

Justice & Peace Assembly 2017

Am I a Good Neighbour? Globalisation and the Fair Society

The event was billed as a day of inspiring talks, challenging debate and lively 'marketplace' activity and once again it lived up to that! Following two excellent talks from Fr Augusto Zampini Davies and Jenny Sinclair, there were opportunities to network and learn more about various initiatives including the diocesan response to the Refugee Crisis. There was great deal interest in our Fairtrade stall, selling goods from marginalised producers and farmers in the developing world. It also offered information on becoming a Fairtrade parish.



Our speakers Fr Augusto, Bishop Richard and Jenny Sinclair

Many participants described the day as 'motivating and enjoyable'. The quality of the speakers was also much appreciated. The Assembly was held at DABCEC in Crawley on the 28 January and had approximately 160 attendees. It opened and closed with prayer led by Fr Kevin Dring, Priest Adviser to the J&P Commission.

Setting the scene, Bishop Richard reflected on the Year of Mercy and shared his concerns following some extraordinary events in the UK and abroad over the last twelve months. Quoting the Pope's apostolic letter concluding the Year of Mercy, he encouraged us to read *Misericordia et Misera*' (Mercy and Misery), and congratulated the audience for gathering to celebrate the great work that is ongoing in the diocese.

After Bishop Richard came Fr Augusto. Fr Augusto is CAFOD's theological adviser and trained as a moral theologian in Argentina. He is an Honorary Fellow at several universities and a regular contributor to mainstream and Catholic media on Pope Francis and Catholic Social Teaching. He has recently conducted a series of international workshops on the encyclical *Laudato Si'*, in Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, Colombia, Bangladesh, Kenya and England.

In an inspiring talk he connected development and justice with the socio-ecological degradation by drawing on the major themes of *Laudato Si'* (On Care for our Common Home). He explained the Christian notion of 'neighbour' using the Book of Genesis and the Parable of the Good Samaritan. This was the foundation of the global solidarity which Pope Francis is calling us to in *Laudato Si*.

Laudato Si' was described as a 'love letter' to all and an urgent call to tackle the global human and ecological crisis. With an emphasis on integral human development and the interconnectedness of the 'Cry of the earth' and the 'Cry of the poor', Fr Augusto shared thoughts on how we are all part of the problem, but also the solution. He concluded by urging all to be inspired and challenged by Laudato Si', renewing our understanding of 'stewardship' and commitment to the common good.

The final speaker of the morning was Jenny Sinclair. As the founder and director of Together for the Common Good (T4CG), Jenny aims to bring the principle of the Common Good alive, in actively encouraging people to work together despite their differences. T4CG has developed into a movement engaging across different church traditions, as well as other faiths and non-religious organisations and is inspired by the unlikely partnership between her late father, David Sheppard (Anglican Bishop of Liverpool) and Derek Worlock (Catholic Archbishop of Liverpool). They worked together for twenty years, using reconciliation as a means of building relationships in a time of polarisation and division.

Jenny focused on a more local approach to the theme of the day. Due to the recent presidential elections and the seismic political events in Europe over the last year, Jenny was concerned she may have way too much to talk about! She looked at how we live together with our immediate neighbours in a divided country. Reflecting on the mission of the church, and her personal mission and vocation, she highlighted our responsibility to create communities, based on the common good, by drawing on the influence of Catholic Social Teaching and rooted in the Trinity.

In a challenging talk Jenny stressed the importance of building relationships, trust and wise dialogue with those we disagree with, creating spaces where all can feel heard.

We had a tremendous number of exhibitors which helped to create a lively buzz during the networking marketplace sessions. These included:-

- CAFOD
- Carbon Credentials
- Eastbourne Network
- Friends of the Holy Land
- Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group
- Global Justice Now
- The Medaille Trust
- The National Justice and Peace Network (NJPN)
- Pax Christi
- Shared Interest
- The St Vincent de Paul Society (SVP)

After lunch our speakers took questions, and then representatives from nine organisations gave a five minute 'pitch.' This proved stimulating and enjoyable and a thirty second Countdown clock ensured no-one ran over time. As ever, Fairtrade did brisk business, over £500 worth of sales, and a stall promoting the diocesan environmental group proved popular too.

In the final session Aidan Cantwell and Mary Jane Burkett, joint leaders for the diocesan response to the refugee crisis gave an update. Aidan outlined the impact of the autumn newsletter with further donations coming in; he explained how the 'Migrant Fund' is being spent. He told the audience that 'momentum is building' and the focus this year is to support, promote and fund local organisations working with destitute migrants. Also, to help develop new schemes to enable parishes to fund accommodation, that's in desperate need.

Mary-Jane then gave some insightful stories from the work of Voices in Exile. Voices provided asylum and refugee casework support for 129 cases last year. Voices has extended its destitution service to Hastings and now see more clients accessing support (£10 per week) and the foodbank (average 37 people in December). She explained that the volunteers and mentoring scheme, funded by the diocese, continues to develop.

Donations received on the day went to the diocesan migrant fund. **There were many resources to take away and for those unable to attend, recordings and presentations are now available on the diocesan website.**

If you would like to learn more about this day or other Justice & Peace initiatives please contact Aidan Cantwell, our Adviser, t 01293 651154 e aidan.cantwell@dabnet.org

