

# THE LONDON CATHOLIC WORKER



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## Editorial for Lent

As the days lengthen, and more of us have received the vaccine - a welcome perk of working with homelessness organisations - there is much to be hopeful about. Although during the time of COVID-19 the wild parties will have to wait, there is much to celebrate.

For the London Catholic Worker, 2020 was a year of anniversaries: twenty years since the Jubilee 2000 Ploughshares, and the founding of the London Catholic Worker, ten years since the founding of Giuseppe Conlon House and fifteen years since the Urban Table soup kitchen first opened at the Roundchapel, Hackney.

As Brian Quail explains in *Ban the Bomb – Done!*, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons [TPNW] which entered into force on the 22nd January is an opportunity for celebration, but also a chance to look back at past actions. In November 2000, Fr. Martin Newell and Susan Van der Hijden broke through the perimeter fence at RAF Wittering and damaged part of a road convoy, that was to deliver nuclear warheads to Faslane, Scotland. When Martin and Susan were imprisoned on remand for nearly seven months, a group formed to support them and the London Catholic Worker was born.

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Above: Jubilee 2000 Ploughshares, Fr Martin Newell and Susan van der Hijden pray at the perimeter fence of RAF Wittering. Drawing by Peter Lanyon

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# Ban the Bomb - Done !

*Brian Quail*

On January 22nd a truly momentous event took place - after decades of campaigning, we finally did 'Ban the Bomb'. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) which was agreed at the United Nations on 20th September 2017 entered into force on that day. The new treaty makes it illegal under international law to develop, test, produce, manufacture, acquire, possess, stockpile, transfer, use or threaten to use nuclear weapons.

The treaty will be *jus cogens*, that is a peremptory norm, from which there is no derogation (like piracy, genocide, or enslavement), as opposed to customary law, where parties have to make a mutual agreement. I make this point in response to the obvious question - what do we do if this law is simply ignored by rogue states? The answer is that nuclear weapons will be delegitimised, and those who have them will be stigmatised. They may perversely persist, but their criminality will be blatant and indisputable.

This is not an innovation - nuclear weapons have always been illegal and genocide has always been criminal. It's just while other means of killing people have been specifically outlawed (Biological Weapons 1972, Chemical Weapons 1993, Land Mines 1997, Cluster Munitions 2008), consideration of nuclear weapons has been avoided.

It is vital to grasp that this Treaty is unique. It is the Charter of the Victims (i.e. you and me) because it is focused on the humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons, and does not get side-tracked into discussing 'deterrence', or the imagined advantages of such weapons.

Previous agreements were deals among the members of the exclusive Big Boys' Nuclear Club. The bomb is their sacrosanct talisman granted by divine favour to us but denied to all lesser breeds. Like Gollum's 'Precious', it drives men mad. They argued about numbers and stockpiles, but took no cognisance of the human beings involved. In fact, the realities of consequential human suffering were deliberately ignored.

The assumption was that nuclear weapons were an asset, that their possession conferred status and prestige. The devastating effects of their use on human beings and the environment was disregarded. Radiation is especially lethal to reproductive organs and therefore women and the unborn are particularly susceptible to harm.

**'This is not an innovation - nuclear weapons have always been illegal.'**

Apart from being an essential for our survival, the TPNW entry into force on 22nd January has huge significance for Scotland. We are the only country where nuclear weapons are imposed on the people in spite of the opposition of their government and so are an obvious weak link in the nuclear chains that bind us. Scots law has always prided itself on being distinctive, and this is its chance to prove that it is seriously independent. It is inconceivable that the Scottish legal establishment should simply ignore a ruling of the United Nations, the highest international legal authority.

On 21st October 1999, Sheriff Margaret Gimblett instructed the jury at Greenock Sheriff Court to acquit Angie Zelter, Ellen Moxley and Ulla Roder, who had been charged with causing £80,000 damage to a Trident related

barge by peaceful, nonviolent direct action. The jury did so, and Trident was *ipso facto* recognised as illegal. This was a momentous ruling. The Daily Record carried the absurd headline, 'Sherriff disarms Britain', as if this ruling magicked away all the UK's armed forces.

However, the Prosecution appealed against the decision, and on 30th March 2001, in the Lord Advocates Referral (LAR) Lords Prosser, Kirkwood and Penrose overturned this verdict and ruled that Trident was in fact legal. But if this were so, then every state in the world that wants to could also legally deploy Trident - an absurdity which proves the original hypothesis untenable. It is essential that the opinions of the LAR be reconsidered in the light of the TPNW.

This legal ruling has an impact not only at the highest levels of law, but at the lowest, and must affect the way ordinary policing of the nuclear base is conducted. The police simply cannot continue to arrest people who are upholding international law, charge them with Breach of the Peace and imprison them. They must decide: Are they upholding international law, or is it a case of 'my country right or wrong' and 'I am only obeying orders'?

Do they not know that the 1945 London Agreement on War Crimes, which led to the prosecution and conviction of the Nazis, enshrined the principle that no one, of whatever office or rank, is above the jurisdiction of international law? All individuals are deemed to be personally responsible for their actions. You cannot plead in your defence that you are merely obeying orders. Anyone who is involved in the manufacture, transportation, guarding or firing of nuclear weapons is part of a conspiracy to commit genocide, war crimes and crimes against peace, and



is liable to prosecution under international law.

This was the case even before January 22nd and the TPNW. Now it is even more blindingly obvious.

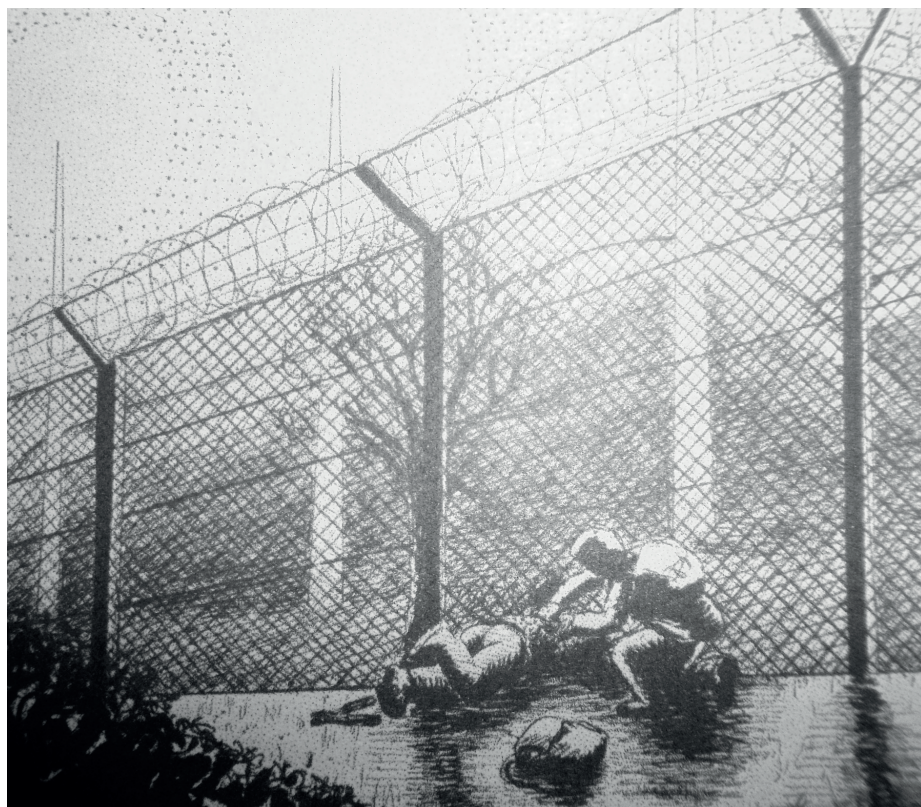
The Pope has condemned deterrence. In a landmark statement on nuclear arms on November 10th, Pope Francis categorically condemned not only the threat of their use but also their very possession. 'Nuclear weapons,' he told participants at a Vatican symposium on integral disarmament, exist 'in the service of a mentality of fear that affects not only the parties in conflict but the entire human race.'

All Catholics and all people of good will must support the TPNW to realise the common dream of a world freed from the threat of nuclear extinction.

*Brian Quail is a veteran peace campaigner and writer. He is famous for his direct actions against Trident and against nuclear convoys.*

*First published in the Glasgow Catholic Worker newsletter*

**Below:** Jubilee 2000 Ploughshares, Fr. Martin Newell and Susan van der Hijden climb through the perimeter fence of RAF Wittering. **Drawing by Peter Lanyon**



Even though our government has refused to engage with the UN negotiations, the Treaty is a wonderful vindication of the witness of the London Catholic Worker and so many others, such as the mass break in at Büchel Air Base in Germany in 2018 (see p10). Every Ash Wednesday the London Catholic Worker has joined Pax Christi, Christian CND and others outside the Ministry of Defence. Several of us have been arrested repeatedly during Lent and Holy Week, for marking the pale stone walls with charcoal.

Very fitting for Lent, included here are three reflections which deeply question how Catholic Workers can respond to the command to serve, to practise hospitality and care for each other during COVID-19 restrictions.

Sadly, I am stepping down as editor of this newsletter, a task I first took on in 2014. I have appreciated the collaborative process of collating material, the network of wonderful contributors, and the opportunity to study the work of Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin in depth.

Henrietta



## The Catholic Worker in the UK

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Giuseppe Conlon House offers hospitality to destitute refugees. For the time being, Urban Table, a joint project of London Catholic Worker and URC Clapton Park, provides a takeaway meal for up to 160 vulnerable people on Sundays. We organise acts of nonviolent resistance and produce this newsletter.

### The Catholic Worker Farm

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The Farm offers hospitality to destitute women. We grow organic vegetables and have a poustinia and hermitage retreat.

### Glasgow Catholic Worker

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We offer a place of welcome for asylum seekers and destitute refugees in the centre of Glasgow at the Garnethill Multicultural Centre, open Saturday 9:00—1:00pm, and a soup kitchen on Friday nights. We keep a vigil at Faslane Nuclear Base and hold monthly meetings and prayers.

# 'The necessary antibodies: justice, charity and solidarity'

*Br. Johannes Maertens*

*A Lent reflection*

Over recent years, long before the COVID-19 pandemic hit our little world, I have often reflected on human suffering. Most of the suffering I saw, for example in the Calais refugee camps, was human inflicted and caused by society itself. But COVID-19 is of another nature, another dimension – a pandemic – from which the Western world has been exempt for several decades – a health crisis that afflicts so many people worldwide it disrupts whole economies. As happens so often, here in the West and abroad, it is the people living in poverty, in less affluent areas of cities, that have been afflicted more harshly, have more often suffered and died.

Ten years ago, when I was in South Africa on a short mission, I visited some of the graveyards around the squatter camps. It was here you could see the immense impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic that was raging through the African continent - and which was also deeply afflicting the gay community in the Northern Hemisphere. There was no curative or preventive medicine yet in those days - and still today there is no vaccine for HIV. Like this one, the HIV/AIDS pandemic deeply impacted society and communities. It also brought some communities closer together and made them stronger.

This year most of us have suffered in one way or another from Covi-19; we may have friends or even family members who have suffered from the virus. Families and friends may have lost and mourned people close to them. In our Catholic

Worker family, several members have had COVID-19 and some struggle with long-COVID. It has deeply affected the way we function as a house of hospitality and I would say also the mental health of us all as Catholic Workers.

But again, looking outwards from this place of our own affliction, I can't help thinking of other places in the world where they don't have this wonderful NHS, or other well-established health services. It is hard to imagine how hard it is for people in the favelas in Brazil or the Palestinian territories where the medical infrastructure is much more vulnerable or even absent in certain areas, where hospitals have no respirators and there is not enough oxygen and COVID-19 patients just suffocate. The TV images of the mass graveyards in Amazonia, Brazil and the refrigerator trucks carrying human corpses in cities in the US have been shocking. It is a reality that calls the whole world to lament.

Some scientists suggest that pandemics like this one can be caused by the way we exhaust our eco-systems. Even so, the simple fact is that COVID-19 is caused by a virus, a small, less-than-an-organism-thing that makes us very sick. And there is only one thing we can do when this happens and that is to stand in solidarity and compassion with those sick or afflicted.

We live in exceptionally challenging times. I understand that some of us long for the time when life will be normal again, but our haircut can wait, our summer festivals are not essential and travelling for leisure is not appropriate for this time.

Maybe the pandemic has helped some of us to understand what is important in life. But what scares me more than the virus itself is the ignorance, lack of compassion or sympathy with those who are suffering and

suffocating.

For most of us the pandemic has disrupted our lives. As Pope Francis writes,

'[the virus] exposes our vulnerability and uncovers those false and superfluous certainties around which we have constructed our daily schedules, our projects, our habits and priorities.'

It shows that our liberal economical model is insufficient and our capitalist priorities are inept at coping with a real crisis.

In the light of the threat of COVID-19 we are forced to reflect on the deeper meaning of our existence, and we should open up this reflection to the other crisis facing our world, the survival of our eco-system.

There might not be an easy, clear theological answer to the question of why we suffer; sometimes I am even convinced there is no answer. But the Christian answer amidst suffering has always been to serve! We have seen the armies of saints, of religious brothers and sisters, of priests and lay people who gave their lives caring for the sick and the dying during the many plagues that hit our world. Today the dedication of people working in hospitals and medical missions all over the world really strengthens my faith in humanity.

Christians are called to serve, not to sit still. I don't often advise people to follow government guidelines - but in this pandemic, I do. Please follow NHS guidelines! And look after each other. Safely check in with your neighbour, call your friends, Skype or Zoom your family. And for those who are able, volunteer to help people in society around you. COVID-19 might mean social distancing, it might prevent us going to church together, but it should not stop us practising solidarity, building community through other means, and being the Church in this world.



Maybe this period of Lent can become the time for us to reflect on our life, to be grateful for what we do have and to pray for those suffering. As a society and Church, we need to take time to lament over the loss, but also look for a different and better future for all of us, and for our planet.

I want to end with a positive quote from Pope Francis' vision for the world after COVID-19: 'If we act as one people, even in the face of other epidemics that threaten us, we can make a real impact. ... May we find within us the necessary antibodies of justice, charity and solidarity. We must not be afraid to live the alternative—the civilisation of love. ... In this time of tribulation and mourning, I hope that, where you are, you will be able to experience Jesus, who comes to meet you, greets you and says: 'Rejoice' (cf. Mt 28:9). And may this greeting mobilise us to invoke and amplify the Good News of the Kingdom of God.'

Pope Francis *Life After the Pandemic 2020*

*Br. Johannes Maertens is a missionary monk and member of the London Catholic Worker*

## Learning from angels

*Fr. Martin Newell cp*

I walked into the kitchen the other day to find one of the guests, Ibrahim\*, cooking. He was roasting chickpeas out of a tin in a frying pan. The smell, probably the smell of hot metal, was not unpleasant. He looked happy and confident in his work. When I asked him about what he was doing he said, 'Oh, yes, we do this at home when it is cold. We heat these, and do this to warm up.' Perhaps it was as reminiscent for him of certain times and contexts in the Eritrean village he left nearly 20 years ago, as turkey and brussel sprouts may be for many of us reminiscent of Christmas and cosy family get togethers. I tasted one and it was pleasant enough.

This story illustrates how little we know of each other's cultures in a house of hospitality where refugees or 'asylum seekers' live together with those who have the privilege of a British passport or residency status, even though we live together for years. I came across a new word

recently: interculturality. It has been explained as distinct from being 'multicultural' in a similar way that 'nonviolence' is different to 'peace'. It is one step further. An intercultural community or living situation has also been explained as being one where everyone feels an equal degree of discomfort, an equal degree of 'not-at-home-ness', rather than that feeling of unease being loaded onto those who are in a new country and a new culture, while those who are in their home country and culture have to make relatively little adjustment.

For most of my time living at the London Catholic Worker, and also here at Austin Smith House, I have yearned for 'English food': fried breakfast, Yorkshire pudding, treacle pudding and custard.... But we rarely had that choice. It is partly what we received in food donations. Partly what we were able to cook in large quantities. And partly what our guests liked to eat, and would eat. No pork of course. Most Africans as well as Muslims do not eat pork. We rarely ate meat for all kinds of reasons, including our own desire to be vegetarian. Meals consisted of some kind of sauce with vegetables, and spices or herbs in it, along with rice or pasta. At Austin Smith House we have a weekly cooking rota. Sometimes a new guest will arrive and say, 'Oh no, I can't cook.' But once they realise we are not expecting 'typical English food', but something they are more familiar with, they almost always find some dish or dishes they know how to cook and that we have the ingredients for. Although my low tolerance for chilli, by their standards, anyway, has put limits.

I would like to think that these experiences are a taste of 'interculturality'. But I know there is so much more to learn. Only a couple of years ago I realised that in many cultures, the time for talking is not while you are eating: while you are [continued overleaf]

## Remembering Oscar Romero

*Sam Hickford*

'Haz patria, mata un cura' - slogan

Forget him, he whose life was elegy,  
tasting and tracing death's shadow. In touching it,  
he fought the umbrageous, audacious canopy  
it stretched over El Salvador, the death-squad-valleys  
so cruelly cooing with caracara, woodcreepers  
wounded by the weight of the noise, the Lete's  
screeching flow he had so swam and strained against.

The mass came. He knew he would die, and so exposed  
his chest to absorb the bullets, not swooning to the east,  
and, knowing the resurrection was delayed,  
he consecrated another, and redismembered each  
campesino, fearing himself, not as a story-book martyr.  
He nervously tilted his shoulder to the nervous flow of the staccato  
of a God-made gun.

[cont. from page 5]

eating, you eat! The

time for talking is afterwards, over coffee or tea. Those of us brought up in European cultures, find this very alien. There is more to interculturality than food of course. All sorts of questions arise; appropriate eye contact and what it means; how you say 'no'. In my experience, most cultures are quite indirect, including my own English culture. When I was at seminary, when not wanting to do something, mostly people would say, 'I'm busy'!

We have a lot to learn in other ways too. The English language, even with its many thousands of words, is lacking in emotional vocabulary. Apparently there is a language which has one word for, 'Of course I'm annoyed that you didn't know that I didn't mean what I said, because it should have been obvious'. That sounds like a good one. We had to borrow the German word *schadenfreude* too.

Our world these days is more and more a global village. It is more and more obvious that we are one human family, all sisters and brothers in the one family of God. This is the overarching theme of Pope Francis's recent encyclical letter, *Fratelli Tutti*. I cannot claim to be good at it, but it is all the more important that we learn to listen, and learn to learn more, of and from all the cultures – including our own – in which Christ is incarnated in our sisters and brothers. Which means all of them. Especially from the 'least of these' who are among us as 'strangers' or 'foreigners', and in whom we may also meet an angel (Hebrews 13:2), a messenger from God who comes with a message from which we are called to learn.

\* names have been changed

*Fr. Martin Newell cp is a founder member of the London Catholic Worker. He lives at Austin Smith House, a Passionist community of prayer, hospitality and resistance.*

# Giuseppe Conlon House

At the end of 2020, we decided we needed to enter a time of reflection and repair in the New Year. These first months, January to March, have found us entering into this period: simultaneously engaging in a process of 'visioning', a guided series of discussions about the shape and future of our community, and the start of the building works – the long-overdue repair of our kitchen and cracks in the walls.

**'Let mutual love endure and remember always to welcome strangers, for by doing this some people have entertained angels without knowing it.'**  
Hebrews 13 v2

While the builders are getting to work, gutting and hammering our old kitchen, we have a little makeshift cooking space set up in the hall, and we are getting creative with hot plates and a microwave. We still try to cook a meal and eat together every day. During this time, some of our other more regular projects are on hold – at least until we have a working kitchen again! Friday



**Above:** The kitchen at GCH before stripping out and **below** with new cupboards fitted.  
**Photo:** London Catholic Worker



Free Food, our weekly walk of the streets of North London to distribute meals to local homeless people, is on pause. We have also stepped back from our bi-monthly cooking for the Urban Table soup kitchen, although the project itself continues. An intrepid group of volunteers have managed to adapt it to the ever-changing COVID-19 restrictions, and are still handing out meals, in a careful, socially distanced way, throughout Hackney.

It has been a long and lonely winter for many in London, and across the country. The majority of our guests are still living in emergency hotel accommodation, with five remaining at Giuseppe Conlon House. We continue to phone the live-out guests regularly and see them from time to time for supply pick-ups, laundry, and other essential forms of support. Thankfully, everyone continues to be well.

Br Johannes Maertens has started his house of hospitality in Hackney (see opposite page) structured around Catholic Worker principles. Bramble O'Brien and Sam Hickford are preparing to welcome their baby in April, and they will be taking a few weeks away to rest around that time.

We are all hoping and praying that the pandemic comes to an end soon, and that everyone who is suffering as a result of it will find solace. As ever, thank you to everyone who continues to support us remotely, through prayers, donations, and ongoing friendship.

**Right: Martha Jane Tolton** crossing the deep river. An illustration by **Brother Mickey McGrath** from the Catholic Worker newspaper. Martha Jane Tolton escaped from slavery by crossing the Mississippi River into the free state of Illinois with her four children.



# The Community House

*Br Johannes Maertens*

In December 2020, I gradually started moving out of my room at Giuseppe Conlon House to The Community House in Hackney. Together with Jo Frew and Conor Cregan of Martha House, a house of hospitality for forced migrants, I am involved in setting up this new project.

For many years, Conor and I had been saying to each other that there is a need for a 'halfway house' for refugees – a step on their way to independent living. When Conor heard that a house might become available, the wheels started turning fast. Martha House Association carries this project, we get some material support from GCH, and people from the local Round Chapel United Reformed Church are also there to help out practically.

The Community House is a house for mostly young adult refugees in London who have been granted 'leave to remain' and are either unemployed or in employment, but have had a hard time finding housing.

The house offers cheaper rented accommodation in a small community setting and supports the 'house companions' with personal administration, English language development, and other skills needed to live independently in the U.K. The aim is both to prevent homelessness amongst refugees, and to move people out of homelessness.

Currently we have already taken in three house companions. One of the men is working in construction, but has had a hard time finding a house. Prior to this, his long working hours, and the fact he had never rented in London before, had made it difficult for him to find accommodation.

Another one of our other companions was referred to us through a local Winter Night Shelter; he also used to work in construction.

Our third house companion only recently acquired leave to remain after a lengthy legal battle during which he lived in Martha House.

More house companions will move in as the house refurbishments evolve, but for the moment we are waiting for the green light from the council, for an updated HMO licence.

And in the meantime, you can still find me working at GCH and around Finsbury Park.

God bless, Br. Johannes

## **The Community House**

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## **Martha House Association**

To offer financial support please contact Jo Frew at

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*from Peter Maurin's  
Easy Essays  
Economist 1880 AD*

**The Laissez-Faire  
Economists  
told everybody  
that competition  
is the life of trade  
and that it is a case  
of survival of the  
fittest.**

**So since 1800  
looking for markets  
has engaged men's  
activities.**

**And since trade follows  
the flag  
industrial nations  
have also become  
imperialist nations.**

**The fight for markets  
between two industrial  
nations,  
England and Germany,  
was the main cause  
of the World War.**

# The dialectic of white saviourism

Nora Ziegler

Two years ago I left Giuseppe Conlon House because the prolonged and extreme levels of stress I experienced there led to a breakdown of my mental health. Two years later I am still struggling with periods of depression, anxiety and exhaustion.

A big part of this struggle has been with my internalised beliefs that this is all my fault – that I worked too hard and obsessed too much; I was too sensitive or emotional or not disciplined enough; I failed to set boundaries and care for myself; I was unworthy of care and support from others.

Part of my recovery has been to challenge these beliefs. This has meant painfully unpacking the group dynamics, patterns of thought and organisational structures within which I, and others, burn out. At the same time, it involves taking responsibility for the ways in which I have reproduced and internalised these structures, projecting them onto other people and groups, but not always challenging them in myself. For example, I derided the ‘white saviourism’ of Extinction Rebellion [XR] activists, while I would and could not face the question eating me from the inside: did I burn out because I was a ‘white saviour’?

I struggled to confront this question because it seems to imply, again, that this is all my fault. I have only encountered the concept of ‘white saviour’ as an accusation against individual white activists, organisers and charity workers. The accusation

is that white individuals offer aid/support/solidarity to Black people and people of colour, for self-serving reasons. They want to assuage their guilt, feel like they’re doing something useful, or seek the thrill of adventure.

Instead, I want to unpack ‘white saviourism’ as a dialectic that both divides and connects people across social movements. A dialectic is a relationship between two poles that are both mutually dependent and antagonistic. A dialectic relationship develops historically and links individual action and responsibility with systemic factors [1].

I think of ‘white saviourism’ as a dialectic that casts Black people and people of colour as passive victims, and white people as expendable instruments (the embodied ‘master’s tools’ [2]). White people hold power but this power binds us in power-relations that divide and disempower everyone. These divisions are real in that power and resources are distributed unequally. They are also false because they injure real people and real relationships. This contradiction makes the dialectic unstable and creates possibilities for change.

For example, the way Giuseppe Conlon House is organised, as a house of hospitality, disproportionately places personal responsibility and decision-making power on

volunteers. This undermines the autonomy of both guests and volunteers. At the same time, the division between guests and volunteers at GCH also connects them. It creates boundaries enabling them to live and work together. These boundaries are necessary but also unjust – they don’t do justice to real people and real relationships – and therefore they can and must change over time.

The division between ‘guests’ and ‘volunteers’ responds to existing divisions created by the immigration system. Recognising the system is necessary to some extent, in order to provide material support to people excluded by the system. However, by reproducing these divisions in our organisation, we also reproduce a racist dynamic that objectifies and disempowers us all as individuals, and fundamentally undermines the aims of our group.

We can’t simply step out of this contradiction. People can’t just stop being white saviours, like people can’t just stop being victimised. However, we can transform it over time through mutual collaboration and confrontation. By living and working together, our relationships change if we let them.

Unfortunately, a lot of activism and organising work often seems to be one-sided and repetitive.

[continued page 10]

**Right:** Volunteers and guests at Giuseppe Conlon House sorting donations for Calais in 2015 **Photo:** London Catholic Worker

**Above right:** Mural of Oscar Romero **Wikipedia commons**





# Oscar Romero and the Church in Britain

Sam Hickford

What could the Roman Catholic Church be? Could it be a voice for the marginalised, oppressed and silenced, and a gateway to a more conscious and equitable world? Or is it pre-ordained to be an instrument of the state, of capitalism, and of consumerism? Is it worth saving because of the few individuals it manages to accidentally enable? Reading James R. Brockman's biography *The Word Remains: A Life of Oscar Romero* (Orbis Books, New York, 1983), has helped me to reflect on these questions.

Oscar Romero was a thoroughly good bloke. He spoke out, at constant risk of abrupt murder, as many of his closest friends were killed by El Salvador's death squads and paramilitary organisations. He held a weekly mass in San Salvador Cathedral for the campesino (El Salvador's lower rural class), and for his clerical allies, who were murdered in the country. Romero also lambasted the government on his radio station, YSAX, which was the chief voice of dissent in the propaganda-saturated country. He was eventually killed while remembering one particular deceased – the mother of Jorge Pinto, editor of *El Independiente*, a newspaper that deviated from the government line - in a mass celebrated at a hospital. The offices of *El Independiente* had been bombed less than two weeks before. Romero lived all of his life tracing the shadow of death, and this grotesque irony continued after his death; at his own memorial service – attended by the campesino, for whom he had strived so audaciously – a bomb went off.

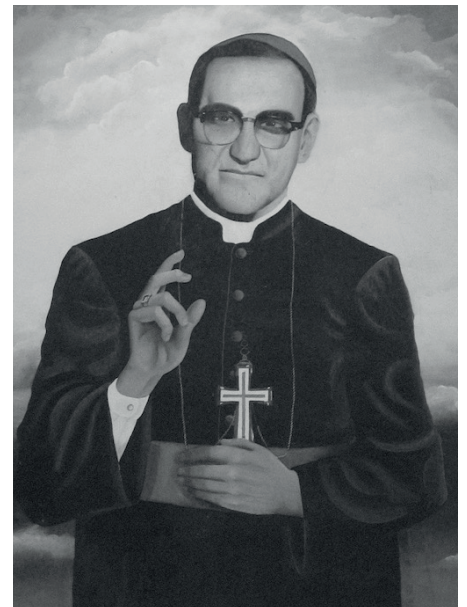
When reading about figures such as Oscar Romero, it is easy to heroise the Roman Catholic Church of Central and South America. It is a church that wel-

comed Marxism. It is a church from which Liberation Theology emerged. It is the church of Pope Francis, who has published bold encyclicals like *Laudato Si'*, calling for greater environmental protection. Today, South American Catholic priests are some of the fiercest opponents of the Brazilian government's systematic destruction of the rainforests.

But to caricature the entire Latin American Church this way would be a mistake, as the biography of Romero demonstrates. Romero himself was not always the bold and critical defender of human rights people remember him as. In his early days, as a then deeply "conservative" priest, he threatened Catholic schools that he suspected of disseminating Marxism.

At that time, it was really only the Jesuits that consistently and meaningfully opposed the government in El Salvador. One particular Jesuit priest and friend of Romero's – Rutilio Grande – had spoken out, and his brutal and un-investigated murder galvanised Romero. This was a government that murdered any dissenters, and yet the Catholic hierarchy in El Salvador co-operated with it. Romero would come to have constant conflicts with the papal nuncio, who continued to attend the murderous government's ceremonies, as well as many of his own bishops, who lamented that he had been influenced by Marxism. Romero himself constantly stated that Marxism's desire to create an 'earthly Heaven' was flawed, and one needs the fullness and promise of a spiritual Heaven in order to fight for equality and justice.

We perceive the Catholic Church in Latin and South America to be positive from the outside. But those who shine forth from it are, as from the church in the UK, emerging from an institutional and spineless organisation – one that could be a true voice for justice, but instead chooses to focus on a narrow range of issues. Do we have any clerical leader in the UK who compares to Romero in stature?



In Britain, we are witnessing widening inequality, the erosion of environmental protections, and an onslaught of the most endemic and serious poverty we have seen in generations. This government has refused to implement a proper lockdown, and instead prioritised the CBI and the beheaded Hydra of the 'economy'. It has failed to provide proper social security, instead insisting on complex furlough arrangements and the damp squib of 'Universal Credit', which has never been enough to live on.

Yet many of our politicians profess to be Catholic. Even Boris Johnson has just baptised his son. Imagine the country we could live in if senior church leaders called for Universal Basic Income – clearly the only rational solution to our plague-ravaged, post-industrial country? Imagine how many people would revisit the Church? All that remains is to pray, and so I pray that someone like Oscar Romero will shine forth from the clergy.

In the Anglican Church, the bishop of Durham, the Rt. Revd. Paul Butler has urged the government not to dismiss the idea of Universal Basic Income. This is a sign that Pope Francis' *Fratelli Tutti* is encouraging clerical leaders to take a more fervent stance on the cavalcades of poverty that are being led through the streets of an alarmingly unequal world.

*Sam Hickford is a poet and teacher and lives - in volunteer at Giuseppe Conlon House*

[from page 9] Doubts, conflicts and criticisms are often suppressed and ignored. The same approaches and actions are repeated again and again in almost the exact same way without allowing the method and the actors to also change through the process. We refuse to learn from the mistakes of other individuals and groups. And we are afraid or ashamed to share our experiences of failure with others.

Critical feedback and conflicted feelings should be welcomed as a sign that power dynamics are not stable. They are being questioned and changed. But the work, both of questioning and being questioned, should not be left to the individual. This is a big part of what causes us to burn out! Criticisms and doubts need to be explicitly expressed, heard and addressed in groups. It is the responsibility of the whole group. How we do this depends on each group and will also change over time. Our groups and methods need to constantly change, through diverse collaboration and confrontation. Otherwise we inevitably reproduce the very systems we are trying to fight.

[1] Howard Winant 2004 *The New Politics of Race: Globalism, Difference, Justice* p.25

[2] Audre Lorde, 1984 *The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House* in *Sister Outsider*  
 Nora Ziegler is a writer, grassroots organiser and member of the London Catholic Worker



Above: Margriet Bos and supporters hold a vigil outside the court in Cochem before the trial for their actions as part of a mass break-in at the airbase at Büchel, Germany in 2018. The banner reads, 'Nuclear weapons are illegal' Photo: Nuclear resistor

## Statement to the court at Cochem

*Margriet Bos*

I've told you a little about myself before. But I'm really nobody. I don't own the truth. I can't tell if a few years from now I'd do the same thing again. I entered the airbase because I was hoping to create disruption at a place where death and destruction are being prepared. It was the right step for me. I acted from my conscience and conviction. I intended to do the right thing and I acted nonviolently.

In recent years, I have become increasingly convinced that all life on earth is connected. Not only do all people form one big human family; we are connected to nature in the same intimate way. Although the living world can do well without people, the other way around is certainly not possible.

(The human species is the only one that is hardly aware of this, I believe...). In fact, without us, forests, oceans and rivers would probably not be in such a terrible state.

The connection, I think, comes from the fact that we all have the same creator. Who creates from an infinite love and enjoys beauty and joy. That's why it seems to me that only love can help us forward. Love creates space. Love celebrates diversity.

And from this it follows that no human being has the right to kill or threaten another human being, whoever this human being may be. Planning to kill people is exactly what happens at Büchel Air Base, and that's why I tried to disrupt and draw attention to what happens there.

The production, preparation, threat or use of nuclear weapons in any way goes against the power of love from which and for which we were created.



**On June 10 in Cochem, Germany, three peace activists were convicted of 'damage to property' and 'trespass' for their part in a protest in July 2018 at Büchel Air Base in Germany, where the United States Air Force stores and maintains twenty B61 thermonuclear gravity bombs. Marion Küpker, of Hamburg, Stefanie Augustin, of Dortmund, and Margriet Bos, of Amsterdam, were sentenced to fines ranging between 300 and 1,200 Euros, or 30 days in jail for refusing to pay.**

Allow me to briefly explain the problem with nuclear weapons. In the process of their production all means are allowed. For example there are no restrictions on mining for the necessary minerals. People are thrown off their land and their sacred sites dishonoured, drinking water is polluted. Already, in the early stages, building these immoral weapons sows death and destruction.

In the factories where atomic bombs are built, the number of sick workers is exceptionally high. Even before the weapons are manufactured, obtaining and working with the raw materials spoils nature AND mankind, The so called purpose of nuclear weapons, the deterrent itself, sows fear and distrust and builds walls between people. It is a major impediment to resolving conflicts without violence or threat of violence. It puts constant pressure on international relations.

Finally, there is the actual deployment of atomic bombs. A weapon that makes no distinction between soldiers and civilians. The atomic bombs stored at Büchel exceed the force of the bombs that fell on Japan many times over.

The huge sums of money invested in the development, manufacture and maintenance of nuclear weapons are taken from things that benefit us as human beings. How much easier the road to sustainable, nonviolent peace would be if we harnessed these resources for diplomacy, the cultivation of connection and peace, education in nonviolent communication, and a fairer distribution of the good we get from this earth?

These weapons of mass destruction are too big for us humans.

They don't fit us.

We can't oversee the disastrous consequences.

None of us, including world leaders who currently control them.

They're inhuman, unmanageable, immoral and illegal, according to human and divine law.

I would like to mention here for the sake of completeness that the international Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1968 is violated by the presence of atomic bombs on Büchel.

According to this treaty, the US is not allowed to have nuclear weapons in Germany (Art. II) and Germany is not allowed to receive nuclear weapons from the US (Art. I).

The Geneva Conventions prohibit indiscriminate attacks on non-combatants, attacks on neutral states and damage to the environment that lasts longer than the conflict. The Hague Peace Agreement prohibits any use of poison or poisonous weapons. Both Germany and the US are part of all these treaties.

I want to go back to the love I was talking about before, which is leading for me.

Someone who is an example to me in the power and scope of love is Jesus Christ.

The man who, for his words and acts of nonviolent love, was tried and executed by the state and



## **The Catholic Worker Farm needs your help!**

**The Catholic Worker Farm has been hit hard financially due to the COVID - 19 restrictions. They will be losing approximately £25 000 in funding this year. Anything you can do would be greatly appreciated. The money will be used for rent, food and utilities.**

**To donate please visit: [thecatholicworkerfarm.org](http://thecatholicworkerfarm.org)**

religious authorities of his time. What he did, he did not do to be disobedient to the law, but because he remained obedient to the God of nonviolent love, justice, and peace.

It is simple (but not necessarily easy!): either we choose more love, peace and justice or we don't. Every step we take, takes us in a certain direction.

Because we are made to live together in peace.

Without the threat of violence.

To enjoy all the good that is on this earth.

I'm grateful that you listened to me today. And I wish you peace and all the best.

*Margriet Bos is a member of Amsterdam Catholic Worker. To read the whole statement and find out more about this case visit*

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

# Giuseppe Conlon House Wish List

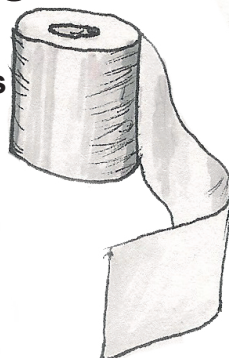
## Food

**Chopped tomatoes**  
**Peanut butter**  
**Cooking oil**  
**Kidney beans**  
**Lentils**  
**Chickpeas**  
**Easy-cook rice**  
 Basmati rice  
 Brown rice  
 Oats  
 Couscous  
 Noodles  
 White vinegar  
 Hummus  
 Nutritional yeast  
 Tahini  
 Soy sauce  
 Spices & herbs  
 Honey  
 Muesli  
 Breakfast cereal  
 Fruit juice and squash  
 Herbal teabags  
 Chilli sauce  
 Nuts and seeds



## Toiletries

**Toilet paper**  
**Toothbrushes**  
 Toothpaste  
 Deodorant  
 Shampoo  
 Liquid soap  
 Razors



## Cleaning

### Eco-friendly products:

**Anti-bacterial spray**  
 Bicarbonate of soda  
 Multi-purpose cleaner  
 Toilet cleaner  
 Laundry detergent  
 Floor cleaner



## Miscellaneous

NEW Men's underwear  
 M-XL  
 Candles and tea lights  
 Umbrellas



## Support our work

We are a part of the radical, Christian, pacifist Catholic Worker movement started in 1933 in New York by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin. There are now over 150 houses and communities in the United States and in other countries. Catholic Worker houses are financially independent. There are no headquarters, nor is there a central organisation. For more on the international movement visit: [www.catholicworker.com](http://www.catholicworker.com).

At Giuseppe Conlon House we run a house of hospitality for around twenty homeless, destitute asylum seekers who are not allowed to work or claim benefits. In collaboration with two local churches we also serve a meal for over fifty people on Sunday afternoons.

### Donations welcome!

We are not paid for this work. We receive nothing from the government. For reasons to do with our political witness, we are not a registered charity.

We rely on our readers' donations to pay utility bills, volunteer and guest expenses, for building repairs, printing, and household supplies.

### Ways to donate:

**Cheque:** send cheques payable to 'London Catholic Worker', to Giuseppe Conlon House, 49 Mattison Road, London N4 1BG

**Online banking:** London Catholic Worker, Triodos Bank, Acc No: 20066996 Sort Code: 16 58 10 IBAN:GB98NWBK60000410018573

**Paypal:** visit our home page [www.londoncatholicworker.org](http://www.londoncatholicworker.org)

**Standing Order:** to arrange a standing order use the adjacent form (left) or visit [www.londoncatholicworker.org](http://www.londoncatholicworker.org)

### Please do not donate pork or pork products!

Many of our guests do not eat pork for religious reasons. Also, please do not donate soup, tinned spaghetti or baked beans as we already have enough.

Standing Order Form <small>Please use block letters</small>	
I wish to pay the London Catholic Worker £10/ £20/£40/other amount per month/ other	
Payments to be made monthly/ other First Payment to be made on: ...../...../21 and monthly thereafter	
Name of your bank	
Address of your bank	
Your account name	
Your account number	
Your bank sort code	
Please pay:	For the Credit of: London Catholic Worker
Triodos Bank	Account Number 20066996
Deanery Road	Sort Code: 16 58 10
Bristol BS1 5AS	Until further notice the sum of the value indicated above
Signed	Date
Please return to :	Your Name and Address
London Catholic Worker	
49 Mattison Road	
London N4 1BG	Email