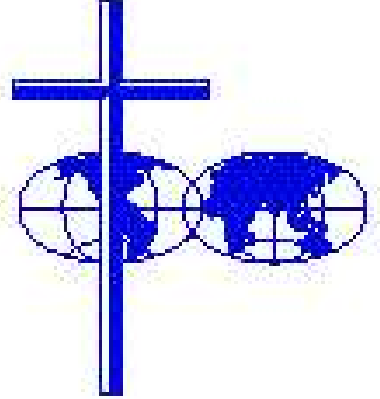


# Vocation for Justice



Winter 2023 Volume 37 No 3

**IN THIS ISSUE:**  
**Pages 6-7 CENTRESPREAD:**  
**'SAVING OUR COMMONS'**

**Page 9 COMPETITION LAUNCH:**  
**'BIODIVERSITY MATTERS'**

## Saving Our Commons

How do we save our commons?

- > Create a home for nature where we live
- > Promote a simple lifestyle
- > Join national campaigns to support nature reserves
- > International advocacy for speedy decarbonisation
- Other?

**COLUMBAN MISSION**

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



The vulnerability of the natural world to human exploitation and insensitivity was highlighted for me this summer during visits to two nature reserves. The first was a peat bog in the Yorkshire Dales which - being preserved from drainage - remains a store of carbon and is home to unique plants such as Blue Moor Grass and Ragged Robin. The second was an Osprey Centre in Scotland's Cairngorm National Park, where a small part of the wildlife-rich Caledonian pineforest which used to cover much of the Highlands is preserved. Two osprey nests on camera were empty during my visit but I did see crested tits, woodpeckers and red squirrels. The dedicated staff, determined to reverse nature loss, wore t-shirts, 'Make Space For Nature'.

Our cover photo shows Columban grounds at our office headquarters in Solihull. Taken in August by our Mission Appeals Coordinator, Helen Dufficy, it illustrates a Columban commitment to maintain a home for nature and implement a three-year plan to plant trees, orchards and hedgerows. A wildflower garden and apiary are planned to protect the vulnerable bee population. Eco-retreats and education days are run in these grounds.

Columbans act locally, as well as think globally.

Globally, we've had a wake up summer. July was the hottest month ever on record and saw extreme weather events on all seven continents. The Washington Post called July "a month packed with weather anomalies that exceeded any definition of normal." These included: China's record temperature of 52.2 Celsius; Antarctic sea ice at record low levels; the heat wave in Europe; record wildfires in Canada; floods in South Asia; and extreme heat in the US and Mexico dubbed the "new abnormal" by the Los Angeles Times. We are in the age of the Anthropocene, when human activity is fuelling environmental crises.

Individuals and organisations acting solely in their own self-interest can overexploit and destroy the natural resources that all of us are entitled to share. These include good air and water quality, land, a stable climate and biodiversity.

The poorest communities in the world are especially vulnerable. Powerful individuals and corporations cannot be relied upon for self-regulation. And we must ask: What part do we each play in supporting a system that encourages infinite growth from finite resources?

Christiana Figueres, the UN Climate diplomat, has suggested that dire news cannot be allowed to paralyse us. Instead, it must motivate us to step up commitment to save our commons. She said in August: "It may seem counter-intuitive to talk about optimism when we are seeing such devastation on the news but we need this now more than ever. None of us individually, but all of us collectively do have the capacity to change the trajectory that we are currently on." A Columban group met her at the Paris Climate Talks of 2015 where faith groups presented her with a petition of nearly two million signatures to urge an agreement at the talks. The energy and commitment at that gathering prompted her tears and she told us that the lobby of faith groups globally could make a difference. An agreement was indeed reached and her focus now is on getting it implemented.

People of vision throughout the world are working towards a paradigm-shattering, dignity-creating, more egalitarian world. There really is no alternative, especially when we consider justice for future generations.

It can be done.

Paris hosting the Olympic Games next summer has prompted a \$1.6billion decade-long cleanup project so that the once heavily polluted River Seine will once again be safe enough to swim in. Now, more than 30 species of fish have returned. It gives us hope that, with sufficient will, UK water companies could clean up our own polluted waterways!

Brazilian president, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, vowed last month to haul the Amazon rainforest out of centuries of violence, economic "plundering" and environmental devastation and into "a new Amazon dream". In power for only six months, Lula has already



*Indigenous person in Brazilian Amazonia*

Caritas Internationalis

overseen a 40% drop in deforestation of the Amazon.

Yet, the peoples of the Global South are facing huge impacts of climate and biodiversity breakdown. They have benefited the least from fossil-industrial society and stand to lose again as their lands are mined for minerals to power high-tech and 'green' systems. The promise of inclusion in progress and rising material comfort is now broken for so many.

So, political and economic powers need civil society to consistently demand they do the right thing for the common good. And the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, highlighted at this year's annual conference of the National Justice and Peace Network of England and Wales, provide global benchmarks.

We must have hope and commitment to save our commons. This issue contains articles by Indian ecologist Vandana Shiva on 'Reclaiming Our Common Home', by CAFOD's Campaign Manager on the rights of farmers to own, sell and save seeds, and by a Columban worker in Fiji who calls for conservation of the ocean and coastal eco-systems. The centrespread gives examples of Church action on 'Saving our Commons'. On page 9 we launch our 2024 Schools Competition, 'Biodiversity Matters' and we urge you to bring it to the attention of young people.

Injustice, violence, and the destruction of life forms and entire living ecosystems of the Earth community today are directly related to humanity's loss of sensitivity related to and connected to our environment, neighbours, and God the Creator. People of faith must stress these links. And we believe God is with us in our mission to uphold the common good. ■

**Ellen Teague**

## Reclaiming Our Common Home

**Vandana Shiva**

***Vandana is an Indian environmental activist and author.***

The path to an ecological civilization is paved by reclaiming the commons — our common home, the Earth, and the commons of the Earth family, of which we are a part. Through reclaiming the commons, we can imagine possibility for our common future, and we can sow seeds of abundance.

In the commons, we care and share — for the Earth and each other. We are conscious of nature's ecological limits, which ensure her share of the gifts she creates goes back to her to sustain biodiversity and ecosystems. We are aware that all humans have a right to air, water, and food, and we feel responsible for the rights of future generations.

Enclosures of the commons, in contrast, are the root cause of ecological crisis and crises of poverty and hunger, dispossession and displacement. Extractivism commodifies for profit what is held in common for sustaining all life.

### **Air is a commons**

We share the air we breathe with all species. Through photosynthesis, plants convert the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and give us oxygen. "I can't breathe" is the cry of the enclosure of the commons of air through the mining and burning of 600 million years' worth of fossilised carbon.

### **Water is a commons**

The planet is 70% water. Our bodies are 70% water. Water is the ecological basis of all life, and in the commons, conservation creates abundance. The plastic water bottle is a symbol of the enclosures of the commons — first by privatising water for extractivism, and then by destroying the land and oceans through resulting plastic pollution.

### **Food is a commons**

Food is the currency of life, from the soil food web, to the biodiversity of plants and animals, insects and microbes, to the trillions of organisms in our gut microbiomes. Hunger is a result of the enclosure of the food commons through fossil fuel-based, chemically intensive industrial agriculture.

### **A History of Enclosure**

The enclosure transformation began in earnest in the 16th century. The powerful privateer-landlords, supported by industrialists, merchants, and bankers, had a limitless hunger for profits. Their hunger fueled industrialism as a process of extraction of value from the land.

Colonialism was the enclosure of the commons on a global scale. When the British East India Company began its de facto rule of India in the mid-1700s, it enclosed our land and forests, food and water, even salt from the sea. Over 200 years, the British extracted an estimated \$45 trillion from India through colonial enclosures of our agrarian economies, pushing tens of millions of peasants into famine and starvation.

Our freedom movement, from the mid-1800s to the mid-1900s, was a movement for reclaiming the commons. When the British established a salt monopoly through the salt laws in 1930, making it illegal for Indians to make salt, Gandhi started the Salt Satyagraha — the civil disobedience movement against the salt laws. He walked to the sea with thousands of people and harvested salt from the sea, saying: Nature gives it for free; we need it for our survival; we will continue to make salt; we will not obey your laws.

### **Expanding Enclosures**

In our times, enclosures have expanded to cover lifeforms and biodiversity. The commons being enclosed today include seeds, information, health and education, energy, and the Earth herself.

The chemical industry is enclosing the commons of our seeds and biodiversity through 'intellectual property rights.' Led by Monsanto (now Bayer) in the 1980s, our biodiversity was declared "raw material" for the biotechnology industry to create "intellectual property" — to own our seeds through patents, and to collect rents and royalties from the peas-

ants who maintained the seed commons.

Reclaiming the commons of our seeds has been my life's work since 1987. Inspired by Gandhi, we started the Navdanya movement. We declared: "Our seeds, our biodiversity, our indigenous knowledge is our common heritage. We receive our seeds from nature and our ancestors. We have a duty to save and share them, and hand them over to future generations in their richness, integrity, and diversity. Therefore we have a duty to disobey any law that makes it illegal for us to save and share our seeds."

I worked with our parliament to introduce Article 3(j) into India's Patent Law in 2005, which recognizes that plants, animals, and seeds are not human inventions, and therefore cannot be patented. Navdanya has since created 150 community seed banks in our movement to reclaim the commons of seed. And our legal challenges to the biopiracy of neem, wheat, and basmati have been important contributions to reclaiming the commons of biodiversity and indigenous knowledge.

### **Partnership, Not Property**

So, too, with water. When French water and waste management company Suez tried to privatise the Ganga River in 2002, we built a water democracy movement to reclaim the Ganga as our commons. Through a Satyagraha against Coca-Cola in 2001, my sisters in Plachimada, Kerala, shut down a Coca-Cola plant and reclaimed water as a commons.

Ecological civilisation is based on the consciousness that we are part of the Earth, not her masters, conquerors, or owners. That we are connected to all life, and that our life is dependent on others — from the air we breathe to the water we drink and the food we eat.

The right to life of all beings is based on interconnectedness - of life and the rights of Mother Earth, of all beings, including all human beings. This is the ecological basis of the commons, and economies based on caring and sharing. ■

*This article was originally printed in YES! Magazine and is reprinted with permission.*



## Seeds are a common good

**Andrea Speranza**

**CAFOD's Campaign Engagement Manager explains how small food producers are struggling to maintain sustainable farming and control over their seeds.**

*"To keep seeds in our own hands is the main thing. Without seeds, being a farmer is not possible..... We should develop relationships and exchange seeds with each other. Diversity is vital because then you have no risks. If one crop is damaged, another crop will survive."*

These are the words of Salina, a small farmer from Bangladesh. Along with millions of other small farmers around the world, Salina is resisting the industrial agricultural model which restricts - and even criminalises - farmers' rights to own, save and sell seeds.

Seeds are the starting point for producing food. For generations, small farmers have freely shared a wide variety of seeds to produce the food that feeds a significant proportion of the world's population. These small farmers are highly efficient too, producing around 35% of global food production on only 12% of agricultural land.

Small-scale agriculture is also vital in reducing extreme poverty. 80% of people living below the global poverty line are based in rural areas. The vast majority depend on agriculture for their livelihoods.

So why can't small farmers always freely use and share their traditional seeds, which God created for the abundance of all?

### **The World Bank's role**

During the past few decades more and more countries - including Ghana, Liberia, Mozambique, Nigeria and Sierra Leone - have introduced laws that limit farmers' choices over which seeds they can access. These restrictive laws have been insisted on by the World Bank in exchange for financial support. But they harm those in most need. As a result, small farmers are facing increasing pressure to buy what is generally known as commercial seeds, from the limited selection produced by big corporations. Seed markets are highly concentrated, with Bayer, Corteva, BASF and ChemChina/Syngenta control-

ling more than 50% of the global commercial seed market.

These same four companies also control more than 60% of global agrochemical sales.

Using their monopolies, they concentrate on producing seeds for crops with large markets - mainly staples such as maize, wheat, soy and rice. This has devastating impacts on crop diversity. Of more than 6,000 edible plant species, cultivated over centuries, just nine crops now account for more than 65% of all crop production. This has led to increased prices, and has significantly reduced farmers' choice, and the resilience of farmers to shocks such as climate change.

### **Diversity and climate resilience**

For thousands of years, diversity has been developed by small farmers growing crops and selecting seeds from the plants that grow best in their fields and their families. Salina explains:

*"Every day in the morning after prayer, I go to the field to harvest my crops for my family to eat, and also to sell. I have food to cook for my family, fresh, organic produce. You can't imagine how good that feels. Compared to the food chemicals produce the taste is so different. It is difficult to explain the difference in taste, but if you eat organic produce it will generally be a little bit sweeter, whereas chemical produce will be sour."*

Similarly, for example, across Africa, the farmer seed system provides around 80% of farmers' seeds. Women often play an important role in these systems, collecting and conserving traditional crop species and ensuring that crops planted contribute to a nutritious and diverse household diet.

The importance of diversity in tackling food security and the climate crisis has also been acknowledged by The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) which has stated that access to diverse seeds is a key strategy to

counter the risk of lower food production as climate change impacts become more severe.

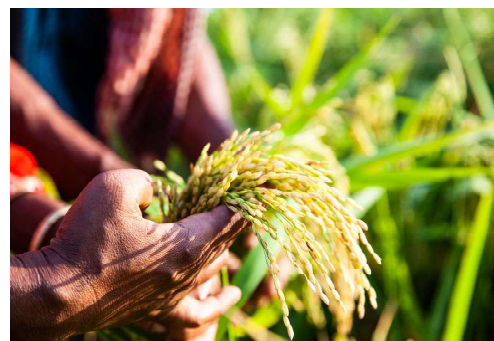
### **Hope and solidarity**

Seeds are also a symbol of hope and transformation in our Catholic faith. Salina's work of saving and protecting traditional seeds is inspiring. It may be a small step, but it is transformational and a reminder that our work for change can come in any size or shape.

Salina has written to the World Bank calling for the protection of the rights of small farmers like herself to use their own varieties of seeds. And over 400 parishes in England and Wales have added their names to support her letter.

In October, CAFOD's partner in Bangladesh, UBING, which works with Salina, will head to the World Bank's annual meeting in Morocco to signal that the Catholic community in the UK stands in solidarity with the rights of small farmers.

Bishop Tom Neylon of Liverpool Archdiocese states: "I support CAFOD's **Fix the Food System** campaign because it's highlighting the situation that small-scale farmers around the world are



CAFOD

increasingly finding themselves in. Caught in a huge power imbalance with large agribusiness, even their rights to their own seeds passed down from generation to generation are being threatened. This can't be right, and I urge parishes in England and Wales to sign small farmer Salina's letter to the World Bank, as I have done. This is a very simple and important activity."

Our faith-filled actions are also like seeds, bearing fruits of change in our world. ■

<https://cafod.org.uk/campaign/fix-the-food-system>

# All life began in the sea

## Tevita Naikasowalu

### ***Tevita is the Columbans' Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Co-ordinator in Fiji, Pacific.***

*'In the beginning, God created the heavens and the Earth. Earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep, and the spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters' (Gen1:1-2).*

Biodiversity is the variety of life on Earth and includes microbes, fungi, plants, animals and humans. According to science, the evolution of life on Earth from early cells was made possible through various relationships.

I interpret the term biodiversity in the Fijian context and language. Bio, meaning life, is *bula* in Fijian and diversity reflects the unique variety of life-forms in relationship with one another, *veiwekani*. So, biodiversity to me as an indigenous Fijian is 'life relationship,' or *bula veiwekani*.

Over millennia, the least in creation has always been subjected to injustices and cruelty due to people's failure to know, see and understand the specific roles, responsibilities and contribution each plays to the wellbeing of the whole.

*"For it is the least among you all who is the greatest," (Luke 9: 48).* In this passage from Luke's gospel, Jesus welcomed the little boy, He taught the disciples to respect everyone, to listen, learn and live with one another, whilst paying reverence to God. When I think of this passage from Luke's gospel, what comes to mind is the whole of God's creation, human and other than human, and the life sustaining relationships that keep everything going.

During the *Age of Discovery*, explorers, traders and colonizers were empowered by the *Doctrine of Discovery* and set out to conquer so-called savage and heathen lands. They came to our Oceania region and other parts of the world to claim them for King and Crown and for their own glory. As a result, Indigenous people were subjected to harsh treatment and slavery simply because they were viewed to be different and uncivilized.

Their ways of life, values, traditions, customs, art, craft, spirituality, scientific knowledge (now called traditional knowledge), economies and social structures were disregarded. This was and is the experience of my people, the indigenous people of the world.

When new lands are used for development and construction, an untold number of organisms perish as lands and trees are extracted, processed and removed. This also is the case for our rivers and oceans when minerals and other substances are extracted for use and remaining parts of the system are treated as mere waste and rubbish.

The extractive industry is rapidly increasing in the Oceania region and is very much after the sands of our shores, especially black sand. Black sand is common in precious coastal ecosystems where the river, foreshore and sea interact in dynamic relationships. Coastal ecosystems contain vital mangrove forests and are sanctuaries for fish, animal and bird life.

Right now, black sand mining is happening at two of Fiji's biggest rivers. Black sand mining at the Ba River has temporarily been suspended and at the Sigatoka River, black sand mining is in its explorative stages. We are working hard with our environmental networks to stop this massive destruction.

The union between life on dry land and the deep ocean happens at the foreshore. The foreshore is a bridge between land and water, where animals, fish and humans are in contact on a daily basis. The foreshore is like a mother's womb because it is source of life, economy, fun and nourishment to all on planet Earth.



Tevita Naikasowalu

Seagrasses are the foreshore grasslands, a pasture to sea animals and the main photosynthesis production area. Seagrasses also shelter mollusks, fish, squid, and little crustaceans, and often serve as foraging grounds for sea turtles.

Sharks and turtles have been patrolling the ocean for millions of years and help keep seagrass ecosystems in balance. One of nature's greatest and most underappreciated plants for storing carbon and battling climate change are seagrasses. Whilst storing carbon, seagrasses give out oxygen, without which oceans would be in serious trouble.

Globally, there are 72 different species of seagrass. Seagrasses are even more important to humans in some places than coral reefs.

To protect the Earth, we must protect our ocean. In Fiji and the whole of Oceania it is extremely important for us to preserve coastal ecosystems because they sustain our life. We are stewards who must continue our sacred duty. Our job is very simple; we need to just let coastal ecosystems be, and they will continue to provide for and look after you and me. ■



A sea shell clings to sea grass on a beach in Fiji.



## World Faiths to run pavilion at COP28

Faiths are being formally recognised as essential contributors to the December 2023 United Nations COP28 climate conference in Dubai. The UN Environment Programme has encouraged partnerships with faith-based organisations to host the first faiths pavilion at a climate Conference of Parties (COP). This space will highlight the role of religious perspectives and values in addressing the climate crisis. Pope Francis met privately with the Secretary-General of the Muslim Council of Elders and the Special Representative of the United Arab Emirates Presidency in May to discuss the crucial contribution of faith communities. Faiths ran a pavilion at the December 2022 UN COP conference on Biodiversity. <https://www.biodiversity.faith/events>



## New Church Alliance on Forests and Indigenous Peoples

The newly formed Ecclesial Networks Alliance met in Rome in July. Ecclesial representatives of the indigenous peoples of the Amazon joined representatives of the Church from Latin America, Africa, Asia, Europe and North America to look at defending tropical forests and their inhabitants from mining and land grabbing. They acknowledged that forests are vital for Earth's climate. Cardinal Michael Czerny, prefect of the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, was present. The Alliance aims to have a voice in the process of the UN's Conference of Parties – COPs.

<https://www.cidse.org/2023/08/02/networks-alliance-for-integral-ecology/>

## Pilgrimages for the Planet

In its latest act of public witness, Christian Climate Action (CCA) organised pilgrimages around England in early September, focusing on creation and the climate. In London they walked along various parts of the Thames path, picking up the theme from Amos highlighted in Pope Francis' message for the Season of Creation. There were two walks to the Thames Barrier, with the one from the Cutty Sark being led by Columban Sister Kate Midgley. The walks included times for discussion, reflection, mindful silence, singing, and attending to the landscapes and places along the way. In the North-West they walked around Port Sunlight River Park, which is on reclaimed land. From its construction by Lever's, through use as landfill, to the creation of this biodiverse green space, focusing on how we have shaped the landscape and how can we take responsibility for our waste.



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



## Campaigning for the Commons in Korea

For over three years, Laudato Si Movement campaigners in Korea have lobbied office workers on the streets of Seoul every Friday to alert them to environmental issues. Efforts are concentrated on:

**Calling for a plastic free world.** Office workers are asked to avoid single use disposable drinks containers. Columban Fr Pat Cunningham campaigns for supermarkets to stop packaging fruit and vegetables in single-use plastic containers.

**Ethical Investment** in renewables rather than fossil fuels. Urging the government and banks to stop investing in a mammoth fossil-fuelled power plant near to the city of Samcheok.

**Japan's release of contaminated water into the ocean.** Almost 70% of Koreans oppose the release of contaminated water from the damaged Fukushima nuclear power plant into the ocean that started in August.

## 'The Letter' raises awareness of climate action

A film which tells the story of a journey to Rome of frontline leaders to discuss the encyclical letter *Laudato Si'* with Pope Francis. Film makers brought together a small group of people - a climate refugee from Senegal, an indigenous leader from the Brazilian Amazon, a young climate activist from India and conservationists from Hawaii who study the ocean, particularly coral. 'The Letter' is available for community screenings. <https://www.theletterfilm.org/>

## Diocesan environmental action

In the UK, the Laudato Si' Centre at Wardley Hall in Salford Diocese is embarking on "an exciting new chapter" following extensive work to its beautiful woodland area. This has been transformed into an imaginative forest school and community resource to help teach about the environment and how to care for it. <https://laudatosicentre.org.uk/>



## Laudato Si Action Platform

The Laudato Si' Action Platform, an initiative of the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, is inspired by Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si'*. It equips the Church to achieve real and lasting solutions to the ecological crisis and links in with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. The program supports participants to develop plans to accomplish 'actions to protect our common home'. Youth movements which have responded include the Don Bosco Green Alliance and The Economy of Francesco, as well as youth in the Laudato Si Movement.

<https://laudatosiactionplatform.org/>

## Refugee Advocacy

UK Churches have been at the forefront of challenging the government's hostile policies towards refugees and reminding that refugees need a home. The lead Catholic bishop for migrants and refugees, Bishop Paul McAleenan, has said the Church will continue to "love the stranger". When the Illegal Migration Act became law, he said: "As a Church, we will continue to welcome those seeking sanctuary here and call for the expansion of safe routes. <https://columbans.co.uk/justice-peace/12747/refugee-week-vigil-grow-your-compassion/>



'Build bridges not walls'

## Church divestment from Fossil Fuels

The Church of England has made the decision to divest from fossil fuels. In June, the Anglican Church Commissioners and Pensions Board announced it would pull all financial investments from gas and oil companies because of burning fossil fuels is driving climate change. Operation Noah paid tribute to local church campaigners: "Divestment campaigners have cycled hundreds of miles, prayed outside places of worship, circulated letters, submitted motions and pleaded with church leaders to stop funding fossil fuels; the world changed thanks to their efforts." Eight Anglican bishops took part in a 'No Faith in Fossil Fuels' protest at Westminster on 21 April 2023. <https://operationnoah.org/>

## General Election: Nature 2030

Green Christian and A Rocha are among 70+ organisations supporting a call for political leaders to make five General Election pledges to save nature. Politicians in the UK have talked a lot about the importance of protecting nature but they are failing to act. 'Nature 2030' calls on all Party manifestos to plan to stop nature's decline.

Individuals can co-sign an open letter to Party leaders asking them to commit to including these five actions into their manifestos:

### A pay rise for nature -

Doubling the nature-friendly farming budget to pay for an increase in ambitious agroecological action and largescale nature restoration.

### Make polluters pay -

Ensuring that businesses have nature and climate plans in place and setting new duties to drive private investment in species and habitats' recovery.

**More space for nature -** To halt the decline of wildlife, more places are needed for nature. These areas must be "bigger, better and more joined up". The Government has already committed to protect 30% of land and sea for nature and this must be implemented.

**Creating more green jobs -** Delivering widescale habitat restoration and creating green jobs in urban, rural and coastal habitats and in species recovery through a National Nature Service.

### A right to a healthy environment -

A new Environmental Rights Bill in the UK would highlight a human right to clean air and water and access to nature.

<https://www.wcl.org.uk/nature-2030-campaign-launches.asp>



## Learning from Migrants in Calais

**Kirsty**

***Kirsty, a sixth form student from a Catholic school in Hallam Diocese, travelled to Calais in July with other young people and teachers. The four-day visit was part of a programme exploring the 'crisis of welcome' for refugees at our borders. It was led by the Columbans and the Diocese of Hallam. She writes:***

Before volunteering in Calais, I had an idea of what it would be like: what I would hear, see and learn. These preconceived ideas were mostly incorrect. Because of this, I firstly urge everyone to look into working with refugees - particularly those intending to cross the Channel.

One refugee told us: "Why would we fight when we've all come here to flee war and conflict?" A common belief is that the camps are full of violence and separation between groups. This is in fact a complete juxtaposition of the truth. I was overwhelmed by the camaraderie and community spirit all around me. The refugees shared in each other's hopes and aspirations, despite their different beliefs, faiths and nationalities. Before listening to their stories, I didn't understand quite how difficult and long a venture it was. I heard numerous stories of journeys of up to 10 years just to get to Calais, making it abundantly clear that the decision to leave their homes was not made lightly and was out of necessity.

As volunteers with Care4Calais we helped to fix bikes, mend clothes and shoes, exchange friendship bracelets, teach English, make hot drinks, play games, litter pick, give out leaflets and distribute donated items. Notably, many of those we saw still have great pride for their nations (which they represented with bracelets in the colours of their respective flags). Many of them wish to be educated in order to earn money that they can then invest back into their communities. These are innovators, activists, problem solvers and leaders who were brave enough to stand against injustice. They would benefit England's workforce, if treated as our equals.

Our time spent volunteering was always followed by time for reflection. Before the day started, we

shared our hopes and fears for the day. This would be followed by two later reflections. One was a debrief with the wider Care4Calais group, to share stories that touched us and follow up with questions. Then later - as a smaller group - we gathered to share what we learned and reflect in prayer. Similarly, we spent time with facts and statistics which gave details of the Channel crossings.

Too often legislation is set without being critiqued empathetically. Many of those seeking refuge will go through a painstaking process to be recognised as an asylum seeker. Many will never reach this status and are dismissed back to danger because of minute technicalities that shouldn't matter when a human being is in need. People are turned away for being presumed a different age to what they claim, though this can't be proved. Additionally, it's easy to mix up details of your life after hours of interviews; however, human flaws are not often accepted in the process of seeking sanctuary.

The Western world is good at shining a light on humanitarian issues for very brief spurts of time.

We then have a social media hashtag and collect donations to be sent in aid. Despite this being beneficial in raising awareness and helping refugees in the short term, the public outcry ends in the blink of an eye. It becomes too easy for the government to once again ignore those in need. The shoes, clothes, tents etc. that we send are slashed, broken and burned consistently in police raids.

The only way we can cause long term change is by advocating for it. This is more crucial than ever with the new Illegal Migration Act. This Act states that any refugee entering the UK illegally will be detained and removed back to their homeland or a third-party country. We need our communities to rally like the migrants do and refuse to be ignored in the face of a gross human rights violations. It's crucial that we hold politicians accountable as it is policies and laws that we need to change. Refugees are not criminals to be locked away on barges. Refugees are not deserving of being isolated and displaced. Refugees are not suspects to be interrogated endlessly. They are people searching for peace. Why can't we grant them this? ■

As the Illegal Migration Act became law in July, the lead Catholic bishop in England and Wales for migrants and refugees, Bishop Paul McAleenan, reiterated his call for the expansion of safe routes. He urged the UK government "to redouble its efforts to tackle factors such as conflict, persecution, and climate change that force people to flee their homes".



*Kirsty's group with James Trewby at the Migrants' Memorial in Dover.*



**SCHOOLS MEDIA COMPETITION 2024**

Columban Missionaries invite students aged 13-18 to submit an original piece of writing or image on the theme:

**BIODIVERSITY MATTERS**

Explore Biodiversity, which humanity relies on for health, food and well-being.

**DEADLINE FOR ENTRIES IS SATURDAY 17 FEBRUARY 2024**

For entry details:  
[www.columbancompetition.com](http://www.columbancompetition.com)

**WRITTEN PRIZES**  
• 1<sup>ST</sup> £500  
• 2<sup>ND</sup> £250  
• 3<sup>RD</sup> £150

**IMAGE PRIZES**  
• 1<sup>ST</sup> £500  
• 2<sup>ND</sup> £250  
• 3<sup>RD</sup> £150

**COLUMBAN MISSIONARIES BRITAIN**

We are looking for students in Britain and Ireland (aged 13-18 inclusive) to submit an original piece of writing or an original image on the theme: **BIODIVERSITY MATTERS**.

**The deadline for entries is Saturday 17 February 2024**  
**All information at: [www.columbancompetition.com](http://www.columbancompetition.com)**

#### WHAT SHOULD ARTICLES/IMAGES BE ABOUT?

This competition invites young people to explore Biodiversity, which humanity relies on for health, food and well-being. We are looking for articles and images that demonstrate an awareness and understanding of the issue of Biodiversity and spotlight people, communities and/or organisations trying to make the world a better place for everyone by building a sustainable future.

To give some examples: If inspired by Pope Francis, create an image/article showing how a school is conserving a local habitat in line with his teaching in the Church teaching document **Laudato Si'**. Or create an article/image about valuing other species in a local community, country and/or internationally.

*Pope Francis has told us that “because of us, thousands of species will no longer give glory to God ... We have no such right” (Laudato Si' #33).*

#### LiveSimply Award

CAFOD reports that 37 schools have achieved the LiveSimply award over the past year. This sees schools committing to live simply, sustainably and in solidarity with the world's poorest communities. The award is achieved when a school puts their faith into action and includes activities such as setting up eco clubs or fundraising and campaigning.

There are also now 444 CAFOD clubs in Catholic Primary Schools, which help pupils to put Catholic Social Teaching into action.

CAFOD provides a range of free resources and activities for primary and secondary schools, this includes lesson plans and assembly ideas, as well as ways for children and young people to get involved in campaigning.

<https://cafod.org.uk/schools>.





*Columban team at the National Justice and Peace Conference in July, which looked at the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.*

## UK failing on climate targets

The UK government has been slammed by its own climate advisers for their slow pace in meeting its 'net zero' greenhouse gas emissions target and backtracking on fossil fuel commitments. Government backing for new oil and coal projects show that the UK has lost its leadership on climate issues.

In its recent annual report the Climate Change Committee described government efforts to scale up climate action as "worryingly slow".

Bishop John Arnold of Salford, lead bishop on the environment, said "the June heat record is a clear indication that Climate Change is directly affecting the UK and the Bishops' Conference will continue to lobby the Government on various environmental issues."

## Migrants and Refugees' Sunday

The World Day of Migrants and Refugees will be celebrated on Sunday 24 September. Pope Francis has offered a message on the theme, 'Free to choose whether to migrate or to stay'. It echoes many of the principles found in the document on refugees and migrants published earlier in 2023 by the bishops of England and Wales, 'Love the Stranger'.

## Christians remember bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki

Bishop Nicholas Hudson joined the Pax Christi vigil and stall outside Westminster Cathedral on Nagasaki Day, 9 August. Michael Mears' play 'The Mistake', about the Hiroshima bombing, will tour England and Wales from September.

<https://paxchristi.org.uk/>



*Bishop Nicholas Hudson with Pax Christi's Andrew Jackson.*

US Archbishops of Seattle and Santa Fe, who visited Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August, have announced an agreement with the bishops of Nagasaki and Hiroshima to work together on concrete actions to create a "world without nuclear weapons," and they call for others to join them.

## Peace Message on AI

Artificial intelligence (AI) is the theme for the annual message that Pope Francis has released for the

World Day of Peace on 1 January. It acknowledges that AI is "having a rapidly increasing impact on human activity, personal and social life, politics and the economy." It addresses fears that it has "disruptive possibilities". However, the Pope also feels that AI "may be at the service of humanity and the protection of our common home."

## Columbans against arms trade

The Columban Justice, Peace and Ecology Team attended street protests outside the DSEI Arms Fair in London during early September. DSEI stands for Defence and Security Equipment International Arms Fair, held at Docklands. These included a walk during a 'No Faith in War Day' and a silent candlelight vigil on 11 September, both with Pax Christi England and Wales.

Columbans also supported a walking pilgrimage from Oxford to the Excel Centre in London. Its aim was to walk for peace in protest against the arms fair, and against the British government's complicity in the arms trade.

## Laudato Si' Part 2

Pope Francis has announced he is writing a second part of his **Laudato Si'** encyclical to update it with "current issues", particularly climate change.



## Season of Creation: Working “for peace with Earth”

The Season of Creation is a month-long prayerful observance that calls on the planet's 2.2 billion Christians to pray and care for God's creation. It's a time to reflect on our relationship with the environment — not just “distant” nature, but, crucially, the place where we live — and the ways in which our lifestyles and decisions as a society can endanger both the natural world and those inhabiting it, both humans and other creatures.

It runs from 1 September to 4 October, the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of ecology beloved by many Christian denominations.

This year's resources ‘Let Justice and Peace Flow’ can be downloaded. The symbol is ‘A Mighty River’. Prayer services, prayers, sample flyers, bulletin inserts, and the official Season of Creation social media channels, are offered online. Columban Missionaries have been involved in the production.

Faith communities are urged to engage with national representatives who influence global meetings such as the UN COPs on Climate and Biodiversity. The UK government could be urged, “to fulfil financial commitments to loss and damage and to biodiversity.” Also, “to work towards reaching binding global agreements that eliminate the use of fossil fuels and achieve a fair and equitable energy transition.”

### Season of Creation 2023

#### - Catholic Liturgical Guide:

<https://nonviolencejustpeace.net/2023/08/05/read-the-2023-season-of-creation-catholic-liturgical-guide-now/>

### Season of Creation 2023 webinars Scottish Laity Network

Details and registration at: <https://forms.gle/7PtdpProL8MFDPga9> and see: <https://scottishlaitynetwork.org.uk/>

**Laudato Si Action Platform:** <https://laudatosiactionplatform.org/>

## Catholic Nonviolence Days of Action 2023

**Pat Gaffney**

This is the fourth year that the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative, a project of Pax Christi International, invites communities around the world to explore nonviolence in action and to commit themselves to living a nonviolent life.

The theme this year is ‘*Blessed are the feet of those who bring nonviolence*’ with the aim of learning about and showing solidarity with a number of nonviolent movements. At the close of his 2019 World Peace Day message, Pope Francis reminded us that, “*day by day, the Holy Spirit prompts in us ways of thinking and speaking that can make us artisans of justice and peace.*” In our plans for this year we lift-up some of these artisans for peace.

The Days will be held between 21 September (International Day of Peace) and 2 October (International Day of Nonviolence and Gandhi's birthday) when people are invited to pray and reflect on the Vow of *Nonviolence*, its meaning and invitation, at personal and community level.

A core solidarity action during the days is to find out more about one or more of these Pax Christi partner organisations:

**South Sudan Council of Churches:** They faithfully continue in tragic times to support initiatives of reconciliation and recently hosted the visit of Pope Francis and the Archbishop of Canterbury.

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

**Serpaj, Mexico:** Offers training and support in nonviolence for community groups facing injustice and hardship, empowering people to action for change. [www.serpajmx.org](http://www.serpajmx.org)

**Pax Christi Germany** is this year celebrating 75 years of peace work. Its disarmament programme challenges the expansion of NATO, nuclear arms and the arms trade. [www.paxchristi.de/](http://www.paxchristi.de/) and [www.aktivgewaltfrei.de](http://www.aktivgewaltfrei.de)

**DHUMA, Human Rights and Environmental Organisations, Peru,** set up to defend the rights of the Aymara, Quechua peoples and Mother Earth, They accompany, train, provide legal and technical environmental advice.

[www.derechoshumanospuno.org.pe](http://www.derechoshumanospuno.org.pe)

**Miriam College, Centre for Peace Education, Philippines.** Training young people in particular to become peacemakers and peace educators. They have developed approaches and resources for schools and families.

[www.mc.edu.ph/cpe](http://www.mc.edu.ph/cpe)

The Days of Action align with other projects: the Week of Prayer for Peace in Palestine and Israel, with its theme, *No Place to lay my head* [<https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/materials-for-world-week-for-peace-in-palestine-and-israel-16-23-september-2023>], and the Season of Creation's theme *Let Justice and Peace Flow*. [<https://seasonofcreation.org>].

These are all opportunities for highlighting the place and power of nonviolence around the world.

See Pax Christi England and Wales website <https://paxchristi.org.uk/resources/nonviolence-in-action/> ■

Pat Gaffney is a member of the Executive Committee of the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative.



## Building a Caring Community Activity Pack,

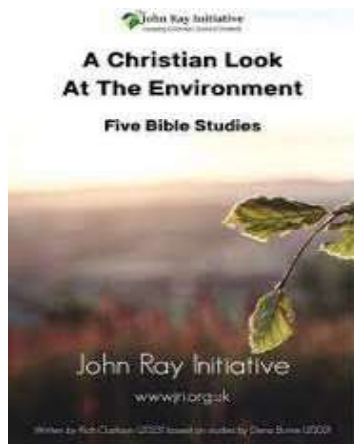
### *Journey to 2030*

Uses integral ecology as a lens for assessing and strengthening parish/school mission.  
<https://journeyto2030.org/poster-activity/>

## A Christian Look at the Environment: Five Bible Studies *John Ray Initiative*

This series of bible studies have been written for the John Ray Initiative by Revd. Rich Clarkson. It draws on both theological and scientific insight to help groups and churches think about what a Christian approach to environmental issues might look like. **These are an ideal set of group studies for the Season of Creation or for a Lent Course, but could be used at any time.**

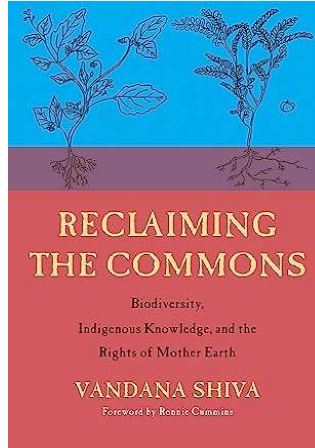
Download at: <https://jri.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/JRI-Bible-Studies-updated-2023.pdf>



## Reclaiming the Commons: Biodiversity, Traditional Knowledge, and the Rights of Mother Earth *Vandana Shiva*

Lays out the scientific, legal, political, and cultural struggle to defend the sovereignty of biodiversity and indigenous knowledge. Vandana articulates what is at stake in the battle between “two paradigms”, that of an age-old system based on local community rights, and the over-reach of global corporations

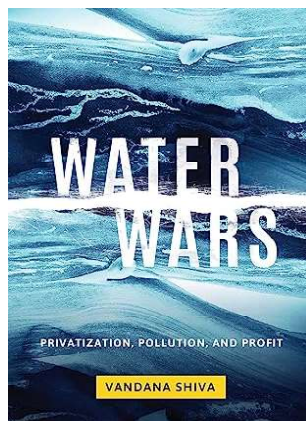
seeking invasion and control of local systems, notably food and agriculture.  
 ISBN-0907791786



## Water Wars: Privatization, Pollution, and Profit *Vandana Shiva*

Vandana details the severity of the global water shortage, calling the water crisis, “the most pervasive, most severe, and most invisible dimension of the ecological devastation of Earth.” She exposes environmental destruction and the disenfranchisement of the world’s poor as they are stripped of rights to a precious common good. She reveals how many of the most important conflicts of our time, most often camouflaged as ethnic wars or religious wars, are in fact conflicts over scarce but vital natural resources. *Water Wars* warns that water privatization threatens cultures and livelihoods worldwide.

ISBN-1623170729



## Robots, Ethics and the Future of Jobs

### *Sean McDonagh SSC*

Sean’s book is timely. There is a “relentless rise of Artificial Intelligence and all kinds of robots” and more regulation is recommended, particularly regarding large tech corporations. He feels more work should be available for people needing jobs. This book 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

## Challenging Poverty in Britain

Challenge Poverty Week in England and Wales - 16-22 October - takes the theme, ‘Dignity for all: a more hopeful future.’ It looks at how to find lasting solutions to poverty. Recent polling shows that almost 90% of people across the UK say it’s important that more is done to tackle growing poverty. A Challenge Poverty Week Toolkit is available at: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1E\\_tCqmk5iRyIDtgLm-iYOBP4LZNTcYht/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1E_tCqmk5iRyIDtgLm-iYOBP4LZNTcYht/view)

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Receive updates, news, stories and reflections by Columban Missionaries direct to your email, including a special focus on a Justice, Peace or Ecology theme six times a year. Scan the QR code or visit: [www.columbans.co.uk/enewsletter](http://www.columbans.co.uk/enewsletter)



## VOCATION FOR JUSTICE

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*Vocation for Justice* is a publication of the Missionary Society of St. Columban (Maynooth Mission to China) Reg.Charity No.221594. It is produced three times a year. Names will be added to the mailing list on request.