



I call heaven and earth today to witness against you: I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choose life, then, that you and your descendants may live, by loving the Lord, your God, heeding his voice, and holding fast to him.

Deuteronomy 30:19-20

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# editorial ...



**D**id you see the wedding? Wasn't it just wonderful? I mean Kate's dress – gorgeous at a reported £240,000; Pippa's so svelte at £20,000; and Mrs M's outfit a snip at £10,000. Who could possibly begrudge the equivalent of a mere seventy five years of jobseekers' allowance when you see the joy it brought to the nation? A gentle and colourful reminder of a society in which the top 10% own over half the wealth and the bottom 50% hang on to about 7%. Still, the average wedding in the UK now costs about £18,000; although you could go for an Asda Value Wedding at just under £700.

And the men – dolled up in their resplendent little Ruritanian uniforms. You could imagine it was a remake of the *Prisoner of Zenda*. At least until you remember the men in real uniforms getting shot and blown up for no good reason in Afghanistan; or the chaps guiding laser sighted munitions in Libya so that we can watch human incineration on prime time television. Not much change in mindset or British self importance since Palmerston's gunboat diplomacy of a hundred and fifty years ago. Still politicians playing toy soldiers with real people. Sir James Mackintosh might just as well have been reviewing the wedding aristocracy of today when he observed two hundred years ago that 'a titled nobility is the most undisputed progeny of feudal barbarism'. Not least, perhaps, when it is underscored by the feudal finery of the established church. **Noblesse oblige:** which is probably why churchgoing for the upper classes is still a bit of a duty as well as a fashion parade.

Sour grapes, you may say. The outfits were only a fraction of the overall cost. Providing police security for the big day, for instance, was costed at £5 million last November. By April it had doubled, largely because the government had declared a public holiday, thus entitling the police to double time, about a third of the overall cost. And the Met earned some of that by the pre emptive arrest in the interests of security of people it thought might do something as heinous as protesting. And somebody also used the distraction and euphoria of the wedding to tip off Facebook that groups protesting against government policies were in breach of terms and conditions; so those sites (and only those sites) were summarily taken down. Anyway, plenty of spare cash for this in the efficiency savings of £18 billion that Ian Duncan Smith chopped off the welfare budget.

In the midst of the shock and awe of the media bombardment about the wedding it was difficult to maintain a sense of proportion. Which of course was the intention: the trickle down of a feel good factor to a populace, the kind of mob distraction the ancient Romans referred to as 'bread and circuses'. It is the maintaining of power and vested interest with the deceptive notion that we are all somehow a part of it – David Cameron's 'we're all in this together'. Following celebrity at one remove in virtual reality is meant to give a sense of belonging. All that it really does is breed a loss of self respect in the mindless following of the lurid, self seeking vanity of someone else's agenda.

The doings of the family of the Sovereign have always attracted an extraordinary amount of interest. Yet this word 'sovereign' has been appropriated, even to the extent of adding the 'g' in the 16th century to make it seem to denote royalty. Its real meaning is something like 'unlimited', 'overall' and 'autonomous'. Each of us has our own sovereignty - the me which is God's unique creation. Abdicating sovereignty involves giving up responsibility for God's gifts to us, subordinating ourselves to the existing power structures and going along with their vested interest by default. One of the more perplexing examples of this obsession with the peripheral that comes up in the debate about Scottish 'independence' concerns such questions as 'What about the monarchy?' or 'What will happen to the Scottish regiments?' These are questions which the SNP for instance feel obliged to address, as if they were of primary importance.

It's as if people didn't want to be empowered; preferring to give over their power to other institutions to sustain an order which remains feudal. And a system that not only tolerates but profits from economic serfdom also demonstrates the relation between economic and political power. Half of the electorate didn't vote in the recent Scottish elections. For many it was a case of indifference and laziness. But in areas of deprivation, the figure rises to two thirds not voting; and the implication is that people feel utterly powerless.

There is of course no such thing as 'independence' in a globalised world. We are all in some measure 'dependent'. Alex Salmond latched on to this idea at the end of his very interesting and eirenic opening address as First Minister to the new Parliament. He also said, 'We know our worth and should take pride in it'. And here is the problem: I think most people are so accustomed to living with the agendas of the consumer society, social aspiration, self deception and laziness that they haven't a clue about their own worth. I suspect the majority of us live with a sense of deprivation and incompleteness precisely because we have little sense of our own sovereignty. And by sovereignty here I mean what God has given uniquely to us and what God desires of us.

One way of understanding and remedying this lies in subsidiarity. Usually thought of only in terms of great structures, subsidiarity in Catholic Social Teaching is the means of regulating power, no less at the personal than the structural level. It helps to put into perspective the question 'What am I to do with the gifts God has given me?' It brings responsibility for those who depend on me; it brings charity for those I can help directly; and it brings the hunger for justice for those denied their proper dignity. I am thereby not bound to the agenda of others, except one: 'to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine' (Ephesians 3:20).

**Tim Duffy**

# integrating refugees

**T**he Scottish Refugee Council has called for more support for refugees to contribute to life in Scotland. The call comes as the charity released on May 24, results of the first stage in a major three-year study on how well people who have fled persecution from countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of Congo are integrating into Scottish life.

The first stage of the study asked 262 refugees who had arrived in Scotland from 37 different countries between 1998 and 2010 to fill in an in-depth questionnaire. While respondents expressed their happiness at being able to live in safety, the findings show significant barriers to refugees being able to rebuild their lives in Scotland.

Only 20 per cent were in paid employment, despite having many skills and a desire to work, with over 68 per cent saying they were struggling to cope financially. Over 70 per cent said they had been discriminated against. However, the study also shows that many refugees are optimistic about being in Scotland despite the problems they face. Around 70 per cent said they were either happy or very happy here.

The statistics in the report show:

- *68.4% of respondents were finding it difficult or very difficult to cope financially.*
- *68.1% had no family members living in Scotland*
- *71.6% said they had been discriminated against in Britain*

- *40.8% felt part of their local community*
- *47% said they felt safe in their community*
- *70.68% said they felt happy or very happy with life in Britain*

John Wilkes, chief executive of Scottish Refugee Council, said the study showed a clear need for dedicated support on integration, from all levels of government – in order to help refugees fulfil the contributions they were so keen to make to Scottish life. 'The UK Border Agency, run from Westminster, has pulled funding for its Refugee Integration and Employment Service from September 2011, despite indicating in its own research that integration assistance is vitally important to refugees.

In his first speech of the new Scottish parliament, Alex Salmond restated his commitment to welcoming those who have fled persecution. Scotland has already made great strides to help refugees integrate from the moment they arrive. We now want to see the Scottish Government revisit their strategy for integration in light of our findings, as well as in light of UK-wide cuts.

As we gear up to Refugee Week, we celebrate the contribution refugees from across the decades have made to Scotland and the UK. Let's ensure today's refugees are able to fulfil their own hopes and dreams'.

Read the full report at  
<http://tinyurl.com/3jvbmdb>  
Refugee Week takes place  
from 20-26 June 2011.



## justice&peace scotland national conference

**T**his year's conference will take place on **Saturday 1 October, in Renfield St Stephens Centre in Bath Street in Glasgow.** The theme will look at social justice in a number of contexts, particularly against the background of celebration of the anniversaries of the major documents of Catholic Social Teaching since *Rerum Novarum*.

Different speakers will consider economic, political and pastoral aspects of the relationship between social justice and work. Professor Greg Philo is the research director of Glasgow University Media Unit and has worked on media presentation of many issues of social justice. Geraldine Donnelly and Susan Cassidy of **Communitas** will speak from a trade union

perspective. Tim Duffy of Justice and Peace will speak on the social context of the encyclicals and their place in Catholic Social Teaching.

After each talk a question will then be put to groups for discussion. The speaker will go round groups offering input to their discussions or answering any questions they may have.

From this we hope to have further questions or points for discussion for a panel in the afternoon.

**Registration will be from 10.30 for a prompt start at 11.00 and the day will finish at 3.45.**

Tea and coffee will be provided, but you are asked to bring your own lunch to share. There will be no charge, but participants are invited to make a donation up to a maximum of £5. It would be really helpful if you want to attend to complete the enclosed booking form.



# Pope Benedict on social justice



**A**t a recent conference in Rome to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of *Mater et Magistra*, Pope Benedict delivered the following discourse to the participants. The text is dense but very important.

In *Mater et Magistra*, Papa Roncalli, with his vision of a Church placed at the service of the human family especially through her specific mission of evangelisation, conceived of social doctrine — anticipating Blessed John Paul II — as an essential element of this mission, because it is ‘an integral part of the Christian conception of life’ (n. 222). John XXIII is the origin of the affirmations of his successors even when he pointed out the *communitarian* and *plural* subject of social doctrine.

The Christian lay faithful in particular, cannot be solely passive beneficiaries but are the protagonists of the Church’s social doctrine at the vital moment of its implementation. They are also valuable collaborators of the pastors in its formulation, thanks to the experience they have acquired in the field and to their own specific skills. For Blessed John XXIII this was particularly true of the Church’s social doctrine, of which *Truth* is its light, *Love* its driving force, and *Justice* its objective (n. 226).

I took up his vision of social doctrine in the encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, as a testimony of that continuity which keeps together the whole corpus of the social Encyclicals. Truth, love and justice, indicated in *Mater et Magistra*, along with the principle of the universal destination of resources as the fundamental criteria for overcoming social and cultural imbalances, continue to be the pillars on which to base the interpretation and also the search for a solution to the internal imbalances of today’s globalisation.

In the face of these imbalances it is necessary to re-establish an integral reason that regenerates thinking and ethics. Without moral thought capable of overcoming the structure of secular ethics, such as the neo-utilitarian and neo-contractual, that are based mainly on skepticism and on a prevalently immanentist view of history, access to knowledge of the true human good becomes difficult for contemporary man.

It is necessary to develop humanistic cultural syntheses open to the Transcendent through a *new evangelisation* — rooted in the new law of the Gospel, the law of the Spirit — towards which Blessed John Paul II frequently urged us. Only in personal communion with the New Adam, Jesus Christ, is human reason healed and empowered and it becomes possible to gain a broader vision of development, of the economy and of politics, in accordance with their anthropological dimension and the new historical conditions.

It is thanks to reason, whose *speculative* and *practical* capacity has been restored, that it is possible to avail oneself of the basic criteria in order to overcome global imbalances in the light of the common good. In fact, without knowledge of the true human good, charity lapses into sentimentalism; justice loses its fundamental benchmark; and the principle of the universal destination of resources is delegitimised.

Disparity, the gap between the rich and the poor and inequalities are nourished by the various global imbalances that characterise our epoch. They create problems of justice and hamper the fair distribution of resources and opportunities, especially with regard to

the poorest. However, no less worrying are the phenomenon linked to a financial system which, after the most acute phase of the crisis, has returned to the frenzied practice of drawing up credit contracts that often allow unlimited speculation. The phenomena of harmful speculation occur also in regard to staple foodstuffs, water and land, ultimately further impoverishing those already living in borderline situations. Likewise, the increase in the prices of basic energy resources, with the consequent search for alternative forms of energy prompted, on occasion, by exclusively short-term financial interests, which can result in a negative impact on the environment, as well as on man himself.

The social question today is without a doubt one of world social justice as, moreover, *Mater et Magistra* already mentioned 50 years ago, although with reference to a different context. Furthermore, it is a question of the just *distribution* of material and non-material resources, of the globalisation of substantive social and participatory democracy. For this reason, in a context in which a gradual unification of humanity is taking place, it is indispensable that the *new evangelisation of society* highlight the implications of a justice that should be achieved at a universal level.

With reference to the *foundation* of this justice it should be emphasised that it is impossible to achieve it through social consensus alone, without recognising that, to be permanent, it must be rooted in the universal good of humanity. With regard to the plan of realisation, social justice should be practised in civil society, in the market economy (cf. *Caritas in Veritate*, n. 35), but also by a proportionately honest and transparent political authority, also at the international level (cf. *ibid.*, n. 67).

With regard to the great challenges of our day, while the Church trusts primarily in the Lord Jesus and in his Spirit, who lead her through the events of the world, for the spread of the social doctrine she also relies on the activity of her cultural institutions, her programmes for religious instruction and social catechesis in the parishes, on the mass media and on the proclamation and witness of the Christian lay faithful (cf. *Mater et Magistra*, nn. 207-208).

The Christian lay faithful must be spiritually, professionally and ethically prepared. *Mater et Magistra* insisted not only on formation but also on the education that forms a Christian conscience and introduces the person to concrete action in accordance with wisely guided discernment.

Blessed John XXIII said that ‘Christian education... must... aim at... fostering among the faithful... their duty to carry on the economic and social activities in a Christian manner’ (n. 228). Consequently, to be successful, formal instruction must be supplemental by... active cooperation in their own training’ (n. 231) put into practice. Still valid, too, in addition, are the instructions that Papa Roncalli offered on a legitimate pluralism among Catholics in the implementation of the social doctrine. He wrote, in fact, that in this context ‘differences of opinion in the application of principles can sometimes arise even among sincere Catholics. When this happens, they should be careful not to lose their respect and esteem for each other. Instead, they should strive to find points of agreement for effective and quick action, and not wear themselves out in

interminable arguments, and, under pretext of the better or the best, omit to do the good that is possible and therefore obligatory' (M and M, n. 238).

Important institutions at the service of the new evangelisation of the social fabric, besides volunteer organisations and Christian non-governmental organisations or those inspired by Christian ideals, are Justice and Peace Commissions, Offices for Social and Labour Problems, Centres and Institutes of social doctrine, many of which do not confine themselves to its study and spread, but also accompany various initiatives that experiment with the content of the social Magisterium, as is the case with social cooperatives for development, experiences of micro-credit and an economy inspired by the logic of communion and fraternity.

In *Mater et Magistra* Blessed John XXIII recalled that one can better understand the basic demands of justice when one walks as 'a child of the light' (cf. 257). Therefore, my wish for you is that the Risen Lord may warm your hearts and help you to spread the fruit of redemption through a new evangelisation of the social sphere and the witness of a righteous life according to the Gospel. May this evangelisation be supported by a proper social apostolate, systematically put into effect in the various particular Churches. In a world that is frequently self-centred, without hope, the Church expects you to be leaven, tireless sowers of genuine and responsible thought and generous social planning, sustained by a total love of the truth that abides in Jesus Christ, the Word of God made man. In thanking you for your work, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing.

# justice spirituality

**Brian Davies is a theologian, who before retiring, was for many years the Education Officer for CAFOD**

**A**mong the various groups and societies we may find in some parishes are the Prayer Group and the Justice and Peace Group. They would be perceived as being at the opposite ends of the spectrum: the one concerned with 'raising the mind and heart to God'; the other with the political realities of the world around. The former would normally be expected to give time to quiet and reflection; the latter to analysis and campaigning. It would be the view of many that while the prayer group is concerned with 'spiritual' activity at the heart of Christianity, Justice and Peace is more of a fringe interest concerned with temporal, and therefore less important, affairs.

But do prayer and politics have to be seen as so far apart? Is there not a need for a spirituality that enables people to integrate their commitment to Justice and Peace with their faith and prayer life? Or an approach to prayer that sees political activity as part and parcel of our love of God? Since the word 'spirituality' is often used as if it referred only to religious activities - like prayer, devotions and sacraments - it is important to clarify what we mean.

## Spirituality

Spirituality is about what is most personal in me; about what makes me what I am, with all my attitudes and values; about what motivates and inspires me and makes me tick. This is where what is most authentically and profoundly me meets God.

Spirituality is about our sharing in God's spirit - however that is experienced. God is the source of all things, the great transcendent mystery, above and beyond us, eternal and infinite, not limited to space or time. But God is also experienced as immanent, working in and through everything that moulds and affects us - the one "in whom we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). The God that Christ reveals to us is above all a loving and compassionate God, particularly concerned about the most vulnerable of his creatures.

Spirituality is also about our relationship with other people, about community. God's spirit is in absolutely everyone and at the centre of Jesus' revelation about God is that by virtue of that Spirit of his Son in our hearts we can call God Abba (Galatians 4:6) - or indeed Imma (mother). If we have this intimate family relationship, all

of us, with each other, then we will have for each other that same covenant-love God has shown us.

Spirituality, at the same time, is about our relationship with the whole of creation. God, creator and sustainer of the world and all it contains, dwells in all things giving them life and being, and 'brings everything in heaven and earth together under Christ as head' (Ephes 1:10). Through God's Spirit we are united in a sense with all of creation and share responsibility for it - as indicated in God's covenant with nature (Genesis 9:8-17).

Our understanding then of spirituality is that it involves our life or self in its relations with all of these - with God, with the rest of the human community, and with the created world. While much of the time we may experience these areas in tension with one another, spiritual growth is about removing the barriers between the various areas of our life and trying to make of them a balanced whole.

## A Coherent Spirituality

We are seeking a spirituality which will be a centre from which we can act and live our faith in today's world, a spirituality which can give coherence to every area of our life and not just a part of it. This idea is well expressed by reflecting on what the prophet Micah has to say. Having delivered Israel from slavery and the land of Egypt, God is not wanting sacrifices and burnt offerings. Micah says, rather... ***This is what God asks of you, only this: That you act justly That you love tenderly, That you walk humbly with your God*** (Micah 6:8).

## Walk humbly with your God

As we become more aware of God's love and care for us individually, we realise we are called to respond as part of God's saving plan. Our religious conversion, then, begins with our experience of being loved in all our weakness and failure. In spite of our inadequacies, indeed somehow because of them, we are enabled to commit ourselves to a pattern of living proclaimed by Jesus, aimed at transforming the world. We are called to share in the proclamation of God's programme of liberation i.e. the Kingdom.

## Love tenderly

We are also concerned with a moral conversion, a

conversion from being self-centred to being other-centred. Everyone is to be loved and treated with respect. Our willingness to listen to others, to affirm them and entrust ourselves to them, to be compassionate means allowing ourselves to be vulnerable. Our model is the faithful and enduring love shown us by God - even in the face of unfaithfulness. Our God is a compassionate God, who has shown in Jesus the extent to which he is willing to enter into our pain and suffering.

### Act justly

Even further, we are concerned with the response in the public sphere i.e. with political conversion. This involves working to build a society in which structures are just, where wealth, power, rights and responsibilities are justly distributed at every level. In particular it involves sharing in God's covenant with the poor and making an option for the poor in our own lives. This is not a bias against the rich, but a recognition that the whole of humankind is judged by the response made to those in greatest need (Matthew 25:31-46). Moreover, in worldly terms the wealthy are well able to look after their own interests, while the poor need special protection against systems that inevitably favour the powerful.

### Justice Spirituality

The spirituality with which many of us were brought up, and which may still sometimes influence us, largely lacked a social dimension, presuming and promoting instead an individualistic understanding of the faith. It was often escapist and 'other-worldly', looking for salvation outside this world in some purely spiritual dimension, and rewarding people in heaven if they patiently endured injustice here on earth. The aim was to disengage from worldly affairs and certainly from politics. In general, it supported the established order of things (with all its inequality) as God-given and not to be questioned. Unfortunately, for some that traditional spirituality has

been replaced by apathy. For others it is common nowadays when they do refer to spirituality for people to insist that it is a purely personal and private matter.

In contrast, the spirituality being proposed here recognises social justice as of key importance. It is prophetic, encouraging people to challenge the existing order wherever it sustains inequality and injustice. It means political involvement, understanding the need, in a society structured in favour of the rich, to bring about change in favour of the poor. It involves taking responsibility for the whole of creation and seeing that natural resources are not wasted or exploited for profit, or so used that future generations suffer as a result.

The Bible leaves no room for doubt. It is justice and compassion rather than religious observance that are identified as the weightier part of the law (Isaiah 58; Matthew 23:23). In God's eyes to be just is to safeguard and respect the rights of the poor (Leviticus 25; Isaiah 10: Amos 8: Luke 4; Matthew 25; James 2 and countless other places). The poor share with us their experience of a liberating God who is on their side to protect them against oppression - a God who 'puts down the mighty and exalts the lowly, who fills the hungry with good things and sends the rich away empty' (Luke 1:52-53). This God reveals to us that those who are most important in God's eyes are not the honoured and powerful people of this world, but the 'little people' who seem of no account (Matthew 13:55; 1 Corinthians 1:26-28).

Our God, then, is above all the God of the poor. The insight we obtain into the lives of the poor and despised challenges us to change our priorities, hopes and concerns and to redefine what we mean by 'success'. To 'opt for the poor' is about sharing our resources with them, but more fundamentally, it involves sharing some of their experience - 'the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties' (Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 1) - in order to work with them for a more just and human society. This spirituality changes our whole life.



## INTERNATIONAL DAY IN SUPPORT OF VICTIMS OF TORTURE - JUNE 26 2011

**T**he United Nations' International Day in Support of Victims of Torture is annually observed on June 26 to remind people that human torture is not only unacceptable - it is also a crime. Rehabilitation centres and human rights organisations around the world celebrate this day each year. Many organisations have played an active role in organising events around the world to promote the day. Activities may include: photo exhibitions; the distribution of posters and other material to boost people's awareness of issues related to human torture; and television advertisements.

On June 26, 1987, the Convention against Torture came into force. It was an important step in the process of globalising human rights and acknowledging that torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment should be universally illegal. In 1997 the United Nations General Assembly decided to mark this historic date and designated June 26 each year as the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture.

The first International Day in Support of Victims of Torture was held on June 26, 1998. It was a day when the United Nations appealed to all governments and members of civil society to take action to defeat torture and torturers everywhere. That same year marked the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which proclaims that "no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment".

The international prayer vigil will be held on the night of

**25/26 June. J&P groups, churches and individuals are urged in this event to remember the tortured, their families and the torturers in prayer. Why not suggest a prayer of intercession at Sunday Mass 'for the victims, past and present, of the crime of torture, and all who suffer at the hands of oppressors'.**

### Loving Lord

For our sake you became the suffering servant, despised and rejected.  
You were beaten and flogged and crushed with suffering for our sins.

Your body was broken for us,

And your blood poured out for us on the cross.

Grant Lord that your love will shine in the worst of the torture chambers.

Look with pity on those who suffer now the barbarity of the torturer;

those who endure physical and mental suffering to break their will.

Receive into your loving arms, those who will die before morning.

Have mercy on those who will betray family and friends

and who will have to live with what they have done for the rest of their lives.

Loving Lord, you know the name of each one.

Hold them in your loving arms and bring them your peace and comfort even in the midst of their fear and suffering.

Give them healing of mind, body and spirit and an end to their suffering.

We ask this for your Name's sake.





# labouring in the vineyard-

in the hope of  
making a difference

*Raymund Madill has been involved in Justice and Peace at the national level since Adam was a boy. Here he offers some salty reflections on his local group in Dunoon and its work.*

**O**ur small group works constantly with our MP Alan Reid (Lib Dem) who is generally on the side of the angels. He responds to requests to sign EDMs and has supported our campaigns on Palestinian Rights, Human Trafficking and EU Trade reform. Unfortunately we have been unable to convert him to our way of thinking on Nuclear weapons. We live surrounded by NATO bases, weapons stores and nuclear submarines, whose sinister shapes we see regularly on the sea within our sight. Mercifully the submarines don't seem to work very well and are often out of service!

We have been in touch with Strathclyde Police about our fears for increased human sex trafficking which may accrue with the advent of the Commonwealth Games and also our concerns that in spite of police raids, no prosecutions have taken place and victims of agricultural, sexual and domestic exploitation are usually returned to their country of origin and therefore exposed to re-enslavement. This is ongoing, but thus far only good intentions have been expressed. We are in contact with Anti-slavery International whom we endeavour to support both financially and by publicising their work. As always we are handicapped by lack of funds and our members generally have to put their own hands in their pockets to fund our activities.

We have worked with other organisations on asylum seekers and we have managed to harbour one down

here. Happily she has now obtained permission to stay in Scotland. She keeps in touch and comes and visits from time to time.

Dunoon Fair Trade Committee is an offshoot of our group but like ourselves suffers from paucity of numbers and lack of younger members. We have recently managed to organise with it upwards of sixty cards to our MEPs urging them to support EU trade reform but the response has been minimal. The fact that one of them is a former president of NFU doesn't bode well for our efforts but we soldier on.

Over the last nine months we have been increasingly concerned by the downgrading of our health services by stealth and we have organised two public meetings with health officials, Local Authority personnel, councillors, community councillors and the public, chaired by our MSP as was, Jim Mather. The results were disappointing so we submitted a Freedom of Information request to the CEO of the Health Board. This has proved to be a difficult process and we are still awaiting further clarification of the misinformation that resulted and further correspondence; in the absence of positive responses we will submit a formal complaint and, if necessary, appeal to the Information Commissioner.

We have worked with other concerned members of the community and achieved quite a lot of publicity. There is evidence in the Community Health Partnership minutes that we are worrying them. There is also evidence of a greater effort to engage the public but this tends to involve the usual suspects who appear on all the committees and 'project boards' and who fail dismally to keep the public informed! The effort involved in this has almost taken us over but it has raised our profile in the community and brought us new (ecumenical) membership - especially in the campaign to re-open Dunoon Hospice.

As always we try to begin and end our meetings with meaningful prayer and hope that our miniscule efforts are slotting into the great scheme of things.



*Raymund getting ready for the Hospice protest march*

## international day for the remembrance of the slave trade and its abolition 23 August



**T**he night of 22 to 23 August 1791, in Santo Domingo (today Haiti and the Dominican Republic) saw the beginning of the uprising that would play a crucial role in the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade. The International Day for the Remembrance of the

Slave Trade and its Abolition is intended to inscribe the tragedy of the transatlantic slave trade in the memory of all peoples. Bringing to light all aspects of slavery is essential to constructing an overall dispassionate vision of this tragedy.

Unfortunately slavery still exists today, and is taking place through out the world and shockingly is still taking place in the UK. It is known as modern day slavery and millions around the world are forced to lead lives as slaves

The anti slavery International website gives us the following

information on slavery today. Although this exploitation is often not called slavery, the conditions are the same. People are sold like objects, forced to work for little or no pay and are at the mercy of their 'employers'.

**Bonded labour** - The least known but widest used form of slavery today.

**Child domestic work** - Millions of children are engaged in this type of employment.

**Child labour** - Millions of children do extremely hazardous work.

**Forced labour** - Is any work which people are forced to do against their will.

**Trafficking** - Using violence, deception or coercion.

**Slavery and what we buy** - What we buy may have been produced through slave labour. There is evidence of slavery in different stages of the supply chain from the production of raw materials, for example cocoa and cotton farming, to manufacturing goods such as hand-knotted rugs and even at the final stage, when the product reaches the market.

This best way to commemorate 23 August is to fight to bring about an end to modern day slavery. To find out more visit [www.antislavery.org](http://www.antislavery.org)





# bethlehem project *a first for palestine*

**Ann Davies sends us the following:**

**A** unique project which offers work opportunities to people with intellectual disabilities is being developed in Bethlehem - with the backing of supporters in Scotland. **Together for Life** (Ma'an lil - Hayat) is the only wool felting centre in Palestine and is a L'Arche programme supported by the Latin Catholic Patriarchate of Jerusalem. Links between L'Arche and Palestine date back to 1985.

Director of the centre, Mahera Nassar, was in Scotland to appeal for help in funding its £750,000 extension plan over the next three years so that a sustainable, permanent workplace can be set up for thirty adults for whom there is no hope of alternative employment.

Hosted by Hadeel, the Fairtrade Palestinian crafts shop in Edinburgh, Ms Nassar and colleague, Suha Awaad, a founder member of the group and a speech therapist, visited the Scottish L'Arche centre's in Leith and Inverness and at meetings stressed the urgent need to provide meaningful work for people with disabilities in Bethlehem and the surrounding villages and refugee camps. The wool felting craft uses local resources and, she says, has the potential to generate income for the future. The present centre is rented but it is hoped to purchase the three storey building as workshop and living space.

Because of the Israeli military occupation, Palestinians in general live under harsh conditions, the director said in a report to supporters. 'In brief, the Palestinian people are deprived of basic human rights, respect and human dignity. It is unfortunately, only 'normal' in this abnormal situation for a society that is degraded and marginalised to further degrade and marginalise its most vulnerable members'.

Needs in the community far exceed the present possibilities, but Ma'an lil Hayat she says, aims to serve as a basic model for other programmes for people with disabilities in the Palestinian territories. Work is not an end in itself but a means of integrating workers and community as well as helping to change society's attitudes to disability.

Set up only two years ago, the centre already encourages people to share life through work, celebration, mutual friendships and trust. It embraces the principles of the International Federation of L'Arche Communities founded by Jean Vanier. It brings together Muslims and Christians and encourages all members to deepen their spiritual life and tradition, but those with no religious affiliation are also welcome. Experts in medical and related fields are involved in their care and development. There are also close links with families who meet regularly to share their experiences and encourage each other.

'Although we are aware of the immense need of the people with intellectual disabilities within Palestinian society' Ms Nassar says, 'we recognise our limitations and know we are unable to respond to all their needs. We seek not to offer a solution but, as the Charter of L'Arche makes clear, a sign that for a society to be truly human, must be founded on welcome and respect for the weak and downtrodden. Many more people need the life that L'Arche can give'.

Wool for the felting processes is locally sourced from sheep farmers in villages around Bethlehem and it is gathered and washed by the mother of one of the young people who works at the Centre. Natural dyes are used in all the processes. After a few experiments in the workshop, several felt products were found to be best sellers locally and among tourists as well as overseas. These include nativity scene figures, soft toys and Biblical tableaux.

Palcrafts, the Scottish charity which owns Hadeel, has already boosted production at the workplace by providing an electric carding machine to speed up preparation of the felt.

As there is no government money available to organisations like Ma'an lil Hayat in Palestine, financial help is being sought from groups and well-wishers. Money has already been promised in France and Switzerland and fund- raising events in Scotland began during Ms Nassar's and Ms Awwad's visit and will continue.

Crafts produced by the **Together for Life** workers are already being sold on their behalf at the Hadeel Fairtrade shop alongside traditional embroidered, olive wood and olive oil products from the West Bank, Gaza and Lebanon.



**Anyone interested in supporting the project can contact Hadeel at 58, Shandwick Place, Edinburgh, the St Andrew's and St George's West Church Centre.**

## ***A prayer for peace in the Middle East***

*Two peoples, one land,  
Three faiths, one root,  
One earth, one mother,  
One sky, one beginning, one future,  
one destiny,  
One broken heart,  
One God.*

*We pray to You:*

*Grant us a vision of unity.*

*May we see the many in the one and the one in the many.*

*May you, Life of All the Worlds, Source of All Amazing Differences*

*Help us to see clearly.*

*Guide us gently and firmly toward each other,*

*Toward peace.*

**Rabbi Sheila Weinberg, USA**



# newsbrief . . . newsbrief

**Poverty Truth Commission:** The Closing Gathering of the Poverty Truth Commission took place in Glasgow City Chambers on the 16th April in front of 350 people. The event was marked not only by powerful accounts of the ongoing reality of poverty in Scotland today, but by shared testimony from the Commission that if poverty is to be effectively tackled a change of culture is required - people in poverty need to be at the heart of decisions about how we address the problems. In its final report the Commission presented 8 challenges and identified 12 organisations including the Scotland Office, the Scottish Government, Glasgow City Council and the Church of Scotland that will seek to take forward some of the Commission's work over coming years. The Commission also re-launched its website at the Closing Gathering and you can check it out at [www.povertytruthcommission.org](http://www.povertytruthcommission.org)

**Christians Against Poverty (CAP)** This leading debt counselling agency has opened two new centres in Scotland. Churches in Penicuik, Kirkcaldy and Burntisland have partnered with the charity to offer their communities free, caring and professional help to people in real need. The charity is looking to partner with more churches in Scotland. Churches can contact them on 01274 760580, email them on [churchpartnership@capuk.org](mailto:churchpartnership@capuk.org) or visit [www.capuk.org/home/index.php](http://www.capuk.org/home/index.php) where there are also films showing some of CAP's clients explaining how debt affected them and how CAP helped. Anyone needing debt help should ring their freephone number 0800 328 0006.

**Can you help vulnerable people in Glasgow** during the Switchover to Digital TV which is taking place in June. Digital UK has asked Glasgow Council for the Voluntary Sector to try to make sure that no-one living in Glasgow south of the river who is vulnerable and relies on TV is left without a signal. They need to recruit Community Supporters to spread the word that anyone aged 75 or over, anyone who is living in a care home, anyone who is getting certain disability allowances, or anyone who is registered blind or partially sighted can get free advice and support with installation from the Digital Help-scheme run by the BBC - all just by phoning 0800 40 85 900. If you know someone who might qualify, please help by asking them if they are ready for the switchover, and if they are not, encourage them to contact the Digital Helpline. For further information, or leaflets please contact GCVS on 0141 332 2444 and ask for Fiona, Tamsin, Stacey or Charlene.

**Vatican issues major scientific report on climate change:** A working group of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, one of the oldest scientific institutes in the world, has issued a sobering report on the impacts for humankind as a result of the global retreat of mountain glaciers as a result of human activity leading to climate change. In their declaration, the working group calls, 'on all people and nations to recognize the serious and potentially irreversible impacts of global warming caused by the anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases and other pollutants, and by changes in forests, wetlands, grasslands, and other land uses.' They echoed Pope Benedict's 2010 World Day of Peace Message saying, "...if we want justice and peace, we must protect the habitat that sustains us." Read the report at <http://catholicclimatecovenant.org/>

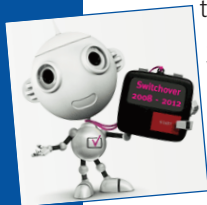
**Bank suspends funding for controversial dam:** Europe's largest bank, Santander, has suspended its funding for Brazil's hugely controversial Santo Antonio dam, citing environmental and social concerns. Survival has been calling for the project to be scrapped, and they hope Santander's move will send a powerful signal to the authorities in Brazil, and that they might now actually listen to the people on whose lands these dams are being built. More information at <http://tinyurl.com/5w4ekgv>

**Atomic Deserts** is a survey of the World's Radioactive No-Go Zones. Everyone knows about Chernobyl, Three Mile Island and, now, Fukushima. But what about Semipalatinsk, Palomares and Kyshtym? The world is full of nuclear disaster zones - showing just how dangerous the technology really is. Find out more at: <http://tinyurl.com/5skbncf>

**Excessive executive** pay has hit the headlines once again with the release of a report by the High Pay Commission. But it's not just high pay that's the problem - it's the low pay that goes alongside it. At many of Britain's biggest companies, the CEOs enjoy salaries in the millions - but continue to pay poverty wages to others in the workforce. Current trends suggest the UK is heading for levels of pay inequality not seen since the Victorian era. Fair Pensions is trying to stop this widening pay gap by pushing for the Living Wage - to ensure that all workers at Britain's best-known companies are paid enough to live on. And they're starting with the banks. Already they're seeing results, with Standard Life being the first of the targets to say yes to the Living Wage across the UK! Your help is needed to keep up the pressure on other companies. Take action by asking your bank to become a Living Wage employer at [www.fairpensions.org.uk/justpay](http://www.fairpensions.org.uk/justpay)

**Mobile Phones Costing the Earth:** As your mobile phone rings and you put it to your ear, a tiny mineral piece from Africa is making this call possible: **Coltan**. This commodity, along with other mining products from the Congo River Basin, is contributing to the loss of forests and the continuing wars in the region. At the heart of the conflict is control of the DRC's natural resources, which include gold, diamonds, copper, cobalt, and 80% of the world's Coltan ore, a necessary mineral used in making computers and mobile phones as well as military and satellite equipments. The increased demand and exploitation of Coltan helped fuel the proxy wars in the Congo resulting in more than 5 million deaths since 1998 as estimated by a report by the International Rescue Committee (IRC). (Source UK:WILPF)

**The 2011 AidWatch report** was launched in Brussels on 20 May, detailing the performance of EU member states against their agreed targets on aid quantity and quality. Nine countries - including the UK have met the EU aid target demonstrating that, despite economic challenges, it is possible for EU countries to meet their aid commitments. AidWatch is the annual flagship pan-European report that analyses the aid commitments of all 27 EU member states, and includes in-depth investigation of key development issues. It is a great tool for campaigning for more and better EU aid and holding EU countries into account regarding their aid targets. Full report at <http://tinyurl.com/3brp723>





# banning boycotts?

**Question:** When does it become illegal to boycott the produce of illegal settlements?

**Answer:** When the Israeli parliament says so.

A resolution before this year's General Assembly of the Church of Scotland calling for a UK ban of goods from unlawful Israeli settlements has had to be withdrawn as a result of the threat posed by proposed legislation in Israel which could make such a call a criminal offence subject to judicial and financial punishment. The Assembly unanimously made the withdrawal 'with regret', and with deep concern and measured outrage expressed by several speakers.

But the Kirk's national decision-making body nevertheless passed Deliverance 48, which 'instruct[s] the Church and Society Council to work with ecumenical and civil society partners to continue to lobby for the introduction of labelling of products in the UK which clearly identify whether they are from an illegal Israeli settlement.' That statement, however, stopped short of calls for a boycott.

It was reported to the Assembly, on 25 May, meeting

on the Mound in Edinburgh, that the terms of proposed legislation going before the Israeli Knesset are that anyone who calls for a boycott of Israeli goods, or goods related to Israel, will be made subject to punishment and made financially liable for the economic impact of such action, as determined by the Israeli authorities.

The Church of Scotland has assets and staff in Israel-Palestine, and the Kirk's Church and Society Council convenor, the Rev Ian Galloway, said that it was 'impossible to assess the risk' posed to them by the legislation if the call for a ban of goods from the occupied territories was passed. But he made it clear that this was not the end of the matter. Continued lobbying of Israel to end its occupation, dispossession and oppression of Palestinians was necessary, Kirk members working for a just-peace for both Jews and Palestinians in the region argued.

A strategy of nonviolent boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) has been proposed by Christian Palestinians in the *Kairos* document which the Assembly affirmed earlier in the afternoon.

Ian Galloway said that, in the light of the withdrawal of the deliverance, it was additionally important that church members buy fair trade products marketed by organisations like the Hadeel Palestinian Fair Trade Shop - whose white felt doves were actively promoted at the Assembly.

*Adapted from the invaluable Ekklesia online briefing.*

The only use to date of nuclear weapons in warfare occurred at the end of World War II, when the USA dropped atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima 6 August and Nagasaki 9 August 1945. At least 145,000 innocent people died instantly, and a total of 210,000 had died by the end of 1945. Due to radiation, rates of cancer in survivors are still rising.

The attack is now estimated to have killed up to 250,000 people. It has been estimated that 60 per cent of the casualties died from flash or flame burns, 30 per cent from falling debris and 10 per cent from other causes.

## NUCLEAR WEAPONS TODAY...

There are approximately 23,300 nuclear weapons in the world today. They are much more powerful than those used in 1945 and pose a constant threat to global security and human survival. Thousands are kept on hair-trigger alert, ready to be launched within minutes.

Today, nine countries have nuclear weapons, and five more have US nuclear weapons on their soil. The overwhelming majority of the world's people and governments want them abolished, and there is a legal obligation to negotiate a ban.

Landmines, chemical weapons and biological weapons have already been outlawed. It is past time we banned the worst weapons of all. It can be done: stockpiles have gone from some 70,000 warheads at the height of the Cold War to 23,300. All that is stopping us from eliminating the rest is lack of political will.

Many thousands of people have also become sick and died because of the 2,059 nuclear test explosions that have taken place since the first atomic bomb was created. The nuclear power

and uranium mining industries also have many victims.

*'In a nuclear war there would be no victors, only victims. The truth of peace requires that all ... strive for a progressive and concerted nuclear disarmament.'*

Benedict XVI

(Source: Australian Catholic Social Justice Council)

ICAN (the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons) is helping to generate a groundswell of popular support for the abolition of nuclear weapons. More info at [www.icanw.org](http://www.icanw.org)

## NUCLEAR-WEAPON-FREE-ZONE SCOTLAND...

The aim is to establish Scotland as a nuclear-weapon-free-zone (NWFZ). This initiative was initiated by Bill Kidd, MSP in the last Parliament, and was inspired by a wish to see Scotland become one of a number of nations which have already established themselves as NWFZs.

The experience of New Zealand is an inspiration in this regard. After much public protest over nuclear testing in the Pacific Ocean; ordinary citizens began to declare their workplaces and homes NWFZs. This civic movement culminated in the passage of the New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone, Disarmament, and Arms Control Act, 1987; under which the territorial sea, land and airspace of New Zealand became nuclear-free zones. To find out more about a NWFZ Scotland visit:

<http://tinyurl.com/43myz2s>



# diary diary diary

## JUNE

- 20 World Refugee Day
- 20-26 Refugee Week Scotland
- 23 Public Mock Trial Discussion - Trident: The Debate, Edinburgh: Tickets £10
- 25 Nuclear Abolition Day
- 25-26 Prayer Vigil for Victims of Torture.
- 26 International Day in Support of Victims of Torture

## JULY

- 2 International Day of Cooperatives
- 16 First atomic bomb detonated in New Mexico
- 18 Nelson Mandela International Day (Birth 1918)

## JULY cont'd

- 26 Emancipation Bill - Slavery abolished throughout the British Empire

## AUGUST

- 6 Atomic Bomb dropped on Hiroshima
- 9 Atomic Bomb dropped on Nagasaki
- 9 International Day for the World's Indigenous People
- 19 World Humanitarian Day

## SEPTEMBER

- 8 International Literacy Day
- 16 International Day for the preservation of the Ozone layer
- 21 UN International Day of peace



## Holidays

For those going on holiday, bear in mind the words attributed to St Thomas Aquinas: *In order to relax our minds, it is important that, from time to time, we give ourselves over to playfulness and the fun of light relief.*

For those with no formal holidays planned, the words of Etty Hillesum, a young Jewish woman who died in Auschwitz in 1943, remind us that rest can be found anytime: *Sometimes the most important thing in a whole day is the rest we take between two deep breaths, or the turning inwards in prayer for five short minutes.*

Our Office: 65 Bath Street, Glasgow, G2 2BX. Tel/Fax: 0141 333 0238

Email: [office@justiceandpeacescotland.org.uk](mailto:office@justiceandpeacescotland.org.uk) [www.justiceandpeacescotland.org.uk](http://www.justiceandpeacescotland.org.uk)

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### OFFICE BEARERS:

Bishop President - Bishop Peter Moran | Chair - Ellen Charlton  
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