



DECEMBER 31 - A CHALLENGE FOR THE NEW YEAR

The Year is over.

We stand at a new moment in time.

We can choose to go on as before, raping the globe, threatening the planet, making specimens of people.

Or we can melt into the grace of the universe and become what we were created to be.

A family in harmony with itself.

JOAN CHITTISTER, LIVING WELL, ORBIS, 2000

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If justice and peace work was judged by results in the world at large we would be in trouble. If we had to produce a business plan with targets which would be the sole measure of our worth, we would probably find ourselves hard pressed. It would be difficult to maintain that justice and peace were flourishing in the face of the inequality and greed, violence and oppression, ignorance and self deception which seem endemic in our world.

A resumé of the last ten years or so sees an ebbing from a high tide of hope. The days of a new Scottish parliament, of New Labour, of the Jubilee campaign, of Millennium Development Goals and of Make Poverty History and Stop Climate Chaos were propelled by ideals and the prospect of a better world.

The Millennium Development Goals are now largely falling short, both in quantity of aid and in the targets for basic human rights. The economist Jeffrey Sachs, an MDG adviser to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, makes the following comment. 'One could say there was a certain lack of seriousness in this process from the start... In 2007 and 2008 I would say [to G8 officials], what about Gleneagles? You have a commitment, 2010 is very explicit. And very senior officials in the German government would say to me, "Oh Professor Sachs, you don't think they're going to be honoured, do you?". The US and others have also said that they do not feel bound by Gleneagles pledges.

In the last decade, we have worked our way through two wars of dubious legality with around 100,000 documented civilian deaths in Iraq and perhaps more than 30,000 in Afghanistan. The cost of these wars so far for the UK is over £20 billion (not from the defence budget, but from a Treasury Reserve Fund).

Meanwhile those who played with risky credit and mortgages owe more than £900 billion in public debt to investors at home and abroad. Total UK personal debt at the end of October 2010 stood at £1,452bn. Yet Tory Lord Young was pushed into resigning by the Prime Minister for saying 'we've never had it so good'. He was fired for telling the truth from his perspective. The National Equity Panel's analysis earlier this year showed how the richest 10% in the UK (with household wealth of at least £853,000, and including more than 80% of the Cabinet) is more than 100 times better off than the poorest 10%.

Recent comments by George Osborne, the UK Chancellor of the Exchequer about why he wants to lend British taxpayers' money to ease the financial crisis in Ireland were revealing: 'It's in our national interest to help a friend in need'. So is this about greedy self-interest or friendship? Research by Stuart Wilks-Heeg has shown that across the last decade 39% of all donations received by the three main political parties combined were sourced from just 1% of the 23,000 cash donations which the parties declared between them. These 224 large donations in turn originated from fewer than 60 separate

sources – a combination of individuals, companies and trade unions.

Is it true then that we have the best politicians money can buy? It often seems that the truly good politicians spend a lot of their time questioning those who are in parliament as mouthpieces of special interest groups. The Christian anarchist in me often wonders whether we wouldn't be better off without the whole system.

At this time of year we enter again into the inauguration of the Word made flesh, the Kingdom of God. There could surely be no greater illustration that the Kingdom is not of this world than the way in which Christmas is perverted in our society. In some sense then, we need to reclaim the birth of Christ.

Lumen Gentium, the Vatican II Dogmatic Constitution on the Church employed the image of Christ as priest and prophet and king. Not only do we all share this office, but as laypeople share it in a special way: *'the faithful who by Baptism are incorporated into Christ, are placed in the People of God, and in their own way share the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ, and to the best of their ability carry on the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world'* (n31). We are empowered and required as *priests* to sanctify creation, as *prophets* to breathe the spirit of truth into creation, and as *kings* to administer creation - all in accordance with the Kingdom or Reign of God

The Christ child was visited by the Wise Men who acknowledged his sovereignty. They were aware it was not a kingdom of this world, a message lost on the paranoid King Herod, himself only a client king for the Romans. Their gifts reflected the threefold office: gold for rule; frankincense for sanctification; and myrrh for prophesying eternal life. As we go through the sacred time of Christmas, we rededicate ourselves to its true meaning. We are not simply at the mercy of the manipulators of wealth and power. We are called instead, by our work for justice and peace, to bring God's kingdom ever more clearly into focus.

In this we fulfil God's promise through the prophet Ezekiel: *I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord God. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with justice.* (34:15-16). Here is the recurring theme of raising the lowly and oppressed and the overturning of the greedy and powerful so familiar from the gospels, and in particular from the Magnificat (Luke:1:46-55). The irony (and our consolation) is that the proud are brought low by being fed God's justice - the same process that empowers our efforts, however frail they seem to us. May we find renewed strength and hope from the Christmas season.

Tim Duffy

work is the key

The government recently published its plans for benefit reform rooted in the idea of getting more people back to work



During much of human history the reality was not far from the assertion in Genesis that we would work by the sweat of our brow. For most people life was nasty brutish and short: if you were lucky enough to escape war, disease and famine, you would probably die from the sheer toil of trying to exist. The Beveridge Report of 1942 wrote of the need for the state to attack the 'five giants of Want, Disease, Ignorance, Squalor and Idleness'. Out of this report arose the welfare state under whose care most of us have grown up. As it approaches its own three score and ten, the welfare state has become itself something of a giant - bureaucratic complexity.

One example: in an article for the article for the *Manchester Evening News* on 10 August 2010 David Cameron claimed 'Welfare and tax credit fraud and error costs the taxpayer £5.2bn a year'. In fact, the amount attributable to fraud is at most £1.5 billion, with the rest attributable about equally to wrong information and to departmental errors. The rest is down to spin.

Ian Duncan Smith had visited Easterhouse in 2002 after losing the leadership of the Conservative party and came away notably affected. Yet, in the words of T S Eliot, he seems to have 'had the experience but missed the meaning'. This is certainly the opinion of Bob Holman, who introduced him to some of the folk working in Easterhouse, but who feels that he has since suffered a relapse to a conservative mentality.

With the arrival of the coalition government, Ian Duncan Smith was the obvious choice for the Department of Work and Pensions. Within a couple of weeks of coming to power, he had produced the most extensive welfare reform policy since Beveridge (presumably it had been cooking for some time previously). There was a period for response and consultation – nowadays about as much use as whistling into a force 9 gale. Among the ambitious and progressive recommendations were a Universal Credit to replace the more than thirty existing benefits; and the removal of anomalies that make it financially more rewarding to remain on benefits than to work. These plans were hobbled by the Chancellor's almost simultaneous statement of intention to cut £11 billion from the DWP budget, with a further 7 billion trimmed by November.

The plans are also hampered by a peculiar, if self serving logic. First, you propose that many people are living in welfare dependency purely as a matter of 'lifestyle choice'. Your Alice in Wonderland (or rather American) solution is that in order to make people independent, you curtail or remove the welfare. Simples.

And spin is of the essence in a campaign which has to fall back on to the older strategy of blaming those on benefits for their predicament. Politicians and the self appointed guardians of virtue in the media, conveniently forgetting that this system is based on National Insurance contributions, push the notion of subsidising 'scroungers' with 'handouts'; not least since it allows ignorant people to assume a sense of moral superiority.

The root problem with the proposals, and the place where they lack any connection with Catholic Social Teaching is in their complete failure to recognise the difference between work and jobs. Work is that which affirms, rewards and dignifies work undertaken for the Common Good. Jobs are all too often little more than wage slavery combined with a bit of displacement activity, frequently damaging to the Common Good. It is not so much what you do: all work has elements we could probably do without. Nor does it concern the apparently menial nature of the work. If an occupation does not recognise and affirm the dignity of those doing it, it is not real work.

No real account is taken of what Ivan Illich calls 'shadow work': work in the home, so-called 'women's work', unpaid and non-quantifiable work as home makers, carers and enablers which nonetheless provides the foundation for society and permits extra-familial and extra-community work. This kind of work is relegated to the scam that is the 'Big Society'.

At the end of October Mr Duncan Smith had a 'Tebbit' moment - or else proved his ignorance of his brief and public transport. The day following his suggestion that unemployed workers in Merthyr should be 'getting on the bus' to Cardiff, figures showed that there were 15,000 people in Cardiff chasing just 1,700 jobs. Comparable figures show 18 jobseekers for each vacancy in Edinburgh. These vacancies are almost entirely low paid, temporary, high turnover and mainly at the lower end of the job market. You can check out your own local vacancies at the Jobcentre Plus search database.

This policy is being overseen by a cabinet, 80% of whom are millionaires, mainly through inheritance and the City. It is guided by a philosophy that to induce the well off to work harder you must pay them more, whereas to get the poor to work harder you pay them less. An ideological commitment to less government and lower taxes and the catch all excuse of recession is not a good basis for a compassionate approach to welfare and work. Coupled with a defective approach to work, however, there is little likelihood of a humane policy emerging.

There is a better approach reflected in Catholic Social Teaching. Next year will be the hundred and twentieth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*, the foundational encyclical. To celebrate its ninetieth anniversary, Pope John Paul II wrote *Laborem Exercens* where the following fundamental insight occurs:

'human work is a key, probably the essential key, to the whole social question, if we try to see that question really from the point of view of human good. And if the solution - or rather the gradual solution - of the social question, which keeps coming up and becomes ever more complex, must be sought in the direction of "making life more human", then the key, namely human work, acquires fundamental and decisive importance' (LE 3).

TD

... you have not sought the lost, but with force and harshness you have ruled them. So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd... my sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth, with no one to search or seek for them. Ezekiel 34:4,6

Imagine that you have tried to get away from violence and oppression which was so strong that you left your home country. Quite possibly you have lost family and friends: dead, tortured, imprisoned or simply disappeared. You left much of your family behind; you probably left almost all your possessions behind; even the documents that tell who you are. You are a skilled and intelligent professional; and you scrape together all you have. You need all you can find to pay the considerable cost of travelling, with what is left of your immediate family, half way across the world to a place where you hope you will find some safety and security. You have a little English and perhaps some social contacts, so you have come to Britain to claim asylum under the 1951 Refugee Convention.

Under a policy of dispersal you have been sent to Glasgow which some years ago entered into an agreement with the UK Borders Agency to house asylum seekers. The houses used were those which were hard to let, among people who were already having a struggle. Refused permission to work while your claim is being processed (this could encourage unfounded asylum applications apparently) you are entitled to just over £5 per day in support, while your claim is being decided.

Your children go to the local school, where they adapt, learn the language, make friends and are soon, to all intents, young Scots. You enrol for a university course, to qualify yourself and improve your English, if and when your claim for asylum is granted.

That is the shadow that hangs over your hopes. Bureaucracy is always slow, you only had partial documentation; and the government really doesn't want all these people claiming asylum. To many people you are nothing but an illegal immigrant: scrounging valuable resources, taking up housing, jumping the queue for medical and social services. You feel their hostility and threatening presence and you try not to be too visible. If it were not for the people who are friendly and sympathetic, you might wonder why you made the effort.

Eventually, your claim is rejected, your appeals turned down. But because of the dangerous instability in your home country, and the risk to your life, the government has decided not to deport you meanwhile. You cannot understand: that is why you claimed asylum in the first place. How can you now go back and say to the officials at the airport in your home country, 'Yes, I know I ran away and rejected you and sought asylum elsewhere. But they rejected me, so here I am again, at your mercy.'

While you are waiting for that time, which could be whenever the Borders Agency tells you, you are given a special Azure card, which entitles you to £35 of approved goods obtainable through approved suppliers only. Again you are made to stand out. Again the disapproving looks in the shops. Again the endless choices: shoes or coat and

gloves for the children; how to phone the lawyer and then travel to an appointment; supermarket halal meat is so limited in choice and expensive.

Then, out of the blue comes the letter from the UK Borders Agency. They have terminated the accommodation contract with Glasgow District Council. You are not sure what this means but you must now be ready to be moved at short notice - 'whenever possible 3-5 days' - anywhere within Scotland. You will be allowed to take two pieces of luggage each, along with baby toys and any disability aids. The letter is written in official English - what does 'all attempts will be made' really mean?

You try to work out what it means for the children's schooling, your university course, continuing care for your medical condition, but a part of you is in shock. The letter seems to suggest these will be taken into consideration, but how long did you have to wait for original decisions that went back and forth. Meanwhile you are surprised by the level of support you receive. The Catholic Archbishop in Glasgow makes a strong statement of concern and support as well as politicians and other groups who have helped you along the way. Your heart almost breaks when you hear that all the pupils and teachers at the children's school have signed a petition and presented it to the Scottish Parliament. There is compassion to be found. There are good people.

Then somebody tells you that the resources are not available for the removals in the short term. Things are postponed and you are left hanging again in this strange landscape with its bitter cold and snow. What has been the point of all you have done? Your life has been on hold for years. You are completely at the mercy of a system that basically wishes you would go away. Pushed to the edge of society, you are excluded economically and socially because if you were enabled to integrate and use your talents, this apparently would only encourage others to make false claims. In the meantime you live a stifled life, dreading every time any post arrives, wondering what will happen to your children; wondering if you have merely exchanged one well founded fear of persecution for another.

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Pupils from Lourdes Secondary with MSPs outside the Scottish Parliament



Demonstrating outside Brand St

archbishop conti's statement

Archbishop Mario Conti made the following statement to be read out at the demonstration at UK Borders Agency in Brand Street on 20 November

I regret that I am unable to be with you today to express my firm opposition to plans to remove 600 families of asylum seekers from their homes in Glasgow. The human cost of this decision is horrendous, and will involve children being uprooted from schools where they are flourishing, a return to the anguish of the unknown for people already bearing a heavy burden of fear and the wanton destruction of communities which have grown up in recent years as Glasgow has successfully welcomed asylum seekers and refugees.

There must be a solution to the financial issues behind this decision which does not involve such human suffering. I call upon the UK Government, the Scotland Office and the Home Office to call a halt to this dreadful decision which, if allowed to stand, will cause untold distress and pain.

A society should be judged by the way in which it treats its most vulnerable citizens. Few of our fellow Glaswegians are as vulnerable as those brothers and sisters of ours who have come to the city as asylum seekers. Their dignity and rights cannot be trampled upon without doing damage to our best traditions of care and compassion. It is not too late to stop the evictions. Safeguarding human dignity is imperative.

bishop peter's statement on azure

As Bishop-President of the Justice & Peace Commission of the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland, I am very concerned about how AZURE cards operate.

Many asylum-seekers and other immigrants to the UK are not permitted paid employment. Rather than actual cash, they are given AZURE cards, a kind of voucher system which allows them access to certain facilities and resources at designated outlets.

However, there are facilities NOT accessible by AZURE - for example, transport to the shops where the card can be used.

Many staff in designated shops seem poorly-informed about the AZURE system. Too few shops selling ethnic (e.g. halal) foods are AZURE designated.

The Justice & Peace Commission has been urging the UKBA to meet us and our colleagues to discuss correcting these anomalies, but meetings are continually cancelled or postponed. Meanwhile the holders of AZURE cards struggle to make ends meet.

I urge Philip Taylor and other senior officials of the UKBA to prioritise this very important humanitarian matter.

the flight to egypt

Travelling to Egypt,
one refugee in a world of refugees;
you will have no settled place, Lord
where you can lay your head,
no one to understand you fully,
no life of ease.

Yet we, Lord
insecure as we are
in faith or temperament,
ask you, the journeying one,
to travel with us.

Graham Jeffrey

poverty

and the human condition

Seventy years ago, my great-uncle Tom (pronounced Tome) pulled himself up by the railings in Northpark Street in Maryhill, dying. He had gone to work as he was scared that if he reported sick, his job as a sawmill assistant would have been taken by someone else, and no doubt he was right. His wage kept my father's family from sliding down the social ladder to the much-feared Lyon Street. He died a few days later, owning only the clothes he stood up in. The only holiday he'd ever had was a few days in a TB convalescent sanatorium, and he would speak in awed tones of the bed-sheets being changed, and the meals he didn't have to make. My father kept his braces until his mother-in-law threw them out some years later, a source of much bitterness. Poverty and the fear of it, is in the genes of Scots, or at least in most of us.

This is a phrase I would have unthinkingly used until I recently listened to a talk given by Dr Harry Burns, Scotland's Chief Medical Officer – and now I wonder if it might be literally true. Why, he ponders, should it be that someone in Easterhouse or Drumchapel or Pilton who smokes 20 a day is 4 times more likely to get lung cancer than, for example, a doctor who smokes the same amount? Why do poor people with cancer lose more weight than the middle-class? Why do their wounds take longer to heal? What is it that's so potent about our place in the social hierarchy?

I won't reveal all the steps in this detective story in case you have the good fortune to hear him talk. But the usual suspects – diet and lifestyle – aren't by any means the whole story. Instead he sees research on survivors of Auschwitz and other death camps as key. Of those who had been children at the time, but had survived into adulthood, 70% had serious physical or mental illness. But 30% were healthy and successful as adults – so what made them different?

What distinguished them could be summarised as them having a sense of **coherence**: they had an ability to make sense of what the world threw at them, no matter how awful it was. First, they understood what was happening to them. They were able to see their world as structured, predictable and explicable, and hence were able to make judgements about it. Secondly, they had the confidence that they had the resources to deal with what was thrown at them, and to make a difference. They had resilience. And thirdly, they wanted to survive. They had the motivation to keep going. Life was worth living. It seemed that these building blocks had been laid down in early childhood; there was something in the way they had been brought up.

I remember as a Reporter to the Children's Panel talking to young people aged 13 or 14 from Possil in the early days of the heroin epidemic about the likelihood of overdosing, and being discomfited at their indifference – if they died, they died. This wasn't bravado: it was in effect a belief based on their experiences at age 13 that life had exhausted its potential for them.

For children to be healthy and successful, their social and physical environment has to be comprehensible, manageable and meaningful - or they experience chronic stress. Early childhood is the key learning ground: if a baby



is stressed because it's hungry or needs its nappy changed, and it cries, and is consistently picked up, cuddled, talked to, and has its needs met, and its stress resolved, then at a young age that child develops a sense of the world as comprehensible and manageable. It learns that it has control over its stressful experiences. Consistency of parenting is key in this: inconsistency is what breeds stress. There is even evidence that maternal stress affects the foetus in this way, so that at birth, the child is already programmed to see the world as a dangerous place - so the building blocks of chronic stress are already there.

If you learn life is dangerous, inconsistent and not manageable, stress can cause passivity and hopelessness to quickly set in. A large-scale study of men at high risk of premature death, for example, found that those who had a high sense of hopelessness – in the sense of negativity and pessimism – had a multiply higher risk of dying than those who found meaning in life. The same applies to children – children living in deprived areas have significantly higher cortisol (the stress hormone) levels than middle class children. And the longer a child is in care, for example, the higher their cortisol levels.

The point of all of this is that stress, sustained over the long-term, wears us out – it accelerates aging and prematurely exposes us to a constellation of diseases. Poverty, and all that goes with it including living in a poor area, is a breeding ground for stress. It's as if the body's defence mechanisms are chronically turned up to full like a boiler's thermostat – permanently - and this wears the body out faster.

In Scotland, it is a so-far unexplained fact that we are peculiarly prone to ill-health, even allowing for poverty and deprivation. We have the highest mortality rates and lowest life expectancy in Western Europe. We have a 50% higher risk of heart disease than England, even once individual social circumstances (and other risk factors such as smoking or alcohol consumption) had been controlled for. This 'Scottish Effect' exists in all geographical regions of Scotland and at all levels of deprivation, but is most

evident in the most deprived post industrial region of West Central Scotland, with Glasgow at the region's core.

Could it be, Harry Burns asks in his report last year as Chief Medical Officer, that the prolonged period of social and economic disruption experienced by large parts of the Scottish population has left them less of the psychological resilience they need to face off the challenges of modern life? Or has what one historian called our tradition of 'municipal feudalism' made us passive recipients of often shoddy services instead of active citizens demanding better?

We have a genius for making our underclass feel uniquely useless - chavs, neds, scroungers, chancers, junkies, alkie. What we're actually saying, which they understand at a deep level only too well, is that we, the mainstream, the real people, would be better off without them – that's the subtext.

So we might conclude that there is some unspoken element in our culture which beats a deeper drum than our equal opportunities posturing, whether we are willing to admit it or not. What it tells us is that dignity is not inherent in the human individual independent of his or her life circumstances. It is a quality to be achieved. And, as night follows day, the attainment of material wellbeing becomes a crucial measure of worth. 'It is within this cultural frame', the Indian writer Lata Mani concludes, 'that material disadvantage spells indignity, shame, self-judgement, dispiritedness and a paralysing pessimism of the will.'

Which brings us back to Harry Burns. A paralysing pessimism of the will is precisely what the biological mechanisms, triggered by the chronic stress which our species of poverty induces, conspire to produce. This not irreversible, we must note. When he was a student at University, he says, he was taught that when a brain cell died, it died. The brain could not develop after it was fully formed. But more recent research indicates that this is not true, and groups as varied as Buddhist meditators and London taxi drivers who have mastered 'The Knowledge' demonstrate the brain's extraordinary ability to re-engineer or regrow itself. There is therefore everything to play for.

We've always been a small, poor country. And yet we were the crucible of the Enlightenment. We went through a peculiarly intense Industrial Revolution. We produced a particularly brutalised, demoralised poor in our cities. We are a maze of contradictions. The way we organise our society, spiritually and practically, makes a substantial slice of our fellow citizens feel useless; and then, conveniently, feeling useless, they kill themselves off through the inexorable workings of the biology we've inherited as a species.

Yet it really doesn't have to be this way. We have a track record of innovative and humane ways of dealing with difficulties. The Children's Hearing System was a genuinely revolutionary approach to deal with troubled children, for example.

What could be a bigger - and more fitting - challenge for Scotland, than to use the social and medical research which continues to unfold in the most fascinating way, to devise ways to help the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our society to take back control of their lives and rediscover purpose and hope for the future?

Bill Grieve

Bill Grieve was chief executive of the Aberlour Child Care Trust

A Christmas Reflection

When I come in the guise
of the needy, the helpless,
the cold and the hungry,
the stranger, the lonely
will you look away?

When I come close to home
in the need of your neighbour,
at times inconvenient,
in places and faces
that mask and conceal me...
What will you do?
What will you say?

When I come in the message
of prophet and preacher,
in truths inescapable
or words which dismay,
will you listen to me
and give me a welcome?

When face to face
At the end of the journey
We look at each other,
Will you look away?
What will I do?
What will I say?

Kenneth Carveley

**May all our readers enjoy a
Happy and Holy Christmas
and find the Peace of Christ in
the New Year.**

**Best Wishes from Bishop Peter
and Ellen Charlton on behalf of
the whole Commission
And Carol and Tim in the
National Office.**

Middle East Synod

This recent synod sent out a clear message requiring freedom of worship political change as a prerequisite to peace.



The Vatican Synod on the Middle East, which ended on the 23 October produced significant demands on behalf of at least 3.5 million Christians of all denominations who live in the Gulf Arab regions. One measure of its success was that it really annoyed the Israeli government into public criticism of the event. But the synod also convened in response to the violence against Christians in the regions and the high rate of Christian migration from the region. For Pope Benedict, peace in the region would be the best remedy for a worrying exodus of Christians. He made his appeal at a solemn mass in St Peter's Basilica. In his sermon at the gathering's ceremonial end, the pope said freedom of religion was 'one of the fundamental human rights that each state should always respect... While some states in the Middle East allowed freedom of belief, he added, 'the space given to the freedom to practice religion is often quite limited.'

In an unusually forthright final statement of their two-week synod, the bishops and patriarchs of the region's Catholic churches said the citizens of the Middle East 'call upon the international community, particularly the United Nations, conscientiously to work to find a peaceful, just and definitive solution in the region, through the application of the Security Council's resolutions and taking the necessary legal steps to put an end to the occupation of the various Arab territories.

'The Palestinian people will thus have an independent and sovereign homeland where they can live with dignity and security. The State of Israel will be able to enjoy peace and security within its internationally recognised borders.

'The Holy City of Jerusalem will be able to acquire its proper status, which respects its particular character, its holiness and the religious patrimony of the three religions: Jewish, Christian and Muslim. We hope that the two-state-solution might become a reality and not a dream only.'

The statement referred to Security Council resolutions which call on Israel to quit territories seized during the 1967 war, including East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The synod was marked by repeated affirmations that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is at the root of the tension affecting the whole Middle East.

With its resolution, the bishops said, 'Iraq will be able to

put an end to the consequences of its deadly war and re-establish a secure way of life which will protect all its citizens with all their social structures, both religious and national. 'Lebanon will be able to enjoy sovereignty over its entire territory, strengthen its national unity and carry on in its vocation to be the model of coexistence between Christians and Muslims, of dialogue between different cultures and religions, and of the promotion of basic public freedoms.'

The synod also said, 'We condemn violence and terrorism from wherever it may proceed as well as all religious extremism. We condemn all forms of racism, anti-Semitism, anti-Christianism and Islamophobia, and we call upon the religions to assume their responsibility to promote dialogue between cultures and civilizations in our region and in the entire world.'

The bishops particularly criticised claims by Jewish settlers that they had a right to occupy the whole land of Israel promised to God by the Jews according to the Old Testament. 'Recourse to theological and biblical positions which use the Word of God to wrongly justify injustices is not acceptable', the synod said. 'On the contrary, recourse to religion must lead every person to see the face of God in others and to treat them according to their God-given prerogatives and God's commandments, namely, according to God's bountiful goodness, mercy, justice and love for us.'

Archbishop Cyril Salim Bustros, the Lebanese-born head of the Greek Melkite Church in the United States, who chaired the commission that drew up the final statement, said, 'The theme of the promised land cannot be used as a basis to justify the return of the Jews to Israel and the expatriation of the Palestinians... For Christians one can no longer talk of the land promised to the Jewish people', he told a Vatican press conference, because the promise was 'abolished by the presence of Christ'. In the kingdom of God, which covers the whole world, 'there is no longer a favoured people, a chosen people. All men and women of every country have become the chosen people.'

HELP LAUNCH

campaign against the arms trade's new campaign

this is not OK!

As the government reveals more cuts to public services, it has quietly pledged to do even more to promote arms sales. On the same day that higher education cuts were announced Business minister Vince Cable spent the morning wooing the arms industry, at an event where one of his colleagues pledged that 'we are proud to support the biggest defence export drive in decades.'

In 2011 Government plans once again to support one of the world's largest arms fairs. Hundreds of arms dealers exhibitors will be invited to London to do

business with tyrants and human rights abusers. Our message is simple: This is not OK.

In the New Year we'll be launching a massive new campaign to stop the arms fair and end the government support that makes it possible – and we need your help! We want to launch the campaign with some great examples of powerful statements ordinary people can make about the impact of the arms trade. Please take 2 minutes to visit <http://caat.iparl.com/lobby/55> and write a short comment saying what outrages you about the arms trade and what you want to see happen about it.

getting it right

The activist comedian Mark Thomas has praised Palestinian Christians for their role in the growth of nonviolent resistance to Israeli occupation. Thomas recently walked the length of the wall surrounding the Occupied Palestinian Territories, in preparation for a book and a film on the subject. He met with Muslims, Christians, Jews and others who are opposing the occupation without violence.

Thomas, an atheist, said, 'When Christians get it right, they really get it right'. He applauded the decision of Christian churches in Jerusalem to describe the occupation as a sin. And he quoted one Christian priest who told him that he was resisting the occupation to 'save our Israeli brothers and sisters from committing a mortal sin.'

'When Christians get it right, they really get it right'

Thomas made his comments while drawing links between military occupation and the arms industry in a speech to the annual National Gathering of the Campaign Against the Arms Trade (CAAT) in London on 6 November.

He said that seeing the wall in Palestine reminded him that campaigning against the arms trade is part of a wider struggle against militarism and all that keeps it in place. Thomas has used comedy alongside more traditional campaigning methods to work against the arms trade over the last decade.

CAAT's National Gathering brought the highest turnout in years, with people from across Britain and beyond meeting for a day of talks, networking and campaigning workshops. The event allowed participants to explore the elements of the arms trade that

concerned them the most, as well as the forms of campaigning that they were most interested in. Subjects offered in workshops included the arms industry's role in relation to the new government, next year's arms fair in east London and the growth of mercenary armies. They were followed by workshops to develop particular campaigning skills, such as organising local activism or using social media.

A key aim of CAAT is to bring an end to the influence of arms companies within the UK government. The organisation is urging the government to close the arms wing of UK Trade and Investment (UKTI), a unit of the Department for Business that promotes British exports. While arms account for less than two per cent of UK exports, UKTI devotes more staff to arms than to all other sectors combined.

Mark Thomas said, 'There is an odd air of expectancy about the arms trade - that it has access to ministers, that it has access to governments, that it has access to the highest levels'. He added, 'One of the great things about CAAT is that it makes room for everyone'. And he insisted that all actions against the arms trade can make a difference. 'Every bit counts, it all counts'.

This item, by staff writers, first appeared in the magazine Ekklesia, 7 Nov 2010



the work for peace goes on

With the closing days of 2010 comes the end of two named decades for peace – The World Council of Churches' Decade to Overcome Violence and the United Nations' International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the Children of the World. The shared goals of these decades have included the promotion of fundamental human rights, strategies to address violence – direct and structural – in homes, communities and in the international arenas, and ways of learning from local and regional programs for overcoming violence.

a prayer for peacemakers

Spirit of God, give us the openness, deep within us to recognise, daily, all people as made in your image and likeness. Help us to learn from one another the ways of being fully alive, at peace with ourselves and with those around us. Give us the courage to transform those parts of ourselves and our world that separate and cause enmity. Help us to take steps to stop the cycle of violence in our homes, in our workplaces, in our neighbourhoods, in our country, in our world. May we be open to our deepest yearning for a world alive with your justice and truth, to dream of a society where all are treated with respect, and, with the power of your Spirit, to take steps to bring it about. Australian Catholic Social Justice Council

Banana Link: Make Fruit Fair: Pineapple plantation workers face harsh conditions in export production at the end of supermarket supply chains. They earn well below living wage, are sacked for joining unions and exposed to hazardous working conditions. Three quarters of the pineapples sold in the UK now originate from Costa Rica. The massive expansion of the industry has been built on a casual workforce predominantly made up of migrant workers and subcontracted workers. Bitter price wars pursued by the supermarkets have reduced pineapple prices to as little as 50p this year. The investigative film, 'Pineapples: Luxury Fruit, at what price' and report reveal the health impacts for workers of exposure to toxic chemicals, long shifts of backbreaking work, mass sackings and the contamination of drinking water supplies in communities neighbouring pineapple plantations. www.makefruitfair.org.uk features testimonies, short films, animation, urgent actions and more. For more info or to order resources email: info@bananalink.org.uk

Nestlé has been violating basic trade union rights for more than 3 years, at its Nescafé factory in Panjaj, Indonesia. SBNIP, recognized for ten years as the union representing workers, has sought to exercise the basic right to negotiate the terms and conditions of employment. The company's response was to harass union members, transfer them, and place them under video surveillance. When intimidation failed, the company created a fake union and now insists that it must be part of any negotiations. Enough is enough. The global union federation -representing food workers - has launched a major online campaign that aims to deliver thousands of message of protest to Nestlé. Take a moment to send off your message. Details at <http://tinyurl.com/2fsw7cj>

Fair Pensions: 'Got Oil?' Following on from their successful Tar Sands and Deepwater campaigns, Fair Pensions have launched 'Got Oil?' in partnership with Greenpeace. They are asking supporters to press their pension providers to ensure the billions invested in oil companies are used to encourage corporate behaviour that is both environmentally and financially responsible. In the wake of the Deepwater oil spill it has become blindingly obvious that BP grossly underestimated the risks in the Gulf, with devastating consequences. BP was, by its own admission, unprepared to deal with the consequences of the spill. There are worrying signs that BP (and other oil companies) may prove similarly unprepared to deal with the human, environmental and financial challenges which climate change presents. Almost anyone who has a pension will have some of it invested in BP and other oil companies so we're encouraging pension fund members to exercise their right to have their voices heard on these vital issues. More info at: www.fairpensions.org.uk/gotoil

The Great Cotton Stitch Up: Fairtrade Foundation have launched a new report highlighting unfairness in the cotton industry, in particular the impacts of subsidies from US and EU on farmers in West Africa. 2011 marks the 10th anniversary of the Doha Development Agenda. The report exposes the vast sums of money spent over the last 10 years on trade distorting subsidies. Using case studies from farmers in West Africa the report reveals the failure to put Doha's 'development priority' rhetoric into action. Fairtrade is critically important as a way for business and consumers to bring more fairness into trade but this must be matched with high level commitment to address global imbalances in the trading of cotton. For more information contact: aurelie.walker@fairtrade.org.uk

Domestic violence, immigration law and 'no recourse to public funds' and - Trafficking, sexual exploitation and the law: Rights of Women has produced two new, extended, legal guides for women to complement 'Seeking Refuge? - A handbook for asylum-seeking women'. These guides set out the legal and financial support options available to women who have been trafficked or who are experiencing domestic violence and have an insecure immigration status. They are available to download free of charge at www.rightsofwomen.org.uk/legal.php Seeking Refuge? A handbook for asylum-seeking women www.rightsofwomen.org.uk/pdfs/ROW_Handbook.pdf

The Peace Museum, which is located in Bradford city centre, West Yorkshire, explores the events and history of people and organisations that have worked to promote peace, non-violence and conflict resolution. It is the only museum in the UK dedicated to the collection, conservation, and interpretation of material relating to the history and development of peace, nonviolence and conflict resolution through exhibitions and learning. If you are ever in the Bradford area it is well worth a visit, and entry is free. www.peacemuseum.org.uk

Survival has launched a call for a boycott of Botswana diamonds, over the government's treatment of the Kalahari Bushmen. In 2002, the Bushmen were illegally evicted from their ancestral lands to make way for diamond mining. At the time, the government denied a significant diamond deposit on their land existed. However, eight years later, Gem Diamonds, which bought the concession from De Beers, (De Beers is part-owned by the Botswana government). is in negotiations to construct a \$3.3 billion mine at one of the Bushman communities. While Gem Diamonds, in which jewellers Graff has a stake, pushes forward with its mine, the Bushmen are being starved off their lands. Despite winning a high-profile legal battle allowing them to return home, the Bushmen have been banned by the Botswana government from using a well which they rely on for water, and are prevented from hunting for food. Survival's director, Stephen Corry, said 'Botswana's diamond industry is the 'Siamese twin' of the government. People should know that far from being an expensive token of eternal love, Botswana diamonds are a symbol of the nasty oppression of southern Africa's first people'. More info at www.survivalinternational.org



ICAN Concerns over Uranium Sales: The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) is raising concerns about Australia's plans to sell uranium to Russia. In ratifying an agreement first flagged between John Howard and Vladimir Putin in 2007, Prime Minister Julia Gillard is selling Australia's uranium to a country with the world's largest nuclear weapons arsenal and the largest stockpile of weapons-usable material. ICAN is deeply disappointed about Australia's decision and is seeking support in getting the message to the Prime Minister. To find out more visit: www.icanw.org.au/node/135 (Australian Catholic Social Justice Council)

scottish fair trade forum campaigners day

Maureen Brough, the Chairperson of Paisley Fairtrade Partnership and long time Justice and Peace friend, gives an account of the Fairtrade Conference.



The Alexander Wilson Suite in Paisley Town Hall was packed on Saturday 6 November for a lively and informative day, hosted by Renfrewshire Council, of presentations, workshops and stalls as well as the opportunity of meeting old friends and making new contacts from all over Scotland – and beyond.

The highlight was undoubtedly, in celebration of the 5th anniversary of the Scotland – Malawi Co-operation agreement, hearing first hand from producer, Joshua Varela, representing the National Smallholder Farmers Association of Malawi (NASFAM), how Fair Trade, and Paisley's Just Trading Scotland Ltd in particular, has transformed the lives of many people in Malawi by ensuring better prices and markets for their high quality rice in a context where 80% of Malawi's people live on less than \$1 a day and would normally have to pay up to 30% interest to borrow money for seed from the bank. Joshua gave a graphic description of the range of challenges they face daily around transport, fit for purpose machinery, pricing and land issues. But he also shared the encouraging news that their exports of Kilombero rice to Scotland are up this year from 125 metric tons to 2000 – an encouragement to keep up those 90 kilo challenges!

Before Joshua's presentation and the excellent lunch provided by Renfrewshire Council, we were welcomed to the day by Martin Metyard, Chair of the Scottish Fair Trade Forum (SFTF) and Councillor Brian Lawson, chair of Renfrewshire's Fairtrade Zone Steering Group.

A sparkling presentation by Holly from Trinity High School's Fair Trade group set an enthusiastic tone for the day as she told the story of the school's successful campaign to involve the whole school and staff in becoming Scotland's first Fairtrade school – they continue to generate new ideas and draw in new people and are actively involved in promoting Renfrew's Fairtrade Town campaign.

The new Director of the Scottish Fair Trade Forum, Martin Rhodes, passionately shared his vision for Fair Trade activity in Scotland, how to engage more widely with Scottish people and build in sustainability for Fair Trade activity after Fairtrade Nation status is achieved, including a continuing commitment to campaign for Trade Justice. He launched the 'Countdown Campaign' for 2011, a pledge campaign challenging activists to aim for an activity somewhere in Scotland to promote Fairtrade every day of 2011!

Veronica Pasteur, Head of Campaigns, Fairtrade Foundation filled in the bigger picture eg highlighting the introduction of new Fairtrade products such as gold, raisins from Afghanistan – and baked beans! Sales of Fairly traded products have continued to increase despite the recession with bananas being the biggest seller, but she informed us that Fair Trade share of the overall market is still low and remains a challenge. The Fairtrade Foundation continues to work in some of the poorest countries of the world to seek and accredit new products with the Fairtrade mark including working in areas of conflict such as Rwanda and Afghanistan.

The Fairtrade Foundation's campaign focus for 2011 is on cotton (watch out for their new report out shortly 'The great cotton stitch up') with 'Show off your label' being Fairtrade Fortnight's campaign slogan from 28 February – 13 March, materials including 'bunting for justice' can be ordered now. The Fairtrade Foundation will also be revising the 5 Fairtrade Town Goals in 2011 to bring them up to date and more responsive to local circumstances.

Andrew Parker from IMANI spoke of the Trade perspective between Scotland and Malawi highlighting many of the difficulties for Malawi, for example, in competing in a global market with its cotton and rice where prices are frequently forced down by richer countries. Ten products are now being imported from Malawi to Scotland working through Just Trading Scotland.

A lively question and answer session followed to the whole Panel of speakers focusing on issues such as cheap fairtrade cotton tee shirts, the Fairtrade mark process, membership of SFTF, achieving a balance between selling and campaigning and impact of the recession on consumers and local authorities.

After Joshua's talk participants had the chance to continue informing themselves and sharing ideas by choosing to attend a workshop on Fairtrade towns, Fairtrade schools and cotton, Fairtrade and local authorities, Fairtrade and the NHS or Malawi: the 90 kg rice challenge.

Altogether it was a stimulating, energising and encouraging day for the 80 participants with plenty to think about, new contacts made and new ideas for keeping up the campaign for justice through Fairtrade.



Councillor Brian Lawson, Martin Metyard, Joshua Varela and Liz Cotton (Rainbow Turtle)

Renfrewshire asks you to support our Fairtrade Zone Campaign

DECEMBER

- 10 Human Rights Day
- 11-19 Edinburgh Ethical Christmas Fair
- 18 International Migrants Day
- 25 Christmas Day. Rejoice! Rejoice!

JANUARY 2011

- 2 The Solemnity of the Epiphany. Justice and Peace Sunday.
Bishop Moran's letter to be read out at all Masses. A collection to be taken up for the work of Justice and Peace
- 3 First loans by the Grameen Bank, founded by Muhammad Yunus in Bangladesh 1977
- 10 First UN General Assembly opens in 1946 with 51 nations represented

JANUARY CONTINUED

- 15 Birthday of Martin Luther King Jr.
- 16 World Day of Prayer for Migrants and Refugees
- 25 Second Vatican Council promulgated by Pope John XXIII 1959
- 27 UN International Day of Commemoration for the victims of the Holocaust
- 29 Poverty & Homelessness Action Week – till 6 February
- 30 Mahatma Gandhi assassinated 1948

FEBRUARY

- 17-18 Scottish Assembly for Tackling Poverty

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



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