

diarydiary

DECEMBER

- 1 World AIDS Day
- 2 International Day for the Abolition of Slavery
- 10 Human Rights Day
- 18 International Migrants Day
- 25 Christmas Day
- 28 Holy Innocents Day

JANUARY

- 6 **Feast of the Epiphany:** Justice and Peace Sunday. Bishop Moran's letter to be read out at all Masses and a collection to be taken up for the work of Justice and Peace. Please ensure this is happening in your parish.
- 27 **Homelessness Sunday**
- 27 - 'Opening doors opening hearts' Poverty and
- 3 Feb Homelessness Action Week
- 30 **Mahatma Gandhi assassinated, 1948**

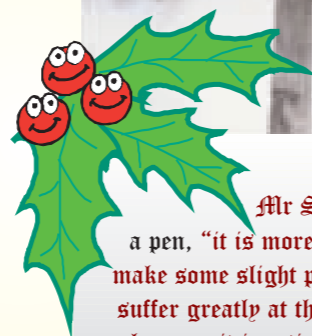
FEBRUARY

- 2 **Scottish Fairtrade Forum** First General Meeting
- 2 **Still Human Still Here** - destitution of asylum seekers conference
- 3 **Poverty Action Sunday**
- 25 - **March Fairtrade Fortnight**
- 9 Mar

MARCH

- 7 **Women's World Day of Prayer**

Full details and links on the events page on our website
www.justiceandpeacescotland.org.uk/events.shtml



"At this festive season of the year, Mr Scrooge," said the gentleman, taking up a pen, "it is more than usually desirable that we should make some slight provision for the poor and destitute, who suffer greatly at the present time. ... We choose this time, because it is a time, of all others, when Want is keenly felt, and Abundance rejoices."

Charles Dickens (A Christmas Carol)

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ISSUE 6 : 2007



Work of Christmas Begins
When the song of the angels is stilled,
when the star in the sky is gone,
when the kings and princes are home,
when the shepherds are back with the flocks,
then the work of Christmas begins:
to find the lost, to heal those broken in spirit,
to feed the hungry, to release the oppressed,
to rebuild the nations, to bring peace among all peoples,
to make a little music with the heart...

And, to radiate the Light of Christ,
every day, in every way, in all that we do
and in all that we say.

Then the work of Christmas begins.

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editorial

It seems that we have outgrown God. This at least is the theme of a whole swathe of recent books. Many of these books are intemperate rants, framed in language that suggests either the jilted lover or the disappointed consumer. One has to wonder where religion (which is usually interchangeable with God in these works) has let these authors down. You just don't get that steamed up about something you couldn't care less about.

The usual technique is to set up notions of God and religion which are based on extreme manifestations and destructive history and then knock them down. Thus Christianity is characterised as ignorant and irrational, based on a slavish biblical literalism and an immature dependence on the supernatural. Catholicism in addition is generally servile to infallible popes, with a history that barely gets beyond the Crusades, the Inquisition, Galileo and sexual repression and abuse. Having shown to the author's satisfaction that religion and God are little more than a kind of primitive superstition, it therefore stands to reason to show them the door.

Interestingly, as one god is being shown the door, another is being invited in. This is the god of Science. Whether scientists or not, the new atheists generally defer to science as not only the last word in truth, but the only word. And of course it is self evident that scientific and technological developments, particularly over the last 250 years, have brought enormous changes for the better in the human condition.

Yet, using the same partial arguments as our atheists, one could argue that science has only given us a fetid world where the power of the greedy is maintained at the expense of the majority, who are allowed to die in their millions from hunger and preventable disease. Under constant electronic surveillance, the drones of this society carry out the toilsome work in return for mindless comfort. The never ending desires of their consumerism are fed and titillated with the pap of gormless media which serve as social tranquillisers: the new form of bread and circuses. Maintaining these selfish hives of productivity entails the dismantling and devastation of the natural environment. And over it all lurks the military industrial complex: the constant, fearful diversion of resources into wasteful and destructive ways of suppressing and obliterating humanity.

Like all good parodies, there are elements of truth; and that is where the danger emerges. For the opposite of truth is not lies, so much as a fanatical belief in the rightness of our version of the truth. Here is the root of much of our social problems, the fundamentalisms of economics and politics, science and religion. Fundamentalist science is merely the latest in a long line of versions of what we call gnosticism, salvation through knowledge, often secret and the property of an exclusive elite. Ironically, the notion of a truth that

excludes is common to scientific atheists and religious reactionaries. It is part of what Hugh MacDiarmid called 'the cursed conceit o' bein' richt that damns the vast majority o' men'. If truth is not open and inclusive it cannot set us free (see John 8:32). And John also points out that the truth is something done rather than merely known (John 3:21; 1 John 1:6).

The Catholic philosopher Jacques Maritain, who was one of the main architects of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights said, 'Yes, we agree about the rights, but on condition no one asks us why'. Presumably, because then we get entangled in justificatory ideology. And that is why governments often find themselves seeing human rights as a dispensable luxury rather than a basic prerequisite of a civilised society. I am continuously surprised by those who claim to be atheists, yet exercise a transcendent compassion for their fellow humans; just as I am continuously shamed that, even with the gift of faith, so many of us who call ourselves theists, fall short of that responsibility.

For Gabriel Marcel, another French Catholic philosopher, it is this very capacity to love and be responsible for one another that is an argument for God's existence. 'The very enormity of these responsibilities', says Marcel, 'is beyond purely human capacity'. Made in the image of a God of love, we cannot but love one another if we act in fidelity to ourselves. We may know people, like a list of trades people in the kitchen, useful for the problems they can sort. Or we may know people deeply and responsively, as if we really meant the old expression, 'I am at your disposal'. This brings us, says Marcel, into the realm of mystery, problems we find ourselves inextricably drawn into alongside others. **Justice and Peace** does not simply confront us with problems; it involves us with others in the mystery of human suffering.

Here God is a presence rather than the conclusion to a logical argument. The coming of Christmas reminds us, in the words of the seventeenth century German mystic, Angelus Silesius:

*Though Christ a thousand times in Bethlehem be born
And not within thyself, thy soul will be forlorn.*

The Incarnation is not a philosophical statement or a scientific explanation. To try to see it as such is to miss the point of the mystery. Born insignificantly in human terms, God is revealed as being completely at our disposal in Christ. Stripped of the hype, Christmas is about gift – the graced nature of giving and receiving. May the gift of the Christ child be born in our hearts again this Christmas. Not only to sustain our work for justice and peace, but to remind us that the mysteries of the kingdom are revealed, not to our cleverness, but rather to the child in us.

unday for the eradication of poverty

17 October 2007

The origin: On 17th October 1987, in the presence of 100,000 people from diverse social backgrounds and many countries, Joseph Wresinski, founder of ATD Fourth World, unveiled a commemorative stone in the Plaza of Human Rights and Liberties Paris, at the place where the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was signed in 1948. The 100,000 people attending were citizens from all walks of life and all backgrounds. Some represented high-level international, national, or local governing bodies. Others were individuals and families living in chronic poverty themselves and struggling against it daily.

Since then the commemorative stone has become a gathering point for people from all walks of life. They gather, sometimes on the 17th of each month, to show their solidarity with people in extreme poverty around the world and to make a personal commitment to join forces with them to end poverty and social exclusion.

Translation of the text on the original commemorative stone has been replicated in public places in many countries including Belgium, Burkina Faso, Canada, Germany, Philippines, Portugal Reunion Island, Switzerland, and the USA. It is a credit to the city of Glasgow that the city has the only replica stone in the UK. The stone reads:

On this day, defenders of human and civil rights from every continent gathered here. They paid homage to the victims of hunger, ignorance and violence. They affirmed



Commemoration in George Square

their conviction that human misery is not inevitable. They proclaimed their solidarity with all people who, throughout the world, strive to eradicate extreme poverty. **"Wherever men and women are condemned to live in extreme poverty, human rights are violated. To come together to ensure that these rights be respected is our solemn duty."**

Joseph Wresinski
Glasgow, October 17, 1999

Paris, October 17, 1987

outcampaigning...



STUC March
Against Racism



People and
Parliament
Against Trident
March and Rally



Some of the J&P contingent at the
Fairtrade Conference at the
Scottish Parliament

For more information, see
www.povertyalliance.org

poverty quiz

Set by Rachel Jury of Poverty Alliance Scotland.
Answers on page 9.

QUESTIONS

- 13 Million People in the UK are experiencing poverty?
True False
- Glasgow features in one of the top 20 postcode areas in Britain for the highest concentration of Millionaires?
True False
- Two of the five most deprived areas in Scotland are in Glasgow City?
True False
- One in three children in Scotland lives in poverty?
True False
- Real poverty is only found in the third world and in developing countries?
True False
- Poverty is not being able to afford the new trainers you want?
True False
- If you have a television and a video, you can't be living in poverty?
True False

scottish fair trade forum first general meeting

The first General Meeting of the Scottish Fair Trade Forum will be held in Glasgow on February 2nd, 2008, at which members will be electing a Board of Directors and dealing with other key business. More information about this event will be posted on the Fairtrade Forum website as it becomes available.

The Forum is calling for nominations for Interim Board Members for 2008-09. Nominees can be self-nominated or nominated by others and should be members of the Forum. Visit the website: www.scottishfairtradeforum.org.uk to download nomination forms and to find out more.

*We wish you the joy and peace of Christmas and
thanks to all our readers for your continuing support.
From all at Justice and Peace.*

In his days justice shall flourish, and peace till the moon fails.

blessing nonviolence

Thomas Gumbleton, retired Bishop of Detroit and founder of Pax Christi USA, gave a sermon to celebrate the beatification of Franz Jägerstätter. Here is an excerpt.

Jesus shows us that when you proclaim the truth as He did, and when you try to get people to radically change their lives as He did, it will become controversial. A couple of weeks ago, Pope Benedict proclaimed that Franz Jägerstätter, a peasant from Austria, should be beatified. At the cathedral in the city of Linz, the diocese where Franz had lived, there was a beautiful ceremony in which thousands of people gathered to proclaim this new, blessed saint: One who is held up now as our model, one who we must try to follow because he followed Jesus.

Franz Jägerstätter definitely was controversial. He lived in a tiny village in Austria called St. Radegund and during World War II he stood up for what was true. We, the whole church, now recognize that he was saying the truth, but he was rejected by the people in his own village. Even his parish priest told him: "No, you can't do what you're planning to do," because Franz was saying no to Hitler. He was saying no to service in the army, he was saying no to war. He was saying, "You can't kill in the name of Jesus."

He was very controversial. Of course, the Nazi regime would not accept that, so he was taken to prison, first of all in Linz and then to Berlin. On Aug. 9, 1943, he was beheaded,

became a martyr for the truth, for the truth of Jesus that we must reject violence and war. So we must recognize that if we do try to say the truth, live the truth, follow Jesus faithfully, we may be rejected. Probably most of us are not going to be asked to live the way of Jesus to the point of being executed, but sometimes that might even be harder. I know how important it is for us to look up to Franz Jägerstätter as a model, one who was willing to give his very life in order to be faithful to Jesus.

But I think also of his widow, Franziska, 94 years old now, and her three children, their spouses and their families with children and grandchildren, but Franziska especially, who was there at the beatification. For over 60 years, she lived the way of Jesus and the first part of that time when the war was still going on after Franz had been executed, she experienced the hostility, the hatred, the contempt of those people who in that village had rejected Franz. The very priesthood, the bishop, did not think he was doing the right thing. They tried to get him to change, to go somehow into that army, for the sake of his children, they told him.

They hated him because of that, but all of that hatred was poured forth upon Franziska over many years until finally it began to change, and now she could be present at the beatification with thousands of people saying, "Yes, you did the right thing. You experienced that rejection, suffering and hostility and you have been through all of that because you are faithful to Jesus."

I am not happy when people ask, "How is the situation for Christians?" Those who kill don't kill only Christians. They kill Muslims as well—the situation is the same for both The Christian house is next to the Muslim house. Each has his own religion, each defends his own home, each defends his religion. But your faith is for God, the country is for everyone.

Cardinal Emmanuel III Delly

patriarch of the Baghdad-based Chaldean Church, which has existed for nearly 2,000 years. The pope recently named him, along with 22 others from around the world, to the College of Cardinals, making Delly the first Roman Catholic Cardinal from Iraq in modern history. (Source: *The New York Times*)



© Ann Smith/CAFOD

FOR CHILDREN affected by HIV/AIDS

To play, to learn, to have food and health.
To be loved, secure and safe.
These are the rights of every child, rights robbed by a virus and robbed twice over in countries crippled by debt and paralysed by trade rules designed to benefit the rich and powerful.

Loving God, vanquish our complacency at our injustice to these your children. Remove all traces of empty conscience-salving charity. Make us, instead, committed to sharing our resources – your resources – with those who need them most; to seeking in justice to remove the debt burdens of the poorest, to working tirelessly so that all your children might know again the joys of playing, learning, living, loving and being loved.

prayer for homelessness sunday 27 january 2008

Lord, Your door is always open to us. Your heart is always open, overflowing with love. Help us, your church, to keep our doors open to all who struggle with poverty or homelessness. Give us open hearts, to recognise our sister, our brother, in need. And fill us with the will to work in our community and our country towards ending the pain and waste that poverty and homelessness create. In the name of the one who emptied himself of all but love, our Saviour Jesus. Amen

christmas reflection

When I look back now to Christmas of my childhood, it seems so real, so pure. The child in the manger was the centre of Christmas. The star of Bethlehem, the shepherds and the kings were all part of that exciting time. Now it is like looking into a bright, warm tunnel, full of light, of peace and expectancy and love; full of warmth and silence, of snow-filled days and clear starry nights, of hushed footfalls and carrying but muffled sounds. There are smells too, of freshly baked mince pies, of a chicken roasting in the oven. The feeling of expectancy was all-enveloping. It was a magic time, a time when heaven embraced earth, a time of goodness and above all, a time of love.



Mass at midnight was exciting - it meant that the time we had been waiting for had come. The crib was visited, pennies were dropped in the box for the missions, a present was left on the steps of the side altar for the children who had no-one. And you thought of those children, and you wondered how it would feel. Somehow the gifts and Santa Claus were only part of a whole - the presents were a culmination of the long-awaited day. The visit of grandparents was a treasured gift in itself.

When looking back, God was there, right at the very centre of a child's Christmas. If only I could now recapture that softness, that awe, when each light on the Christmas tree was a light of a simple child-like and trusting faith.

When I had children of my own, I recaptured those early Christmases. We decorated the tree, set up the crib and placed the figures lovingly in their place. We would turn off the main lights, play Christmas carols, and 'feel' Christmas, feel the presence of God all around us, and remember past Christmases.

None of my children are yet married, but I look forward to the day when I will have grandchildren around me so that I can again look down through the kaleidoscope of time to Christmas of the past, to gather the memories like precious flowers and rearrange them to suit tomorrow's child. What I had and what my children had, I want these as yet unknown grandchildren to have. The warmth and peace, and brightness and love, and above all, that unworldly expectancy of God becoming one of us.

Heaven and earth meet in love at Christmas. But out there, in our world, there are children who have never experienced that love and joy and can never pass on that experience. Heaven and earth have met in us for a purpose. The Christ-child did not come to remain an infant forever in a manger. The love and joy and peace he brought should overflow in us to the point that we want to share them with others. No-one should be left in the margins. God came for all.

And just as the spirit of Christmas past stays with us, so does God's spirit stay with us. Not only as the gentle dove, bringing love, joy and peace but as the wild goose, restless, disturbing, reminding us continually that the Christ-child came that we might build a world of justice and peace here on earth. That is what the first Christmas was all about, that is what every Christmas is about.

(We long to see you so. Come, Lord Jesus, come again.)
Rosaleen Murray

NONIE

Nonie (Rosaleen) Murray who died recently, was a wonderful, delightful woman whose friendship I will always cherish. She brought great warmth to everything she did, at SCIAF, where I got to know her and in her life with Peter and their family. Her quite profound spirituality and her devotion to the poorest among us was evident in the many prayers and meditations she composed for SCIAF over the years. I'm quite certain no one has ever been able to take her place. That might make her sound rather serious – quite the opposite. Nonie had a great sense of the funny side of life and often when I phoned her for advice or dropped in to see her on my way to a meeting, we would wind up in fits of laughter.

The meditation above was written when her children were younger and before they had families of their own. I'm sad she was not able to write another reflection once she was surrounded by the love and noise and fun of her grandchildren, whom she adored.

Christmas is all about love – God's love for us; Mary's love for her wee baby; our love for each other. Nonie Murray was all about love and life and joy. It was a privilege to have been her friend.

Maryanne Ure

amnesty international + abortion

The following advice has been compiled by the Justice and Peace Commission

Many of you with an interest in justice and peace issues will be aware of the recent debate with Amnesty International over its position on abortion. The matter has been considered at length by the National Commission for Justice & Peace Scotland and this article

(which is also published on the website) offers advice on the situation. It is advisory only and should not be seen as an official or definitive statement from the Bishops. You may wish to note that the Justice and Peace Commission has withdrawn from membership of Amnesty International.

amnesty international + abortion cont'd

Amnesty International (AI) has changed its long held neutral position on abortion. It now supports the right to abortion where there has been violence such as rape or incest. Amnesty in abandoning its neutral position is forcing its members to take up a position themselves. It puts us in the difficult position of wishing to further Amnesty's work for prisoners while being unable to support its position on abortion.

On 28 August, 2007 Cardinal O'Brien resigned from AI stating: *"I hope I act in a manner which is 'pro-life' following what I believe is the teaching of Jesus Christ and the teaching of my Church. That basic and most fundamental of all human rights, the right to life is recognised by the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the document upon which Amnesty International was founded. Sadly now Amnesty International seems to be placing itself at the forefront of a campaign for a universal 'right' to abortion in contravention to that basic right to human life. For me it is a matter of conscience that I have decided to resign from Amnesty International. Others must follow their own consciences."*

Many of us have been long time supporters of AI and are struggling with our consciences as to how we should respond. Here is some background information on this issue and some thoughts on how you might practically respond:

BACKGROUND

Amnesty's original focus was on the plight of prisoners of conscience; subsequently it expanded its focus to campaign, for example, against the death penalty and the prevention of violence against women, including rape and being imprisoned for undergoing abortion. Its new position has arisen from this and it has now departed from its long standing neutral position regarding abortion.

The Church has a concern regarding the care of prisoners (*see Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church: Para 402, 554 and 557*) If the Church abandons its support for the work of Amnesty in this field, it is necessary to think how this concern can be continued in practice. As members of the Church we shall not want to abandon the prisoners for whom Amnesty has provided and will continue to provide so much valuable support.

We are accustomed to working with a wide range of Churches and voluntary bodies in promoting Justice and

Peace without requiring sharing all of their principles. This can include offering and sharing resources. There is normally no conflict or confusion in these situations. Indeed this breadth of activity generates a valuable dynamic.

POSSIBLE RESPONSE:

You may decide that you wish to leave Amnesty

- *First don't go quietly. Please tell Amnesty that you support their work on prisoners but cannot support their stance on abortion.*
- *Watch the situation – if Amnesty changes its position it would be good to rejoin them and tell them why you are able to do so.*
- *Look for opportunities where you can still support the work on prisoners. For example it should still be possible to take part in the greetings card campaign without being a member of AI.*
- *Look for other organisations which support similar aims and give your support to them. We do not want to abandon the prisoners of conscience who need our help. For example:*

Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture, which is supported by CTBI, the UK ecumenical agency, and has a greetings card campaign; or the Medical Campaign for the Victims of Torture, which provides for those oppressed for their beliefs. Other organisations are listed on our website.

You may decide to stay with Amnesty

- *First don't stay quietly. Tell Amnesty of how difficult this has been and that you will review your decision periodically*
- *Take part in any and all consultations and the annual AGM to put your view across.*
- *You could ask that your subscription to Amnesty be ring-fenced. However, Amnesty has stated they will not consider making such provision.*

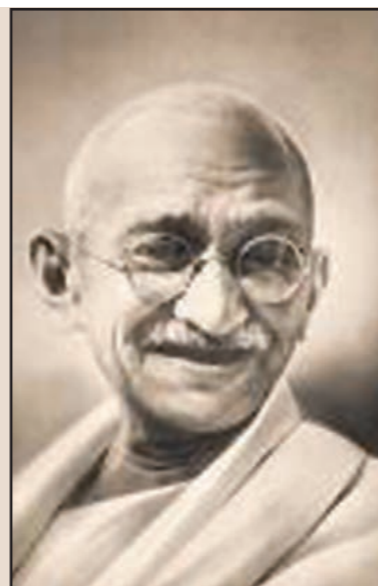
In the end it will be for each of you to decide for yourselves. We have no doubt that those who do resign will do so with heavy hearts; those who stay may find an even greater challenge. What is important is that those who have unjustly lost their liberty do not suffer. We hope that you find this advice to be helpful.

John McCarney, Chair

In January we commemorate the 60th anniversary of the assassination of Mohandas Gandhi, better known as Mahatma, meaning Great Soul. Below are two quotations with particular relevance for Justice and Peace

'Nonviolence is the greatest force at the disposal of humankind. It is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction devised by the ingenuity of man.'

'God Himself dare not appear to a hungry man except in the form of bread.'



newsbrief . . . newsbrief

AVIATION TAX: The government recently announced that they will replace air passenger duty with an environmental tax on planes. For the first time taxes on aviation will be linked to carbon dioxide emissions. The current air passenger duty taxes individuals for flying, whereas the new tax targets aircraft. This means that airlines will be penalised for flying half empty or inefficient planes. The government is also launching a consultation on how to link the tax to the distance the flight is travelling. The challenge for the UK government is now to set a tax on planes at a high enough rate to halt the growth in aviation. The challenge for us is to make sure they do this! The aviation industry pays no tax on fuel and no VAT, and so effectively receives a subsidy of over £10 billion a year from the British taxpayer. (*Source WDM*)

'ADDING UP' A NEW REPORT BY CHILD ACTION ON POVERTY exposes the 'free education' myth. The report found that three-quarters of secondary school parents and two-thirds of primary school parents find it difficult to meet costs like school uniforms and school trips. Only a quarter of families thought their school made it clear that low income families can be helped with, or exempted from, many costs. Full details at www.cpag.org.uk/campaigns/education this report has been published by the School Costs Coalition. The Coalition was formed 2 years ago when CPAG joined forces with Citizens Advice, the National Union of Teachers and children's charities.

ASYLUM: "Asylum practices in Europe in the recent past (which continue in some countries) put asylum seekers through lengthy and costly procedures while excluding them from the labour market and giving them fairly generous public benefits, making it easy to caricature them as a burden. Visibly different and forcibly idle for long periods, asylum seekers became an easy target of public resentment." - Kathleen Newland of the Migration Policy Institute.

CENTRE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE'S ASYLUM ENQUIRY: This think-tank, set up by former Conservative Party leader, Iain Duncan Smith MP, has launched an enquiry looking at issues of asylum. Asylum campaigns were heartened by the content and the tone of IDS's words at the launch: "The law effectively forces them into destitution, illegal activity and vulnerability... The result is a growing destitute underclass in society that is only being supported by voluntary organisations. A radical overhaul is needed." For the full comments: <http://www.church-poverty.org.uk/news-items/CSJ/>

RICH COUNTRIES' MUST PAY HUGE CARBON DEBT: Industrialised nations must pay billions of pounds to help poorer countries tackle global warming if millions of people around the world are not to be consigned to endless poverty, Christian Aid says in a new report. *Truly Inconvenient: Tackling poverty and Climate Change at Once*, is intended to inform debate at a UN climate change conference in Bali in December, where representatives from 180 nations will discuss an international strategy for reducing global warming. Details at www.christianaid.org.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/carbon_debt.aspx

POVERTY QUIZ ANSWERS (see page 11)
 1: True. In 2005/06, around 13 million people in the UK were living in households below this low income threshold. This is around a fifth (22%) of the population. (www.poverty.org.uk)
 2: True. Bearsden in Glasgow has 155 Millionaires living in the area. (*Millionaire Neighbourhood Report, Report Compiled by EuroDirect, part of the Skipton Information Group*)
 3: True. Of the five most deprived data zones in the SIMD 2006, two are in Glasgow City. (*Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2006*)
 4: True. Scotland has one of the highest rates of child poverty in the EU.
 5: False. Although absolute poverty is rare here, it does exist. And poverty - absolute or relative - is very real to the people experiencing it.
 6: Maybe. If you have to make sacrifices in order to be able to afford basics like food and rent, you could be said to be living in poverty.
 7: False. Owning a television doesn't mean that you can always afford two meals a day

ANTI-SLAVERY INTERNATIONAL recently held its annual Award ceremony. This year's winner was the Coalition of Immokalee Workers for their exceptional contribution towards tackling modern-day slavery in the United States agricultural industry. Over the past decade the CIW has uncovered, investigated and assisted in the prosecution of six slavery cases, secured the release of 1000 Mexican and Guatemalan migrant farm workers held in slavery, and successfully campaigned for corporate buyers to eliminate the existence of forced labour within their supply chains, including historic agreements with McDonalds and Taco Bell. More information at www.antislavery.org.uk

CAAT WINS DRAMATIC VICTORY IN HIGH COURT. In a landmark ruling on 9th November, the High Court gave the go-ahead for a judicial review of the Government's decision on BAE's Saudi arms deals. Campaign Against the Arms Trade, along with their allies The Corner House, will now be able to take the Government to court in the new year. At that hearing, their lawyers will argue that the Government broke the law by cutting short a Serious Fraud Office investigation into BAE. This is a great success for CAAT's Control BAE campaign. It is now more vital than ever that we continue to call for the reopening of the investigation. CAAT wish to thank everyone who's playing a part in the campaign!

STUDY WAR NO MORE: The power of arms companies extends a long way, even into supposedly independent places of learning and research. CAAT has teamed up with the Fellowship of Reconciliation to research military influence in universities. *Study War No More*, a report launched in December, reveals hundreds of courses, events and other projects through which sponsorship or involvement by arms companies extends their sway and compromises academic independence. The report will be a great resource for students and university staff campaigning against the arms trade.

UK CHILD POVERTY: According to a report by Save the Children, one child in ten in the UK lives in severe poverty, in a family that is struggling to get by. The UK government has promised to end child poverty by 2020. But they're way off target. £4 billion extra is needed to meet the government's promise to halve child poverty by 2010. Full report at www.savethechildren.org.uk/en/50_693.htm

FAILED ASYLUM SEEKERS FACE HEALTHCARE BAN: Controversial plans to bar hundreds of thousands of illegal immigrants and failed asylum seekers from all but emergency health services are being considered by the Home Office. (*The Observer, Sunday 2nd December*)

PERSONAL FINANCE HANDBOOK LAUNCHED AT WESTMINSTER: The second edition of the Personal Finance Handbook was recently launched. Lack of financial advice can limit access for the poorest families to appropriate financial services. Many low income families find themselves without savings or in spiralling debt as a result. The book helps advisers to give people the information they need to manage debt and access financial services like savings and insurance, so they can plan for the security of their family. Copies of the book available from <http://www.cpag.org.uk/pfh07/>

scotland's future

John Deighan, the Catholic Parliamentary Officer, offers some considerations on the recently introduced National Conversation.

The Scottish Government has launched what it calls a *'National Conversation'* inviting people to give their views on Scotland and their perspective on what kind of Scotland they wish to live in. In particular it seeks views on support for a referendum on independence for Scotland. The notion of such an exercise raises many issues worth pondering. Is it possible to *'re-invent'* a country? Can the words of contributors have any great impact on the direction of Scottish politics and society?

Detractors in other parties question the merit of spending public money on such an exercise, questioning whether a minority SNP administration has the power to deliver on findings that may come from the consultation and especially in regards to any discussion about independence which is poorly supported in opinion polls and favoured by a minority of parliamentarians.

For good reason, the Catholic Church's social teaching points out that institutional and constitutional issues are not matters for the Church to teach on other than to promote principles that ensure justice and fairness. The choice of government structure and the form of the state belong to the realm of politics rather than the realm of the Church.

On the other hand the Pope and his predecessor have been gravely worried about some of the underpinning values which have been absorbed in to the prevailing ideas of democracy in the Western world. Most notable have been the pleas for a re-evaluation of moral relativism which is now taken for granted as the basis for informing government policies and action. Issues around constitutional arrangements and economic prosperity cannot be detached from the status of the human person and the corresponding rights of the person in society. In 1948 the Universal Declaration of Human

Rights was seen as a triumph for establishing rights that had to be recognised by every nation. It came in the aftermath of the Nuremberg trials which concluded that there are limits to the authority of governments. In recent times this lesson has been forgotten and some human rights have been eroded. Governments again see themselves as the final arbiters of what is right and wrong and feel free to redefine the boundaries of human rights as long as these can get voted through their respective parliaments. Campaign groups now see the human rights label as a useful means of getting their special interests accepted and enforced in law.

Ministers of the new Scottish Government have made it clear they see this as a chance to hear a full range of views on all aspects of Scottish life. The First Minister in launching the consultation stated: **"I respect the role of organisations like churches, business groups, voluntary organisations and others across civic Scotland who reflect a distinct voice on these matters and bring wisdom and expertise"**.

An opportunity to *'converse'* with our nation's leaders is perhaps then a useful time to draw their attention to the need for a firm foundation for values which should inform their decision making. Catholics will have a variety of views on Scottish independence and on the structures and workings of democracy and it will be good for those views to be contributed where possible in public discourse. But more importantly, it is necessary to be united in supporting norms of right and wrong which cannot be changed in regard to the value of human life, the natural rights of the family, the right to work and the role of parents in educating their children, the means to support one's own family and the right to freedom of belief and expression.

The National Conversation has its own website at: www.anationalconversation.com



Tenth Anniversary of Cupar Justice and Peace Group



Fiona Gordon of Cupar describes a celebration

A decade can be a long time in the fragile world of ecumenical groups so the tenth anniversary of the Cupar group was something to celebrate. We had the party recently and over forty members and guests came along to a lively evening of reminiscing, ending with worship. We cut the birthday cake and enjoyed the delicious spread, but it was the birthday bunting and the graffiti table that made the party special. Everyone was asked to decorate a piece of yellow bunting depicting what the J&P group meant to them and later put their dreams for the future on the graffiti table. The results were a beautiful display of individual insights, passions and ideas which affirmed us all as a group committed to working for justice and peace together. One member said on the bunting, a circle of friends can make a huge impact; another said, we must never lose hope and one of our guests encouraged us by saying, together you do make a difference.

Looking back on ten years we can see patterns emerging in our work. From the summer of 1997 when Maryanne Ure came to tell us about J&P groups, we have tried to respond to many causes which swirl around the media and are focussed for us by the likes of One World Week, Jubilee Scotland, Traidcraft, Hadeel, Christian Peacemaker Teams, Make Poverty History, Amnesty International, Eco-congregations. And that is not an exhaustive list! The Church of Scotland's Church and Society Council and the Scottish Catholic J&P Commission itself have highlighted issues and given backup for our actions.

Like all church groups our instincts have always been to support those in need like the Franciscan Sisters working in Zimbabwe, but over the years those instincts have widened and

deepened to the realisation that Christian obedience must always include active campaigning and that the obvious way is for churches to do this together.

As we look round this wonderful but sad, needy and wicked world, we have often said to each other, we can only do what we can do. And we have offered others the opportunity to do these things too. It has become our custom to have two public occasions each year (coffee morning in spring and a lunch in autumn) as well as public stalls at Cupar Cross from time to time. We have also lobbied our MP, MSPs and MEP. People have signed letters, petitions and postcards at our campaign tables; they have bought from fair trade stalls; they have listened to talks and inspected displays; they have donated to good causes. The outcome of these events can be observed not just in money and attendances but in changed attitudes and new understanding.

A group from six different congregations around Cupar (and some in St Andrews) is not always easy to manage. We don't automatically see each other on a Sunday. However, in Cupar we are blessed with The Lighthouse a twenty year old book and coffee shop in the centre of town run by trustees from many churches. It is a beautiful place of many a God-given encounter: another example of churches doing the obvious thing together. J&P business is often conducted there in the by-going.

It is said that the secret of a good organisation is that it keeps good minutes and runs good parties. I think our group fulfils both these criteria! After the tenth birthday party our bunting was taken round six congregations where we have members, accompanied by someone from a different church. One congregational reporter was baffled by the bunting and declared in the local paper that it was the work of children.

What was it Jesus said?

what does the world need?

A reflection from Maryknoll Friends



When poets talk about the human soul, they do not talk about reason; they talk about feeling. The totally human being, they enable us to see, is the one who weeps over evil, revels in goodness, loves outrageously, and carries the pain of the world in healing hands.

Feeling is the mark of saints. It is Vincent de Paul tending the poor on the back streets of France, Mother Teresa with a dying beggar in her arms, Florence Nightingale tending the wounded in the midst of battle, John the apostle resting trustingly on the breast of Jesus, Damian binding the running sores of lepers on the island of Molokai, the soup kitchen people in our own towns giving hours of their lives, week after week, to feed the undernourished. Feeling, we know deep within us, signals the real measure of a soul.

Without feeling, living becomes one long, bland journey to nowhere that tastes of nothing. Take feeling away and we take away life. Feeling warns of our excesses and alerts us to possibilities. It attaches us and opens us and warns us of danger. Because of our feelings we are able to persevere through hard times and find our way to good times. Feelings lead us to the people who love us through life and satisfy our souls when nothing else about a situation can sustain us at all. Feelings, devoid of thought, made only of mist, become the inner lights that lead us out of harm's way and home to our

better selves. Feeling leads us to love the God we cannot see and to see the God around us whom we have yet to come to love. To talk about the spiritual life without feeling, to talk about any life at all without feeling, turns the soul to dust and reduces spirituality to the most sterile of initiatives. And yet we do.

In situations that require insight, wisdom, and concern to resolve them as well as hard, cold information, feelings bring an invaluable dimension. Feelings are the other kind of intelligence, the alternate kind of knowing, the humane kind of reasoning.

What the world needs may well be less detached intellectualism and more thinking hearts, less law and more compassion. Reason that is not informed by emotion is a dry and sterile thing. It comes up with answers too flawed to be humane, too disjunctive to be moral. Reason can be a very dishonorable approach to the task of being human. The kind of thinking that invented slavery trivialised feeling. The kind of thinking that trivialised feeling invented slavery. The world that developed nuclear bombs and made defense impossible, made fun of the peace movement for eroding national defenses. With the subjective obscured, objectivity too easily becomes hardheartedness. As Alice in Wonderland noted, in such a world **'down is up and up is down.'**

to save the innocent

From The Tent of Abraham: Stories of Hope and Peace for Jews, Christians, and Muslims by Joan Chittister, OSB

As co-chair of the Women's Global Peace Initiative, a UN partnership organisation, I have been working for almost four years with other women religious figures - an ordained Protestant clergywoman, a Buddhist nun, an Islamic scholar, an Orthodox Jew, and a Hindu nun - to bring Arab and Israeli women together in a common cause. In all these experiences, I found myself viewing the present through the scrim of the book of Genesis.

I remember my delight as a child when Sister read to us in class the passage that protects the innocent and the guilty. **"Then Abraham came near,"** the scripture read, **"and said to the Lord, 'Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked?'"**

Then began the haggling that amazed and delighted me as a child.

"Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city," Abraham goes on. **"Will you then sweep away the place and not forgive it for the fifty righteous who are in it?"**

And Abraham cajoles: **"Far be it for you to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as well as the wicked! Far be that from you!"** And the Lord honors the plea of the innocent: **"If I find in Sodom fifty ... or forty-five ... forty ... thirty ... twenty ... even ten righteous in the city, I will forgive the whole place for their sake."** I found myself confronted by the living implications of the scriptures when a young Palestinian woman sat next to me on the bus. She had come as staff for the group, but, I noticed, she came every day in the same

clothes - all of them a bit too small, a bit too uncoordinated for the poise I saw in her. It was only toward the end of the conference sessions, on the trip back from a day of meetings, that I finally began to piece her story together. There had been, she told me, the destruction of a thirty-unit apartment building in Gaza the week before by an Israeli tank squad. The military had seen members of the Palestinian underground run in the front door of the building and out the back. So, they evacuated it and then destroyed it.

"I'm so sorry," I said. **"It must have been very frightening to see."**

"Yes," she said, **"but worse was to lose everything at one time. We're not even allowed to search through the rubble for our things."**

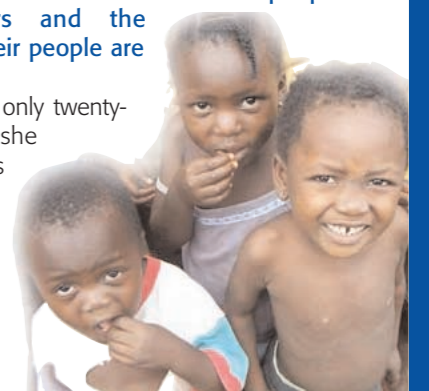
I stopped short. **"You lived there?"** I said. **"Where do you live now?"** I asked, almost afraid to hear the answer.

"I sleep overnight with different friends, and," she smiled a little uncomfortably and pointed to the short skirt, **"I borrow clothes till I get some money to buy more."**

"Are you angry?" I asked.

"Well, yes," she said, **"but not at all the Israeli people. Only at the soldiers and the government. After all, their people are suffering, too."**

The young woman was only twenty-three years old. If she can understand Abraham's debate and God's answer, if she knows the whole city must be saved, if only for ten righteous, why not the rest of us?



asylum - a justice & peace priority

Scottish Refugee Council Conference

Grace Buckley, of the Glasgow Archdiocesan Justice and Peace Group, reviews another conference on the Justice and Peace priority of asylum

The main theme of the conference on 9 November was asylum-seeking children. The morning session consisted of a series of presentations, finishing with a Panel Session. Speakers included Fiona Hyslop (Cabinet Secretary for Education & Lifelong Learning in the Scottish Government), Ahlan Souidi (an asylum seeker who has just been granted leave to remain in the UK together with her children), Jeremy Oppenheim (the wonderfully named – or misnamed – Children’s Champion of the even more wonderfully titled Borders and Immigration Agency BIA) and Lisa Nandy (Policy Adviser to the Children’s Society). In the afternoon, we were given the opportunity to attend two out of a number of workshops on aspects of children and the asylum process.

Coming to the subject with a fairly limited knowledge, I found the day very interesting and informative. In the morning session, Fiona Hyslop updated us on the actions being taken by the Scottish Government in support of their stated intention to improve the situation of asylum seekers in Scotland, including giving asylum seeking children who have been here for 3 years or more, access to university courses on the same basis as their Scottish peers; pursuing with the UK government counterparts alternatives to detention for families; working on the appointment of specialist local authorities for dealing with unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

Ahlan Souidi spoke very movingly about her experiences as an asylum seeker with children. As she pointed out, no-one is born an asylum seeker. It is something forced on them by their circumstances, and the trauma of that experience is further increased by the long drawn-out process in the UK for seeking asylum which has serious impacts on the children of asylum seekers who learn to fear the “brown envelope” from the BIA and the dawn raid.

The presentation from Jeremy Oppenheim could have been viewed as the comedy turn if you had a black sense of humour. He opened his talk by taking issue with some of the “myths” (as he described them) which are current in relation to asylum seekers. According to him, there are no dawn raids – the authorities must make their “visit” at times when they know people will be there but they don’t go before 7 am! As Sally Daghlian, the Chair of the session, said, that amounted to dawn in her terms. Clearly what he

was really taking issue with was the “emotive” term for actions which have rightly earned his agency such criticism. He also sought to convince

us that asylum seekers were not living on a bare pittance but, when all the allowances in kind were taken into account, were doing very nicely, thank you. Finally he stated that the UK government’s reservation of its position on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in relation to asylum seeking children was because they considered the domestic legislation

more than covered the position (and by the way they didn’t want to open up another avenue of appeal for asylum seekers).

Lisa Nandy spoke about the fact that, contrary to Mr. Oppenheim’s claim, UK immigration law was going in the opposite direction to the legislative framework being put in place to protect children. She highlighted the continuing holding of children in detention centres and the failure to recognise the quite different needs of unaccompanied asylum seeking children for support and legal advice when faced with the completion of the paperwork for an asylum claim.

The afternoon workshops which I attended were on Family Reunions (how to go about the process of reuniting parents who had been given the right to remain in the UK with their family) and Guardianship of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (which took us through the idea of appointing a guardian for unaccompanied children). Both workshops were very well delivered and the only problem was the shortness of time to discuss the issues in any depth.

All in all, a very worthwhile conference.

Seeking Asylum: A Scottish Perspective

Lesley McCue of St. Joseph’s Justice and Peace Group, Clarkston, reports on a recent conference on a Justice and Peace priority issue

I was very privileged to attend the recent conference in Glasgow Royal Concert Hall representing St. Joseph’s Justice and Peace Group and Justice and Peace, Scotland.

The conference was well attended with an interesting mix of delegates from different areas of society. There were representatives from police, housing, social work, education, local councils, NHS, groups working with refugees and asylum seekers and many others. Although there was a very small representation from the community of asylum seekers there was not as many as really should have been there – no doubt the expensive cost of the conference contributed to this. There was an interesting selection of speakers and a short resume of their presentations follow:

Baroness Vivian Stern (member of the Joint Committee on Human Rights) spoke of a UK wide report that the committee had carried out on the treatment of asylum seekers. She said that the study had found that human rights performance was “sadly wanting” in many respects and came across evidence from a number of witnesses that destitution of asylum seekers was a “deliberate government policy”. Baroness Stern also spoke of concerns about the treatment of children in the system and questioned why the UK Government has chosen to enter a general reservation to the Convention on the Rights of the Child with regard to entry, stay in and departure from the UK. She said the UK is the only country in the world to have entered such a reservation and the committee recommended that the reservation be withdrawn.

Phil Taylor (regional director, Scotland and Northern Ireland, Border and Immigration Agency) explained the asylum decision process. Mr. Taylor then went on to speak of the detention of children and dawn raids. The implication was that in his eyes dawn raids do not exist and that no ‘enforcement visits’ have taken place before 6.15am in the last year. He went on to explain that these ‘enforcement visits’ were carried out early out of consideration to the asylum seekers so that families could be kept together and they would then have a full day in which to access legal help and assistance.

Applications predating July 2004 are having their cases concluded in the next 6 months and Phil Taylor assured the conference that despite recent press reports there was currently no amnesty and removals will proceed. On the issue of detaining families with children he stated “There is no other area of civil or criminal law where the existence of children excuses the offences of the parents.” Mr. Taylor went on to advise that in all cases when families are removed, children are properly looked after, given the opportunity for breakfast and are properly clothed. “The stories that we drag them from their beds screaming are just not true...”

Sally Daghlian (Scottish Refugee Council) recognised and praised the new Scottish Governments support towards asylum seekers and refugees in particular with University places for children after being here for 3 years and education maintenance allowance for those staying on at school.

John Watson (Amnesty International) spoke about asylum seekers and how the asylum system can represent the difference between life and death. He stressed that the goal of any government should be to be fair and effective – not to supply statistics.

John Neilson (Assistant Chief Constable Community Safety, Strathclyde Police) gave a very uplifting and interesting account of when asylum seekers first started arriving in Sighthill, Glasgow and how police, local community and asylum seekers have worked together to reverse a very negative situation where the situation has improved for both asylum seekers and the indigenous white population.

This reversal of how asylum seekers are viewed in Glasgow by local populations was reinforced by John Donaldson (Head of Immigration and Emergency Services, Glasgow City Council) in his speech.

Jacqueline Parlevliet (Deputy Representative for UNHCR in UK) spoke about the Gateway Programme which resettles refugees. So far this programme, which was launched in 2004, has resettled 1,000 refugees. She spoke about the successful resettlement of a group of refugees from DRC in North Lanarkshire and how she hopes that other communities in the UK will be responsive to the programme.

Kate Ramsden (UNISON, Scotland), co-author of “Child’s Welfare Paramount”, a Guide to Ethical Practice for those who work with asylum seeker children, then spoke of her work as a Children’s Rights Officer and Jonathon Cox (Independent Asylum Commission) spoke of the Commissions work. Their findings and recommendations for reform will be published in 2008.

Chanel Bikorimana (Project Co-ordinator, Business Gateway), originally from Burundi, gave details of the Integration through Enterprise programme which was set up in 2005 to help refugees and new citizens in setting up business. So far the project has attracted 129 entrepreneurs and created 11 companies.

In the final session of the day a panel of experts considered Scotland’s role in the asylum debate.

A very full day had passed. It was uplifting to hear of the success stories within Glasgow and Scotland, in particular the breaking down of barriers by Strathclyde Police, the relocation of refugees by UNHCR and the fantastic work being done by Business Gateway. The compassion and dedication of Amnesty International, Scottish Refugee Council and many local groups to the plight of asylum seekers and refugees can not receive enough admiration and support. As Amnesty’s John Watson said there is “no such thing as an illegal

asylum seeker” and thus anyone seeking refuge in our country should be treated with fairness, compassion, understanding and respect – not apparently how many are treated currently by the asylum system as it is in Scotland today.

Dungavel Revisited

Margaret Donnelly, former commission member for Galloway diocese, describes the latest gathering at Dungavel



J&P Activists with Christina McKelvie at Dungavel

St Andrew’s Day was marked outside Dungavel Removal Centre by a Gathering organised by Friends of Refugees Ayrshire, this was the sixth such Gathering to be held near the Feast Day of our Nations Patron Saint and this year we had just observed Prisoners Week which was marked in many of our churches.

Eurydice Women’s Choir from Glasgow led the larger than normal group who had gathered in singing appropriate songs. We also heard from several speakers among whom was Motherwell Diocesan Commission member Margaret McGowan, who read the Commission Statement on Refugees. Others who spoke included Christina McKelvie MSP, who said that “compassion was not a reserved matter”, and that the new Scottish Government was looking at the issue of detention of children as a priority. Former MSP Rosemary Byrne who has been a long time supporter of the group also spoke.

As usual a minute’s silence was observed as we remembered all those in detention. Before we left, gifts were handed to staff to be passed on to those held within Dungavel.

STILL HUMAN, STILL HERE A CONFERENCE ON PRACTICAL RESPONSES TO THE ENFORCED DESTITUTION OF ASYLUM SEEKERS

*Organised by Church Action on Poverty and Positive Action in Housing.
Renfield St Stephens, 260 Bath Street, Glasgow.
Saturday 2nd February 10am - 12:45*

For anyone with an interest in standing in solidarity with people forced to claim asylum; including Church and faith communities, community groups, individuals or professionals.

This half day conference aims to help the people in central Scotland campaign more effectively and to share ideas how best to practically assist destitute asylum seekers. Positive Action in Housing will launch ‘Welcome’ a film made by Camcorder Guerrillas that tells the story of three destitute asylum seekers and includes a details toolkit.

There will be first hand testimony of people who have experienced destitution, the opportunity to learn from others who have been living with and campaigning against destitution, an opportunity to learn more or receive mutual support and an excellent lunch!

*For more details:
contact David Reilly: 0141 353 2220 david@paih.org*