the human person. Given the communal nature of these sins it seems to me counter-productive to talk about them in a situation of individual confession. These are communal sins, so they need to be aired in a communal context. Equally, a communal penance would be more appropriate, it seems to me.

Another element of this (and all the more reason for them to be considered in a communal context) is that such sins are more difficult to define. I've picked some examples which I think are clearly structural sins. Jesus's attitude, and that of the Church down the ages, has been one of welcome to strangers., for example. So, the creation of a 'hostile environment' is patently sinful. I'm sure some would argue with this

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position – but I think they would have a difficult time with Jesus about it.

Other situations are not so clear cut. Is Universal Credit inherently a sinful system? I don't know, but I do know that there are elements to this system that are contrary to the dignity of the human person and there is growing evidence that where it is rolled out then more and more families end up living in poverty. Again, this calls for communal discussion and discernment – what, as a community do we think about these situations and what, as a community, should we be doing about them?

I have not come across any guidance about this at an institutional church level nor any church communities that do this sort of communal examination of conscience on a regular basis. The only thing that comes to mind is the work of Ernesto Cardenal and his book 'The Gospel in

Solentiname' in which are described meetings of his church community coming together to reflect on the Gospels of the day and the meaning of it in their own lives. But that was published over 30 years ago and in a very different context to our own.

Is it all just too difficult for the institutional church? We do not have a healthy practice of dialogue between both church community members and church communities and clergy. 'The Church is not a democracy' is a defence that is heard quite often. However, that is no excuse for not having true dialogue between people to discern our communal sinfulness and ways of making reparation for it. There are signs of hope, but we need to get to a better place in relation to communal reflection (and out of this reflection, penitential action) before the damage to God's creation is irreversible.



## Leeds From 8 November to 11 December 2018 Palestinian Film Festival

This has now started and continues until well into December. This festival shines a light on Palestine – its people, history, culture and society – through showing compelling and thought-provoking films that are not readily available to general audiences in and around Leeds.

The films are being shown in various venues across Leeds and at many of the showings there will be Fairtrade Palestinian crafts and Zaytoun products on sale.

See the full programme by visiting their website:

[www.leedsdff.org.uk/](http://www.leedsdff.org.uk/)

Some of the films are free – but even for these it is recommended that you book via the relevant Eventbrite page as shows do sell out

**REMEMBRANCE IS NOT ENOUGH: SOLIDARITY OF THE 'SHAKEN'**

Solidarity is one of the basic concepts in Catholic Social Teaching:

*"We are all one family in the world. Building a community that empowers everyone to attain their full potential through each of us respecting each other's dignity, rights and responsibilities makes the world a better place to live" Sollicitudo rei socialis – 'On Social Concern' (1987)*

In his address at last weekend's service we jointly organised with the Leeds Pax Christi group, our speaker, the Anglican theologian Andrew Shanks, spoke about the 'Solidarity of the Shaken'. This is a concept elaborated by the Czech philosopher and political dissident Jan Patočka.

The word solidarity stems from the Latin word 'Solidus' – meaning an entire sum or solid body. In other words, the concept of solidarity seems to lead us towards an understanding of community that rests upon a common and solid foundation. We would thus be in solidarity with others because we have a solid and common ground under our feet: a common cause, a common debt or a common nature serving as the solidity of our solidarity.

Jan Patočka was seeking to describe a solidarity that can exist when those firm foundations have been shaken and destroyed. It is a solidarity that can exist where there is great uncertainty. Andrew then went on to link this to the reading from Amos that he had chosen (Amos 5:18-24). Our current understanding of the book of Amos, he explained, was that it was one of the first books of the bible to be committed to writing over 2800 years ago. It paints a picture of a very different God from that of other cultures: "I hate and despise your feasts, I take no pleasure in your

solemn festivals... Let me have no more of the din of your chanting, no more of your strumming on harps." Yet, across the region at the time this is precisely the common understanding of what Gods wanted : ostentatious flattery of the Gods was the conventional wisdom of the time.



The Hebrew people must, indeed, have been 'shaken' to hear that this was not the nature of Yahweh, to be told that the worship that was expected of them was to be so different from that of all the communities that surrounded them. What was it that Yahweh expected?

*But let justice flow like water,  
And integrity like an unfailing stream.*

The 'shaken-ness' of the often disquieting messages of the Gospel should give us much pause for thought – how much of our lives are the 'Solidarity of the Orthodox' - filled with platitudinous ritual and empty piety -and how much with 'letting justice flow like water'?

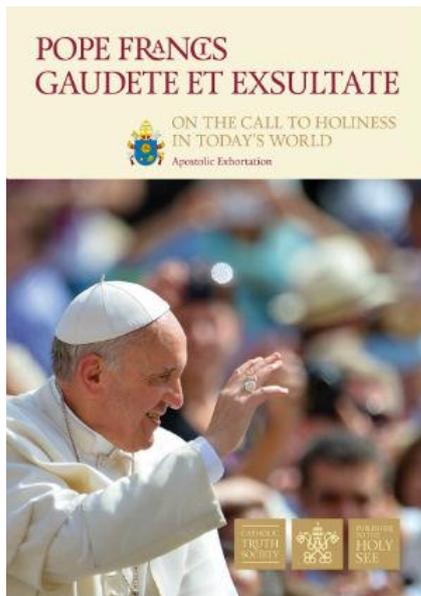


We will be publishing the full text of Andrew's address as one of our occasional series of pamphlets – look out for it on our website some time in the two weeks.

**FAITH IN ACTION: Part of the Reflection given at the Caritas Day of Reflection on 6<sup>th</sup> Oct**

*By John Battle (Chair of the Commission)*

Gaudete et Exsultate deliberately focusses on “now”, the present, and where we are in our homes, communities, country and world today. It is a reflection on ‘the mysteries of the Beatitudes’ as Bishop Marcus comments. Notably, the opening words “Rejoice and be glad” set a positive tone, announcing “good news”. The psalm for the recent feast of St Francis has the refrain “I am sure I shall see the Lord’s goodness in the land of the living” (Psalm 26) yet most of the time these days it is hard to see evidence of the Lord’s goodness in the land of the living here and now - not least if you follow the daily news media.



In our Diocese of Leeds there is evidence in our society of major economic and social shifts in recent decades from traditional manufacturing to service sector and retail industries, and to part time, temporary and lower paid work, to two parents working with reducing family incomes, changes to welfare and tax support (the introduction of universal credit), all compounding an increasing level of poverty, especially among the new ‘working poor’. There

is rising homelessness and call on food banks, the filling up of the prisons, the arrival of refugees and migrants, family relationship stress and breakdown, all drowning out any sense of “the Lord’s goodness in the land of the living”.

Despite this, our parishes and parishioners through individuals and organisations such as the SVP, Catholic women’s groups, and Knights are already key supporters of foodbanks and helping the homeless. The Diocesan Refugee Support Group, St Monica’s Housing, Growing Old Gracefully and Catholic Care are now well acknowledged sources of practical support.

Pope Francis opens with a reminder in “Gaudete et Exsultate”; *“If I encounter a person sleeping outdoors on a cold night, I can view him or her as an annoyance, an idler, an obstacle in my path, a troubling sight, a problem for politicians to sort out, or even a piece of refuse cluttering a public space. Or I can respond with faith and charity and see in this person a human being with dignity identical to my own, a creature infinitely loved by the Father, an image of God, a Christian. Can holiness somehow be understood apart from this lively recognition of the dignity of each human being”* (para 98).

In a central passage in “Gaudete et Exsultate”, Pope Francis emphasizes that “the call to holiness” is an invitation to recognize the “*face of Christ in others; Jesus clears a way to seeing two faces, that of the Father and that of our brother. He does not give us two formulas or two more commands. He gives us two faces, or better yet, one alone; the face of God reflected in so many other faces. For every one of our brothers and sisters, especially the least, the most vulnerable, the defenceless and those in need, God’s very image is found.*”

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*Indeed, with the scraps of this frail humanity, the Lord shapes his final work of art. For what endures, what has value in life, what riches do not disappear? Surely those two; the Lord and our neighbour. These two riches will not disappear."*

The personal challenge to us therefore is to dare to reach out to the marginalised on the fringes;

*"God is eternal newness. He impels us to constantly set out anew.... He takes us where humanity is most wounded....so if we dare to go to the fringes we will find him there; indeed he is already there. Jesus is already there in the heart of our brothers and sisters, in their wounded flesh. In their troubles, and in their profound desolation. He is already there."(para 135). Our God is a God of surprises, calling us, daring us; "God infinitely transcends us; he is full of surprises. We are not the ones to determine when and how we will encounter him; the exact times and places of that encounter are not up to us." (para 41).*

Moreover *"our growth in holiness is a journey in community side by side with others"*(para141) , reaching out to those in need, praying constantly and doing both together with others in community. A final quotation from *"Gaudate et Exsultate"*:

*" It is true that the primacy belongs to our relationship with God but we cannot forget that the ultimate criterion on which our lives will be judged is what have we done for others...our worship becomes pleasing to God when we devote ourselves to living generously and allow God's gift granted in prayer, to be shown in our concern for our brothers and sisters" (para 104).*

As Dom Helder Camara put it over 40 years ago when he visited Leeds :*"Whenever you listen to someone who is suffering, you hear Christ's voice. And whenever you meet someone suffering you meet him in person."*

The full text of John's address will shortly be available on the Views page of the J&P website

**REFLECTION: we are a people – not a mass.**

"God wants to save us in a people. He does not want to save us in isolation. And so today's church more than ever is accentuating the idea of being a people. The church therefore experiences conflicts, because it does not want a mass; it



wants a people. A mass is a heap of persons, the drowsier the better, the more compliant the better.

The church rejects communism's slander that it is the opium of the people.

It has no intention of being the people's opium. Those that create drowsy masses are others. The church wants to rouse men and women to the true meaning of being a people.

What is a people? A people is a community of persons where all cooperate for the common good."

*St Oscar Romero in "The Violence of Love"*



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**EVENTS**

 <b>Thu 08 Nov – Tue 11 Dec</b>	<p><b>LEEDS PALESTINIAN FILM FESTIVAL</b>  The mainstream media carries very little about the life of Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza. This festival (the fourth) provides unique opportunities to find out more about their plight. See their website for details <a href="http://www.leedsdff.org.uk/">http://www.leedsdff.org.uk/</a></p>
 <b>Thu 15 Nov</b>	<p><b>CAFOD REMEMBRANCE MASS FOR DECEASED SUPPORTERS</b>  <i>St Benedict's Church, Aberford Road, Garforth 19:00</i>  Join the CAFOD team in remembering CAFOD volunteers in the diocese who have died.</p>
 <b>Sun 18 Nov</b>	<p><b>SECOND WORLD DAY OF THE POOR</b>  <i>Global</i>  The theme for this year is 'This poor man cried and the Lord heard him.'  Resources are available from the CSAN website <a href="http://www.csan.org.uk/worlddayofthepoor/">www.csan.org.uk/worlddayofthepoor/</a></p>
 <b>Wed 21 Nov</b>	<p><b>LOOK INTO THEIR EYES</b>  <i>Mill Hill Chapel, City Square Leeds LS1 5EB 18:30 – 20:00</i>  In this Sabeel Yorkshire event Zara Levy &amp; Paul Clark will focus on the lives of Palestinian children living under occupation in Bethlehem where there has been an escalating number of child arrests, night raids and detentions. This event is Free and all are welcome</p>
 <b>Sat 24 Nov</b>	<p><b>PEACE AND JUSTICE VIGIL</b>  <i>The Market Place, Huddersfield, HD1 2AN</i>  This is a regular monthly vigil organised by Quakers in Huddersfield to which all are welcome. In recent months they have focussed on the campaign to stop arming Saudi Arabia.</p>
 <b>Sun 09 Dec</b>	<p><b>AMOS Trust Carol Service with members of the Bethlehem choir</b>  <i>Bradford Cathedral, 1 Stott Hill, Bradford BD1 4EH</i>  Peace activist Zoughbi Zoughbi, founder of Amos partner Wi'am Reconciliation Centre and campaigner Lucy Talgieh who leads the women's work at Wi'am will be present. Joining them will be 6 members of Choir of Bethlehem on their first visit to the UK. The Amos Trust is a human rights organisation that undertakes significant work in Israel-Palestine.</p>
 <b>Mon 10 Dec</b>	<p><b>LOVE NEEDS TO BE ORGANISED – a talk by John Battle</b>  <i>Xaverian Spirituality Centre 169 Sharoe Green Ln Fulwood, Preston PR2 8HE 19:30</i>  John will talk about the relationship between prayer and action -following Thomas Merton's theme of the relationship between contemplation and action. Included especially for those in the NW enclaves of our diocese! Spaces limited – search for it on Eventbrite.</p>
 <b>Tue 11 Dec</b>	<p><b>J&amp;P COMMISSION MEETING 19:00 – 20:30</b>  Anyone in the Leeds Diocese is welcome to come along to a Commission meeting. If you are interested, email the office and we will send you the details.</p>
 Find us on <b>Facebook</b>	Follow us on Facebook to help keep up to date with the key campaigns that the Commission is supporting.

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

**See our website for full details of these and other events that may be of interest**