

Archdiocese of Southwark
Commission for
Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation



Autumn Assembly 2015

The Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) Autumn Assembly was held on 17 October in London, Romero House, and supported by CAFOD.

Since 17 October is observed by the UN as International Day for Eradication of Poverty, we chose to base our Autumn Assembly around the theme "Can We Eradicate Poverty?"

We had four main speakers, Heidi Chow from Global Justice Now, Sarah Croft from CAFOD, Fr. Richard Finn from the Dominican Priory of St. Michael the Archangel and Canon Giles Fraser who chatted with Alison Gelder.

After the four speakers, there was a brief panel discussion that included Alison Gelder, Fr. Richard Finn, Sarah Croft and Pat Gaffney from Pax Christi. They answered questions from the audience, which related to the topics covered earlier during the day. The outcome of the panel discussion was that we should widen the definition or types of poverty and value empathy and solidarity with those in poverty.

Food Sovereignty – Heidi Chow from Global Justice Now

Heidi Chow spoke on Food Sovereignty, the challenges faced by small farmers, especially in relation to the Corporate Companies and their alarming growing influence in Africa.

For more information, please click on the link below, that also gives access to a short video on Food Sovereignty.

<http://www.globaljustice.org.uk/blog/2015/oct/16/food-sovereignty-it-just-makes-sense>

Food Sovereignty is a framework that assists in the production and distribution of food, and that recognises food as a human right. It values food producers and their knowledge and expertise. It helps build and support communities that in effect have control over their own food and the way it is produced, traded and consumed.



Food Sovereignty is a global network of farmers, growers, consumers and activists.

Large businesses dominate and control the food business. Due to their size, they are able to control the complete food chain that includes producing, processing, marketing, distribution and ultimately consumer habits. They are able to slowly edge out the smaller players and ultimately have a kind of a monopoly in the market where they operate.

Global Justice Now seeks to support the small owner in a variety of ways. Their methods recognise the local knowledge and expertise. They encourage their farmers to avoid the use of herbicides by encouraging traditional methods, which are not only more climate-friendly but also more healthy.

Photograph:

Heidi Chow (left) with Rosalind Shea

Climate change and poverty

Sarah Croft - CAFOD

When Jesus shared the story of the Good Samaritan the message was simple: a neighbour is someone who behaves with compassion, who reaches out to those in need; one who heals and restores. We're called to be good neighbours, not just to those close to us, but to anyone who needs our help. And we're asked to love our neighbours, just as we love ourselves.

Right now, we and our neighbours – near and far – are in the midst of a crisis. Climate change is the single biggest threat to reducing poverty that exists today.

Whether it's extreme weather destroying entire communities or unpredictable seasons for farmers leaving millions hungry, its undoing years of CAFOD's work to improve people's lives.

And ultimately it's the poorest people with the least safety nets who suffer most from the effects. Ninety percent of people who die in disasters live in developing countries and four in ten of the people most vulnerable to a changing climate are already surviving on the edge of subsistence.

Scientists say, with 95 per cent certainty, that human activity is the main cause of climate change; so we all have a responsibility to care for creation. We're called to behave in a neighbourly way towards the earth itself.

In September 2014, CAFOD launched the climate change campaign One Climate One World. We have been working with the catholic community to ask politicians to take strong action to tackle climate change and to prevent it push people further into poverty.

Since the campaign launched we have started to make progress. In February, the Prime Minister, Labour and Liberal Democrat leaders made a joint climate pledge, urged on by the thousands of CAFOD supporters who took action. Together with the Climate Coalition, we organised a big lobby of parliament to demand MPs deliver clean, safe energy. Over 300 MPs were lobbied in one day!



And most recently, following the release of the Pope's encyclical *Laudato Si'*, 40,000 Catholics in the UK called on David Cameron to show leadership at the UN climate talks in Paris. Pope Francis inspires us to open our eyes and be more compassionate towards creation and our neighbours. He speaks openly about the devastating effects of climate change on people and the planet. He says that climate change is real, urgent and it must be tackled.

The UK is already respected globally for taking the lead on tackling climate change for when it passed the ground-breaking 2008 Climate Change Act. But we need to build on this. **We need to keep up this momentum for change.**

Recent CAFOD research shows that the UK Government is still spending billions of pounds supporting dirty fossil fuel investments overseas – more than double the amount it invests in renewables. This simply doesn't make sense.

In the next stage of the campaign, we're asking you to [call on Amber Rudd](#), the Climate and Energy Secretary, to lead that shift and to ensure that *all* UK investment in energy overseas **protects the climate** and benefits the poorest people.

[Find out more about how the UK Government is supporting fossil fuel investments overseas](#)

Photograph: Sarah Croft from CAFOD

Eradication of Poverty – A Gospel Imperative? - Fr. Richard Finn

Fr. Richard spoke in relation to the day's theme and Catholic Social Teaching (CST). The gospel tells us to love God and your neighbour. These are not two distinct commands, but one. To love our neighbour is to love God.

We need to define what poverty is. Poverty can be defined as what it does or denies us from doing. There are various ways of benchmarking poverty. Millions of people survive on less than a dollar twenty five a day and can be considered to live in poverty. Then there are people whose income allows them to eat well, but live in unsuitable housing. From this a tricky question emerges – Is poverty absolute or relative? If we say poverty is relative, then the question arises, can poverty ever be eradicated?

One percent of the world's population controls half the world's wealth. What is required to redistribute this wealth? Is it a new political order or new economic order or something else? The history of communism gives little ground for optimism. Pope Leo XIII issued an encyclical in 1891, *Rerum novarum*, which explicitly recognised the need to address appalling "misery and wretchedness" suffered by the working class created by the industrial revolution and supported the formation of trade unions, as well as affirmed the right to private property. Political attempts to redistribute wealth, beyond a certain point, risks other political rights and compromises basic freedoms. The Lord Jesus said that the poor you will always have with you. However, we need to work towards reducing the gap and inequality in society. The gospel does not command us to do away with poverty as that is impossible. However, it **commands us to love our neighbour, and hence reduce or alleviate poverty. The parable of the Good Samaritan tells us that our neighbour is anyone we are in a position to help.** So not only someone next door, but also on the other side of the world. Victims of human trafficking, economic migrants and refugees fleeing violence, are all our neighbours.

Saint John Paul II, in the encyclical *Sollicitudo rei socialis* of 1987, emphasised the duty and virtue of solidarity which, in recognition of our interdependence, is a firm commitment of oneself to the common good.

We cannot flourish as an individual if we are not mindful of the "common good". Loving our neighbour applies to individual as well as to groups and organisations.

Pope Francis said "we are in a global economic system which places money at its centre, not the human person. A true economic system, should evolve around men and women, the human person".

We also need to make judgement calls. Do we help one next door neighbour's family with a donation of £500 to go on a vacation, or do we donate that money to educate 10 people in Africa for a year.



It is more important that we act consistently as good neighbours, than rather which neighbour to assist.

In the Kingdom of God, there is no poverty. By being baptised as Christians, the gifts of each are meant to be placed in the service of all in the community.

It is for this reason that communities or individuals accept "voluntary – poverty".

Communities of monks, friars, nuns and apostolic sisters are examples of "voluntary-poverty. Desires are re-shaped. The power of the Holy Spirit is drawn in order to live as per God's Kingdom.

In conclusion, we are not commanded to eradicate poverty but commanded to alleviate poverty. Poverty will only be eradicated when we enter God's Kingdom, which will be God's gift to us.

*Photograph:
Fr. Richard Finn*

Chat with Canon Giles Fraser

Canon Giles lived up to peoples' expectations. His views were well appreciated by the audience. He is a self professed "pessimist". He believes things will keep getting worse till one day the current system will collapse under the strain. **A large economic catastrophe is due, and that will make us re-think and change our ways.**

The church is a spur for getting involved in Justice and Peace. In reply to the question of what causes poverty, his view is that people have wants and needs. Global advertising does not differentiate between the two. As a result, people are manipulated into chasing things they do not really need. This is done by creating a want in unnecessary things, or things that are not as important as the real needs. We need to appreciate the Idea of having Enough. We want more and more. As a result, human needs, or rather wants, have become insatiable. Advertising generates the desire for more. Needs are easily met. The church should be able to provide us as a role model for a simple life.

A person in the audience picked up on the point of advertising, as spoke on how advertising targets the children by bombarding them with advertisements.

Fr. Arbo Lekule, Chair of JPIC, commented on Extreme Poverty, which is when a person is so resigned to their fate, that they truly believe that their situation is never going to change and there is no hope for them. Fr. Argo went on to say that we can change this by breaking down social barriers and encouraging interaction between various social classes. We need to change the attitude of those in extreme poverty by giving them the message that they can improve their situation and do well.

An organisation working with Extreme Poverty is ADT Fourth World. It has more than 40 years experience working in this field. For more information, please click on the link below: <http://www.atd-uk.org/>. ADT Fourth World, 48, Addington Square, London SE5 7LB. or Telephone 020 7703 3231.



Canon Giles felt that it is too simplistic a solution and extreme poverty cannot go away only by the goodness of people's hearts. Small acts of goodness like buying Fairtrade Chocolate are welcome, but are not enough. It tends to make us complacent and we should not satisfy ourselves with small acts
What is required is Empowering the poor.

Fr, Richard, a Dominican Friar himself, proudly noted that it was the Dominican Friars that introduced Cocoa to the Spanish and hence rest of Europe and the larger world. Light-heartedly, he also suggested to people to watch Danger Mouse.



A member of the audience was of the view that science is a solution since religion is dividing the people. Canon Giles was pessimistic of the achievements of the United Nations. He also felt that the Church has failed on its part to make people realise that **Jesus should be part of our lives not only at Christmas and Easter, but everyday, and in every way!!**

Photographs:

Top: Canon Giles (right) in conversation with a member of the audience

Below: Canon Giles mingling with the audience

17 January – Pax Christi Peace Sunday

Theme: Overcome Indifference and Win Peace

The views expressed in this bulletin are not necessarily those of JPIC.

If you would like to get involved in Justice & Peace in your Parish, please contact Kenneth Roberts at:

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