



ENCOUNTER, CONVERSION, HOPE!

By Joe Burns, Commission Member



The View from our retreat centre - a bit rainy in the afternoon but ok most of the day!

The urgency of the Climate Emergency can sometimes feel overwhelming. There are so many calls for action. The changes required to ameliorate the worst effects are huge – and require international political action. In these circumstances it is easy for people to lose hope.

This was the backdrop that led the Spirituality of Justice group within the Commission to organise this Day of Reflection. We wanted to give people the opportunity to stand back a little from the action and reflect on the motivations behind

what each of us do. By chance, we found that the CAFOD group in Our Lady of Kirkstall parish were thinking about organising a similar event. We agreed to join forces and Michael Emly joined the organising group.

Originally, Linda Jones (Head of Theology Programmes at CAFOD) was going to lead us in our reflections. However, due to family circumstances she was unable to do this. However, in her place, two members of her team, Stewart and Caroline, joined us.

The day was split into 3 parts:



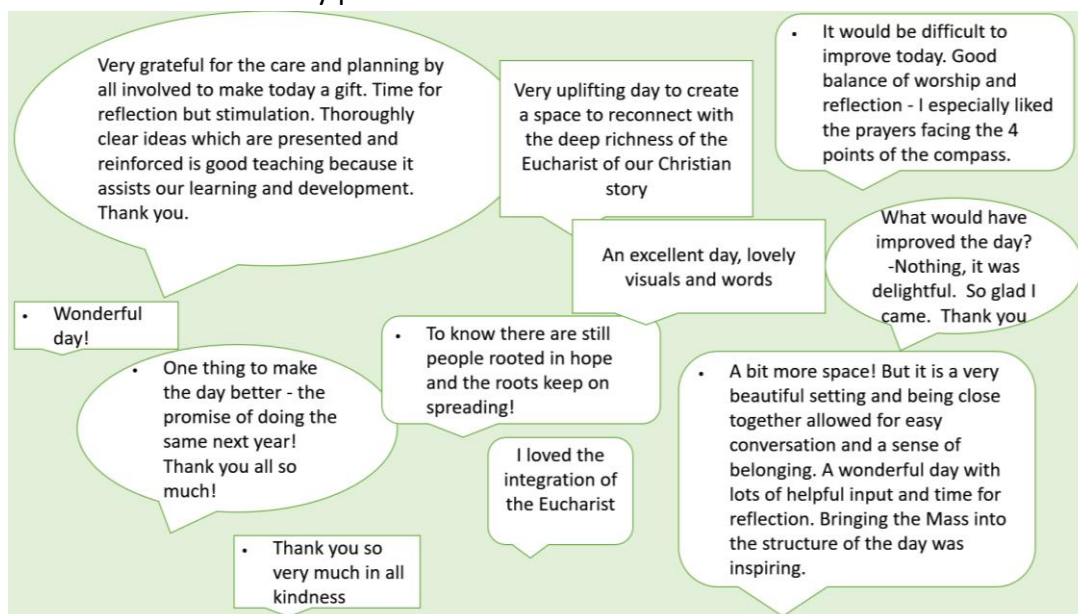
- encountering each other at the start of the day and encountering Christ in the readings of the Mass
- through our reflection on these, to renew our conversion to the need to care better for our 'Common Home'.
- Lastly, to find the signs of hope that enable us to go back to our communities with renewed motivation to continue and extend the work of taking better care of our planet.

The day was held at Norwood Methodist Retreat Centre in the Washburn Valley. There were over 30 of us and we were at the limit of the capacity of the venue. However, its location on a hillside overlooking Lindleywood reservoir made the slightly cramped conditions more than worthwhile.

The day included mass at which Fr Peter Rosser presided, a longtime Commission member. The old doorway into the Chapel has been converted into a lovely picture

window looking on the valley below. We arranged our seating so that, whilst the altar table was the focus, we could always see the view outside the window and keep in mind the wonder of God's creation. Rather than 'slot in' the mass at some point during the day we used the structure of the mass to structure our time so that the mass itself extended over most of the day. Our Eucharistic celebration was immediately followed by having our shared lunch. This was followed by a post-communion reflection from Francis & Caroline with some extended time for individual reflection and the opportunity to walk in the surrounding countryside (which several people did even though it was just starting to drizzle a little). We ended our day with the final blessing of the mass and a rousing hymn on which to depart.

It was clearly a day that people were very thankful for, and this was confirmed in the evaluation comments that we received.



Evaluation comments from people



NORTHERN DIOCESES' ENVIRONMENT GROUP TO MEET IN LEEDS

What is it?

As the name implies, it is a group composed of people from all the northern dioceses. It meets a few times a year to share what is happening about Climate Change and *Laudato Si* in the various dioceses and to share good practice, often with a guest speaker of some sort.

The meetings are open to anyone.

The people who usually attend are either Caritas / Justice & Peace supporters or CAFOD volunteers in parishes and schools – really anyone among the Catholic community who wants to do more about the Climate Emergency.

So, what's happening in Leeds?

Well, this will be the first *in-person* meeting of the group since the start of the pandemic. Prior to that the meetings were hosted by Caritas in the Salford Diocese, but they migrated to Zoom once the pandemic got underway. The Commission is delighted to be hosting the group at Wheeler Hall on **Thursday June 8th**. The full day will last from 10:30 until about 3:30pm.

Anyone is welcome to come along to the whole day (light lunch will be provided) or to come along to either the morning or the afternoon session if your time is more limited.

What's happening during the event?

There will be a presentation in the morning from John Paul de Quay, one of the authors of a resource in the Arundel & Brighton Diocese called '*The Journey to 2030*'. The aim is to get to net zero by 2030 and the

programme provides the roadmap for achieving this outcome.

In the afternoon there will be a short input from Helen Hayden, Leeds J&P Commission member and Executive member of Leeds City Council with responsibility for the Climate Emergency.

I'm Interested – what do I do?

The event is free to attend.



Simply go to the Eventbrite page we have created for the event and sign up to come along – you can choose the full day or the morning or afternoon session. Booking is essential if you want to have any lunch!

Follow this link, or just go to the J&P website events page for more information:

[Northern Dioceses' Environment Group Tickets, Thu 8 Jun 2023 at 10:30 | Eventbrite](#)



For more information about the 'Journey to 2030' programme, take a look at their website:

<https://journeyto2030.org/>



“Seeds are life! They feed us all.” – Salina

By Angela Powell, CAFOD Leeds

In a beautiful location overlooking Lindleywood Reservoir some of us gathered to spend time encountering one another and reflecting on how we are living in the context of climate change. We thought about the individual choices we all make on a daily basis, and how we impact others and our environment. During Mass, prayer, and thanksgiving were offered in the hope we can all become more committed to converting to a more simple and faithful life in Christ.

CAFOD is sharing stories about our partners who are accompanying communities whose lives are severely impacted by climate change. Despite the challenges of accessing sufficient food, indigenous communities are doing what they can to ensure they do no further harm to God’s precious environment, and we can be in solidarity with them.

Salina is an organic farmer and seed saver from Bangladesh. Salina has written a letter to the World Bank calling for the rights of small-scale farmers to use their own seeds to be protected. This letter will be given to the World Bank in October. But prior to that, your parish will have an opportunity to support Salina by adding its own name to the letter.

Women as knowledge-keepers of seeds -

In many communities, women play a vital role in saving and sharing the seeds of traditional crops. This knowledge is at the foundation of the development of new varieties of seeds that help to build climate resilience and protect biodiversity as well as the cultural heritage of communities.

This is Salina’s testimony.

“...As a woman I am able to give lessons to other farmers. This is my great pride. I have already taken the initiative for myself to provide vegetable seeds especially to women who are producing in their homesteads. This season I have provided seeds to 15 or 16 women to produce vegetables in their homestead.

I have done this especially to encourage the women to establish their empowerment. I believe once they have started producing and selling their own vegetables, this is the first step to establishing themselves as women leaders. This is a special initiative I have started only for the women....”

Why is it so vital to support farmers like Salina? The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has stated that access to a diverse range of seeds is key to reducing the risk of lower food production as climate change impacts become more severe. By signing up your parish to stand alongside Salina, we can send a strong message to the World Bank that the Catholic community stands with small-scale farmers on this vital issue.



You can help CAFOD to support farmers around the world in the fight to keep their rights to their own seeds.

As the official aid agency of the Catholic Church in England and Wales, CAFOD is reaching out to people living in poverty with practical help. But CAFOD's mission also calls on us to challenge the structures that bring about poverty and injustice in the first place.

This is at the core of the [Fix the Food system](#) campaign which was supported last year by parishes in each of the 22 dioceses in England and Wales. This initiative aims to re-think the current global food system and, as Pope Francis says, transform it for the benefit of people and planet.

Globally, just [nine crops account for more than 65%](#) of all crop production, which are traded and transported by a few big businesses.

This lack of crop diversity makes the current food system unfit to cope with the challenges brought about by the climate crisis and also makes it unsuitable for quickly adapting to disease and conflict. We only need to look at [Russia's war in Ukraine to see the impact](#) this has had on the price of key staples such as wheat and overall food prices.

Solidarity with small scale farmers

Although enough food is produced to feed everyone, around 800 million people go hungry each day and many of them are small-scale farmers who grow the world's food. This situation is intensified when small-scale farmers are unable to freely access a wide variety of local seeds which they have used for generations. Instead of saving, producing,

and sharing their own seeds, they are often pushed towards buying a limited selection of commercial seeds produced by a few corporations.

This is not good for the climate nor for food security. It's much better when small-scale farmers can build and freely access a diverse set of seeds. It increases local resilience.

Seeds are also a symbol of hope and transformation in our Catholic faith. This is why CAFOD is inviting parishioners all across the country to support Salina, a small scale farmer and seed saver in Bangladesh.

Salina has written a letter to the World Bank - an institution with a lot of influence in food policies - calling for the protection of the rights of small-scale farmers like herself to use their own varieties of seeds.



Salina

This summer, your parish has an opportunity to support Salina by adding your names to her letter. Find more about how your parish can support Salina at:

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



INVITATION: CREATIVE DAY RETREAT FOR CHURCH VOLUNTEERS AND LEADERS

From Bronagh Daly, LCI Faith & Creativity Lead



Dates: Saturday 24th June, 23rd September

Time: 10:30am-3pm

Venue: Leeds Church Institute, 43 The Calls, LS2 7EY

Cost: Free (refreshments, vegetarian lunch and all creative materials provided)

Experience: Suitable for all abilities, beginners welcome

All creative abilities are welcome. Please invite friends and colleagues who may be interested.

“Definitely recommend this, a great resource and wonderful to meet people from different faiths.”

Belinda, Holy Rosary Church, Chapeltown

“Getting to create your own art and hear how creativity can be used in church was really useful”

Madge, Sunday School LS8

Calling all Sunday School helpers, Messy Church leaders, Youth group workers.

Come along to an interactive, creative day retreat and meet church family play leaders, Children’s Liturgists, Catechists, Primary school RE leads and teaching assistants, Uniformed group leaders, family ministry workers and creative volunteers in church settings.

This retreat is a small, informal learning opportunity. There are 8 spaces on each retreat day.

As part of LCI’s mission of learning for a faithful city, we will come together to reflect and inspire each other to put faith into practice through creativity.

All creative abilities are welcome. Please invite friends and colleagues who may be interested.

The event is free of charge, there will be a vegetarian lunch provided, and all creative materials will be supplied by LCI with expert guidance and support.

[BOOK NOW to reserve your place!](#)



Husam Zomlot in Glasgow

By Matthew Maslen

Earlier this month I attended a lecture given by Husam Zomlot, the Palestinian Ambassador to the UK at the University of Glasgow in commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of the Al-Nakba.

Before attending the event, I knew very little about the Nakba, I simply knew that it was a truly devastating period in the history of Palestine. For those of you who may also know little about what the Nakba was, I will give a very admittedly simple overview: the Nakba refers to the destruction of vast areas of Palestine in 1948. An estimated 531 villages were destroyed, killing around 15,000 Palestinians and displacing 750,000.

The lecture held at the University of Glasgow, organised by a coalition of student groups who support the Palestinian struggle for freedom, began with a short YouTube video outlining what the Nakba was.

Husam Zomlot, who had earlier that day been at the Scottish Parliament, then gave a speech detailing the long-lasting impacts the Nakba has had on Palestinians over the past 75 years.

Zomlot's talk was extremely emotional as he spoke about the ways in which his own family has been impacted by the Nakba. Yet, as Zomlot was at pains to express, his own personal experience is far from unique: *"Every Palestinian has been affected by the Nakba, that is, there is no one Palestinian who has not been affected by the Nakba"*.

At the end of his speech, Zomlot invited those in attendance to ask questions. One of the questions asked, which I think many here in the UK ask themselves, was about how to respond to those who claim that standing in solidarity with Palestinian struggle is anti-Semitic.





Zomlot gave an extremely eloquent and detailed response to this, which I am afraid I can only paraphrase. Firstly, he emphasised the importance of acknowledging that antisemitism does exist. He went on to talk about the importance between differentiating between religious and political resistance.

He went on to say that it is important for campaigners within the UK to be specific in their campaign aims; to have small goals. In particular, he highlighted the impact that simple acts such as boycotting products that originate from illegal settlements can have. He reminded us that here in the UK, the power which we as individuals hold is very heavily based in our identity as consumers: how we spend our money matters.

I left the event feeling that I had a much better understanding of a conflict which I have often shied away from discussing because I felt it was something too controversial to discuss unless I knew every detail. I feel differently now. I know I have a lot to learn, and that there is much I will never understand as it is not my lived-experience. Yet, I know that this does not justify my silence. Zomlot ended his speech by quoting Martin Luther King, and so will I: "Injustice anywhere is injustice everywhere".



EVENTS

 Thu 08 Jun	<p align="center">Northern Dioceses' Environment Group</p> <p align="center"><i>Wheeler Hall, Leeds Cathedral, St Anne's Street, Leeds LS2 8BE 10:30 – 15:30</i></p> <p>An open meeting where you can find out what is happening across the North of England to promote action on Climate Change with guest speakers John Paul de Quay of the Ecological Conversion Group and Helen Hayden, Executive Member of Leeds City Council with responsibility for the Climate Emergency.</p> <p>Book a place via our Eventbrite page: https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/northern-dioceses-environment-group-tickets-629999193547</p>
 Sat 10th Jun	<p>Great Big Green Week</p> <p>10th – 18th Jun</p> <p>Come together for #GreatBigGreenWeek for all kinds of events: litter picks, climate coffee mornings, film screenings, nature trails, crafting, sports relays and so much more!</p> <p>https://greatbiggreenweek.com/</p>
 Mon 19th Jun	<p>Launch of the Seeing Asylum exhibition for Refugee Week</p> <p>Leeds Minster, 7pm – 9pm</p> <p>speakers providing insightful information about the process of people seeking asylum, followed by the opening of the exhibition. Attendees will be provided with visual and audio resources relating to the exhibition, alongside having the opportunity to speak with the speakers throughout the event.</p> <p>https://lcileeds.org/eventbrite-event/refugee-week-seeing-asylum-exhibition/</p>
 Fri 21st Jul To Sun 23 Jul	<p>Sustainability? – Survival or Shutdown</p> <p>21st @6:30pm – 23rd @2pm @ The Hayes Conference Centre</p> <p>45th National Justice & Peace Network Conference. What is sustainability? It is always a lively event with a combination of keynote speakers and a range of workshops with a good craic around the bar in the evening. Also running during the weekend will be a 'Just Fair' with stalls from many organisations working around sustainability and other social justice issues.</p> <p>It's not a cheap weekend (full cost is £225) though there are low income options as well. Use the button to download the application form.</p> <p>https://www.leedsjp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/2023-NJPN-conference-WEB-Booking-Form-2023-11-2.pdf</p>

Please forward this email E-News onto anyone else who you think might be interested. Even better, get them to send us their email address so we can add them to our contact database. See our website for details of these and other events which may be of interest.