

## Message from the Chair

Dear Friends,

I send you greetings knowing that we will soon be starting the holy season of Lent. It is a time of reflection and renewal for all as we prepare for Holy Week and Easter.

We are mindful of the many people and causes we support by prayer and action in many parts of the world. Many of them are facing their own time of oppression, persecution and suffering - their own stations of the cross. Some dealing with natural disasters and the effects of climate change, others facing political forces of repression.

May God grant them the courage, strength and hope they need to sustain them in their time of trial.

Wishing you a Holy Lent, may it be a time of renewal and grace for us all.

Fr Gerard Murray (Chair)

## In this issue:

Welcome by Fr Gerry (Chair):	page 1
Bishops Holy Land:	page 2
Our Common Home:	page 3
Ban on Fracking:	page 4
Lent Plastic Challenge:	page 6
ICON Award:	page 7
Pax Christi:	page 7
First They Came:	page 8
The Pax Christi Icon :	page 9
A Year of Anniversaries for Peace:	page 10
Zimbabwe: the country of my birth:	page 11
Lenten Retreat:	page 13

## Dates for your diary:

### **Annual Justice and Peace Lenten Retreat**

**Saturday 14th March 2020**  
**St Paul's Convent, Selly Park,**  
**Birmingham B29 7LL**

register on-line

<http://bit.ly/LentenRetreat2020>

### **Annual Justice and Peace Assembly**

**Saturday 10th October 2020**  
**St. Peter's School, Solihull**

## Bishops insist on application of international law in Holy Land



Jan 16th, 2020 **Source:** CCN

Bishops from across Europe and North America have called on their governments today, to insist on the application of international law in Israel and Palestine, following their visit to the Holy Land this week.

The bishops of the Holy Land Coordination, who visit the region every year in support of the local Church to promote dialogue and peace, said they were inspired by the enduring resilience of the people they met in Gaza, East Jerusalem and Ramallah despite the worsening situation.

However, they echoed the local bishops' lament the international community's failure to realise justice and peace in the land of Christ's birth. While the political solution had ultimately to be shaped by the people of the Holy Land through dialogue, they said there was an urgent need for the governments in their own countries in Europe, Canada and the USA to play an essential part by:

Insisting on the application of international law; following the Holy See's lead in recognising the State of Palestine; addressing the security concerns of Israel and the right of all to live in safety; rejecting political or economic support for settlements and resolutely opposing acts of violence or abuses of human rights by any side.

They concluded their communique with prayer for the peace of Jerusalem.

*Read the full text of the Bishops' statement below:*

### Holy Land Coordination 2020

#### **We must not ignore the voice of people in the Holy Land**

Every year we come to encounter and hear the people of the Holy Land. We are inspired by their enduring resilience and faith in a worsening situation.

In their recent powerful message, the local Catholic Bishops lamented the international community's failure to help realise justice and peace here in the place of Christ's birth.[1] Our governments must do more to meet their responsibilities for upholding international law and protecting human dignity. In some cases they have become actively complicit in the evils of conflict and occupation.

The local Bishops also warned that people are facing further "evaporation of hope for a durable solution." We have witnessed this reality first-hand, particularly how construction of settlements and the separation wall is destroying any prospect of two states existing in peace.

In the same message, the local Bishops have sounded the alarm about living conditions becoming "more and more unbearable". This is painfully clear in the West Bank where our sisters and brothers are denied even basic rights including freedom of movement. In Gaza the political decisions of all sides have resulted in the creation of an open air prison, human rights abuses and a profound humanitarian crisis. We were welcomed by families whose focus is now day-to-day survival and whose aspirations have been reduced to bare essentials such as electricity and clean water.

Amid these circumstances we are moved by the sacrifice of religious sisters, lay people and priests who are reaching out with respect to every side, in order to build a better future for all. They offer vital services, especially education, job opportunities and care for the most vulnerable people. We give thanks for their witness.

We encourage Christians in our own countries to pray for and support this mission. The increase in people making pilgrimages to the Holy Land is encouraging and we call for those who come to ensure they encounter the local communities.

*Bishop Peter Bürcher*  
*Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden*



ruthlessly damaging the natural world, especially in the past 50 years. The distressing facts that these documents present illustrate very powerfully the truth of what Pope Francis said in *Laudato Si'* (LS): Mother Earth “now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her” (LS, §2). The following are some of the abuses to which the IPBES report draws attention, with reference in some cases to what Pope Francis says about the problem:

**Global Change in Nature:** Across most of the globe nature has now been significantly altered by multiple human interventions, with the great majority of indicators of ecosystems and biodiversity declining at rates unprecedented in human history.

**Loss of Biodiversity:** Around 1 million of the Earth’s estimated total of 8 million animal and plant species are now threatened with extinction, many within decades.

**Global Warming:** The 2015 Paris Agreement aimed at keeping the global temperature increase this century to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels, while pursuing efforts to limit the increase to no more than 1.5°C. But with average temperatures over the past 30 years rising by 0.2°C per decade, human interventions had already led by 2017 to an observed global warming of approximately 1.0°C.

**Climate Change:** In June 2019, Pope Francis declared that the world was experiencing a global “climate emergency”, warned of the dangers of global warming and stated that failure to act urgently to reduce greenhouse gases would be “a brutal act of injustice toward the poor and future generations”.

**Use of Fossil Fuels:** Instead of deriving ever more energy from the sun and from wind and water movements, the world is proposing to increase its use of fossil fuels, with governments planning to produce about 50% more fossil fuels by 2030 than would be consistent with a 2°C global warming pathway and 120% more than would be consistent with a 1.5°C pathway.

**Exploitation of the World’s Resources:** Today, humans extract more from the earth and produce more waste than ever before. Globally, approximately 60 billion tons of renewable and non-renewable resources are extracted from the earth every year – nearly double what it had been in 1980.

**Pollution and Waste:** Each year three to four hundred million tons of waste materials from industrial facilities are dumped into the world’s rivers and oceans. Marine plastic pollution has increased tenfold since 1980. In 2014 it was estimated that more than 250,000 tons of microplastic particles were floating in five major plastic “garbage patches” that covered 40% of the world’s oceans. Illness and mortality from air pollution also occur, caused by people inhaling or ingesting very small particles of toxic matter, coming either directly from fuel combustion or formed indirectly from atmospheric gases. Mining operations may also lead to harmful pollution in the air, soil, plants and water, leaving people exposed to long-lasting injurious effects. Following almost a century of lead and zinc mining, Kabwe has won for itself the unenviable reputation of being the most toxic city in the world.

**Deforestation:** Tropical forests, the lungs of Mother Earth, continue to dwindle. The global forest area today is only about two-thirds of its estimated pre-industrial level.

**Water Security:** The deplorable bottom-line figure is that today, well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, 40% of the world’s population still lacks access to clean and safe drinking water, while it is estimated that by 2030 demand for freshwater will exceed supply by 40%. But while there is not enough water in many places, the world is also facing the growing challenge that the warming global climate is leading to too much water in others, with 112 million people being affected by floods in the decade 2005-2015.

**Land-Use Change:** Land-use change is driven primarily by agriculture, forestry and urbanization, all of which are associated with air, water and soil pollution. Agricultural expansion, alongside a doubling of the urban area since 1992 and an unprecedented expansion of infrastructure linked to growing population and consumption, has come mostly at the expense of forests (for the greater part, long-established tropical forests), wetlands and grasslands.

**Infrastructure:** The development of roads, cities, hydroelectric dams, and oil and gas pipelines has come with high environmental and social costs, including deforestation, biodiversity loss, and social disruption.



**Ocean Degradation:** Human activities have had a large and widespread negative impact on the world's oceans. Alarming, these are running out of oxygen at an unprecedented rate. In addition, coral reefs, being particularly vulnerable to global warming, are projected to decline to between 10 and 30% of their former cover at 1.5°C warming and to less than 1% at 2°C warming.

**Rising Sea-Levels:** Over the past two decades, the global average sea-level, which has risen by 16 to 21 cm since 1900, continued to rise at a rate of more than 3 mm per year. This rise in sea-levels puts between 100 and 300 million people at increased risk of floods, hurricanes and the loss of coastal habitats and protection.

**Sea-Fishing:** In 2015, 33% of sea-fish stocks were being harvested at unsustainable levels; 60% were being fished at their maximum sustainable levels, while only 7% were being harvested at levels lower than can be sustainably fished.

**Pollinator Loss:** Up to US\$577 billion in annual global crops are at risk from the loss of pollinators that are disappearing through the extinction of various species of insects and small animals.

### Impacts on the Poor and Vulnerable

The areas of the world projected to experience significant negative effects from global changes in climate and declines in biodiversity, ecosystem functions and nature's contributions to people are also areas in which many of the world's poorest communities reside. "Damage done to the earth is also damage done to the most vulnerable, such as indigenous peoples, peasants forced to emigrate, and the inhabitants of urban peripheries. The environmental destruction being caused by the dominant economic system is also inflicting intergenerational damage: not only does it affect those now living on earth, particularly the very young, but it also conditions and jeopardizes the life of future generations". Today we have come to realise that a true ecological approach must always become a social approach so that we "hear *both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor*" (LS §49; emphasis in the original). "Climate change will have devastating consequences for people in poverty. Even under the best-case scenario, hundreds of millions will face food insecurity, forced migration, disease, and death. Climate change threatens the future of human rights and risks undoing the last fifty years of progress in development, global health, and poverty reduction".

### Public Policies

Around the globe, subsidies with harmful effects on nature have persisted. In 2015, OECD countries provided an estimated \$100 billion in financial support to agriculture that was potentially harmful to the environment. In 2017, countries subsidized the fossil fuel industry by \$5.2 trillion, or 6.5% of global GDP.

Unfortunately, the Madrid Summit on climate change that ended in December 2019 brought fresh doubts about the world's collective resolve to slow the warming of the earth and put a halt to the harmful climate changes that this brings. This failure in political commitment means that the danger remains that global temperatures could rise by at least 3°C before the end of this century, something that would be a recipe for global disaster.

### Achieving Environmental Sustainability

*Laudato Si'* speaks forthrightly about what we must do to "escape the spiral of self-destruction which currently engulfs us": the environmental degradation we are experiencing challenges each one of us to examine our lifestyle (LS, §206). We must promote ways of conserving energy, modifying consumption, developing an economy of waste disposal and recycling, protecting certain species, and planning for diversified agriculture and the rotation of crops (LS, §180). Above all we must modify or reduce consumption; compulsive consumerism is one of the principal factors that has brought planet Earth to its present degraded state. This is also echoed by the IPBES report which speaks of the importance of lowering total consumption and waste and the need to promote "visions of a good quality of life that do not entail ever-increasing material consumption". The IPBES report and the Pope's encyclical also speak of the need for an education that would encourage people to adopt new habits which would help them to establish harmony with nature and with other living creatures. "Education in environmental responsibility can encourage ways of acting which directly and significantly affect the world around us, such as avoiding the use of plastic and paper, reducing water consumption, separating refuse, cooking only what can reasonably be consumed, showing care for other living beings, using public transport or car-pooling, planting trees, turning off unnecessary lights, or any number of other practices" (LS, §211).

*Laudato Si'* and the IPBES report are fully in agreement that the time has come to draw the line and to institute a major 'transformative change' – a fundamental, system-wide reorganisation of the technological, economic, political and social features that govern the world today, including its ideals, goals and values. While massive global efforts must extend to the provision of food, water, energy, health and the achievement of human well-being for all, they must do so in ways that will conserve and use nature sustainably. Unless the world adopts sweeping alterations in its technological, economic, political and social features, the projected impacts of increasing land-use change, deforestation, ocean degradation, exploitation of organisms and climate change will ensure that the condition of our common home will continue to deteriorate throughout the years ahead. It is only through urgent and concerted efforts, fostering radical, transformative change, that nature can be conserved, restored and used sustainably. Arresting the dangerous decline in nature, hearing the cry of Mother Earth who cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her (LS, §2), demands radical global, national, local and personal action. This basic awareness of our mutual interdependency and belonging and of a future to be shared with everyone impels us to set out at once on the long path of renewal as we seek new convictions, attitudes and ways of living. "Many things have to change course, but it is we human beings above all who need to change" (LS, §202).



# JOIN THE LENT PLASTIC CHALLENGE

GIVE UP BAGS,  
BOTTLES AND AS  
MUCH SINGLE USE  
PLASTIC AS YOU  
CAN FOR

## 40 DAYS

### Ten Tips for a Reduced Plastic Lent

1. Take paper bags with you to the supermarket to put your fruit and vegetables in
2. Visit your local greengrocer or farmshop to cut down waste
3. Give up buying bottled water or drinks and buy a refillable flask
4. Get a reusable coffee mug
5. Use a Bag for Life or cardboard boxes
6. Return to the milkman and get your milk delivered in reusable glass bottles
7. Reuse containers for storing leftovers
8. Refuse disposable cutlery and plastic straws at cafés, pubs and restaurants
9. Write to the managers of your local supermarkets and ask them to cut back on plastic waste
10. Buy package-free shampoo bars









## Cardinal Newman School ICONS award

On Monday 2nd December, following a presentation on Sunday 24th December at the celebration of High Mass at Coventry Cathedral, Canon Kathryn Fleming and Jenifer Jenkins joined us at Cardinal Newman to present our school with the ICONS award.

ICONS, the International Cross of Nails, is an award presented to schools in recognition of their commitment to peace focusing on the following three priority areas:  
healing the wounds of the past  
learning to live with difference and celebrate diversity building a culture of peace.



As a school we are honoured to receive this award, we are the 51st school to receive this award internationally and the first Catholic school to ever receive this award. These priority areas will remain a focus for our school as will the beautiful cross of nails which will be housed in our school Chapel and visited by students and staff alike to serve as a reminder of our commitment to peace and passing it on to others.

223 students involved in the Catholic Life of the school through their work as prefects, peace and justice, choir, altar server and the mission team represented the school to receive the award.



All Soul's  
Welcomes  
Theresa



Pax Christi was born out of the experience of war 75 years ago. Our founder, Martha Dortel-Claudot, began a campaign of prayer for peace in 1945, for reconciliation between the people of France and Germany and to encourage people to work to bring an end to war. Today Pax Christi is present in 50 countries: an international network of people of goodwill, inspired by our faith to work for peace built on justice, reconciliation and nonviolent change. In England and Wales Pax Christi, through its small team of 4 staff, its volunteers and its members, works to create opportunities to support Catholic people, like you, to work for peace.

This year Pax Christi International will celebrate its 75th anniversary. We are respected contributors at the UN in Geneva and New York and at the African Union. The movement continues to grow and flourish with more than a hundred member groups around the world.



It is often said that there are many strands to making peace and all are necessary. Last year, Pax Christi coordinated times of prayer and witness, as well as making public statements to challenge the arms trade, nuclear weapons and the oppression of the Palestinian people. The trade in weapons for profit plays a key part in fuelling conflict, death, suffering and environmental destruction, as well as the displacement of huge numbers of people. Pope Francis says that the money made from the sale of arms is 'drenched in blood'. This can all seem far removed from celebrating mass together here in Coventry. But Pax Christi members and friends are working to highlight investment in the arms trade right here. It is also a local issue.

We have an Education Officer who works mainly in Catholic schools and at youth events to support young people in exploring peace issues and developing as peacemakers themselves. Thousands of young people have taken part in Pax Christi workshops and study days, exploring how to put faith into action for peace. We provide resources such as books, prayer cards, spiritual reflections, greeting cards, and goods from the Holy Land.

I invite you to think about how you might support the work of peace in the year ahead. Pope Francis says the first step is 'believing in the possibility of peace, believing that others need peace just as much as we do.' As followers of Jesus, can we help build the kingdom of God – not a fortress but a wide-open place where all are welcome and we don't kill and maim and make each other suffer.

Please consider becoming a member of Pax Christi or supporting Pax Christi's work financially in the year ahead if you can. We are not a charity and we rely on such donations. You can take away a prayer card today and remember Pax Christi's work in your prayers. You would be joining a whole community of people doing just that. You can find out more about us on our website, on Facebook and on Twitter.



## First They Came Pastor Martin Niemoller



HOLOCAUST  
MEMORIAL  
DAY TRUST

First they came for the Communists  
And I did not speak out  
Because I was not a Communist  
Then they came for the Socialists  
And I did not speak out  
Because I was not a Socialist  
Then they came for the trade unionists  
And I did not speak out  
Because I was not a trade unionist  
Then they came for the Jews  
And I did not speak out  
Because I was not a Jew  
Then they came for me  
And there was no one left  
To speak out for me.

To learn more about Holocaust Memorial Day and discover more poetry featuring a variety of experiences of the Holocaust, Nazi persecution and subsequent genocides please visit us online



@HMD\_UK



/HMD.ORG.UK

HMD.ORG.UK

## Maximilian Kolbe and Auschwitz

St. Maximilian Kolbe was born as Raymund Kolbe on January 8, 1894, in the Kingdom of Poland, part of the Russian Empire. He was a Polish Conventual Franciscan friar and a martyr in the German death Camp of Auschwitz during World War II.

In 1909, Kolbe and his elder brother, Francis joined the Conventual Franciscans. In 1910, Kolbe was given the religious name Maximilian, after being allowed to enter the novitiate, and in 1911, he professed his first vows.

At the age of 21, Kolbe earned a doctorate in philosophy from the Pontifical Gregorian University. He would also earn a doctorate in theology by the time he was 28.

In 1918, he was ordained a priest and continued his work of promoting Mary throughout Poland. Over the next several years, Kolbe took on publishing. He founded a monthly periodical titled, "Rycerz Niepokalanej" (Knight of the Immaculate).

He also operated a religious publishing press and founded a new Conventual Franciscan monastery at Niepokalanow, which became a major religious publishing centre.



Kolbe also founded monasteries in both Japan and India. To this day, the monastery in Japan remains prominent in the Roman Catholic Church in Japan.

In 1936, Kolbe's poor health forced him to return home to Poland, and once the WWII invasion by Germany began, he became one of the only brothers to remain in the monastery. He opened up a temporary hospital to aid those in need.

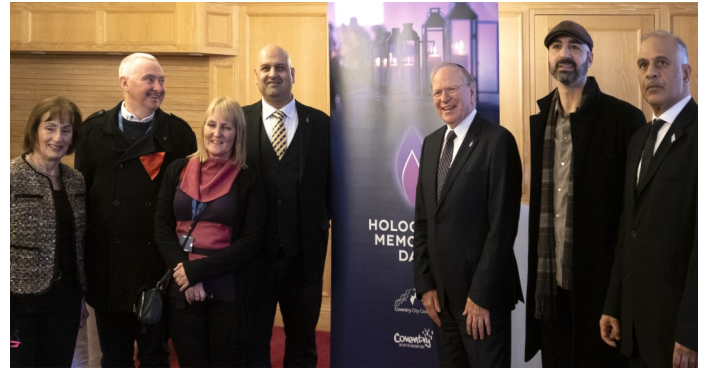
When his town was captured, Kolbe was sent to prison but released three months later. Kolbe refused to sign a document that would recognize him as a German citizen with his German ancestry and continued to work in his monastery, providing shelter for refugees - including hiding 2,000 Jews from German persecution. After receiving permission to continue his religious publishing, Kolbe's monastery acted as a publishing house again and issued many anti-Nazi German publications.

On February 17, 1941, the monastery was shut down; Kolbe was arrested by the German Gestapo and taken to the Pawiak prison. Three months later, he was transferred to Auschwitz. Never abandoning his priesthood, Kolbe was the victim to severe violence and harassment. Toward the end of his second month in Auschwitz, men were chosen to face death by starvation to warn against escapes. Kolbe was not chosen but volunteered to take the place of a man with a family.

It is said during the last days of his life Kolbe led prayers to Our Lady with the prisoners and remained calm. He was the last of the group to remain alive, after two weeks of dehydration and starvation. The guards gave him a lethal injection of carbolic acid. The stories tell that he raised his left arm and calmly awaited death.

St. Maximilian Kolbe died on August 14 and his remains were cremated on August 15, the same day as the Assumption of Mary feast day.

Recognized as the Servant of God, Kolbe was beatified as a "Confessor of the Faith" on October 17, 1971 by Pope Paul VI and canonized by Pope John Paul II on October 10, 1982. Pope John Paul II declared Kolbe not a confessor, but a martyr. Kolbe's is often depicted in a prison uniform and with a needle being injected into an arm. He is the patron saint of drug addicts, prisoners, families, and the pro-life movement and his feast day is celebrated on August 14.



On the 27th January, Holocaust Memorial Day, a number of people gathered in a tent in Coventry City Centre to listen to children, students, councillors and guest speakers talk and read poems about the holocaust and gendercides that have happened since the end of the 2nd World War. Music was performed by Coventry Music Brass Quintet and Coventry City Council Choir. San Eli Eli, poems were read by Coventry young Ambassadors from Good Shepherd RC and Stoke Primary schools. Stoke Park School is a UCL Beacon School ([Centre for Holocaust Education](#)). Afterwards in the Lord Mayor's hospitality Suite Clive Stone DL answered questions about his trip to Auschwitz with camp survivor Mindu.



**The Pax Christi Icon of Reconciliation will be in Birmingham in March:**

**Saturday 14th March** - J&P Retreat at Selly Park  
**Sunday 15th March:** Taize Prayer, 6pm - 7pm,  
 Holy Name Church, Great Barr, B43 6LN  
**Saturday 21st - Tuesday 24th March** at St  
 Philip's Anglican Cathedral Birmingham, where  
 you can visit the icon and pray for peace and  
 reconciliation.  
**Tuesday 24th March, 6pm - 8pm:** Interfaith event  
 at Nishkam Community Centre, Soho Road,  
 Birmingham, B21 9BH

(During the week 16th - 20th March the icon will be used in schools).

**Volunteers:** We may need help moving the icon between some of the venues - if you have a large estate car and think you might be able to help, do get in touch; likewise, if you live in the Birmingham area and could spare an hour or two to be available to speak to visitors in St Philip's about the icon and Pax Christi please get in touch.



## 2020 A Year of Anniversaries for Peace

2020 marks 75 years since the end of World War 2 in 1945, and with it the anniversaries of events that occurred at that time, and movements emerging in the aftermath. Notably, it is the 75th anniversary of the use of nuclear bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, on 6th and 9th August 1945 respectively. In his visit to Japan in November 2019, Pope Francis went to these places and met with 'hibakusha', survivors of the bombings. At the Peace Memorial in Hiroshima he reiterated the Church's clear condemnation of both the use and possession of nuclear weapons: "The use of atomic energy for purposes of war is today, more than ever, a crime not only against the dignity of human beings but against any possible future for our common home... The use of atomic energy for purposes of war is immoral, just as the possessing of nuclear weapons is immoral, as I already said two years ago. We will be judged on this."

In 2016 the Hibakusha launched an international signature campaign appealing for State Governments to conclude a treaty to ban and eliminate nuclear weapons. In 2017 the UN adopted the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, so the campaign is now calling on individual states to ratify the treaty. The UK has so far not done so. You can add your signature at: <https://hibakusha-appeal.net/english/> by April 2020.

If you would like to commemorate the anniversaries in August, you can find resources at: <http://paxchristi.org.uk/resources/prayer-and-seasonal/>

Pax Christi is a movement which grew out of the aftermath of World War 2. It was the initiative of a teacher, Marthe Dortel-Claudot, in Agen in southern France, who began a campaign of prayer for Franco-German reconciliation, not an easy thing to do at that time. She was supported by Bishop Théas of Montauban, who had been imprisoned by the Germans for protesting about the persecution of Jews and who had prayed for German people and urged others to do so. The original objective was enlarged and Pax Christi became a 'crusade of prayer for the nations'. This spiritual basis underpinned the work of the movement which, as it developed, called for socio-political action in public life as a means of bringing about the Peace of Christ. In 1950 it was constituted as 'The International Catholic Movement for Peace'. Pax Christi International is

now a worldwide network with over one hundred and twenty member organisations in sixty countries on five continents. It will be celebrating its 75th anniversary with an international assembly in Hiroshima in May - to REMEMBER and to RISE, recounting their concurrent history and all it has meant while rising up to answer the challenge of peace in our world today and for tomorrow.

You can read a reflection written by Anne Dodd, former Chair of Pax Christi UK on a visit to the home church of Marthe Dortel-Claudot at: <http://paxchristi.org.uk/about-us/history/>



Marthe Dortel-Claudot

(below)  
Hiroshima Peace  
Dome



Loving God of peace, Strengthen my  
determination to work for a world of peace and  
justice;

My conviction that, whatever our nationality or  
race, we are all global citizens, one in Christ;  
My courage to challenge the powerful with the  
values of the gospel;

My commitment to find nonviolent ways of  
resolving conflict - personal, local, national and  
international;

My efforts to forgive injuries and to love those I  
find it hard to love. Amen

'Peace alone is holy. Peace alone is holy  
Not war.' Pope Francis



Catholic Agency for  
Overseas Development

## Zimbabwe: the country of my birth

By CAFOD's Community Participation Coordinator  
for Birmingham, Sylvester Mutsigwa

Much has been spoken and written about the country of my birth – the country I grew up in.

Childhood memories of Zimbabwe and its beauty remain some of my fondest. I remember the beautiful and majestic Victoria Falls; the incredible architecture and stonework of Great Zimbabwe; and the gorgeous golden sunsets along the Zambezi river. I think of Jacaranda trees lining either side of the streets. In spring, their bloom created a beautiful purple carpet along the roads. It seemed to me that everyone had a friendly smile – there was a real sense of hope everywhere I went.

These are unforgettable memories.

Sadly, the Zimbabwe I witnessed during a recent three-week visit paints a different picture – a stark, if not bleak, contrast to my memories.

Zimbabwe once boasted an enviable subtropical climate, excellent rainfall seasons and fertile soil, but climate change and spiralling hyperinflation over the last three decades have altered the social and physical landscape of the country. The once reliable and abundant rains – the backbone of the agricultural sector – have been replaced by long dry spells and extensive droughts. Seventy per cent of Zimbabwe's population live in the rural areas. They are farmers that rely on agriculture to feed and support their families. Persistent droughts have resulted in little-to-no crop yields and the loss of livestock – the measure of a family's wealth.

Zimbabwe's urban population were mostly unaffected by previous droughts. This too has changed, as daily average temperatures soar. In Harare, the main dam supplying water to all households is below capacity. As a result, running water is limited to just one day each week.

Moreover, because of the dire economic situation, Local Councils cannot afford to treat water sufficiently; therefore, the water that does manage

to come through the household taps is unsafe to drink. In order to get safe drinking water, most urban families are forced to walk or drive for miles on end, with large containers, to form queues at busy boreholes.

To further exacerbate the situation, drought and soaring temperatures have caused low water levels. Subsequently, the Kariba dam – one of Zimbabwe's main sources of energy through hydroelectricity – is not producing enough electricity. In order to manage this desperate situation, electricity supplies to homes and businesses are restricted. Businesses have no option but to either reduce opening hours or permanently close, leaving many people unemployed.

Furthermore, hospitals must deal with failing medical equipment, shortages of basic supplies and rising mother and baby mortality rates. Food and fuel prices have risen beyond levels of affordability for most people. Rural and urban families alike are facing poverty – reduced to eating one meal each day, just to be able to afford to send their children to school.

All of this, and then the devastation caused by Cyclone Idai. In 2019, huge storms and severe flooding affected parts of Zimbabwe and Mozambique. Houses, crops and livestock were destroyed. Thousands of people were killed.

Yet, despite these desperate circumstances, the Zimbabweans that I know – either through sheer determination or strong faith – somehow manage to find the means to survive.

On my recent visit to Zimbabwe, I asked an uncle how this was possible. He told me:

"The situation in this country weighed me down so much. I would ask myself, why is all this happening to me? Then, one day, whilst in my garden, I overheard my neighbours complaining about the very same issues I was complaining about.

"Walking down the street, I overheard others also lamenting over the same issues that I am going through. I realised I was not alone – that things will get better."

My uncle's resilience is that of most Zimbabweans. His hope, too. Things will get better.

My work so far with CAFOD has shown this to be true. CAFOD was at the centre of the Cyclone Idai emergency appeal. Local experts worked tirelessly to ensure vital emergency aid reached affected communities. Today, while the rest of the world



has moved on from the cyclone and its devastation – never mind the ongoing problems of drought – CAFOD continues to provide assistance to these communities.

The local experts we work with range from emergency first responders, nutrition advisors, water and sanitation engineers, agricultural educators, psycho-social counsellors, and many more. They are trusted and knowledgeable local people that have often grown up in the communities they now support.

One of these local experts is Sr Consilia. She is a trained pharmacist, working from a remote, rural hospital in Gokwe, west Zimbabwe. She prescribes medication, conducts check-ups and gives valuable advice. Every day, she helps pregnant mothers and their babies survive. When asked why she works so hard, her reply was simple: love.

Perhaps this simple reason also explains my uncle's resilience and hope – the resilience and hope of people all over Zimbabwe – love for our sisters and brothers.

This Family Fast Day (6 March), support our local experts – people like Sr Consilia – continue their brilliant work. Show them the love they show others.

Find out more about CAFOD's Family Fast Day at [cafod.org.uk/fastday](http://cafod.org.uk/fastday) or donate to our Lent Appeal at [cafod.org.uk/lent](http://cafod.org.uk/lent)



Coventry welcomed Sylvester and Joanne to Sacred Heart Church to present information about CAFOD's Lent campaigns and to introduce themselves to local CAFOD volunteers.

CAFOD new campaign - Generation Unite

<https://cafod.org.uk/Campaign/Climate/Generations-Unite>

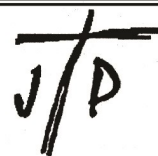
You may wish to use the Lent Calendar

<https://cafod.org.uk/Pray/Lent-Calendar>





The Justice and Peace Commission Archdiocese of Birmingham



# **Lenten Retreat 2020**

**The world is in Transformation and so is Mission  
Changes bring Opportunities**

**Saturday 14th March 2020**

**Registrations 9:30am Start at 10:00  
concludes with Mass at 3:30pm.**

**St Paul's Convent, Selly Park,  
Birmingham B29 7LL**

A time of reflection, silence and prayer for those involved or  
interested in the work for justice, peace and social justice.

**All are welcome**

**Led by Fr. Ray Collier SSC**

£5 (concessions free) to be collected on the day.

Bring your own packed lunch  
Tea and coffee will be provided

**Please register your intention to attend by Email to:**

Janet Vaughan

Administrator, Birmingham Justice and Peace Commission

**Email: [bham.jandp@gmail.com](mailto:bham.jandp@gmail.com)**

**Or book on-line <http://bit.ly/LentenRetreat2020>**



**Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2020 Retreat Day**  
**2nd Saturday in Lent**

Venue: St Paul's Convent, Selly Park, Birmingham B29 7LL

**Programme**

**The world is in Transformation and so is Mission –  
Changes bring Opportunities**

- 9:30am Registration opens - **coffee/tea available**
- 10:00 Welcome and opening prayer including welcoming of the Pax Christi icon
- Talk 1 - Led by Fr. Ray Collier SSC
- 10:45 Reflection time
- 11:45 Champagne Glass view of the world
- 12:30 Lunch, bring own pack lunch (**tea and coffee will be available**)  
with time to walk round the grounds for reflection  
and look at Justice and Peace table
- 1:15 Talk 2 - Led by Fr. Ray Collier SSC
- 2:00 Reflection time
- tea and coffee will be available**
- 2:30 Open forum / Q&A
- 3:30 Mass
- 4:30pm Depart

**You are invited to bring a bible with you on the day**

If you have a contribution you would like included in the **February 2020** newsletter please send it by Email for consideration to:  
The Administrator, J&P Commission.  
Email: [bham.jandp@gmail.com](mailto:bham.jandp@gmail.com)

**February 2020 Edition:**  
Last date for copy **31st January 2020**

*The views expressed in this newsletter are the view of the individual contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Birmingham Justice and Peace Commission or the Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham.*

[www.birminghamjandp.org.uk](http://www.birminghamjandp.org.uk)  
[Birmingham J&P](#) @BhamJandP