

Justice and Peace Scotland is the Justice and Peace Commission of the Bishops' Conference of Scotland; its remit is to have a concern for social justice, human rights, peace, development and the integrity of creation. Our three priorities at the moment are trade justice, clean drinking water and asylum and immigration. We are also developing campaigns about poverty in Scotland and about the possible replacement of Trident nuclear weapons. The Commission is working on policies and actions in these areas based on Gospel values and Catholic Social Teaching.

In the words of Pope Paul VI 'The name of the Commission, Justice and Peace, aptly describes its goal.'

We are aiming to have a Justice and Peace presence in every parish. If your parish has a Justice and Peace group please think about joining it; if your parish or deanery doesn't have a group why not think about starting one - the national office will help you.

Why not subscribe to our magazine? If you contact us before the end of January we will send you a sample copy of our magazine in February.

We provide free email updates on issues related to Justice and Peace; to receive these please visit our website.

Donations for the work of the Justice and Peace Commission are gratefully received. Please give generously to today's collection. If you prefer, donations can be sent to the National Office, cheques payable to Justice and Peace Scotland. To find out about making regular donations through direct debit please contact the National Office.

If you would like more information about the work of Justice and Peace please contact us.



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Feast of the Epiphany, 8th January 2006



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Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ

Today's feast makes us think about gifts and giving. In some countries people exchange presents today rather than at Christmas. But, for the world's poor, the occasional present is not enough. The underlying system needs to change.

This past year has seen the great campaign to Make Poverty History. The extraordinary response of people from all over the country on the second of July showed how deeply ordinary people feel that world poverty is a scandal that must not continue. Throughout the year your national Justice and Peace Commission has worked with the Make Poverty History campaign. Local Justice and Peace groups organised buses to the Edinburgh demonstration. They sent postcards and letters to MPs, travelled to lobbies in Edinburgh, London and Brussels, and worked hard to raise local awareness of the issues.

The decisions made by politicians on debt and aid go some way towards improving things, but by no means far enough.

At the root of the debate is the issue of justice. Increased aid, even the cancellation of debt, will not of themselves resolve the problems of world poverty. At last, people are beginning to understand that these are not issues of charity but of justice. Charity would call for us to give aid. Justice calls for a complete re-think of how world markets operate.

People are not rich or poor by nature. They are made so, by the operation of economic systems. And the dominant economic system of today favours the rich at the expense of the poor.

"Free trade" sounds good. But in reality, free trade asks poorer countries to remove all barriers protecting their products while richer countries continue to protect their own. This lets rich countries send cheap exports to poorer countries, and local industries in those countries are priced out of business. Free trade is not the same as fair trade.

Catholic Social Teaching has always seen work as something that gives dignity. Work is how men and women share in the divine work of creation. But if work is not rewarded, if the products of human work are undervalued, human dignity itself is undermined. Economic exploitation dehumanises people; economic co-operation gives them back their dignity. Justice of this kind builds respect and self-respect.

In your parish or your area Justice and Peace group, you can help to influence opinions and change attitudes for the better. At a national level your Justice and Peace Commission will continue to work to increase awareness and influence policies.

The Wise Men gave of their riches to the Poor Child of Bethlehem because they recognised His hidden dignity. Today, in His Kingdom, there should be no second-class citizens. There should be no First Class or Second or Third in His World.

Yours sincerely in Christ

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Peter A. Moran'.

Bishop Peter A Moran

Bishop-President, Justice & Peace Commission