

Criminal Justice Enquiry: Briefing Paper and Action

Background

At the 'Faith in Action: Joy and Challenge' day of reflection at Notre Dame Catholic Sixth Form College, lay and ordained Catholics were invited to reflect together and set priorities for social action in the Diocese, to be coordinated by Caritas Leeds.

The event began with Bishop Marcus leading a liturgy focused on the Beatitudes, which he likened to 'a Christian identity card'. The Bishop spoke about the roots of Caritas Leeds and restated the importance of Diocesan social action being coordinated and focused to maximise impact. After reflecting on Pope Francis' latest exhortation 'Gaudete et Exultate' (on the Call to Holiness in Today's World'), which reminds us that '*To be holy does not require being a bishop, a priest or a religious. We are frequently tempted to think that holiness is only for those who can withdraw from ordinary affairs to spend much time in prayer. That is not the case. We are all called to be holy by living our lives with love and by bearing witness in everything that we do, wherever we find ourselves.*' (paragraph 14), participants listened to personal testimonies from witnesses with knowledge and experience of social injustices and challenges faced by parishes.

The participants worked together to devise a range of potential actions the Diocese might take to address these issues and voted for Caritas Leeds to coordinate action on **two priorities**: youth leadership and criminal justice.

The agreed aim for the Criminal Justice Forum is to be an Enquiry which Bishop Marcus has approved and endorsed.

Aims:

- Our work will be time-limited and framed by specific and achievable aims.
- A Caritas Leeds year-long enquiry (research action project) to:
 - Increase Catholics' knowledge and understanding of the UK criminal justice system and the experiences of people in our Diocese who encounter it,
 - Explore and reflect on different models of restorative justice,
 - Encourage Catholics to take more action to support people encountering the criminal justice system and tackle the injustices they face,
 - Make practical recommendations for change, to be announced by Bishop Marcus in December 2019.

Commissioners and their Role

- Our work will be led by a team of volunteers (Commissioners) from around the Diocese working in cluster groups.
- There are a diversity of expertise and perspectives within the team, but a shared commitment to the Enquiry process.

- *At least 15 lay and ordained Catholics from across the Diocese of Leeds will lead the Enquiry by:*
 - *Gathering evidence and testimonies through regular site visits and/or roundtable discussions with relevant people,*
 - *Organising and attending one or two public hearings in 2019,*
 - *Meeting twice to review the evidence and testimonies submitted by people and organisations,*
 - *Familiarising themselves with these documents from the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales*
 - [A Place of Redemption \(2004\)](#)
 - [The Right Road \(2016\)](#)
 - [Belief & Belonging \(2016\)](#)
 - [A Journey of Hope \(2018\)](#)
 - *Agreeing the final list of recommendations for Bishop Marcus to announce in December 2019.*

Process for Gathering Evidence and Testimonies

- **Monthly site visits and/or themed roundtables with key institutions and organisations active in the criminal justice field. Targets could include:**
 - ***Courts and Legal Sector***
 - *Criminal Defence Solicitors*
 - *Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service*
 - *HM Courts and Tribunals Service*
 - *Leeds Magistrates Court and Family Court*
 - *Leeds Crown Court*
 - *Magistrates Association*
 - *Diversity and Community Relations Judges*
 - ***Government and Policy Makers***
 - *Ministry of Justice*
 - *Home Office*
 - *West Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner*
 - *Local Government*
 - *Leeds City Council (Youth Offending Service/Safer Leeds)*
 - *City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council*
 - *Kirklees Council*
 - *Wakefield Council*
 - *Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council*
 - *Selby District Council*
 - *Harrogate Borough Council*
 - *Craven District Council*

- *University of Leeds Centre for Criminal Justice Studies*

- **Enforcement and Prisons**
 - *West Yorkshire Police*
 - *Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service*
 - *Leeds Prison (Armley)*
 - *New Hall Prison (Flockton)*
 - *Wakefield Prison*
 - *Wealstun Prison (Thorp Arch)*
 - *Wetherby Prison*

- **Probation and Employment**
 - *National Probation Service*
 - *West Yorkshire Community Rehabilitation Company*
 - *Interserve*

- **Faith and Charitable Organisations**
 - *Prison Chaplaincies (Liaison Bishop for Prisons and Catholic Bishops' Prisons Advisor)*
 - *Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT)*
 - *St John's Approved Premises (Knights of St Columba)*
 - *WYCCP (West Yorkshire Community Chaplaincy Project)*
 - *Jigsaw Visitors Centre*
 - *McKenzie Friends*
 - *Catch 22 (Transforming Rehabilitation)*
 - *Giving Time*
 - *St Georges Crypt*
 - *Barca-Leeds*
 - *WY-Fi Project*
 - *New Wortley Resettlement Project*

- **Media**
 - *BBC News (including Danny Savage, Crime Correspondent)*
 - *ITV Calendar*
 - *Yorkshire Evening Post*
 - *Leeds Live*

- **1 or 2 Public Hearings where:**
 - *Key representatives from organisations make short presentations or send in evidence,*
 - *Individuals with lived experience give testimony,*
 - *Catholics learn more about the work of the Enquiry and are encouraged to take action locally.*

- **One-to-one meetings, private hearings or written submissions will be used to allow people to share their stories in other ways.**
- **How will we keep Catholics informed of our progress throughout the year?**
- Caritas Leeds area on the Diocesan website
- Updates for Parish bulletins / news for websites
- Printed News Bulletins for circulation in parishes
- Public Relations plan - Press releases and nurturing relationships with local and national media

Rev. Dr. Joseph D Cortis

Coordinator of Caritas Leeds-March 2019