

Newsletter

March-May 2026



Justice and peace for the Holy Land

The President of Justice & Peace Scotland, Archbishop William Nolan, alongside Anne-Marie Clements, our Catholic Social Teaching Engagement Officer, returned to Jerusalem in January as part of the Holy Land Coordination 2026.

Archbishop Nolan recorded a video message during the visit reflecting on the realities he witnessed and on what is needed for justice and peace to be realised. He spoke of the intense pressures faced by Bedouin communities in the West Bank, including harassment and violence from Israeli settlers and the devastating impact this has on people's lives.

The Archbishop also addressed the wider context of the ongoing military occupation in the West Bank and the deepening crisis in Gaza, stressing that lasting peace will not be possible until these conditions change and Palestinians are granted the right to a state of their own: "Everyone wants peace, but the only way to peace is through justice."

You can watch and share the Archbishop's full video message on our YouTube channel by clicking [here](#).

On page two there are stories of the Bedouin communities he references, with more on all those we encountered to follow in future editions. To book a parish or school visit for our *Journals from Jerusalem* talk, updated following the 2026 visit, please contact us.

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Why it matters to use your vote

The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that voting is a "morally obligatory" duty of responsible citizenship; a "co-responsibility of the common good". For this reason it is incumbent upon us to cast our two votes - one for a constituency candidate, and one for a party on the regional list - in the 2026 Scottish Parliament election on Thursday, 7th May.

As Pope Francis once said, political participation requires courage "to think of oneself as a people" rather than only for "myself, my clan, my family, my friends." To bring faith into the public sphere "not so much to be heard, but to have the courage to make proposals for justice and peace in the public debate".

At Justice & Peace Scotland, and in the Church, we would never instruct any person on how they should vote. We simply strive to advocate for measures to build a Scotland that recognises the inalienable dignity of all, and with a prayerful, loving heart stretches out a helping hand to the poor, the marginalised and the stranger.

We want to see a Scottish Government that focuses on relieving hardship, providing good jobs for all, and tackling the scourge of inequality. Scotland needs a just tax system and fair pay for those in social care. Our government should strive rebuild social cohesion and protect the most vulnerable.

We want to be led by politicians who value New Scots and anyone who makes this country their home, not parliamentarians who seek to stoke division or push hostile rhetoric. In our care for creation, we want to live in a country that meets its climate commitments and delivers net zero by 2045.

Even though defence is a matter reserved for the UK Parliament, as peace organisation J&PS stands against indiscriminate nuclear weapons and their potential to destroy our nation that houses them Weapons of mass destruction do not respect borders.





Bishops and delegates of this year's Holy Land Coordination, which took place in January, travelled east of Jerusalem to visit the Mihtawish Bedouin community and the Comboni Sisters, who have accompanied them for more than 12 years.

The Mihtawish are a Palestinian Bedouin community in the West Bank. Semi-nomadic by tradition, they are organised around extended family, hospitality, and a deep connection to land and livestock. Most live in simple structures and face severe shortages of electricity, water, sanitation, and access to public services.

For over a decade, the Comboni Sisters have remained close to Bedouin families across 13 villages, building long-term relationships through regular presence. They support five kindergartens, provide healthcare and social assistance, and run women's empowerment programmes that foster dignity, resilience, and opportunity. Through this accompaniment, they embody a Church attentive to the dignity of all, as Pope Leo calls us to in *Dilexi Te*.

We heard from women who have learned sewing, embroidery, and English, and who are pursuing education so they can be protagonists in their own lives and agents of change in their communities.

The hills where the Mihtawish live are surrounded by illegal Israeli settlements that continue to encroach on their land. A new settler outpost has appeared within walking distance of their farm. While we were there, we saw settlers observing the community from nearby hills and witnessed new settlement buildings under construction. The women shared their fear of increasing settler violence: at night, settlers have taken sheep and goats; during the day they intimidate and harass the community, throw stones, and there have been incidents where children were attacked.

We met Raghad (*pictured above with her younger sister*). Her name means "ease of living" or "comfortable life". She is ten years old. She deserves the future that her name promises. But the older women of her community shared their fear of what lies ahead: if the settlers continue to come, where will the Mihtawish go?

When asked what they wanted us to tell people at home, they said: **"We want to live in peace. Tell your people that we want to be free; we want to live freely and securely on our own land."**

During the season of Lent we can grow closer to God through prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. While charitable giving is an essential expression of our faith, Pope Francis reminds us in *Fratelli Tutti*, and Pope Leo echoes in *Dilexi Te*, that true love of neighbour requires us to transform the injustices and structures that make these acts of charity necessary.

That's why we are calling on supporters to be agents of transformative love this Lent. **In a world scarred by conflict, poverty, and the denial of rights can you do one small thing each week to bring about justice and peace?**

Here are some example actions to inspire you:

- ◆ Week 1 (Poverty): Write to your MSP calling for structural action on poverty and the continued need for food banks.
- ◆ Week 2 (Refugees): Volunteer at a conversation café, English class, or refugee support group and encounter those whose stories are often ignored.
- ◆ Week 3 (Care for Creation): Care for our common home by planting a tree, reducing waste, or supporting an environmental justice cause.
- ◆ Week 4 (Peace): Learn about an ongoing conflict and support organisations working for nonviolence, peace, and disarmament by sharing their work or signing a petition.
- ◆ Week 5 (Dignity of Work): Practice ethical consumerism - choose Fair Trade or local goods to support workers' rights.
- ◆ Week 6 (Solidarity): Write a message or letter to a prisoner or to someone in immigration detention, offering compassion and hope.

Small actions, taken faithfully, can renew both our own relationship with God and help to renew the world around us.

JUSTICE & PEACE LENTEN ACTION CHALLENGE



Will you commit to taking one action for justice and peace over the next six weeks?

Schools' Tackling Poverty Conference

The publication of Pope Leo's first apostolic exhortation, *Dilexi Te*, reflects on the Christian call to love the poor and work for the eradication of poverty. Following this, Justice & Peace Scotland partnered with the Society of St Vincent de Paul Scotland to host an inaugural schools' conference on Catholic Social Teaching, campaigning, and advocacy. Titled **Tackling Poverty in Scotland: Responding to Dilexi Te**, the conference explored how faith can be translated into meaningful action on poverty.

Over 30 pupils and their teachers gathered in Glasgow to engage with the realities of poverty in Scotland. The event started with a presentation from the Poverty Alliance which gave the key facts of the problem. Participants then explored the message of *Dilexi Te* and what the exhortation calls Christians to do. Finally, they developed practical advocacy and campaigning skills, and planned projects to be delivered in their schools on behalf of SSVP Scotland and J&P Scotland.

While the conference was a pilot to explore future collaboration between our organisations, it was an successful first attempt: 100% of attendees responded "yes" when asked whether the event had helped them feel better equipped to take action for those living in poverty.



Write to your MP about detention

At the National Day of Solidarity to End Immigration Detention Event organised by Justice & Peace Scotland, Scottish Detainee Visitors and Glasgow Solidarity Stall last October, a template letter was made available to attendees to send to their MPs about detention.

Now that letter has been made into an online tool you can use to email your MP. The template can be modified to reflect any personal feelings or experience. Many MPs are unaware of the cruel and unjust practice of indefinite immigration detention, which the UK is the only country in Europe to practise.

Write to you MP about detention by clicking [here](#).

REFLECTION

"[In a world where] the virtual takes over the real, disagreements and social violence are part of everyday life, and peace becomes more insecure and distant every day, this Year of St Francis spurs all of us, each according to our possibilities, to imitate the poor man of Assisi, to form ourselves as far as possible on the model of Christ."



Papal decree proclaiming 2026 as a Franciscan Jubilee Year, to commemorate the 800th anniversary of the saint's death.



Pancake feast

Justice & Peace Scotland's Shrove Tuesday Shindig proved the hot (crepe) ticket for this year's final pre-Lent indulgence. An annual event held at Eyre Hall in Glasgow's Archdiocesan offices, it provides the opportunity to share a pancake feast and good chat with those within J&PS' network, Catholic agencies and other organisations that are valued partners.

Across the afternoon of meeting old friends and making new ones, and developing connections to further the work of J&PS, close on 40 people dropped in to enjoy some of the delicious fare on offer. All served up by Jamie Macdonald, head chef at one of Glasgow's foodie institutions Cafe Gandolfi. His services and skills in making real-deal pancakes were employed to tremendous effect.

Thanks to Archbishop Nolan and fellow colleagues at the Bishops' Conference of Scotland as well as our friends at SCIAF, SSVP, the Church of Scotland, SFAR and Glasgow Bethlehem Twinning Association, among others, for coming along and contributing to such a memorable event.



Scottish Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

Stop the Nuclear Nightmare:

HMNB Clyde (Faslane)
North Gate
Saturday 14th March 2026
1pm-3pm

Use your vote



Ahead of the national election on 7th May, a broad coalition of partners from across the Scottish peace and justice movement will gather at Faslane to highlight the nuclear threat to Scotland. All are invited to assemble at the north gate of HMNB Clyde on 14th March from 1pm to 3pm. Representatives of Justice & Peace Scotland and Pax Christi Scotland will be attendance to make a stand against weapons of mass destruction with potential to destroy our entire home environment and cause unimaginable devastation across the planet.

Far from keeping us safe, the weapons stored so close to our most populous city put a target on our backs. Poor conditions at the nuclear weapons facilities on Scotland's west coast have caused radioactive risks and shocking incidents of pollution. Nuclear convoys carry these dangerous and toxic weapons up and down our roads, often through towns and cities. Further, the threat of nuclear devastation raises international tensions and poses the greatest risk to humanity. You are urgently asked to help us send the message to politicians running for elected office in Holyrood that Scotland rejects these horrific weapons stationed on our coasts.

Special bus travel will be offered, with donations invited to help over costs on a non-obligatory basis (see details below). The journey to the base will include a toilet stop at Helensburgh before the rally (the coaches will also have toilets). After speeches for an hour, there will be a quick stop on Glen Fruin to a spot allowing a better viewpoint of the entire naval base. Please remember to bring appropriate clothing in case of poor weather, as well as a packed lunch to prevent any hunger pangs.

It is important to register for buses. For travel from Edinburgh and Glasgow you can do so [here](#).

For those seeking to support the event from further north, there will be an Aberdeen bus that will make stops in Dundee, Perth and Stirling. For details email Mike at scndabdn@gmail.com to register interest.

One site, two organisations, three days



I recently spent three days in northern France volunteering with two organisations, Care4Calais and Roots, working alongside displaced people and refugees at the new distribution site in Dunkirk, France. Though families and women passed through among the 500 to 1,000 people daily, most were single men. People from Eritrea, Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia and Afghanistan – all navigating uncertain journeys.

Despite the many organisations present - offering services such as hot drinks, showers, shaving, heaters and films and football on screens - their work is constantly disrupted by intensified police intervention. Evictions happen almost daily. Tensions are high; each day we had to briefly evacuate the site because of fights. Food poverty is severe. Cold is constant. Many people have no shoes. In theory, gyms open when temperatures drop below zero, but many avoid them because violence, abuse, or fear of arrest.

What will stay with me most is not only the hardship, but the determination – among both volunteers and people on the move – to preserve dignity and connection in a harsh environment. These small acts do not solve everything – but they matter. Perhaps our role, from a distance, is simply to remain attentive: to stay informed, to hold these realities in our hearts, and to remember that behind policies and borders are people, still hoping for safety and a future. **Sheilagh Guthrie.**



Upcoming Events

Saturday, 7th March - St Andrew's Foundation for Catholic Education Cardinal Winning Lecture 2026, University of Glasgow Humanity Lecture Theatre, Room 255, Main Building, West Quadrangle, Glasgow, G12 8QQ - 11am to 1pm (Mass held before the lecture in the Memorial Chapel at 9.30am)

Dr Jem Sullivan, from the Catholic University of America, will deliver the annual Cardinal Winning Lecture this year, under the heading 'Why the Way of Beauty Matters in Catholic Education'. [Reserve your place here](#).

Thursday, 5th March to Thursday 16th April, 'A Better World With Dignity For All', pre-Scottish Parliament election Q&A evenings with candidates from all main parties - various venues across Glasgow Diocese.

See on the right of this page for all details of these meetings that are open to all.



Saturday, 14th March - End The Nuclear Nightmare Peace Rally, HMNB (Faslane), North Gate - 1pm to 3pm

See page four for all information, including details of special bus provision that covers all of Scotland's major cities.



Friday, 24th April - Faith In the Public Square, St Ps and Gs Church, Edinburgh - 9.30am to 4.30pm

A one-day conference exploring politics, culture, the arts and academia from a Christian perspective in Scotland today. Only weeks ahead of the Scottish Parliamentary elections, this is a timely opportunity to think deeply, listen well, and reflect on how Christian faith can shape our engagement in public life — wisely, graciously and faithfully. Keynote speaker will be Tim Farron MP, who will reflect on why and how Christians should get involved in politics, drawing on his book *A Mucky Business*. Participants can also join a choice of seminars throughout the day.

[View the full agenda and book tickets by clicking here.](#)

13th May to 20th May - A Million Acts of Hope - UK wide

A campaign led by Hope not Hate, A Million Acts of Hope, supported by many Christian organisations, will build to a week of action in mid-May. It will be a UK-wide week of action bringing together communities, faith groups, and charities to make visible the everyday acts of hope, service, and solidarity that too often go unnoticed. From food banks and litter picks to youth work and neighbourhood safety, millions of people are already showing up for one another. The aim is to connect those efforts into a single national story - one that amplifies compassion over division. The hope is to involve as many faith groups, big and small as possible.

[For details of how to take part, click here.](#)

'A Better World with Dignity for All' - Scottish election Q&A evenings



In anticipation of the Scottish Parliament election on 7th May, the Glasgow Justice & Peace groups of St Joseph's, Milngavie, St Andrew's, Bearsden, and Immaculate Conception, Maryhill, have invited representatives of the six main political parties in Scotland to a series of public Q&A evenings between March and April on the theme of 'A Better World with Dignity for All'.

The format of one party representative at each meeting is to ensure dialogue between the audience and the guest speaker, rather than political point-scoring between parties. It is hoped that this will allow the audience to hear and learn only the party's response to dealing with the same five questions, sent to them in advance, related to Justice & Peace Scotland areas of concern: human rights, social justice, refugees and migration and care for creation.

Roughly ten minutes will be allocated to each question, including any follow up comments raised by the audience. An independent chairperson will coordinate the meeting, keep the speaker on point, and control timings and any comments from the floor.

Meeting schedule (all Thursdays 7pm for 7.15pm - 8.30pm)

5th March - Dr Pam Gosal, Conservative Party - St Andrew's Church Hall, 29 Roman Rd, Bearsden

12th March - Cllr Thomas Kerr, Reform UK - St Joseph's Church Hall, 3 Buchanan St, Milngavie

19th March - Ross Greer, Green Party - St Joseph's Church Hall, 3 Buchanan St, Milngavie

26th March - Marie McNair, SNP - St Andrew's Church Hall, 29 Roman Road, Bearsden

9th April - Adam Harley, Liberal Democrats - St Andrew's Church Hall, 29 Roman Rd, Bearsden

16th April - James Adams, Labour Party - Immaculate Conception Church Hall, 2049 Maryhill Road, Glasgow

Red line for Gaza

A total of 37 humanitarian charities are being threatened with the forced closure of their life-saving work in Gaza in the coming weeks, even as a devastating and deadly crisis grips more than two million people. Please act now and email your MP, with link below.

Forcing humanitarian organisations to shut down in the middle of an ongoing catastrophe – especially one where people are still being injured and killed – is an act of inhumanity. If this threat is carried out it will mean less food reaching desperate families, fewer medics working to save lives, and women and children less able to find protection and mental health support. This decision will cost lives.

Allowing aid agencies to operate is not optional, conditional, or political. It's an obligation enshrined in international law.

Use your voice to demand action from those in power. Every email to an MP counts. [Do so by clicking here.](#)