

# BALLOT PAPER

Human Dignity	✓
The Common Good	✓
Option for the Poor	✓
Subsidiarity	✓
Human Rights	✓
Integrity of Creation	✓

# THE ALTERNATIVE VOTE

# editorial

**M**ay is a lovely month. Nature has come round her annual cycle, puts her best clothes on again and the land begins to yield its plenty. Liturgically there is fullness too. We are in the joyful aftermath of Easter (even in a late year like this), living for the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost. From time immemorial May has been the month of celebrating nature; and rather than trying to suppress it, the Church baptised this tradition and put May under the care of Mary, the 'Queen of the May'.

Benedict XV (1915-22) is not much remembered today; yet he should be for his tireless work for peace during and after World War I, albeit largely rejected by the cynical participants. He did arrange for care and repatriation of war wounded. He also initiated May devotions for peace, and added the invocation 'Mary Queen of Peace' to the Litany of Loreto. Pius XII reinforced the call for May devotions as a way to peace in 1939 (commended in his encyclical *Mediator Dei*, n182). In 1965, Paul VI devoted an encyclical to the month of May, which included the following beautiful prayer to Mary:

*May she who experienced the cares and hardships of earthly life, the weariness of daily toil, the hardships and trials of poverty, and the sorrows of Calvary, come to aid the needs of the Church and the human race. May she graciously lend an ear to the devout pleas of those all over the world who beg her for peace. May she enlighten the minds of those who rule nations. And finally, may she prevail on God, who rules the winds and storms, to calm the tempests in men's warring hearts and grant us peace in our day. What we seek is true peace grounded on the sturdy foundations of justice and love - on a justice which recognises the legitimate rights of the weak as well as those of the strong; on a love which keeps men from falling into error through excessive concern for their own interests. Thus each person's rights may be safeguarded without the rights of others being forgotten or violated.*

May is also a month when work and labour are celebrated. It is worth remembering that 'liturgy' derives from two Greek words meaning 'the work of the laity'. This word was used initially to refer to service given to the Athenian state by citizens for the betterment of the public good. Throughout the world there are secular holidays and May Day processions, deriving from the nineteenth century attempts to improve the conditions of workers through trades unions, the eight hour movement (eight hours each of work, recreation and rest) and of course the growing movements under the banners of socialism or communism. Socialism is properly a political belief about the equality of people (as in Galatians 3:28); while communism is an economic belief about the distribution of resources (as in Acts 2:44-5, 4:32).

Ideologists have twisted them into slogans or dirty words and May Day has often been an assertion of political superiority. St Joseph, is the patron saint of those 'fighting against communism'. Since 1955, May 1 has been the feast of St Joseph the Worker (perhaps because he is nearly the only person in the Gospels to hold down a job). What concerned the Church at one level about socialism and communism in the late nineteenth century, however, was their purely materialistic basis and their apparent denial of freedom in their predictions of historical inevitability. At a more practical level there was concern about the increasing hostility to religion if not

downright atheism; and a fear for the social consequences of rejecting private property and the disturbance of the social order, already deemed to be too secular.

On 15 May 1891, therefore, Pope Leo XIII issued the encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, usually seen as inaugurating the modern tradition of Catholic Social Teaching. It was not that there hadn't been any social teaching prior to that. The Industrial Revolution had however brought about a new and systemic understanding and organisation of society, challenging the old hierarchies and spawning a vast and impoverished urban *lumpenproletariat* which was seen as a constant threat to social stability both in the old empires and the new nation states. It was only twenty years earlier that the Church had lost the Papal States and the papacy had become 'the prisoner of the Vatican'.

Another element lay in the enormous progress and extension in the means of communication and literacy. Indeed, Leo himself was the first pope to be recorded (you can hear him chanting *Ave Maria* on the internet). *Rerum Novarum's* dissemination was universal and worthy of commemoration. So in 1931, *Quadragesimo Anno* celebrated the fortieth anniversary; followed by John XXIII's *Mater et Magistra* in 1961; Paul VI's *Octogesima Adveniens* in 1971; John Paul II's *Laborem Exercens* (delayed by the assassination attempt in May 1981); and *Centesimus Annus* in 1991. Each developed an aspect of *Rerum Novarum* while preserving the continuity of the tradition. They are largely fascinating if read in their historical context; often as much for how they revise one another and reflect their period than for simply restating what has already been said.

Another anniversary for 15 May, this time in 1252. Pope Innocent IV issued the papal bull *Ad Exstirpanda*, which authorised, but also limited, the torture of heretics by the Medieval Inquisition. It was a time when an absolute faith enjoined absolute sanctions. I was reminded of the confrontation of the 'progressive' Franciscans and the 'conservative' Benedictines portrayed in Umberto Eco's marvellous novel, *The Name of the Rose*. It is set in 1327 in a monastery hosting an important conference on poverty, but beset by mysterious deaths, investigated simultaneously by a benign Franciscan and a fearsome Dominican inquisitor who detects the whiff of heresy.

At one point the Abbot deposes a sermon to one of the most senior monks, who claims that the deaths are the punishment for pride of intellect in the curiosity for knowledge:

*'...the work of this monastery ...is the study, and the preservation of knowledge. Preservation, I say, and not search for ... There is no progress, no revolution of ages, in the history of knowledge, but at most a continuous and sublime recapitulation.'* I am haunted, not only by beauty of the language, but by this tension of stability and progress which is at the heart of our attempts to live our faith in society.

Each year the return of May brings back what seems the same, but is actually new. The bark of last year's tree requires a new beginning, yet still draws on the same roots. The cycle of liturgy brings us back to the same place – almost. And that almost is crucial, because it contains the measure of our relationship with God.

Tim Duffy



## Jubilee Scotland Campaigns Director, James Picardo, introduces their latest campaign

Jubilee Scotland campaigners met in Holyrood on 22nd March to launch a new campaign calling for Scotland to punch above its weight once more in the debt campaign, by promoting itself as a panel where countries can have unjust and unpayable debts cancelled.

The last major round of poor-country debt-cancellation took place in 2005 when the debts of 40 of the world's poorest countries were pledged to be cancelled. To a huge degree this could be credited to popular campaigning around the world, for example when campaigners in Scotland fought for debt cancellation measures to take place when the G8 Summit was held on Scottish soil in Gleneagles in 2005. But while the debts of many of the so-called Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) were cancelled, no lasting framework was left in place through which debts could be cancelled. So whole groups of countries - and millions of the poorest people in the world - are still falling through the net of debt-relief.

Many of the poorest countries in the world did not qualify for HIPC because their debts were deemed to be 'sustainable', but this did not take into consideration whether the countries in question would still be able to afford essential public services. Bangladesh is a case in point - it did not qualify for this debt relief despite the fact that nearly half of its population live below the poverty line. Even those countries who qualified for HIPC faced a lengthy wait to go through the process of having their debts cancelled - for example it took Malawi six years to complete the process from the point of qualifying in principle for HIPC status. During this period new debt was built up.

Furthermore, existing debt relief takes no account of the unjust circumstances in which many poor-country debts originated - the 'Dodgy Deals' addressed in Jubilee Scotland's other major current campaign. One of the classic examples of an illegitimate debt is the Bataan nuclear power plant in the Philippines. Every day between 1975 and 2007 it cost the cash-strapped Philippine Government \$155,000 in interest payments. The plant, designed and constructed by US Corporation Westinghouse, with the backing of the US Government, was built near major earthquake fault lines, close to a volcano. In 1986 it was declared unsafe, and has never produced one single watt of electricity for the country. The project initiated by the dictator President Ferdinand Marcos in 1975 was beset with scandal - Marcos is thought to have received upwards of US\$100 million in kickbacks. It was hugely overpriced, costing the country over US\$2.3 billion - three times as much as a similar South Korean plant. Today 45% of Filipinos live on less than \$2 a day. In just one day in 2004, \$155,000 could have paid for 20,000 school teachers' wages, or hospital facilities for 750 sick people. As yet the only creditor government to acknowledge the category of unjust or illegitimate debt is that of Norway

All of these sets of countries are badly in need of a fair

and transparent setting in which they can meet with creditors and agree to cancel those debts deemed to be unjust and unpayable. Various proposals for how such a system would work have been put forward in the last decade. It is a need which creditor countries and institutions have so far ignored, but the debt crisis faced by many Northern countries has led now to a recognition of the failure of existing systems for dealing with debt crisis. In Europe particularly there is a growing movement for precisely the kind of debt arbitration framework that is so badly needed by poorer countries.

At the World Social Forum in Dakar the global 'Defuse the Debt Crisis' campaign was formally opened by a photo in front of the Africa monument at Place du Souvenir. Debt campaigners from European, African and US networks presented the civil society proposal for a fair and

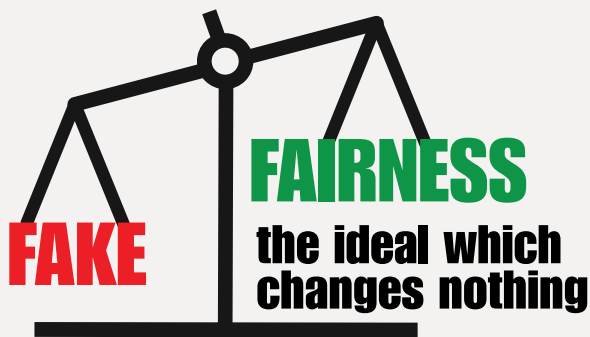


transparent debt workout mechanism. Participants of the event came mostly from critically indebted African states including Guiné-Bissau and the emerging state of Southern Sudan.

The Scottish 'Defuse the Debt Crisis' campaign is asking for Scotland to play its part within the larger campaign by promoting itself as an arbiter of sovereign debt. Norway - a small country - was able to punch above its weight by cancelling debt on the basis of illegitimacy - and Scotland, by championing debt arbitration, could follow suit.

In 2011 Jubilee Scotland will be asking MSPs to sign up to a new Charter for Responsible Financing which calls for a fair and transparent process for the cancellation of unjust and unpayable debts. We will also be seeking sponsorship and support for a motion later in 2011, calling for Scotland to actively promote itself as an arbiter of poor country debt. Please ask your MSP candidates whether they support this campaign, and stay in touch to receive updates and actions on the campaign throughout the year.

Jubilee Scotland [www.jubileescotland.org.uk](http://www.jubileescotland.org.uk)  
Telephone 0131 225 4321



In a sense, fairness is one of those values no one can oppose. Who doesn't want fairness?

However, this uncontroversial universality of 'fairness' is precisely what makes it a slippery and misleading term for framing any debate. Politicians of different parties bat accusations of unfairness back and forth, but the real issue is what 'fairness' means, and what its use conceals. If no one opposes fairness, what content does it have? More to the point: whose interests does it serve?

The problem with the government's claims of fairness is that they leave the essential parameters of economic power and inequality in place. The Institute for Fiscal Studies has argued that the effect of cuts falls disproportionately on the poorest despite the rhetoric which claims 'we are all in it together'. Part of the point is that people living close to margins of poverty or homelessness stand to lose far more than those experiencing proportionally similar cuts from a higher base.

When we take into account the likely reduction in public services, on which those with lower incomes depend more, the regressive implications of the cuts stand out even more starkly. More specific examples could be added: the attack on those in receipt of housing benefit, or those in care; the targeting of those with children; the disproportionate effect of cuts on women.

However, even such analysis does not go far enough. Christians need to drag the idea of 'fairness' into the light, to expose it as the ideological prop that it is. Neither the government nor their Labour party critics are addressing the chaos, exploitation, conflict and inequality endemic to the economic system which has created current conditions. The major political forces of our country have been at one in embracing trade liberalisation and the free-run of financial markets, with little concern for their human and ecological impact.

Why else have companies like Vodafone and Boots been allowed to evade billions in tax through exploiting loopholes? Why do we continue to press ahead with the tens of billions it will cost to replace the Trident nuclear missile system? Why is the cost of unemployment, increased crime and ecological vandalism not factored into the equation? Why are the jobless forced to work for nothing whilst bonuses are doled out to those in the banks whose greed and neglect threw people out of work in the first place? Why else, but that the current agenda of cuts and reforms have nothing to do with 'fairness' and everything to do with ensuring that a system founded on inequality stays in place.

Christians are called to a different perspective, because, put simply, the gospel is not about 'fairness'. It is about revolutionary, excessive grace. The parable of the labourers in the vineyard draws us into this drama. The labourers are all paid the same, paid the whole amount even though some only joined the work late in the day. When those who have worked all day complain, the employer asks them 'are you



envious because I am generous?' (Matthew 20.15).

The story is not a literal prescription for how to pay workers. It is a re-imagination of what economy means. First, everyone is given the full amount. There is no discrimination, no competition for more. Secondly, this giving is not dictated by an impersonal law of supply and demand, but by a conviction that the contents of all our transactions are ultimately rooted in divine gift. Thirdly, the equality of the workers is not based upon some kind of envious class hatred. Rather, it is the desire for inequality that is exposed as driven by envy.

Neo-liberal capitalism may not have been the economic form of Jesus' day (though a form of commodity capitalism clearly was, and all those traders selling their luxury wares are weeping and gnashing teeth in Revelation), but it is the very spirit of competitive inequality, mutual suspicion and envy. Christians live in the world and have to deal with the world as it is, but that should not blunt the edge of their critical voice and actions. Pursuing 'fairness' in the context of a system which is built on establishing inequality (not to mention exporting it to other countries and visiting it upon the earth itself) is at best tinkering around the edges and at worst a cynical deception.

Fairness is the fancy dress put on by a corrupt system. In short, it is seen as the best way of dividing up the scarce spoils of a market driven economy. But what if the way the market drives that economy creates the appearance of scarcity and the need for unequal outcomes in the first place?

Again, Christians need a more radical perspective, not conforming to the world as though its current state were inevitable, natural or divinely sanctioned; but being conformed to Christ, who speaks a word of judgement upon our systems of violence and exclusion. The Christian claim is that the earth and all that is in it belong to God. It is not ours by right of possession, to do with what we will. We cannot own the earth or any aspect of the ecology of which we are a part. Property is never an absolute right, only a relative one, a means to the end of universal human flourishing. [This kind of] fairness simply leads to the reification of the status quo. Instead, the God revealed in the Judeo-Christian Tradition is one of Equity - which doesn't treat people all the same, but treats them according to their need.

God did not create people to be the pawns and slaves of economic powers, shifted around by the political arbiters of 'fairness'. Nor did God make the earth to be the spoilheap and raw material for ever-increasing consumption. So we don't start from the assumption that people are naturally unequal and we have to iron things out a bit with a dose of philanthropy; we start from the conviction that creation is gift, to be stewarded in common. The early church put this vision into practice: they held things in common, as a natural expression of the prayer and breaking of bread which they also shared.

This confirms our original claim: Christians must not retreat into a private religious sanctuary, because our faith is always earthed, always embodied, always political. Our faith is not merely words and ideas. It is food and drink for the hungry 'without money and without price' (Isaiah 55.1).

*This is an excerpt from a longer document entitled **Common Wealth**, a theological reflection on the state of contemporary British society compiled by (largely Anglican) theologians. The full document is available via the J&P website.*

# the BIG society

We pinched this article by Steve Atherton (with permission) from 'MouthPeace', the magazine of the Shrewsbury and Liverpool J&P commission.

## Are you confused and worried by Big Society?

According to the government's web page 'The Big Society is a society in which individual citizens feel big: big in terms of being supported and enabled; having real and regular influence; being capable of creating change in their neighbourhoods.' Big society will help in '... achieving a radical shift of power away from the centre.' There is even a Minister for Decentralisation. Another document writes about 'a society where individuals and communities have more power and responsibility, and use it to create better neighbourhoods and local services.' We are told that Big Society 'lies at the heart of the Department's work in housing, planning, regeneration and local government'. The principles are described with inspirational words: 'The first is about what the state can do for us. The second is about what we can do for ourselves. And the third is about what we can do for others.'

So far so good but my alarm bells began to ring when I read about four key principles of 'competition, choice, payment by results, transparency.' I began to wonder what 'competition' to provide social security payments would look like or what 'payment by results' would look like in local government. I wondered why Big Society does not lie at the heart of defence, health, energy, or education.

I found it very informative to learn that the brain behind 'Big Society' is a man called Philip Blond, an Anglican theologian and confidant of the Prime Minister, who regularly attends conferences in Italy on Catholic Social Teaching.

Comparison of Big Society with key principles from CST shows that many of the ideals are shared: The Principle of Subsidiarity (Decisions are to be taken as near as possible to where they will have effect) is central to the idea of Big Society; The Principle of Human Dignity fits comfortably into the Big Society framework; The Principle of Solidarity is appealed to encourage people to join in with Big Society; The Principle of the Common Good could fit into the framework if those with oversight make sure that everybody is protected and not just an elite or their supporters.

However, I don't find enough emphasis is given to The Principle of Preferential Option for the Poor and Vulnerable. Most worryingly, I fear that 'the delivery of public services and community benefits through private/third sector partnership' will lead to a loss of reliable professional services. Churches have always been places where the poor were treated with respect and indeed many of our current social services began in the churches. But they are not there any longer and a government that seeks to cut its spending in the hope that churches will distribute welfare is a government that has abandoned its responsibilities.



The March for the Alternative saw up to half a million people gather in London on Saturday 26 March to protest at the government's plans for fast and deep public spending cuts. The English and Welsh J&P Network took part in this peaceful event. Our photo shows Anne Peacey, chair of the Network standing in front of their banner at the rally in Hyde Park. The march sent a strong signal to the government that those opposing their fast and deep public spending cuts are not an easily ignored minority. In fact, they're now the mainstream majority.

## Some

Some stood up once, and sat down  
Some walked a mile, and walked away  
Some stood up twice, then sat down, 'I've had it' they said,  
Some walked two miles, then walked away.  
'It's too much', they cried.

Some stood and stood and stood.  
They were taken for fools,  
They were taken for being taken in.

Some walked and walked and walked.  
They walked the earth,  
They walked the waters,  
They walked the air.

'Why do you stand,' they were asked, 'and why do you walk?'

'Because of the children,' they said,  
'And because of the heart,  
'And because of the bread,'

'Because the cause is the heart's beat,  
And the children born  
And the risen bread.'

Daniel Berrigan SJ

# catholic social teaching for the Present Time

**W**hether we like it or not, we are all pretty much secularised. We live in a world which claims to offer us the power of 'choice'. The problem is that unlimited choice is no choice – merely endless distraction. Add to this the fact that marketing and advertising have deeply vested interest in limiting choice and we see that consumerism is based on an illusion. And the ideology of consumerism is so all encompassing that it governs not only the choices we make in shopping, but also in such areas as culture, entertainment and dress. Even foundational disciplines such as science, economics, politics and religion are influenced by the ideological requirements of consumerism.

Fortunately there is an alternative. Particularly in a time of economic uncertainty, Catholic Social Teaching gives us clear guidelines on ways of avoiding the injustice, inequality and conflict which inevitably accompany consumerism. It also gives principles, such as the dignity of the human person and the need to work for the common good of all, which form the basis of balanced and harmonious relationships. Without this balance and harmony, which is the basis of justice, we are unable to participate in the peace which is rooted in God's transforming love.

## Justice and the balance of relationships

We often think of justice only in terms of what happens to criminals, yet it is much wider. Justice is about maintaining and, when necessary, restoring the balance of social relationships. And if crime is perhaps the most obvious disruption of the balance of social relationships, it is far from being the only one. How often do our own selfishness and stupidity spoil our relationships with one another? Absorbed in our own concerns we neglect and forget the needs of others, in the process losing touch with ourselves.

## Created in God's image

We are created in the image and likeness of God, which brings with it a unique dignity and worth. Perhaps we do not think about this often enough – how privileged we are. We are each of us special, each of us loved by God for ourselves. It doesn't matter whether we are tall or short, fat or thin or in between, super smart or ordinary. We are all imperfect in some way, but we are each graced with a special dignity.

## Social Beings and the Common Good

We cannot survive on our own and that is why we need other people. In giving to and receiving from others we create that balance of dignity and social relationships which the Church calls the Common Good: not just for a few but for everyone. In particular we are required to be alongside those who are deprived or handicapped in some way, physically, mentally or socially. This is what is called 'the option for the poor'. All of us need of this help at some time, because we are all in some way incomplete.

## In God's eyes we are all equal

In Mary's wonderful prayer the *Magnificat*, we are told that 'he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted the lowly' (Lk 1:52). This not about vindictiveness, but rather to remind us, that in God's eyes we are all equal. It is also a reminder that human priorities often get it wrong: 'the stone that the builders rejected has become the corner stone' (Ps 118:22). Jesus quotes this as the measure by which those who have been sent to test him have failed (Mark 12:10-12).

## God's justice and forgiveness

Here we find the difference between human justice and God's justice. In human terms, if we unbalance human relationships, we can expect consequences. In the normal run of things, if we are overbearing or selfish, we find ourselves isolated, cut off from the comfort and affirmation of balanced relationships. In contrast to the required payback or retribution of human justice, God offers mercy and forgiveness. Forgiveness brings reconciliation; the restoration of broken relationships. Human justice, which normally offers no more than our 'just deserts', is now transformed by God's unconditional love. And in that reconciliation comes the peace that allows us to experience fully the love of our neighbour.

## Catholic Social Teaching and spiritual growth

None of this just happens of course. Faith is God's gift which deepens as we cooperate. We can try to hide or run away from life's challenges, but sooner or later we have to face them. Here the social teaching of the Church is invaluable. The *Catechism* tells us that 'conscience must be informed and moral judgment enlightened' (n1783). Catholic Social Teaching is the body of the Church's reflections on social issues rooted in its tradition and mission. It is not a set of ready-made answers, but rather principles that enable us to comprehend situations of injustice or conflict; and to develop appropriate and manageable responses.

## Anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*

In May we celebrate the hundred and twentieth anniversary of the encyclical issued by Pope Leo XIII which brought these concerns together against the backdrop of the Industrial Revolution. It is known by its opening words in Latin, *Rerum Novarum*, usually translated as 'a spirit of revolutionary change'. It inaugurated the Church's rich modern tradition of social teaching with a special emphasis on work, which as Pope John Paul II noted, is 'a key, perhaps the key to the whole social question'.

## Work in Catholic Social Teaching

Work is not simply a job. It is what we do with our lives using our God given talents and contributing to the Common Good of human wellbeing. Children and students learning, parents and carers looking after people and the elderly doing their best to live independently are all working. Those in paid employment have a right to a decent wage and working conditions which are compatible with their dignity. Government has a duty, as an indirect employer, to fund public works for the maintenance of the infrastructure of the society it governs. This includes providing for those who are unable to find employment, or who through illness or age, are unable to work. Work, properly understood, is a crucial means of human fulfilment.

## From Teaching to Action

So Catholic Social Teaching is not a rule book for life. Often our faith journey is stifled by signs saying 'Thou shalt not'. Rather it is like a road map and Highway Code: it shows us the territory in proper perspective and gives us the means to reach our destination with due regard for others. For proper orientation we need a compass; and God's magnetic call of faith gives us our true bearings. One thing remains: we may know the route and the direction intimately, but we still have to make the journey. So, while in one sense we have the rich patrimony of Catholic Social Teaching, to be effective it needs to be more than a point of reference. It needs to be incorporated into a habit of life which expresses in action our spiritual vocation as pilgrim people of God.



29th May - 4th June 2011

## world week for peace in palestine and israel

This annual observance of a week of prayer, education, and advocacy calls participants to seek justice for Palestinians so that both Israelis and Palestinians can finally live in peace. It has been more than 60 years since the partition of Palestine hardened into a permanent nightmare for Palestinians. It is now more than 40 years since the occupation of East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza overwhelmed the peaceful vision of one land, two peoples.

[www.worldweekforpeace.org](http://www.worldweekforpeace.org)

Yet the dream of one nation cannot be fulfilled at the expense of another.

The action week's message is that now:

- It's time for Palestinians and Israelis to share a just peace.
- It's time for freedom from occupation.
- It's time for equal rights.
- It's time for the healing of wounded souls.

### *A Prayer for Jerusalem*

*God of Justice, our thoughts are not your thoughts, but we sense your deep sadness that three world faiths struggle to sustain a hold on Jerusalem, your holy city. We feel your grief as discrimination and oppression are part of daily life for many citizens, and that Palestinian homes are being bulldozed in the Eastern suburbs. We pray that today's political conflict will give way to the transformation of Jerusalem, into a city where all people of goodwill are welcome.*

*God of Peace, our thoughts are not your thoughts, but we believe that you long for the day when fear and suspicion between faith communities gives way to mutual respect.*

*We pray that wise negotiators will hear and feel the experience of loss in each culture, and that reparation will be made to those whose lives have been devastated in living memory. We pray that in the new Jerusalem, resources will be shared and the political future reshaped.*

*God of Love, our thoughts are not your thoughts, but we long for Jerusalem to be a place where every child is known to be a child of God, and where, like Jesus, they may grow up in wisdom and grace, and in the full knowledge of the God of Abraham. Amen.*

## I SHALL NOT HATE

*John Armson, a semi-retired Anglican priest, reviews an inspiring book, recently published*



It's always uplifting to read of – or even better to know – people who, by their nature and example, stand for 'gospel values' – kindness, charity and justice. His book, *I Shall Not Hate; a Gaza doctor's journey on the road to peace and human dignity* is about one man who, outstandingly, has been able to retain an active and practical sense of understanding and forgiveness in the face of an enormous hostility that has cost him dear.

Izzeldin Abuelaish was bred and born in Jabalia, the infamous refugee camp in Gaza, with its over-crowded conditions and arbitrarily Israeli-controlled water and electricity supply. From this disadvantaged start, which would have hindered a lesser man, he has become a specialist in gynaecology, training in Egypt, London and Harvard. He has held positions in hospitals in several middle eastern countries, and until recently worked as a hospital consultant in both Gaza and Israel simultaneously. He has very recently taken up a post in Toronto.

His academic and professional successes have not separated him from his roots in Gaza. He was there during the recent intifada. His own home was shelled at point blank range – it seems entirely deliberately – causing the death of three of his eight children. No explanation or apology has ever been forthcoming for this wanton act.

The death of his children followed hard on the death of their mother, his wife, attributable, in part, to the infamous delays at the check points between Gaza and Israel. Abuelaish tells us of the pain and frustrations he has had to suffer because of these, commuting between Gaza and Israel. (I have witnessed this myself. Each day, an acquaintance of mine has to allow three hours to get from Bethlehem to Jerusalem. But he might – entirely unpredictably – be waved through and so get to work at 5 a.m. instead of 8 a.m.)

Anyone, including someone as well-known as

Abuelaish, a doctor, practising in Israel, passing through these check points might even finish up with a blank, unexplained refusal to be allowed to leave or return to Gaza. On one occasion, when he was due to travel (in connection with a job interview abroad) he faced a whole day's delay. Flights were missed. Anecdotes suggest it can be even harsher and more frequent for those less well qualified. Arbitrariness seems to be part of the demoralising strategy.

In such circumstances, many, perhaps most, of us would get angry and become bitter, and even give up. Abuelaish has certainly felt the first of those, but has not given up nor given way to bitterness. Not even when his three daughters were killed. One of his surviving sons comforted the weeping father: 'My sisters are happy and with their mother.' The father's faith and his habit of not hating seem to have been passed on.

Such an attitude is not confined to Abuelaish, of course, and his book tells of support from many quarters, including Israelis. The immediate aftermath of the slaughter of his children, by an extraordinary turn of events, was broadcast live on an Israeli radio chat-show: the show's host masterminded on air the rescue effort which probably saved the eyesight of one of his daughters and the life of a wounded niece staying with his daughters that fateful day. (Providence, or what?)

Abuelaish is one of those remarkable people who has managed to avoid bitterness or the desire for revenge; who understands that tit-for-tat brings no peace; that even the restrictive 'an eye for an eye' could make everyone blind. He is a beacon in a needy world. More than a beacon: he has set up charities to assist his own people, prisoners in Gaza.

His name remains relatively unknown in Britain. Perhaps this most moving book will help to correct that.

Izzeldin Abuelaish, *I Shall Not Hate; a Gaza doctor's journey on the road to peace and human dignity*, Bloomsbury 2011. £16.99. For a full and harrowing account of policies in Gaza, see the Christian Aid Report, *Failing Gaza*, available at [www.christianaid.org.uk/Images/failing-gaza.pdf](http://www.christianaid.org.uk/Images/failing-gaza.pdf)

# world asylum figures fall in 2010 to almost half their 2001 levels

The number of asylum-seekers in the industrialised world continued to fall in 2010, bringing the figure down to nearly half the level at the start of the millennium.

This was among the main findings of the recently released UN refugee 2010 statistical overview of asylum applications in 44 industrialised countries.\* The report deals with new asylum claims and does not show how many individuals were granted refugee status.

According to the report, 358,800 asylum applications were lodged in industrialised countries last year - down 5 per cent from 2009, and some 42 per cent lower than the decade's peak in 2001, when almost 620,000 asylum applications were made.

'The global dynamics of asylum are changing. Asylum claims in the industrialised world are much lower than a decade ago while year-on-year levels are up in only a handful of countries,' said High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres. 'We need to study the root causes to see if the decline is because of fewer push factors in areas of origin, or tighter migration control in countries of asylum.'

Last year's total number of new asylum claims was the fourth lowest in the last decade. Year-on-year decreases were reported in most regions, including in Europe, North America and North Asia. Within Europe, the largest decline was seen in southern Europe, where claims fell by 33 per cent compared to 2009. This was mainly because fewer people requested protection in Malta, Italy and Greece. However, this decline was offset by increases elsewhere, especially in Germany (49%), Sweden (32%), Denmark (30%), Turkey (18%), Belgium (16%) and France (13%). In the Nordic countries, the increases in Denmark and Sweden were offset by substantial declines in Norway (-42 %) and Finland (-32%).

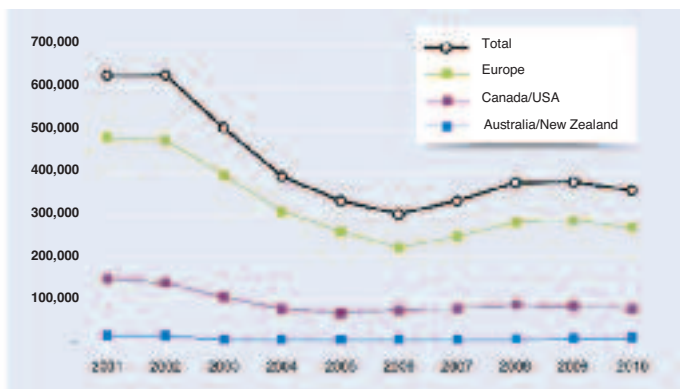
Among continents, only Australasia saw more asylum claims compared to 2009. Australia received 8,250 applications, an increase of 33 per cent. Nonetheless, applications there were well below levels recorded in other industrialised and non-industrialised countries, and were down by more than a third compared to 2001.

## US tops recipient list

Among individual countries, the United States remained the largest asylum recipient for the fifth consecutive year, accounting for one out of every six asylum applications in the industrialised countries covered in the report. The US saw an increase of 6,500 applications, partly due to a rise in the number of Chinese and Mexican asylum-seekers. France maintained its position as host to the second-largest number of new applications, with 47,800 in 2010, largely from Serbian, Russian and Congolese asylum-seekers. Germany became the third-largest recipient country with a 49-percent rise. The increases can partly be attributed to a rise in asylum seekers from Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

## Asylum applications lodged in 44 industrialized countries | 2001-2010

All data are provisional and subject to change.



That development is widely attributed to the introduction of visa-free entry to the European Union for nationals of these two countries since December 2009.

Sweden and Canada ranked fourth and fifth respectively. Together, the top five countries of asylum accounted for more than half (56 per cent) of all asylum applications covered in this report. The United Kingdom was sixth with 22,100 claims, the lowest since 1989.

## Most claims from Serbia

In terms of places of origin, the largest group of asylum-seekers in 2010 were from Serbia (28,900, including Kosovo). The country saw a 54 per cent increase compared to 2009, when it ranked sixth. Interestingly, the number of asylum applications in 2010 was comparable to 2001, soon after the Kosovo crisis.

Afghanistan slid to second place with a decrease of 9 per cent compared to the previous year. Unlike in 2009, when Afghan claims were mainly lodged in Norway and the United Kingdom, in 2010 more claims were filed in Germany and Sweden. Chinese asylum-seekers made up the third-largest asylum group in 2010, partly due to a substantial drop in the number of new applications from Iraq and Somalia. For the first time since 2005, Iraq was not one of the top two countries of origin of asylum-seekers. It dropped to fourth place, followed by the Russian Federation. Somalia, which occupied the third spot in 2009, fell to sixth in 2010.

Putting the latest numbers into the context of recent emergencies in Côte d'Ivoire and Libya, Guterres noted, 'Overall, it's still the developing world that is carrying the lion's share of responsibility for hosting refugees. Despite their many other challenges, countries like Liberia, Tunisia and Egypt have kept their borders open to people in need. I call upon all countries to support them.'

\* The 44 industrialised countries included in this report are: The 27 European Union countries as well as Albania, Australia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Croatia, Iceland, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, New Zealand, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland, Turkey, the United States and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. You can read the report in full at [www.unhcr.org/4d8c59e69.html](http://www.unhcr.org/4d8c59e69.html) UNHCR, Press Releases, 28 March 2011

Here at the gates of Faslane, there is no better place to say that it is not courageous of Britain to have these dreadful weapons of mass destruction. It is shameful to have them. If our government wished to truly be courageous it would unilaterally give up its nuclear deterrent, giving the witness and impetus for other nations to do the same. Trident is fast becoming obsolete, and we have the chance now to do the right thing and give it up. We have the chance to be peacemakers, echoing the Easter desire of Jesus Christ for a lasting peace. We will all, I trust, continue working and praying together for this, and I thank you for this witness you all give today. May God bless each of you with deep peace, this Holy Week and at Easter.



## another mother's day at dungavel

Campaigners gathered outside Dungavel in solidarity with those held in the Immigration and Removal Centre on Sunday 3rd April. This was the 10th Mother's Day in a row they had gathered for Mother's Day, and indeed this marked a sad anniversary. Over the years Dungavel has had its name changed from detention centre to removal centre, and many alterations including extra fences and barbed wire have been added to the perimeter.

As always we began with a minutes silence thinking about all who have been incarcerated behind those bars.

Ellen Charlton chair of the commission was among those who spoke, and she read out the following message from Cardinal O'Brien. 'I commend those who



campaign for the voiceless inside Dungavel Detention Centre. I hope and pray that their voices will be heard. The way we treat the most vulnerable in our midst is a true gauge of our values as a nation and a people. The dignity that each of us expect and deserve as human beings and which we owe to our neighbours, cannot be wholly at the mercy of the pressures of effective border control. We in Scotland rightly expect fair and humane treatment of asylum seekers, befitting of a civilised society'.

Other speakers were Graeme Cumming and Arthur West from Friends of Refugees Ayrshire who organise the gatherings, prospective MSP candidates, and individual supporters. The gathering finished with singing of 'A' Adam's Bairns' which was led by members of the Eurydice Choir, who are long time supporters of the campaign.

Refugee Week



20 - 26 June 2011

*Different pasts, shared future: '60 Years of Contribution'.*

Refugee Week is a unique opportunity to discover and celebrate the contributions refugees bring to the UK

During Refugee Week loads of events take place across the UK, all of which explore refugee experiences. Whatever you're into - be it arts, music, food or just meeting people in your local area - Refugee Week will have an event for you.

This year is the 60th anniversary of the Refugee Convention. In order to mark the occasion and link it to Refugee Week 2011, the theme for this year will be '60 Years of Contribution'.

The Refugee council are currently collecting stories and case studies about the contributions that refugees have made to Britain over the last 60 years. If you have any interesting stories or photos on this subject to share, they would very much like to hear from you! Email: refugee week at [info@refugeeweek.org.uk](mailto:info@refugeeweek.org.uk)

### Who's Who?

Many people, either from ignorance or malice, muddle the terms used to describe immigrants seeking to live in this country. This guide to the terminology is from *Tell It Like It Is: The Truth About Asylum* by the Refugee Council.



**Refugee:** "A person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it." *The 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.*

In the UK, a person is officially a refugee when they have their claim for asylum accepted by the government.

**Asylum seeker:** A person who has left their country of origin and formally applied for asylum in another country but whose application has not yet been

concluded.

**Refused asylum seeker:** A person whose asylum application has been unsuccessful and who has no other claim for protection awaiting a decision. Some refused asylum seekers voluntarily return home, others are forcibly returned and for some it is not safe or practical for them to return until conditions in their country change.

**Illegal immigrant:** Someone whose entry into or presence in a country contravenes immigration laws.

**Economic migrant:** Someone who has moved to another country to work. Refugees are not economic migrants.

## a rare opportunity

*Behold the Lamb* is the title of a Silent Weekend Retreat by Fr. Emmanuel Charles McCarthy on *The Nonviolent Jesus: His Way of Nonviolent Love of All.*

This retreat provides what many have called a 'life-changing' experience of the Nonviolent Jesus of the Gospels. It addresses our struggles to transform our lives and our world by living Christ's example and message of universal love and kindness in all our relationships.

It shows us how we can effect peace in our families, communities, workplace, political structures and the world by confronting with love those forces within that undermine the innate capacity for care and compassion with which we are all imbued.

The retreat is from Friday 10 June 2011 (6:00 pm) to Sunday 12 June 2011 (4:00 pm)

Booking details at [www.thefriars.org.uk](http://www.thefriars.org.uk)

Fr Emmanuel Charles McCarthy is a priest of the Eastern

Rite (Byzantine-Melkite) of the Catholic Church. Formerly a lawyer and university educator, he is the founder and the original director of The Program for the Study and Practice of Nonviolent Conflict Resolution at the University of Notre Dame.

He is also the co-founder, along with Dorothy Day and others, of Pax Christi-USA. He has spoken throughout the world on the relationship of faith and violence, and has written three books and innumerable articles on the subject of violence and religion. For forty years he has directed educational programs and conducted spiritual retreats throughout the world on the issue of the relationship of faith and violence.



Moments of Celebrating Sanctuary London 2007 - Photograph by Anyya Roman

# newsbrief . . . newsbrief

**Poverty in Scotland 2011 Book Launched.** Reviewing Scottish and UK anti-poverty policies since the last edition in 2007, Poverty in Scotland 2011 identifies approaches that have had a positive impact, while pointing out those that have not only failed to make things better, but have deepened the effects of poverty or increased the stigma people experiencing poverty face. Poverty in Scotland 2011 is an essential guide for voluntary groups and community activists, teachers, policy makers, students and academics working in the anti-poverty field. For more details and to order your copy visit

[http://povertyalliance.org/publications\\_detail.asp?pubs\\_id=67](http://povertyalliance.org/publications_detail.asp?pubs_id=67)

**New website on housing rights in Scotland:** A new website to help migrants, refugees and housing staff understand what housing and related benefits non-UK nationals are entitled to in Scotland has been launched. The new website [www.housing-rights.info/scotland](http://www.housing-rights.info/scotland) features guidance on a range of issues for new arrivals in Scotland, including how the housing system works, homelessness, lettings and housing benefit. It was launched at Glasgow Housing Association on 16 March.

**Scottish Citizens for Sanctuary Anti-Destitution Pledge 2011:** Please contact all your prospective MSP candidates and ask them to sign this pledge which can be downloaded from our website. The candidates are asked to pledge among other things that people fleeing persecution should be able to find sanctuary in safe countries like Scotland; people seeking sanctuary should be treated fairly and humanely; have access to essential support and public services; and should have opportunities to contribute if they are able, by working in their host country.

**The Glasgow Passion:** On 6 October, Glasgow's George Square will play host to a unique piece of theatre, with the staging of an ambitious new, contemporary and vibrant take on the life of Jesus entitled 'The Glasgow Passion'. Well-known actors, playing alongside a community cast, will be watched by a live audience of up to 5,000 people and there is great television and media interest, since this will be a major event for Scotland. There are lots of ways to get involved. Pray for the play; join the cast; become part of the crew, costume or catering team or offer financial support. For more information, visit [www.glasgowpassion.co.uk](http://www.glasgowpassion.co.uk)

**Speak out about legal loan sharks where you live!** There is growing anger that thousands of low-income families are being charged 500% APR for credit - and sometimes much more. The UK is unusual in that credit companies can charge whatever they want, as long as people are desperate enough and have no other choices. Contrast this with the USA, Canada, France, Germany and many other countries, which have legal ceilings to protect consumers from extortionate lending. Last month, over 400 MPs voted for the new finance regulator (the Financial Conduct Authority) to seriously look into this issue. Church Action on Poverty want to raise awareness of the issue more widely, and build public support for a cap on the charges made by these loan shark companies. They suggest we write to the letters page of our local newspaper about this. This is one of the most widely read sections of the newspaper and will reach a large audience. Full details at <http://tinyurl.com/4xtwah6>

**Tar Sands:** The World Development Movement has learned that bailed-out RBS has lent £303 million to French oil giant

Total which is now preparing to mine tar sands deposits in the Melaky region, one of the poorest areas of Madagascar. RBS, now 83% owned by the UK government, is helping to finance tar sands in Madagascar using your money. Tar sands in Canada have had a catastrophic impact on indigenous people, poisoning land and water supplies and triggering an increase in cancer rates. The impacts in Madagascar, one of the world's poorest countries would be truly devastating. Over 120,000 people who live within the Bemolanga oil field would have their water supply disrupted and their land poisoned. More info at <http://tinyurl.com/4bn57xa>

**Campaign against the Arms Trade Day of Prayer:** This year's Christian Network Day of Prayer has been moved from June to September and will take place on the eve of DSEI, Defence & Security Equipment International one of the world's largest arms fairs, on Sunday 11 September 2011, a poignant date ten years on from the 9/11 attacks. Many will already be reflecting on the legacy of that day: two illegal wars, increased inter-community tension, and an increasingly militarised approach to security. Please put the date in your diary, and contact [outreach@caat.org.uk](mailto:outreach@caat.org.uk) to pre-order materials to encourage reflection in your Christian community. CAAT's work to change public opinion on arms exports is paying off! A recent Sunday Times poll shows that just 7% of the British public think it was right to sell arms to Libya.

**Tea time for change:** Westminster lobby for international development. Hundreds of committed supporters are to meet their MPs on 9 June in a powerful lobby event focused on aid and economic justice. At a time of economic challenge, poor countries are feeling the pinch more than most - so it's more important than ever for us to call for justice for poor people. The event will take place in Westminster Central Hall from 11.00am-4pm on Thursday, 9 June. Read more information and find out how to get involved in the 'Tea time for change' lobby at <http://tinyurl.com/3ce868f>

**'Piecing Together One World - A hand book for taking local action for global justice'** is a new resource from One World Week. The handbook brings together the learning and ethos from their three-year DFID-funded Ubuntu project, in a simple to use guide. It has, of course, a One World Week flavour but can be used by any individuals or groups wishing to take local action for global justice. It presents simple ways to take action and to work with like-minded people from different backgrounds, cultures, faiths and experiences. The book is available from OWW [www.oneworldweek.org/v2/](http://www.oneworldweek.org/v2/) Tel 0118 939 4933

**The Tackling Poverty Board** was established by the Scottish Government and COSLA in September 2009 to assess the extent and impact of the implementation of Achieving our Potential. The Board consisted of representatives from COSLA, national and local government, the private sector and the voluntary sector. It met on 5 occasions over a 12-month period and has produced a short statement which sets out its main principles and recommendations. A number of evidence papers on key poverty related issues were produced to support the work of the Board. These focused on benefit uptake, childcare, early years, equally well, financial capability and energy prices. Access the evidence papers produced by the Board at [www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/tackling-poverty](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/tackling-poverty)

# Some pre election thoughts

*Scottish politics is far too important just to be treated seriously.*  
Canon Kenyon Wright

*During an election campaign the air is full of speeches - and vice versa.*  
Anon

[T]his does not in the least imply that representatives are merely passive agents of the electors. The control exercised by the citizens does not in fact exclude the freedom that elected officials must enjoy in order to fulfil their mandate with respect to the objectives to be pursued.

*Compendium of Social Doctrine, n409*

*Being an MP is the sort of job all working-class parents want for their children—clean, indoors and no heavy lifting.* Diane Abbott

*As God once said, and I think rightly...*  
Margaret Thatcher

The church praises and esteems those who devote themselves to the public good and who take upon themselves the burdens of public office in order to be of service. *Gaudium et Spes, n75*

In the democratic system, political authority is accountable to the people. Representative bodies must be subjected to effective social control. This control can be carried out above all in free elections which allow the selection and change of representatives. [This] is a constitutive element of democratic representation.  
*Compendium, n408*

So that all citizens will be able to play their part in political affairs, civil and political education is vitally necessary for the population as a whole and for young people in particular, and must be diligently attended to.  
*Gaudium et Spes, n75*

An authentic democracy is not merely the result of a formal observation of a set of rules but is the fruit of a convinced acceptance of the values that inspire democratic procedures: the dignity of every human person, the respect of human rights, commitment to the common good as the purpose and guiding criterion for political life. If there is no general consensus on these values, the deepest meaning of democracy is lost and its stability is compromised.  
*Compendium, n407*

*Politicians promise to build a bridge, even where there is no river.* Nikita Krushchev

Politics: a strife of interests masquerading as a contest of principles. The conduct of public affairs for private advantage.  
Ambrose Bierce

*If God had wanted us to vote He would have given us candidates.* Jay Leno

*National elections these days are a cross between the X Factor and Crufts; with the party leaders going through their tricks to conform to the requirements of celebrity television rather than political debate.* Anon

*I am much happier now that I have joined the majority of people in this country who don't give a damn about politics.*  
Christine Hamilton

'I dinna ken muckle about the law,' answered Mrs Howden; 'but I ken, when we had a king, and a chancellor, and parliament-men o'our ain, we could aye peeble them wi'stanes when they werena gude bairns. But naeboddy's nails can reach the length o' Lunnon.'  
Sir Walter Scott

*It is never difficult to distinguish between a Scotsman with a grievance and a ray of sunshine.*  
P G Wodehouse

**Don't forget to vote! Information on the election can be found on the J&P website.**

## Indeed he is Risen! Alleluia!

With Simon of Cyrene, witness to Roman oppression, we recognise the unjust structures of our world; the tyranny of the powerful over the weak, the exploitation of the poor by the affluent, the domination of greed and the destruction of the earth. And we recognise you, Lord Jesus, as a victim among victims, but also more; as the one who chose the fate of the victimised. In the brutality of your death we see the love that will heal the world. Help us to see the world from your place among the victims. Enable us, with Simon, to take our share in carrying your cross, which is also their cross.

*From At the Cross by Richard Bauckham & Trevor Hart*

## Prayer Vigil – For Victims of Torture

The Vigil, organised by Action by Christians Against Torture (ACAT), marks United Nations Day of Support for Victims of Torture. It will take place on the night of 25/26 June, from 8.00 pm on Saturday to 8.00 am on Sunday. Members, groups and churches are encouraged to take part in this very important Vigil when we pray for the victims, their families and communities, as well as for those who commit acts of torture.

If you are on your own what about praying for 5 or 10 minutes or asking friends to join you? You can do this in your front room! ACAT and J & P Groups and churches are encouraged to hold their own vigil or services either on the specific night or sometime during the week leading up to the 25th. We could remember the tortured during Sunday intercessions.

Prayer materials and this year's theme should be available free from the ACAT office at the beginning of May. They can be used as they stand to provide ideas or adapted.

# diary diary

## APRIL

- 26 & 27 Hustings to Discuss Poverty and Inequality, Glasgow
- 28 World Day for Safety and Health at Work

## MAY

- 1 St Joseph the Worker and International Workers Day
- 3 World Press Freedom Day
- 3 Hustings on Citizens for Sanctuary, Glasgow University
- 5 Scottish Parliamentary Election
- 13 International Conscientious Objectors Day
- 15 Anniversary of Rerum Novarum (1891) and Social Encyclicals
- 15 - 21 Christian Aid Week
- 16 World Debt Day
- 29 International Day of UN Peacekeepers
- 29 - 4 World Week for Peace in Palestine and Israel

## JUNE

- 4 International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression
- 5 World Environment Day
- 12 World Day Against Child Labour
- 16 International Day of the African Child
- 17 World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought
- 20 UN World Refugee Day
- 20 -26 Refugee Week
- 25/26 Prayer Vigil – For Victims of Torture (1998)

Full details and links on the events page of our website [www.justiceandpeacescotland.org.uk/events.shtml](http://www.justiceandpeacescotland.org.uk/events.shtml)

### **A Date for your Diary**

Keep Saturday 1st of October free as this is the proposed date for this year's Justice and Peace Annual Conference, to be held at Renfield St Stephen's, Bath St, Glasgow.

Magazine Subscriptions: Many thanks to all who paid their magazine subscription so promptly and for all the very generous donations. There are still quite a few people who need to renew their subscription. Please help us by renewing as soon as possible. Remember if cost is a problem, just let us know.

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