



ARCHDIOCESE OF SOUTHWARK

JUSTICE, PEACE AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION COMMISSION

2013 Autumn Assembly

"Justice & Peace – Mission Beyond the Year of Faith"

Our 2013 Autumn Assembly was organised jointly with the Brentwood and Westminster dioceses, with the support of Missio and held in The Salvation Army Regent Hall in Oxford Street. The event was well attended with around 150 present and the location brought in attendees from dioceses outside the three which had organised the event.

Space limitations will allow only a brief synopsis of the day and of the excellent talks and presentations. Full texts and presentations are available at www.southwarkjandp.co.uk, printed copies on request.

Bishop Pat Lynch chaired the day and, following introductions, spoke on The Mission of Social Justice today: Inspiring people to care, enabling people to see, accompanying people as they respond. He reminded us of the vision of Pope Francis "a Church which is poor and for the poor." This is a beautiful vision for the Church – a Church that understands the poor, a Church that works for the poor and a Church that is poor and with the poor.

Bishop Pat spoke first about the Principles of the Social Teaching of the Church. In general terms Catholic Social Teaching refers to the principles, ideas, teachings and doctrines that deal with human life and society as it has evolved over the years. Catholic Social Teaching is not a fixed unchanging body of doctrine but a developmental understanding of the social mission of the Church in an ever changing world seeing life and the world as 'gifts'.

In 1891 Pope Leo XIII, with the publication of 'Rerum Novarum' created a seismic shift in Catholic Social Teaching first of all by stressing that the process of social transformation is part of the mission of evangelisation – the mission of proclaiming, promoting and giving witness to God's love – and secondly by placing the Church in solidarity with the poor and not with the economic and political elite of society.

Over the last 100 years many Popes, bishops and theologians, writing in different contexts, have identified a number of key principles that shape the social mission of the Church. At the heart of Catholic Social Teaching are the principles of human dignity and the importance of human community. The principle of human dignity reminds us that every human being is created in the image of God, is equal in the eyes of God and is therefore worthy of respect as a member of the human family.

Bishop Pat went on to give a practical analysis: Understanding the causes of injustice, poverty and oppression. Many years ago when Cardinal Cardijn – the founder of the Young Christian Workers – picked as a motto for his new movement "See, Judge, Act" he summed up the three key steps needed for engagement in the social mission of the Church. In more recent times, Joe Holland and Peter Henriot (in their book "Social Analysis: Linking Faith and Justice") have developed what has become known as the pastoral cycle or pastoral circle. Essentially, they outline a four step process of how Christian communities engage in the social mission of the Church; firstly seeing or experiencing the reality of suffering, injustice or oppression, secondly, analysing the causes of that suffering, injustice or oppression, thirdly, reflecting theologically and sociologically on the suffering, injustice or oppression and finally, responding pastorally to that suffering, injustice or oppression.



Truly 'seeing the reality', however, involves much more than observation - observing the suffering that is being experienced and the injustice that is taking place. Truly 'seeing' also means recognising and understanding why it is taking place. It involves analysing the social, cultural, economic and political reality of a particular situation.

The final aspect he focussed on was the pastoral response we make as individual Christians but especially as a Church to the reality of injustice, suffering and oppression. 'Working for justice' is essentially a ministry of transformation – working to change the attitudes, working to change the structures and working to transform the people that cause injustice.

Pope Francis simply by taking that name calls us to a greater sensitivity to the poor, to a deeper spirituality that sees the face of Christ in the poor, to a stronger solidarity with the poor and to build a Church that is for the poor and stands up for the poor. Bishop Pat told us that his prayer is that we can respond to that challenge.

Our second speaker was Bruce Kent, a seasoned campaigner for nuclear disarmament and peace issues, whose subject was "50 years on from *Pacem in Terris*".

Bruce reminded us what a remarkable document it is. In Pope John XXIII's vision the people of world are a large family - 'living members of the universal family of mankind'. That we all have rights and duties is central in *Pacem in Terris*. These come from God and are part of his divine plan and order for our world. That belief in the Divine source of rights however must not stop Catholics working with all. His message was for everyone. Its title makes that clear.

John XXIII's international perspective is the traditional one - that that the State is the political foundation of the human community. Pope John knew that there will be tensions between minorities and majorities in states but is convinced that they can learn from each other and stay together as well as separating, if need be. His is not a message of revolution.

War is an abomination to be eliminated and nuclear weapons to be banned at once. No ifs, no buts. Unlike many others who discuss such weapons, Pope John was well aware that a major risk is war by accident or as the result of misunderstandings. After all, the Cuban missile crisis was, at the time, a very recent reminder of dire possibilities.

One of the most remarkable claims that the document makes concerns immigration. There is a right, it says, to enter a country in which a man hopes to be able to provide more fittingly for himself and his dependents. It is therefore the duty of State officials to accept such immigrants - so far as the good of their own community, rightly understood, permits. We are a long way from that vision of free movement as global citizens. No politician or indeed religious leader or development agency in this country, while clearly bewailing the tragedy of the Syrian refugees, has suggested that even one of them be allowed to cross our borders.

If Christian principles are to have their effect, Catholics are to 'strive to influence effectively from within' the institutions of the world, national and international. Did *Pacem in Terris* have any real effect on the thinking of the Church Bruce asked? It certainly started a train of thought and action at the top level which has continued by fits and starts to this day. That it still has life and influence is clear. In particular none can deny that what Pope John XXIII said on war, peace and even nuclear weapons, has had a lasting effect.

What progress have we made here in the Church in this country in three areas which were highlighted in *Pacem in Terris* – political engagement, support for the UN, and the abolition of war itself? Have we developed a more politically active laity? I don't want to be rude, said Bruce, but I have to say I don't think so.

He went on to explain that there is lay involvement, usually in the form of employed lay people or advisers chosen by the Bishops. The structures that do exist in some Dioceses are consultative only, like some parish councils which are even without mandate or jurisdiction. The Hierarchy, he felt, can't expect active participation in public social and political affairs to come from people who remain children in their own basic community - that of the Church.



Pope Francis sounds as if he intends to challenge the global Church to organise itself in a very different way. Bruce felt that he cannot be the only Catholic whose heart has been lifted in recent months by the breath of fresh air which he has brought with him. Pope Francis wants a real dialogue 'among the people and the bishops and the Pope' - pastors and people together. But there are real reasons for confidence and courage. That Catholics are more globally aware than they were is in substantial part due to CAFOD and its concern for the peoples of less developed world. One day I am sure that all development agencies will openly make the connection between militarism and poverty. A world that can spend \$1.7 trillion annually on war will never be able to care for its people. It is becoming more and more apparent that peace on earth is going to depend on joined up education and campaigning on overcoming poverty, militarism and climate chaos.

Bruce concluded paying tribute to Bishop Thomas McMahon whose constant witness in campaigning against the arms trade and nuclear weapons has been such an encouragement and to Archbishop Keith O'Brien who has been a constant voice calling for nuclear disarmament. Beyond bishops there has been that powerful network of Justice and Peace groups and organisations like Pax Christi, the Jesuit Refugee Service, Progressio, Vocation for Justice, the Christian Ecology Link and so many others whose vision of one world justly ordered is exactly that of Pope John in *Pacem in Terris*, which he strongly advised us all to re-read.

Before the lunch break there were some notices from all the dioceses. Of particular interest to those of us from Southwark was the announcement, by Bishop Pat, that Fr. Michael Scanlon was standing down as Chair of the Commission for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation after holding the post for 8 years and that the post was being taken by Fr. Arbogast Lekule, who is now also parish priest of Kidbrooke.

Bishop Pat paid tribute to Fr. Michael for all his hard work over his time in office and welcomed Fr. Arbo into the role.

Fr Michael thanked all who had worked with him over his time in office and Fr Arbo spoke about his background and about vision for the work.



After the break we had a presentation from Sr Alberta Forson and Sr Marie Theresa Chambers, members of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary on the subject of "Mission Today and Tomorrow", a reflective consideration of what we would find today if we answered the call from John's gospel to "come and see".

They reflected on the missionary challenges faced in three of the communities of the 76 in which they work. The work in the city of Aleppo is working, in collaboration with Jesuit Refugee Service, to support 16,000 refugees - providing one hot meal per day and the provision of education, in face of assaults from the Syrian army.

In the Congo they were providing shelter for people looking for a place of safety from the Mayi Mayi rebels whilst in the UK they seek to share the message of St Francis with young people.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer said "It is not sufficient to assist the victims under the wheel, we are required to block the spokes in order to stop the wheel". We then reflected on these words and on pictures from the gospel and of Christ's work concluding with a quotation from John "Do you love me? - Feed my sheep"

Our final speaker was Bishop Kevin Dowling from Rustenburg Diocese in South Africa who spoke on "Mission and Development". His inspiration for the talk was from Luke chapter 4, "the spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor...." this is our inspiration for mission development. Development is rooted in mission—it is incarnational and ecclesial.



He told us that God can seem to be absent if the Church is absent, if it is not involved, and quoting Pope Francis "We are a community of faith in the mess of life". Catholic Social Teaching should be a journey with the poor and deprived.

The key elements are solidarity, walking non-judgmentally with the people, not imposing solutions, listening and sensing the words they cannot say and building lasting relationships.

Subsidiarity requires us to analyse situations, decide priorities, identify our own qualities and strengths to live out the gospel and to grow in the dignity we all already possess as sons and daughters of God, made in his image. The Church cannot call for subsidiarity unless it is already acting it out in the Church community.

Participation needs us to act together, to empower the people and enable them to grow in responsibility. The poor must be agents for change and transformation.

Vital to this is the development of the "Option for the Poor" and promotion of peace. We need to confront the realities of war, the degradation of women and the need for people to be free. Forced migration is a profound injustice which cries out to heaven.

Bishop Kevin spoke movingly about the work of the Church that he had witnessed and helped throughout Africa, much of this with the support of Missio. He had visited the Nuba mountains in Sudan and seen the damage caused by the government's bombing of innocent victims, one particularly moving experience was a visit to the site where a bomb dropped on a teacher and her class while they were sheltering under a tree. The school has now been rebuilt.

At the Sudan Ecumenical Forum he asked "if a Bishop can help what do you need?" The answer given was "give us guns" but he had a better response which was to guide them towards the UN Operation Lifeline Sudan project just across the border in Kenya. By documenting the atrocities they then moved to put pressure on the Bashir regime to stop the bombing and move towards peace.

He also told a moving story about Anna, a girl born near a platinum mine in South Africa. Her mother had died and she had no other family. She was taken under the wing of the heartbeat programme of local community workers who looked after her and provided a care centre and meals for children after school. Anna has now done so well that she is going to university.

Other programmes are involved in care of HIV / AIDS patients. One great success has been in avoiding mother to child transmission with a 100% success rate for those coming to their clinics. There are, of course, the cases which come to the clinic too late to receive anything but hospice care but even here the peace and compassion given can ensure a peaceful death.

Bishop Kevin concluded by telling us that mission based development creates "Agents of Transformation". No one is providing the answer, the one solution. It is only together we grow to this. What we do is provide the person, the person of Christ and the promise of the Gospel. We seek to bring into the mess of the everyday, the solidarity, dignity, love and community which comes from Christ. Together we discover this and together we are enriched, not just the local Church but the universal Church, enriched through one another.

Please pray for the work of mission and development of the Church across the world.

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