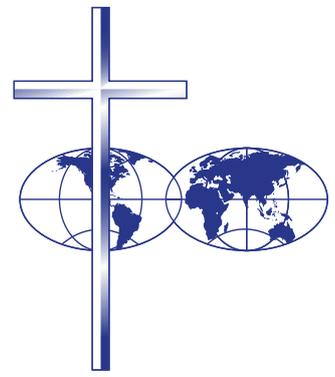


Vocation for Justice

Summer 2021 Volume 35 No 2



**Laudato Si' Decade
Launch on 24 May**

**Season of Creation
1 Sept - 4 October**

**COP26
1-12 November**

Prepare the Future

"Many people want to return to normality... Today we have an opportunity to build something different."

Pope Francis, General Audience, 19 August 2020



'Let's Create A World Without Racism'

Congratulations to the Columban Schools Competition Winners

COLUMBAN MISSION

Collaborating with the National Justice and Peace Network of England and Wales & Justice and Peace Scotland

This editorial highlights the Columban Schools Media Competition. This year's competition was the most successful ever, and we thank all those who supported it, particularly the young people themselves. Winners and winning images are on our front cover.

Zane Sekhon was a winner in the writing section of, 'Let's create a world without racism'. He attends Worth Catholic School in West Sussex. Zane is one of the Muslims in the school and says: "Being one of the only Muslims in a Catholic school didn't matter at all. It was an accepting place where the teachers would share and impart knowledge and I could draw comparisons directly with my own faith." You will find his contribution on the next page.

In this edition of *Vocation for Justice* you will find much material that will help you in whatever way of life you follow. If you are involved in adult education you will find material to chew on for the family and for schools. The Centrespread looks at the launch of the *Laudato Si'* Decade on 24 May, which Columban Sister Kate Midgley introduces. Much of the newsletter is dedicated to *Laudato Si'* responses. I remind you of the COP26 in Glasgow in November of this year.

Pope Francis has for some time now been referring to the importance of preparing the future for a post-pandemic world. In a recent general audience, he had this to say:

"A small virus continues to cause deep wounds and to expose our physical, social and spiritual vulnerabilities. It has laid bare the great inequality that reigns in the world: inequality of opportunity, of goods, of access to health care, of technology, education. Millions of children cannot go to school, and so the list goes on. These injustices are neither natural nor inevitable. They are the work of man; they come from a model of growth detached from the deepest values. And this has made many people lose hope and has increased uncertainty and anguish. This is why, to emerge from the pandemic, we must find the cure not only for the coronavirus - which is important! - but also for the great human and socio-economic viruses. And, certainly, we cannot expect the economic model that underlies unfair and unsustainable development to solve our problems. A society where diversity is respected is much more resistant to any kind of virus."

He warned that as a result of our economic model, humanity is close to the limits of the planet, with serious and irreversible consequences such as loss of biodiversity, climate change, rising sea levels and the destruction of tropical forests.

This newsletter notes that 2021 is particularly significant in the on-going efforts to respond to the climate crisis, and we are called to play a critical part. COP26 in Glasgow is the next in the on-going series of United Nations climate conferences. Negotiators and leaders from countries who are members of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change will come together to discuss action on climate change. COP stands for 'Conference of Parties' to this treaty. This meeting was postponed from last year due to the pandemic, and it is vital that it brings about serious and immediate change, ensuring that the world 'builds back better' with a commitment to the common good and healing our exploited world. Columban JPIC had a delegation at the Paris talks in 2015. Join us in engaging with the process this year. ■

Peter Hughes SSC

Vatican taskforce seeks to 'prepare the future'

"The COVID Vatican Commission is trying to respond to the reality we're living and preparing the future," said Fr Augusto Zampini last July. "Preparing the future is different from preparing for the future" said the head of the Vatican's post Covid-19 taskforce; "that implies the future is already determined and we must mitigate its worst effects because it's going to be terrible."

Fr Augusto continued:

"Preparing the future means to acknowledge that things look grim, but since it's not set in stone it's worth looking for economic models that will help humanity out of the ongoing crisis — not by going back to a world of inequalities led by an economy that kills, but by creating a fairer world. We are called to a new imagination of the possible with the realism that only the gospel can give.

"We need a new economic model, not because I say so or because Pope Francis is asking for one. We need a new model because there's no alternative. Within the catastrophe of the pandemic we see people dying; people sick; countries forced to close down because they cannot control the spread of the virus; people growing nervous because they can't take it anymore; poor people who have to go to work because they don't receive a salary from either the private or public sectors. Seeing all this calamity, we acknowledge that every crisis is an opportunity to see what's not working.

"Conversion is a key part of this: something that 'can take us to new shores', with spirituality a guiding force. It allows us to resist the temptation to simply wish to reset or restart our pre-covid lives, at the cost of the environment and the poor, but to look instead to regeneration and new life." ■

Fr Augusto was speaking at an online panel to promote a November 2020 summit to be held in Assisi called 'The Economy of Francis'.

Columban Competition

Covert Racism a “smouldering flame”

Zane Sekhon

Zane was a winner in the Columban Schools Competition, ‘Let’s create a world without racism’. He attends Worth School in West Sussex.



Zane Sekhon

There are two types of racism I usually encounter: the ‘cool covert’ - “I’m not racist but just checking where your loyalties lie: who do you support in the World Cup?” or the ‘very cool’ - “we’re with our friends so we’re just going to scream ‘Paki’ at you and increase our street cred racism”. Between these two there were many other blurred lines, things that white people say because they’re curious but shouldn’t. These are normally things that are offensive to brown people, but they are so used to the questions they don’t take offence - “where are you from? Not Surrey, where are you really from?”

For instance, I’m an average kid, no real hardships in my life, from an average family, living an average life. I love gaming, I love music and I love eating. This last hobby is a bit of a problem, leading to my being a tubby brown kid in a very posh, predominantly white, private school of athletic boys. I should have just got a ‘rush me’ sign and pinned it to myself; I was an easy target. This didn’t deter me however from my love of chicken and eating it. I wished I would eat less but my insatiable hunger meant that just never happened. I go to a Catholic school, where the ethos of fairness and sharing, of accepting and being accepted is wonderful to me. Why doesn’t this always translate in our real world?

Being one of the only Muslims in a Catholic school didn’t matter at all. It was an accepting place where the teachers would share and impart knowledge and I could draw comparisons directly with my own faith. In essence, it was learning the same thing, just in a different language. I loved this, I loved the peace you found in the notion of God, of things being preordained and most importantly that everything will work itself out in the end.

My gran calls me a ‘coconut’, apparently my privileged education means I might be brown on the outside but inside I’m all white. I get that a lot, at the mosque, at my cousin’s house - ‘posh white boy’, at cadet practice I often hear, “don’t blow me up terrorist! Shaan’s a jihadi, he’s got a gun”. So here I am, on a pendulum swinging from Paki to Coconut, unwanted to unfamiliar.

Not ever really being accepted by anyone hasn’t made me think I should change or adapt, mainly I don’t know where to start or how? How can I be browner? Or how can I be less brown? Sometimes the very question makes me laugh. I don’t feel sorry for myself - it would be ridiculous - for the country is full of kids like me - third generation brown kids, who grew up sitting with their Indian grandfathers, watching them rooting for India in the World Cup while putting up the Christmas tree in otherwise English households. It bothered the English though - “why do you support India? You’re English”. I asked my friend born and bred in Surrey, “why do you support Leeds football club?” He replied, “because my dad does”. Some things are just familial heritage; some things are just because India have a great team.

Overt racism, though hurtful, is so much easier to deal with. You can answer back, confront, discourse. It’s the covert one I hate. It leaves me seething inside, like someone lit a small match in the pit of my stomach and though the

smouldering flame is burning me it feels rude to do anything about it.

“Why are all terrorists Muslim?” Well, the majority of terrorism is carried out by white supremacists but though they get cast as ‘lone wolfs’ (which I’ve always thought is quite a flattering macho term) any crime committed by a Muslim is an act of terror. I can address these overtly ignorant questions. Question like, “Where are you from?” “Surrey.” “No before that, where are you really from; where are your parents from?” “Also, Surrey.” “No, I mean before that, where are your grandparents from?” This is the most ridiculous line of frequent questioning I ever encounter. Why does this question even get asked? Do you think I have connections to cheap saffron dealers? Are you curious about the weather and food of a country that you have no idea about yet? What clarity will my lineage provide to you? Apart from assisting in making some form of biased opinion on what I must be like “aha Saudi, oppressive, aha India, must do yoga, aha Morocco, what the heck does that mean?”

Other than these biases, I can’t imagine why the interest. I’m clearly British, sitting on the fence - not out of choice - waiting to be embraced by my people, whoever they may be. I know lots of people who have suffered endemic and outward racist assaults that have left life-changing damage, so I feel a bit self-indulgent talking about myself in this way, but this isn’t a once in a while attack; this is just how most brown kids live in England.

This is the average story of an average boy. I am the friend when people say, “I’m not racist, my best friend’s brown”. I’m the kid who is always explaining his lineage and I’m the kid always fake laughing when other kids ask if there’s a bomb in my backpack. I’m the kid that gets rushed at break for no reason. I’m the kid who loves India as his cricket team, like it’s a guilty secret, and I’m the kid who loves England because it’s his home. I’m the kid who loves his Catholic school and his Muslim faith. If they can both coexist within me why can’t I coexist in a brown and white world? ■

www.columbancompetition.com

Biodiversity: An International Priority

Dan Troy SSC

A key Columban concern is the protection of Earth's Biodiversity. A Columban based in China reports.

When a species becomes extinct, a point of no return is crossed for our world. At such times, no amount of goodwill and no amount of scientific creativity can bring a species back to its original place in Creation. It is gone forever, part of the web of life that has irreversibly unraveled.

Pope Francis highlighted in *Laudato Si'*: "Each year sees the disappearance of thousands of plant and animal species which we will never know, which our children will never see, because they have been lost for ever. The great majority become extinct because of human activity. Because of us, thousands of species will no longer give glory to God by their very existence, nor convey their message to us. We have no such right" (LS 33).

The ongoing loss of Earth's biodiversity is a tragedy. Increasingly, the world will be coping with a self-imposed and permanent poverty that will be experienced by all future generations.

The rescheduled United Nations-sponsored Convention on Biodiversity will be held in Kunming, China, on 11-24 October this year. International delegates will shape policy that invites governments to protect the essential balances of the natural world, even when we still do not fully understand the real consequences of the losses that have already taken place.

The choice of Kunming in China's southwestern region as a location for the convention is interesting. The city is located almost 2,000 metres above sea level, where it feels like spring all year round. It is the capital city of the mountainous Yunnan province, home to many of China's ethnic groups, some of these extending across to neighbouring Myanmar.

While the Church in China is gradually becoming aware of the importance of ecological issues, the publication of *Laudato Si'* in 2015 provided a unique opportunity to encourage a deeper engagement with these issues. A number of

recent ecological workshops held for Chinese sisters and others without formal connections with the Church have encouraged me to believe that much more can be done to encourage people to deepen their appreciation of the natural world and to pose questions that lead to knowing the Creator in a new way. Combining the reading of *Laudato Si'*, scientific input, participants' artistic expression, and the use of hand lenses and microscopes to see the deeper beauty of flowers and insects, hearts and minds were opened to an experience of awe at the creativity that God has blessed us with in the natural world.

Linking an appreciation of nature with a deeper understanding of the mysterious ways of the Creator is well supported by traditional Chinese art. It often represents the huge scale of the natural world with just two colours. People are a small part of artistic scenes, carrying a message of wisdom in the reminder that we should approach the natural world with humility rather than seeking to impose ourselves on it with domineering intentions.

A further encouragement to the Church in China to engage with issues of ecological concern is found in the missionary contribution of two people in this vast country over the past 100 years, namely Teilhard de Chardin and Thomas Berry. In 1923 Teilhard de Chardin S.J. arrived in China just a few years after the harrowing experience of being a stretcher bearer at the frontlines of World War I. He lived in China for 23 years and was an early promoter of paleontology, using his experience to encourage those who are now seen as the pioneers of the discipline in China. Photographs of him on the walls of a museum in Shanxi province and a museum in Beijing as well as the display of many of his fossils at the natural history museum in Tianjin are testament to how the Church can contribute to a deeper understanding of the natural world in China. Interestingly, Teilhard is the only modern theologian mentioned in *Laudato Si'*. Thomas

Berry, a Passionist priest and theologian whose abundant writings raised an urgent plea for humanity to reconsider its relationship with the natural world, arrived in China in 1948. Although he lived here for less than one year, China remained important to him throughout his long life. He appreciated its ancient culture and religious traditions, highlighting for him the importance of how cultural and religious authenticity can guide the shaping of a people's relationship with their surroundings.

The upcoming Convention on Biodiversity in Kunming is an opportunity for international governments to make commitments on biodiversity conservation. It is a necessary step in the efforts to halt species loss. If progress is made at this convention, it needs to be accompanied by commitments that are put into practice at local level throughout the world.

Each area of our planet has ecological uniqueness. Pope Francis says, "the history of our friendship with God is always linked to particular places which take on an intensely personal meaning" (LS 84). Local ecological features and the stories that have shaped the hearts and minds of people can become the wellsprings needed to ensure that a viable future emerges for our planet. An appropriate long-term response is likely to be one that affirms the creativity of people in each local area throughout the world. An affirmation that encourages respect for the natural world in each community's area is surely the best way forward in a new way of life that sees the local and the global depending upon each other. If this were to happen it would reflect in some way the concerns of the Creator whose hopes are surely inclusive of the health of this fragile planet both now and scores of generations into the future. ■

UN Biodiversity Day is 22 May

**'Reconciled with Creation:
Call for Urgent Action on
Climate and Biodiversity'**

An online Assembly of the European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN). 31 May-1 June.
<https://www.ecen.org/>

Acting on Laudato Si'

Sr Kate Midgley

Kate is a Columban Sister who did the Global Catholic Climate Movement's "excellent" Laudato Si' Animators course last year. She is now in the GCCM UK Animators' group and is starting a Laudato Si' parish community gardening group in East London.

On the 24 May the Vatican will invite the entire Catholic Church to embark on an audacious faith-filled, decade-long journey through the **Laudato Si' Action Platform** (see *centrespread*). It is hoped that as many of us as possible will join this journey together and that with every passing year the number of us on this journey will increase exponentially.

So why is the Vatican so concerned that we all take part in this journey? Pope Francis, the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, David Attenborough, to name a few household names, as well countless scientists, religious leaders and ordinary citizens have all warned us that we need to take urgent action in order to protect our Earth from a sixth mass extinction and dangerous global overheating. Changing weather patterns could spiral out of control, making large parts of the Earth uninhabitable and leading to hundreds of millions of climate refugees.

As Christians, we believe that the whole Earth is a miracle of God's creation and that it is held in every moment by God. This attitude of awe and wonder was evident in the title Pope Francis gave to his 2015 encyclical '*Laudato Si' (Praised be)*. And he recalled St Francis who, "*just as happens when we fall in love with someone, whenever he would gaze at the sun, the moon or the smallest of animals, he burst into song*" (LS 11).

The Pope, quoting St Francis, spoke with great tenderness about Earth: "*Our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us*" (LS 1). The Pope shows us in '*Laudato Si'* that integral ecology is integral to our faith.

The Pope also wrote these heart-breaking words: "*This sister 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. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life. This is why the Earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor, she 'groans in travail'. We have forgotten that are ourselves are dust of the Earth; our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters" (LS 2).

With these words ringing in our ears, six years after '*Laudato Si'* was first published, the Pope, through the Vatican Dicastery of Human Development, is inviting us to act now and embark on this journey through the **Laudato Si Action Platform**. Pope Francis has said, 'Let us Dream' and the **Platform** is a visible form of that dream.

For an excellent 20 minute introduction by Fr Josh Kureethadam into what it is all about see this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UIU7C7V81qg> (39 mins in)

LAUDATO SI' ACTION PLATFORM

Parts of the Church are identified for embarking on this journey to sustainability, in the spirit of '*Laudato Si'*, towards integral ecology. These include: **Families/Education/Religious Orders/Parishes & Dioceses/Hospitals & Health Centres/Catholic businesses, cooperatives & farms/Catholic organisations, movements, communications.** It is hoped that each part will make public commitments to the seven '*Laudato Si'* goals:



Kate Midgley

LAUDATO SI' GOALS:

- Response to the Cry of the Earth
- Response to the Cry of the Poor
- Ecological economics

- Adoption of Simple Lifestyle
- Ecological Education
- Ecological Spirituality
- Community Involvement and Participatory Action

We are encouraged to act in ways that are SPECIFIC, MEASURABLE, ACHIEVABLE, RELEVANT, TIME-BOUND

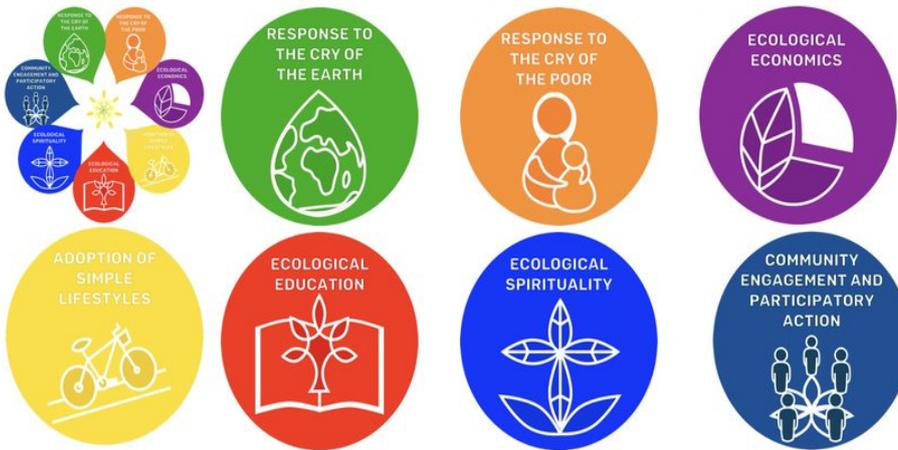
The goal of this mobilisation of the entire Catholic Church is to create the "critical mass" needed for the radical societal transformation needed in order to protect our planet for future generations. Social scientists tell us that this critical mass is reached with just 3.5% of the population. For society to change, 21% to 25% of the population is needed, but the critical mass is the first goal.

History tells us that radical social change has started from below - Gandhi in India, Mandela in South Africa or the Suffragettes. It is hoped that in the climate and ecological emergency, the Pope, the entire Catholic Church, and working together with others, will help achieve the radical global societal transformation that is needed. Everyone is needed for this journey, as Greta Thunberg has said: "*Somebody needs to do something and I am somebody*".

"*What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up? "Leaving an inhabitable planet to future generations is first and foremost, up to us. The issue is one which dramatically affects us, for it has to do with the ultimate meaning of our earthly sojourn."* (LS 160) ■

www.LaudatoSi.org
click on Laudato Si' Goals

LAUDATO SI' GOALS



In the spirit of integral ecology, hope for the Earth and the Poor.

FAMILY

- **Strengthen awareness** that the family is an agent of pastoral activity, called to bear witness to the Gospel including by caring for our common home.
- **Support families** in their role as the privileged educational setting in which we learn respect for others and for creation, as well as solidarity, courtesy, forgiveness, and responsibility.
- **Promote opportunities** for young people to take leadership roles, supporting their initiatives by providing appropriate ethical guidelines for building a future that is more sustainable, inclusive and respectful of the gifts of creation.

SCHOOLS

- **Encourage children's innate curiosity** by having them observe and explore natural and urbanised environments, helping them to understand the characteristics of the reality in which they live.
- **Promote guided visits** to parks, botanical gardens, educational farms, environments that are significant for their beauty. Help children to have memorable experiences of nature.
- **Broaden children's horizon of knowledge** about other people's situations besides their own, including those that lack proper nourishment and even starve. This will increase awareness of the need for social justice.
- **Address the causes** that hinder integral development and lead to marginalisation, such as poverty, inequality, illiteracy, exploitation, child labour, and the treatment of women.
- **Promote behavioural change** for the sake of human health and of the environment. Carry out awareness campaigns involving other students, parents and local communities, to encourage better, more moderate consumption of food and a commitment to avoiding food waste.
- **Promote multidisciplinary teaching on integral ecology** and highlight the importance of the circular economy of nature, which does not produce waste, as a means of addressing the problems of environmental sustainability.
- **Educate and empower** young people to show leadership in promoting human dignity, mercy, reconciliation, nonviolence, peace and sustainable development.
- **Create Internet platforms** to connect students so that they can share their experiences of sustainability projects.
- **Promote paths of reflection** on the ethical and spiritual roots of environmental problems, with reference to the teaching of *Laudato Si'*.
- **Establish cooperative relationships and networking** with specialised Catholic associations, in order to support the development, implementation and evaluation of educational initiatives aimed at defending human dignity and promoting integral ecology.

UNIVERSITIES

- **Educate future generations** and young people to think in terms of a united world and of a shared project, integrating the care of the common home and sustainability even in those university courses not strictly related to environmental issues.
- **Teach students** to view their education as involving greater responsibility for today's problems, including the needs of the poor and caring for the environment.
- **Encourage students** to engage in professions that promote positive environmental change and the social changes needed to achieve the objectives set forth in *Laudato Si'*, drawing inspiration from the best international sustainable development practices.
- **Empower students** by involving them in Service-Learning activities to disseminate good sustainability practices in the various sectors of human activity, such as food production and access, water management, waste reduction, renewable energy and technological innovation.
- **Develop interdisciplinary research** on sustainability that can take into account its three dimensions (ecological, social and economic) as well as respect for nature, humanity and our common home.
- **Study the theology of creation** and the relationship between human beings and the world in which we live. Introduce courses in the theology of creation that can help develop the concept of "sins against creation" and an understanding of the bases of a harmonious relationship between human beings and creation.
- **Establish think tanks** on sustainability and integral ecology from different faculties and departments. These groups should be composed of representatives of students, administration, management and teachers, with the aim of improving university sustainability in procurement and other procedures. Also, promoting sustainability in events and relationships with external bodies, innovation on campuses, internships, liturgy and vocational training in line with integral ecology.

Action Platform for Education and Ecological Conversion

ADULT EDUCATION

- **Encourage the implementation** of structures and methods that can help individuals and communities to engage in lifelong learning. Favour educational and formational approaches to integral ecology that encourage recipients to express, share and compare their personal experiences and skills.
- **Support inter-generational exchanges and partnerships.** Children, young people, adults and the elderly can enrich each other.
- **Counter the culture of super-efficiency and consumerism** by showing concern for vulnerable people. The sick, the elderly, people experiencing difficulties, drawbacks and disabilities, are an important social resource from the standpoint of integral ecology, representing an opportunity for daily encounter with enduring values. Launch initiatives to raise awareness of the dignity of each and every person.
- **Do not shield the young** from experiences that enable them to “touch the suffering of others”. This will allow them to grow in charity and empathy, to appreciate the value of their own suffering and the meaning of life, to respect and care for others and to reject the indifference typical of the throwaway culture.
- **Promote wider interaction** with the social, cultural, economic, political and religious community on the local level.
- **Take an interest in local problems** and connect them with the global ones. Be concerned for beauty in every setting and for contact with nature. There is an intimate link between harmony and a healthy environment. Propose moments devoted to the contemplation of nature and beauty, to expressing gratitude, to thank God.
- **Consider the culture of respect for creation** as an instrument of dialogue and, if possible, of convergence between different cultural trends.

CATECHESIS

- **Raise awareness of our vocation** to be stewards of God’s creation.
- **Encourage Christians to act decisively** in caring for our common home at every level: personal lifestyle, community, commitment to active citizenship and engagement with national and international bodies.

ECUMENICAL AND INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

- **Strengthen cooperation** between Christian Churches through prayer services, pilgrimages, seminars, disinvestment or reinvestment campaigns, financing joint projects.
- **Pursue cooperation** with other churches and faith communities in supporting projects for humanitarian cooperation and development.

COMMUNICATION

- **Promote ‘Laudato Si’** websites and help inform journalists about environmental issues.
- **Give voice to the voiceless**, using testimonies of those who have experienced abuse, pollution and violations of human rights.



'Journeying Towards Care for Our Common Home', Working Group of the Holy See on Integral Development ISBN 978-88-266-0464-0

<https://icscentre.org/>

Rumours of a COP

Danny Sweeney

Danny is the Co-ordinator of Justice and Peace Scotland, and represents the Bishops' Conference of Scotland on the Glasgow Churches Together COP26 Co-ordinating Group. He has participated in Columban Invitation to Mission.

In the summer of 2019 we first considered rumours that the next COP (Conference of Parties Climate Conference) would be hosted in the UK. The assumption that this would be held in London, or perhaps Manchester or Birmingham, had myself and colleagues in the Church of Scotland outlining ideas for a pilgrimage. We knew groups had gone to Paris in 2015 from around the world. We envisioned starting at Iona or Whithorn and taking the spirits of Columba and Ninian down to England to show our concerns for Creation. Then we found it was Glasgow which would be welcoming the world for COP26. We would be hosts, not guests!

Churches started dialogue over something this significant. Now, we are a group of around 30, representing both Glasgow churches and the national Church agencies. We meet regularly to share information, plans, and discern together just what may be needed to make a success of hosting a COP. One fruit of this already has been using the common ground of our concerns to grow a membership wider than the ecumenical networks and bodies. To welcome the world to Glasgow would not be an either/or, but a both/and for the Church as a whole, with our shared work complementing and feeding the plans we were making in our own traditions.

At the start we had many ideas, hopes, and concerns as to just how we could not only do this but do it well. It must be said, these early meetings were defined by what we did not know. Both the Holy See and the World Council of Churches are signatories to the COP - Would we be expected to host delegates? Did the Vatican have a specific agenda for us? With delegates from around the world presumably containing within their number Christians of

varied traditions and languages were we expected to cover all these bases ourselves, or be gracious hosts in facilitating others? Should initiatives take place in churches across the city, or were we expected to provide a chaplaincy to the UN-controlled zone that would be established on the south bank of the Clyde? But for all the answers we didn't have, we had ideas: ways to bear witness to our concerns, to share the prophetic vision of *Laudato Si'*, and show a proper Scottish welcome to the world.



Danny Sweeney

Rumours moved on. After the Chile COP moved to Madrid and failed to deliver on the hope that was placed on it, Glasgow became very significant: five years since the landmark Paris Agreement, and the increasing imperatives to make real change.

Sadly, other rumours abounded too; the Westminster government was refusing to speak to Holyrood, the First Minister of Scotland was being refused accreditation as a UK delegate, the Scottish government had reserved all the buildings nearest to the COP location with no interest in sharing them. Already, all the hope we were pinning on the COP seemed to be overshadowed by political wrangling. As we started to find our feet new rumours started; a new highly contagious virus was being detected in Wuhan.

Very quickly the talk turned to lockdowns and furloughs, and I along with several others found ourselves furloughed and unable to continue planning. During lockdown COP wasn't top of most people's agendas, but rumours still circulated: would it be moved to London, or cancelled, pushed back for six months, and then to 2021.

We're now planning for COP in November this year. Only what does a COP look like in a post-pandemic Glasgow? Not just the COP itself, which is unlikely to have thousands of delegates as in previous years, but our dreams and plans for mass gatherings, marches through the city, and public worship all feel like they are on uncertain ground. There is an unspoken fear of another COVID wave forcing us to alter or cancel everything. We have had to learn to use online platforms to communicate. The possibility of bringing the world to Glasgow (be it online or in person) remains.

Most challenging to our hopes have been rumours about whether the government is truly committed to what is needed to take on the climate crisis. We have met with civil servants involved with the COP team in the Cabinet Office. We are constantly reassured that the government values the voice and the presence of the Churches at this event. We have had to make it clear that a government which in a matter of months has slashed international aid, broken commitments to nuclear disarmament, is passing legislation which targets traveller communities, our rights to protest, and effectively criminalises seeking asylum does not get to "faith-wash" what it is doing around the COP.

At a time when leadership is desperately needed from the government it seems they are less concerned with the outcomes than the appearances. We feel it is cynical for oil companies to have sponsored events or buildings at COPs in the past. The government cannot claim our allegiance when they are ignoring the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor, which *Laudato Si'* speaks directly to. Can we take as genuine the promises of a government which places Extinction Rebellion and Greenpeace on terrorist watchlists for schools or which serves the interests of those who are after unlimited growth from the finite resources of the planet? Glasgow will certainly be written into the history of the world's response to the climate crisis later this year. ■

Websites:

www.justiceandpeacescotland.org.uk

<https://climatefringe.org/>

<https://cop26coalition.org>

<https://www.theclimatecoalition.org/>

Columban Education

Keep Planting Seeds

James Trewby

James is the Columban JPIC Education worker.



In the last edition I praised educators for all they've done during the pandemic and made the argument that we must keep 'planting seeds' of the vocation to justice and peace. That seed, sown and nurtured now, will grow, God willing, into the leaders, prophets, activists, healers and educators we need.

Please forgive me for mixing metaphors, but the proof is in the pudding! On the front cover and other pages we highlight the young winners of the Columban School Media Competition, this year on the theme of 'Let's create a world without racism'. There were an incredible number of entries; don't believe anyone who tells you young people are apathetic. But it was the quality not the quantity that blew me away. Discussion of overt and covert racism, from structural challenges to micro-aggression, small actions in everyday life, images to force anyone to stop and think – I could go on. In my email to participants I said: "You brought passion, depth of thought and knowledge, experience, compassion, anger, hope ... Thank you. I'm inspired, challenged and encouraged. All those involved - judges, shortlisters and so on, would agree. Thank you. I want my little children to grow up in the world you'll make."

An invitation to readers: Might you be able to amplify the voices of these young people? Perhaps you could use one of their articles or images in your parish newsletter or magazine? Would your local school be interested in sharing them, for

example in an assembly or on social media? Via *The Tablet* magazine, one of the winners is featured in a podcast, available on their website. Please do what you can to share the good news of young people bringing Catholic Social Teaching to life. I believe they could be particularly encouraging for educators and other young people.

Last term was an extremely unusual one for me. The shifting sands of the pandemic put a stop to our programmes of teacher training, retreats for young people and so on. But thanks to divine providence, collaboration and the power of Zoom, new opportunities arose. Looking back, it turned into a busy and exciting term.

The bulk of the work was facilitating multiple weekly online justice and peace education programmes for groups of educators, youth ministers and young people – sometimes working collaboratively with Aisling Griffin from Pax Christi. What a privilege it has been! Groups have included the young adult retreat teams from Catholic youth retreat centres at Walsingham House and Kintbury, teaching staff from St Thomas More secondary in Nuneaton, young people from schools and a group of CAFOD volunteers and staff. One of the advantages of everything being online was that we could bring them so many inspirational 'guests': activists, a pub landlord who started a foodbank, missionaries, a theologian, refugees and asylum seekers, a young climate striker, people impacted by climate change.

Groups in this country found themselves reflecting on encounters with people in Pakistan, the Philippines, Myanmar, the US, and Fiji. In some of the groups' final session we used online software for participants to generate 'word clouds' to capture their learning (see *image*). Accompanying groups over multiple weeks (one group of educators didn't want to stop) allowed us to really get to know participants, exploring together a range of justice and peace issues, the relationships between them, faith responses and the possible roles for education. I look forward to working with these people in 'real life' one day!

With spring and the easing of lockdown, the fruits of these programmes are now beginning to show. One participant said, "This course has been a profound experience for me and will transform not just my ministry but my whole life". COVID allowing, one retreat centre will work with us to host a summer residential with asylum seekers, refugees and educators. I've had bookings for retreat days for children, INSET training for teachers and online conferences. Let's hope and pray things continue to open up, but that we also find ways to keep our eyes and hearts open to situations around the world.

Looking slightly further ahead, we are beginning to explore how we might engage with the COP in Glasgow. Also, a seed planted a couple of years ago with some head teachers from Catholic schools in Birmingham is growing nicely – one of them contacted me with a very exciting dream: 1000+ pupils from Catholic schools joining a climate strike during the Season of Creation, just before the COP. We are also considering taking a group of young adults to Glasgow, bringing messages and prayers from young people connected to the Columbans around the world as well as offering virtual engagement for schools, parishes and youth groups around the country.

Many thanks for your continuing support. Please pray for the work of Columban Justice and Peace Education – and do get in touch:

education@columbans.co.uk ■

“Dire” Covid report from Peru
Columban Ed O’Connell reported from Lima in April that deaths in Peru are now officially at least 200 a day, but the number is probably double that. Limited vaccines from China have been given to front-line workers. Columbans continue to support a Special Needs School and five communal soup kitchens to feed the most vulnerable families. Global vaccine access is essential for a global, just recovery from the pandemic, but the countries least able to afford the vaccine are the last to access it. Maryknoll has released the following video on vaccine equity: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cC6QDzTR4gY>

“Re-imagine immigration!”
Scott Wright, director of the Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach (CCAO) in Washington, has highlighted the human trafficking risk migrants face along the US-Mexico border. “They’re particularly vulnerable to human traffickers at every step along the way of their journey and as they wait on the Mexico side of the US border to cross,” he said. Over the next four years, US President Joe Biden must “rebuild an immigration system so that it’s welcoming and compassionate.” A key issue is care of unaccompanied children crossing the border. “This moment is a unique opportunity,” Scott said, “for us to reimagine an immigration system that acknowledges their dignity and treats them with compassion.”
<https://columbancenter.org/usmx-border-policy-under-president-biden>

Vatican climate refugee plan
The Vatican has released a ten-point plan for how local churches can tackle the “great emergency” of people being forced to flee their homes due to climate change. The guide, *‘Pastoral Orientations on Climate Displaced People’*, recommends that priests and parish leaders “speak more directly and clearly” about “our reasons for loving and accepting all our brothers and sisters” and for each bishops’ conference to establish a special commission for immigrants. Between 2008 and 2018 more than 250 million people were displaced by environmental disasters, and millions more are increasingly

vulnerable to storm surges and coastal flooding.

Bishop calls for a “just and humane” approach to asylum
The lead bishop for migrants and refugees for the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales called for a “just and humane approach to asylum policy” in March after Home Secretary Priti Patel announced new immigration proposals, saying that, for the first time, people seeking protection as refugees would have their claim assessed based on how they arrive in the UK. Bishop Paul McAleenan said, “what is being suggested ignores the many valid reasons refugees may make a particular journey e.g. being unable to access resettlement schemes, having connections to the UK, experiencing rejection and violence in other European countries.” The bishop urged ‘legal and safe’ routes for migrants, aware that, “those coming through unofficial routes are penalised.” Bishop McAleenan urged that there should be more listening to agencies who have met and listened to migrants.

Lord Deben laments focus on “procreation over creation”
The Rt Hon Lord Deben (John Selwyn Gummer), chair of the UK’s committee on climate change, has told an online gathering that Catholics must take climate change more seriously. His talk, *‘Climate Change: The Gospel Imperative’*, was organised by the Catholic Union on 23 March. He called for Catholics to put pressure on their bishops to place this issue at the centre of the Gospel they preach. The former Conservative MP and environment secretary said: “Creation must be at the heart of the Gospel, but “there are some bishops in Britain from whom I have never heard a word on this topic.” He felt there was “too much focus on sex than creation”, in fact, he suggested, tongue in cheek, “more about procreation than creation”. Lord Deben criticised major fossil fuel companies, such as Exxon Mobile, which have devoted significant time and money to climate denial.
Video at: <https://catholicunion.org.uk/2021/03/webinar-lord-deben/>

Divest your church
Operation Noah is preparing the next global divestment announcement for faith organisations on 17 May. Churches and other faith groups joining the announcement commit to divest any investments in fossil fuel companies within a five-year timeframe and pledge not to invest in fossil fuels in the future.
<https://brightnow.org.uk/>

Scottish Faith Leaders sign COP26 pledge
More than 50 faith leaders have signed the Scottish Churches COP26 Pledge. The Bishops of Edinburgh and Brechin, the Leader of the Iona Community and the Head of Christian Aid Scotland are among the signatories. They agreed to support a just and green recovery by divesting from fossil fuels and investing in a clean energy future.

CAFOD promotes ‘forest’ film
CAFOD has highlighted ‘The Last Forest’ documentary. It offers insight into the life-long struggle of Yanomami leader, Davi Kopenawa Yanomami, as he tries to protect his people and their rainforest home in Brazil’s northern Amazonian state of Roraima. In 2014 Kopenawa visited the UK to raise awareness of the threats indigenous communities face, and support CAFOD’s campaigning work.

No to more nuclear warheads
Church leaders across seven denominations have issued a statement criticising the UK Government’s proposal to increase the UK’s nuclear warheads from 196 to 260. They said, “it is immoral that the UK government is committing resources, which could be spent on the common good of our society, to stockpiling even more weapons.” Bishop Declan Lang of Clifton and Chair of the bishops’ International Department and Bishop William Kenney, auxiliary in Birmingham and the lead bishop on peace and disarmament issues, signed. Ann Farr, the chair of Pax Christi England and Wales said “the increase in nuclear warheads also seriously undermines existing agreements that Britain has made in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to decrease nuclear weapons worldwide”.
<http://christiancnd.org.uk/war-heads>

Action Ideas



A CEE Bill banner outside a church.

Christian groups, such as Green Christian, are supporting the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill (CEE Bill). It asks the UK Government to take responsibility for our fair share of greenhouse gas emissions, to actively restore biodiverse habitats in the UK and to reduce damage to the environment caused by the production, transportation and disposal of the goods we consume. The Bill is supported by over 100 MPs. It provides a framework for action and the current thrust is to get Conservative MPs behind it.

<https://greenchristian.org.uk/press-release-churches-call-mps-to-back-the-climate-and-ecological-emergency-bill/>

CLIMATE SUNDAY

An ecumenical Climate Sunday programme is planned for September. Dimensions include a climate service and commitment as a church community to taking long-term action. <https://greenchristian.org.uk/climate-sunday/>

SEASON OF CREATION

From September 1 to October 4, Christians globally celebrate the Season of Creation. The theme this year is, 'A Home for All'. We are encouraged to pray and engage in community events in order to deepen our relationship with our God, our neighbour and the Earth we share. Some pray, some do hands-on projects, some advocate.

<https://seasonofcreation.org/> and <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/home/our-work/environment/season-of-creation/>

PREPARING FOR COP26 1-12 November

G7 mobilisation in June around the G7 meeting in Cornwall

Climate festivals locally in September.

Ecumenical Climate Sunday Service in Glasgow broadcast on 5 September.

Campaigning focus on the middle weekend 7-8 November
Liturgies on 8 November in Glasgow

To do: Demonstrate public appetite for action

Identify possibilities for action which your MP can take forward, including an end to all use of public money to subsidise fossil fuels.

Campaign: RECLAIM OUR COMMON HOME

Elements include calling on banks to cancel the debt of the world's poorest nations and providing information about the G7 meeting of world leaders in Cornwall in June.

<https://cafod.org.uk/Campaign/Latest-campaigns>

Campaign: JOURNEY TO 2030

Resources for the liturgical year, including the Season of Creation, plus a 'newsroom' in the blog.

<https://journeyto2030.org/>

Campaign with GLOBAL JUSTICE NOW

Radical campaigning addressing the role of the corporate world on issues ranging from the Climate Crisis to Vaccine Apartheid.

<https://www.globaljustice.org.uk/>

NJPN Conference '2021: Life on Earth – moment of truth'

The 42nd annual conference of the National Justice and Peace Network is due to take place 23-25 July 2021 in Derbyshire. It celebrates the fifth anniversary of *Laudato Si'*.

<https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/conference/>

PROTECTING BIODIVERSITY

The Columbans have produced a 'Jubilee for the Earth,' podcast mini-series about the beauty of biodiversity and the threats it faces. It was put together by Wesley Cocozello of the Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach in Washington and brings in insights from Columbans in the 16 countries where we are on mission. Episodes include, 'Nonviolence for the Earth', 'Spirituality of Biodiversity', 'A New Kind of Economy' and 'A New Beginning'. A new study programme to accompany the series and embedded links to each of the six episodes is available to download at: <https://columbancenter.org/jubilee-earth-study-guide>



Read the new report, 'The wailing of God's creatures – Catholic Social Teaching, human activity and the collapse of biological diversity', commissioned to the *Laudato Si'* Research Institute by CIDSE, CAFOD and the Global Catholic Climate Movement. This call to address the climate emergency is extremely important while the world formulates post-pandemic recovery plans to ensure building forward better in the wake of Covid-19. <https://www.cidse.org/2021/03/19/new-report-on-the-unprecedented-loss-of-biodiversity-and-ecological-conversion/>

Resources

Robots, Ethics and the Future of Jobs

Sean McDonagh SSC

Sean's book is timely. Robots are already being used in care homes, to patrol at night, and for 3D printers, and autonomous vehicles. Perhaps the most sinister is the use of drones in remote warfare. There is a "relentless rise of Artificial Intelligence and all kinds of robots". More work should be available for people needing jobs. This book is a big departure for Sean, better known for his work on Ecology and Creation Theology, but he prophesies the future with this topic, as he has with others, and it is a wake-up call. Fifteen million jobs in the UK could be lost through automation and robots. Sean says we cannot stumble into the future with these powerful technologies in an ethics-free environment.

ISBN-10:1788123069

Sean's 2004 book **'The Death of Life'** on the loss of Biodiversity at ISBN-10: 1856074641

On Care for Our Common Home, Laudato Si': The Encyclical of Pope Francis on the Environment with Commentary by Sean McDonagh SSC

An overview of the development of Catholic teaching on the environment, and offers a commentary on the Encyclical 'Laudato Si', the full text of which is given.

ISBN-10: 1626981736

Climate Generation: Awakening to Our Children's Future

Lorna Gold

Addresses the harsh reality of climate change but wraps the message in humanity and practical ways forward. She highlights stories of people who are doing amazing things to tackle the climate crisis.

ISBN-13: 978-1847308412

Burning down the House

Tearfund/Youthscape

This report surveyed 630 young Christians aged 14-19 and found

that nine out of ten Christian young people are concerned about climate change, but just one in ten are confident their church is doing enough about it. Two thirds of respondents said they'd never heard a sermon on climate change. The survey revealed widespread concern for climate change, poverty and social justice. Young people were also taking action, with many reporting recycling, eating less meat, and encouraging their families to do more.

<https://www.youthscape.co.uk/research/burning-down-the-house>

Teach the Future

Young people are calling for action on educating students on climate change and care for our common home. 70% of teachers feel they have not received adequate training to educate students on climate change, its implications for the environment and societies around the world, and how these implications can be addressed. Only 17% of schools mention climate change in core subjects. Only 65% of schools mention climate change in science lessons.

<https://www.teachthefuture.uk/teacher-research>

Post Growth: Life After Capitalism

Tim Jackson

Once we let go of the idea of endless economic growth as our measure of success, what becomes possible? Each chapter has a main character, which embodies the kind of vision of human flourishing that Jackson wants to explore. Wangari Maathai, demonstrates the wisdom of investing prudently in the future rather than exploiting for a quick profit in the present. How do we get around the conundrum that, "those who want change tend not to be in power" while, "those who hold power tend not to want change"? One chapter looks at the social contract and the role of civil disobedience in holding power to account.

Earthbound Books UK and US from 21 May.

A Material Transition

London Mining Network and War on Want



New report calls on the UK government to act on 'green' mineral mining. It exposes the potential widespread environmental destruction and human rights abuses unleashed by the extraction of transition minerals – the raw materials needed for the production of renewable energy technologies. One example would be the mining of Lithium for use in electric cars. It calls on the UK government to critically question resource use in any green recovery plans. The report author, Andy Whitmore, says: "Although we must rapidly transition away from fossil fuels to tackle the climate crisis, we cannot do this by expanding our reliance on minerals, destroying communities and causing environmental destruction. The transition to green energy must respect human rights."

Report at: <https://waronwant.org/resources/a-material-transition>

Money Makes Change

Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility

'Money Makes Change' Bible studies are designed to help exploration of ethical issues around money with small groups or the wider church. You can choose just one or look at all of them as part of a series.

<https://www.eccr.org.uk/money-makes-change-bible-study/>

Catholic Bishops Environment

The website of the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales has a good section on the Environment. Break-down areas include: 'Season of Creation', 'Global Healing', 'Making your Parish green' and 'Theology Resources' at <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/home/our-work/environment/>

VOCATION FOR JUSTICE

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