

THE LONDON CATHOLIC WORKER

issue 53

winter 2016

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All year we endeavour to give solid form to the words that 'God is Love' and 'We have no King but God' so it is a special time when the Church remembers that the Word of God was made Flesh a long time before it occurred to any of us, even to Peter Maurin or Dorothy Day, the first Catholic Workers.

We hope you have had a good year. Since few of us have had a year without some sorrow we hope you find some purpose in your trials and have found some company in your struggles. For the London Catholic Workers, 2016 has been an interesting year. Our lives are attempts at voluntary poverty wed to brothers and sisters who are very familiar with sorrow yet we do our best to find purpose in it, sustained by a community of guests, volunteers, visitors, friends and supporters.

Despite their high standing in the eyes of the Lord, Our Guests are amongst the least in the eyes of many in this country. In the eyes of some the Hospitality we provide is very basic but

to others it is wonderful. Sometimes I take it for granted that so many people contribute their time, money, skills, thoughts and prayers to help a group of men who are routinely portrayed by our media and government as sub-human. It is surely a work of the Holy Spirit that so many are moved to call these men their neighbour. In these acts, some seemingly mundane and some remarkable, many of the words spoken by Christ about the poor take form in the flesh of our many friends.

We ask that you pray for us, for our Guests and Volunteers in our many challenges in the coming year.

We rely solely on the kindness of our supporters for the day to day running of our House of Hospitality, our soup kitchen and other projects. Food, clothing and furniture is either found or donated.

The help, in cash donations, from you, our readers, fills many of the larger gaps.

Some of the larger items and bills

that we need to raise money for this Christmas:

- **Heating** - to offer comfort on winter evenings
- **Maintenance** - A new sturdy gate between our alley and the street and necessary repairs to the roof and gutters
- **Health and safety** - a new fire alarm system

Dorothy Day said that "heaven is a banquet and life is a banquet, too, even with a crust, where there is companionship."

Or in the words of Sarojini Naidu: "If Gandhi only knew how much it costs us to keep him in poverty!". Voluntary poverty is a strangely luxurious lifestyle, with new trials and purposes, many struggles and many companions. We are ever grateful to you for joining us in these works of mercy and we are ever grateful to God for your friendship in this.

**For ways to donate
turn to the back**

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The Catholic Worker in the UK

London Catholic Worker

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Giuseppe Conlon House offers hospitality to destitute refugees. We also run the Urban Table soup kitchen.

Sunday 2:30 — 4:30 pm, The Round Chapel, London E5 0PU

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 poustina and hermitage retreat. Maryhouse also offers a home to four destitute women with children.

Glasgow Catholic Worker

Email: glw@catholicworker.org.uk

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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 regular vigil at Faslane Nuclear Base and hold monthly meetings and prayers.

Tolstoy and nonviolence

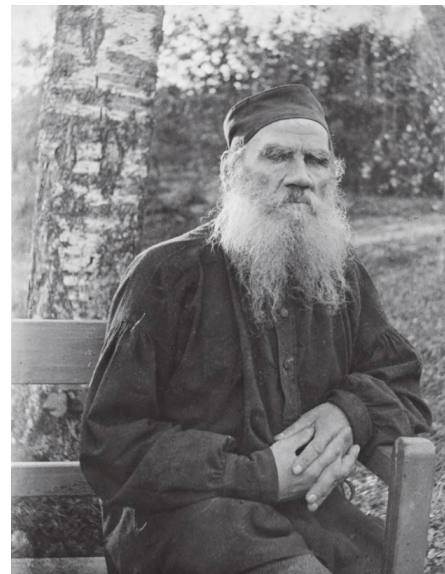
Nora Ziegler

At this year's London Anarchist Bookfair Nora gave a talk about Tolstoy's theory of nonviolence.

I first learned about Christian Anarchism through reading Tolstoy at university and his ideas inspired me to explore how I can bring together my faith and political ideals within my own life. I first came to Giuseppe Conlon House almost four years ago hoping to learn more about Christian Anarchism and how a radical reading of the Gospel can be put into practice.

Tolstoy was a Russian aristocrat who lived from 1829 to 1919. He is well known for his novels *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*. Later in his life he experienced a moral crisis, converted to Christianity and gave up his aristocratic privileges and property. This was probably influenced by his experiences as a soldier in the Crimean War, witnessing a public execution in Paris in 1869, his meetings with the French anarchist thinker Pierre-Joseph Proudhon as well as study of the Bible, especially the Sermon on the Mount. He developed a theory of non-violence and anarchism based on his Christian faith and wrote several books on this topic, including *The Kingdom of God is Within You* in 1894.

Despite the popular violent image of anarchism, the question of non-violence has always played a key role in anarchist thought. Like other



Leo Tolstoy 1897

anarchists such as Mikhail Bakunin, Peter Kropotkin and Errico Malatesta, Tolstoy associated violence primarily with the state. He also agreed that a violent revolution would still be less violent than the repressive state. The central question for these thinkers was, “how could state violence be overcome and is there a justified kind of revolutionary violence?”

For example, Kropotkin believed that humans naturally value human life and seek to cooperate but this natural instinct is suppressed and corrupted by the state system. He argued that revolutionary violence was a paradoxical but necessary evil to liberate the people from the state's oppression. Malatesta believed that violence was completely opposed to anarchism which should carry human dignity and love at its core. However, since resistance to the state would inevitably lead to violent repression, the right of self-defence and, more importantly, the duty to defend others, would result in a need for revolutionary violence.

However, most influential anarchist thinkers agreed that the ends must condition the means and therefore revolutionary violence should and would not be excessive or cruel. For example, Bakunin, who was a Russian aristocrat like Tolstoy, thought that a civil war was the only way to disrupt state power and awaken and organise the people. However, he mostly disapproved of individual acts of violence or terror, since “the revolution sought to destroy institutions, not individuals”.

This is where Tolstoy disagreed with other anarchist thinkers of his time. He believed that violence could never be used to overcome violence, because even though revolutionary violence could not exceed state violence, it would still be part of the same underlying evil. According to Tolstoy the only possible resistance to state violence is radical non-participation in any form of government.

Where Bakunin described different kinds of violence, the revolutionary anger of the oppressed masses opposed to the oppressive violence of the state, Tolstoy saw all violence based on the same principle of coercion. Coercion was the impulse to dominate, to control life, to “love power”, which Tolstoy believed to be contradictory to love of people and

life in general. Tolstoy argued that any kind of government or organisation, including the state and the church on the one hand but also revolutionary action on the other, is based on coercion. The fallacy of revolutionary action, he thought, is the belief that any group can seize power and bring about and maintain a just state of affairs.

Tolstoy believed that in the gospels Christ calls his followers to give up the desire to dominate and instead trust in God's justice. He interpreted the Sermon on the Mount as a call to love all people, not repay evil for evil and not worry about the future but live in the present trusting that God will provide. This means to not participate in oppressive institutions but also give up the idea that people can build "good" institutions in their place, and put faith in God, rather than domination, as the organising principle of life. This means to have faith that there is already good in the world, we don't have to try to create it, we just have to stop doing bad.

Interpreting Christ's message as a call to give up control over life is intriguing but also seems slightly paradoxical. I've been thinking about how one can take personal responsibility while at the same time giving up the impulse to organise and manage. I wonder if that is what love is: to take responsibility and care for others, and also for yourself and the earth, without the need for ownership. To love others as Christ loved us is a gift, or as Peter Maurin put it, a "personal sacrifice".

I think it is this kind of love that the Catholic Worker tries to put into practice. Living in community means trusting that others, who I need in my life, will accept me as I am and forgive my mistakes. Living simply means being generous with what I have and relying on other people's generosity

too. We aim to build our work of hospitality on personal relationships and mutual trust rather than top-down authority. Our non-violent resistance aims to bear witness to God's love through acts of non-compliance, mourning and solidarity. All these things involve letting go of control and letting God fill the gap. Like Tolstoy says, we don't need a better system that enables us to love. We need to have faith that love is already here.

Nora Ziegler is a live-in member of the community at Giuseppe Conlon House

Just peace roundtable discussion

Henrietta Cullinan

After hearing from participants in the Just Peace conference at the Vatican last April, where delegates from xx countries were to debate the legitimacy of the Just theory, we set aside one month's roundtable discussion to read and reflect on some of the background papers submitted to the conference, available on the Christian Nonviolence Initiative website.

In the materials it asks us to consider "Just War" theory in our own context. So we stood in a spectrum on where we stood on pacifism and Just War, where our church stands and our respective countries. For the UK and Australian citizens in the room, came the graphic realisation that we were off the scale. Our country profits from war. Our country promotes war, through the arms trade, militarism and nationalism.

During the session we wondered why this debate had occurred now. Several points come to mind. In her study 'Official Catholic Thought on Gospel Nonviolence', Lisa Sowle Cahill says Just War theory, has always been secondary to commitment to peace. In 1914 Pope Benedict XV wrote

that Just War theory was unable to deal with the reality of war.

War has also changed in that it's now more or less perpetual and invisible at the fringes. How can a drone be accountable or proportional? Or how do I surrender to a drone? When Briton Reyaad Khan was targeted and killed in a drone strike, Cameron said it was legitimate act of self defence, to prevent terrorist attacks in the UK.

In the paper on 'Exegesis on Jesus' non-violence from Terence J Rynne, we read how the early Christians were peaceful. Jesus knew about violence in his time and he preached nonviolence again and again, Sermon on the Mount, Beatitudes, his own crucifixion, his lament over Jerusalem. One of the most powerful passages was, 'Oh, Jerusalem I wanted to take you under my wings as does a hen her chicks. (Luke 13:34)

As one of the group said, he wishes he could wave a magic wand but he couldn't. He is a human being who follows a non-violent path, just when he says 'Put your sword away'. What Rynne terms 'Christology from below' clearly tells us that to follow Jesus we must do the same and be nonviolent. At the London Catholic Worker, we have studied these passages many times during faith and resistance retreats, so reading these official documents gave us a lot of hope.

Ordinary congregations listen to sermons that are often about domestic matters, which, however true and relevant, give us the impression we are powerless. The RC church is big so imagine how wonderful if it became a 'peace' church. Or else how wonderful it would be if all the congregations knew how far we could say, 'I'm a catholic. I believe in Just Peace.'

<https://nonviolencejustpeace.net> The website provides resources for education, prayer, and examples where communities have resolved conflict through peaceful means



"Sore Throat" Cartoon, by the Giuseppe Conlon House cats

God speaks from the 'dougar'

Henrietta Cullinan

I met a young man in the Calais hospital. His heavily bandaged hand looked painful. He was sunk into the bedclothes, his skin grey. How had he hurt his hand? 'Dougar', he said. As one of the volunteers, a refugee himself, chatted to him in his own language, he brightened up a bit, realising he was being offered food and clothes.

The road to the port crosses over the entrance to the Jungle camp and continually there is the skyline of the lorries trundling left to right towards the ferry, to England. Any picture of the camp taken from a high spot in the dunes has this line of traffic on the horizon. Between the embankment of the road and the camp is a kind of 'maidan' where people play cricket and football. But this is also the place where police throw tear gas to stop people running up the bank.

For me visiting the Jungle camp was certainly biblical. Every morning at Maria Skobtsova House community I listened to the scriptures read aloud in English, French and Farsi. The voices cracked as if the readers realised the poignancy of the words.

As the self-determined nature of the camp revealed itself to me, with its ancient-seeming organisations and its communal nature, the Bible readings became more and more alive. People there, I was told, were used to living in large groups. Even if they collected food aid in individual portions, they would put the food together onto one communal plate and eat it together, according to their custom.

While I deeply welcomed the daily readings and prayer in three languages, in the Jungle my faith was being tested, in the classic fashion. How can there be a God while such things happen? It was a nudging doubt in my head that I'd never heard before.

Shortly before I went to Calais, I attended the Refugees Welcome rally in Parliament Square, with my daughter, my husband, friends and relatives. It is our moral duty, the rally said hopefully, to care for each refugee or indeed each person who comes to us



The Jungle camp with the 'dougar' visible on the horizon photo: Henrietta Cullinan

in need. At the same time the media reported the death of an Afghan boy who already had permission to come to the UK, who was killed on the 'dougar', the traffic jam of lorries lining up for the port in Calais. I was shocked at the vitriol and anger on social media that followed both the rally and this incident. It made me think people are afraid. They are unable to cope with the idea of their duty to each refugee. And so they should be. People are afraid on both sides of the channel.

This is when Abraham, the father of faith, sprung into my mind. God told Abraham to take his only son Isaac up Mount Moria, with a knife, fire wood tied to a donkey. Many writers; Bob Dylan, Kierkegaard, Derrida have looked to this moment for truths about religion, faith and sacrifice. Derrida, in "The Gift of Death", spends a lot of time looking at the moment when God stops Abraham from killing his son. It is an "impossible moment", he says, "neither present or future", not graspable. It is the moment when there is no longer an exchange. Abraham leaves oikonomia, the normal relations of home and existence, work, to take his son up the mountain. The same son in which all his hope for the future of his descendants lies. God tells him to.

Simon Jones, a Baptist minister who has been visiting the Jungle for many years, tells me people in the Jungle don't think in terms of an individual life and death, or of searching for a better life for themselves. Instead, it is a moment of seeking for life itself. It is survival for them but also for the future of their family, their descendants. Families or communities in Afghanistan, Iran, Sudan, Eritrea, places where existence - not daily life/job/mortgage as we think of it, but the very existence for them and their family - has

become impossible. They see that there is no future. They send their children to Europe, send money, stay in contact through Whatsapp, just as Abraham collected the firewood, took the knife and loaded up the donkey to climb the mountain in Moriah.

When Abraham lifts the knife, God stops him. Then God promises Abraham that his descendants will be as numerous as the grains of sand on the beach or stars in the sky.

Abraham was travelling looking for a place for his people. His only son Isaac represents his hopes for the future, for his people's very existence. In the moment of sacrifice, when he raises the knife to sacrifice Isaac, he is following God's orders. God speaks to him.

This is the terrifying moment when God speaks to us. An impossible moment of "right-now-this-minute, neither past nor future", according to Derrida. God is speaking to us. There is the moment between climbing on a lorry and not being on the lorry, falling. Through the deaths on the Calais 'rocade'.

God is speaking to us from the 'dougar' and from the Jungle camp. If we listen we will save our sons and daughters as well as our brothers and sisters. Like Abraham we can stay the knife. This is Isaac on the 'dougar'. God is telling us to sacrifice Isaac and rescue him both at the same time.

No wonder we are frightened. No wonder the tabloid press have debased themselves. I've spent enough time on the street handing out leaflets to know that when people come and abuse me, say 'get a job, lesbian hippy', it's because they are frightened not of me but of the reminder that we collectively are doing something very,

very wrong. They are just turning their faces from what God is telling us, or not even God, but what the situation is telling us about ourselves. We are not welcoming; we are vain, greedy, selfish and lazy. Worst of all we lack faith. We are so afraid our government is building a wall, another folly, the trucks loaded with spoil from building the wall trundling backwards and forwards near the camp. We have so many different ways in which to display our lack of faith!

I remember Luke's gospel. Each sparrow is precious, no one is more or less. Each one is precious to God. I can't meet all of them. For us weaklings, we can only speak to a few people at a time.

The young man in hospital with his injured hand becomes precious. The women I meet come out of the sky mist, become stars. But I can't meet all of them, *Secours Catholique* can't meet all of them. Instead we need to have faith like Abraham.

Henrietta Cullinan is a member of the London Catholic Worker and edits this

A journey from Roman Catholicism to Quakerism

Susan Clarkson

The first Quakers I met lived in a small mining village in Yorkshire. They were a family who were enthusiastic about different churches working together. At that time, the mid-1970s, I lived in a small religious community and worked as a teacher in a local Catholic school. I remember being attracted to Quaker faith and practice at the time but felt that to leave Catholicism and my religious order was too great a leap.

I was brought up as a Catholic in my home city of Bradford, also in Yorkshire. At the age of nineteen, in 1966, I joined a Catholic religious order called the Sisters of Christ. The sisters ran schools in England and I became a teacher.

It was a very exciting time to be a Catholic and a nun. In the 1960s there was a Council of the Church, the Second Vatican Council, which revitalised many aspects of Catholic life, from liturgical change to deeper relations with other Christians and other faiths.

Catholics in many countries became actively involved in issues of justice and peace. This appealed to me too and I was able to work with others on issues such as nuclear disarmament and inequality in society.

In 1993, after several happy years working as a school chaplain, again in Yorkshire, I became ill. In 1994 I moved to a community of our sisters in London and began working with homeless people. It was at this time that I heard about the Catholic Worker Movement.

With the support of my religious order I was able to spend two years living and working with CW communities in Los Angeles, Washington D.C and New York. During this time I learnt a great deal about Dorothy Day and the CW Movement. I also met other peace activists, especially those acting from Christian conviction. In 2001 I was arrested for the first time outside the White House on Holy Saturday.

On my return to England I joined the CW community in Oxford. This was again with the support of the Sisters of Christ and I shall always be grateful for their encouragement. However, it became apparent to me and to my superiors that this work of hospitality and resistance to war was where God wanted me to be. After three years of discernment it was decided that I should leave the Sisters in order to carry on this work. The Sisters loved the work of hospitality but were uneasy about the direct action, especially as I have been arrested several times since 2004 when I came to Oxford. I officially left the Sisters of Christ in 2009, with sadness but with the blessing of my superiors. I still keep in contact with the sisters.

As soon as I came to Oxford in 2004 I met Quakers. Oxford has a large active Meeting and many of the people I met on demonstrations against war and nuclear weapons were Quakers. I began to deepen my knowledge of the Society of Friends by attending Meeting for Worship and reading Quaker literature. I realised that the non-hierarchical nature of the Society, the mystery in the silence at Meeting and the Testimonies answered a great longing in me for a simpler way of following Jesus and putting his Gospel teaching into practice. For a few years there was certainly a tension in me for I was, after all, part of the Catholic Worker Movement. Again I set out on

a journey of discernment with the help of two guides, a Catholic and a Quaker. I also did a silent retreat. For a while I attended both Mass and Meeting for Worship on Sunday but found this cumbersome and confusing. I decided to focus on Meeting for Worship and see where God would lead.

In 2012 I went to Afghanistan on a peace delegation with three other women from Voices for Creative Nonviolence UK. I had already been attending Meeting for two years and was deeply moved by the support I received from Oxford Quakers as I prepared for this visit. I decided on my return to apply for membership and have now been a member for over two years.

Until June of this year I continued to work at the Catholic Worker house of hospitality for refugees in Oxford. Becoming a Quaker has made no difference to my commitment to hospitality and resistance, indeed it has strengthened it. For practical reasons the house had to close in June so at the time of writing this I am discerning the best way to go forward in the remaining years of my life as a Quaker and a peace activist.

Last year I visited Perm in Russia as part of the exchanges between Oxford and Perm who are twin cities. On my return I attended a conference at Woodbrooke, the Quaker Study Centre in Britain, about Quakers in Russia where I met Natasha and Sergei from Friends' House Moscow. In September I met Natasha again in Moscow, on my way back from a second visit to Perm. This contact with Russian Quakers and other Friends worldwide who are similarly connected to FHM has added a new and most welcome aspect to my life as a Quaker.

As an elder I am involved in the life of the Meeting and am also part of the Oxford Friends Action on Poverty, as well as being a member of our group working to commemorate the beginning of conscientious objection in 1916. To close the circle, the mother in the Quaker family I met forty years ago was the daughter of a noted British CO of the First World War, Corder Catchpool.

Susan Clarkson is a Catholic Worker and peace activist

'The jungle is finished but our work goes on'

Johannes Maertens

Often people ask me how I feel now the Jungle has gone and especially how it felt to experience the demolition from so close by again. The answer is that my heart is saddened by the way it all happened: the people I worked with for months have forcibly been moved, a community I belonged to is now no longer. So, all our volunteers and those of our partner Caritas and many others feel sad and angry.

I am sad and heartbroken not because of the Jungle, the Jungle is only dust, but because of the people who are broken, because the dust in our souls and eyes. Because I love I am heartbroken, but I will always love, as this you will never steal from me.
-A volunteer, October 28, 2016

The demolition happened in 5 days. About 10,000 people were moved in less than a week to all the corners of France. In coaches, they didn't know where they were being taken, or how long they would be able to stay at these centres and what their legal status would be. The authorities have always communicated vaguely and at the very last moment. People, the ones who have our numbers, are now calling from Marseilles, Vienne, Toulouse, Strasbourg to Langres to let us know how it is.

I am worried about my friend Amaniël who is 16 and waiting to join his sister in the UK. He is now in a centre in the South of France. Or Yamanjé, 16, who had hoped to be on a bus to London by now but who's now in Langres instead. These youngsters are travelling alone without family or friends. I had met them in the Orthodox Church in the Jungle and followed them closely because of their vulnerability. We stay in contact with Amaniël and his sister in the UK and with Yamanjé.

I am worried about Mohammed, an isolated young Sudanese man with

serious mental health issues, who lived in the Jungle for 8 months. He lost control over his life after losing his young wife when traveling through the Libyan Desert. He stepped on a coach to somewhere with the help of an Eritrean man who took care of him. I couldn't walk through the camp without Mohammed running up to me, shouting either in joy or anger 'babba, babba, babba'. He could be so annoying sometimes, taking up all the attention at the wrong moment and scaring people off. But I learned to love him and care for him and to put my fears aside. What will happen to him? Will they understand he has mental health problems, psychological pain and not anger?

I am worried for Titi, one of the Eritrean women who used to pray at our



Making tea in the Jungle photo: Johannes Maertens

house. She called in tears, saying that she didn't know where the coach was taking her and she had already been on the coach for more than 12 hours. She also ended up somewhere near the Spanish border. After everything refugees have been through that is how we treat them.

In the last months so many people have passed through our house. So many volunteers and students joined us and we had the privilege of being part of so many people's lives, learned from their cultures, customs and languages. The Jungle was a place of destitution, pain and violence but also of community, hospitality and friendship. It was one of the few places in the world I knew where Afghans,

Sudanese, Ethiopians, Eritreans, Muslims and Christians lived together, formed community and faced all the challenges this posed.

"It takes a lot of resources to welcome somebody with food and tea. Water needs to be heated on little wood fires. there are wood shortages in the jungle. Volunteers bring it in and distribute it. Making a little fire, bringing the water to the boil, washing the cups with hot water. First the guests are served and when there is enough and there are enough cups the hosts take for themselves. Hospitality in the jungle in all the communities is a big thing. To share what you have with the stranger." October 17, 2016.

From the very beginning our house focussed on the most vulnerable refugees and migrants. In practice that meant that most people coming in to the house had health problems, exhaustion or stress. People came to us from the city or the Jungle hospitals. In a way our house evolved into a sort of hospice. Weekly visits to the refugees in the hospital became part of our work, and transport to and from the hospital.

The Jungle hospital packed up on Friday and emptied its 'container modules', the refugees were placed in other centres. 'Oh... wait what about Mamoot,' the nurses must have panicked. It seems the authorities had forgotten about him. Mamoot (from Egypt) is now in our house, he is a young man recovering from bone cancer legally in this country. He will be staying with us until his next admission to hospital in two weeks. And what about Emal from Afghanistan who has a broken jaw and stays with us until local government finds him accommodation?

Our house has six guests for the moment, with health or vulnerability issues. There are more refugees coming from hospital who have nowhere to go. The work continues.

Refugees and migrants have been coming to Calais since 1998, since the war in Kosovo. Refugees have lived in squatted houses, beach huts, in bushes, in the dunes and in several jungles. As long as Calais is the main

Worker community in Calais, France

geographical and logistic connection between France and the UK, refugees and migrants will continue to come. And hopefully our work will continue to serve the most vulnerable of God's children here in Calais.

Often I have met God in the jungle, in the walking and talking with refugees, in sitting together in silence because we have no language in common, just enjoying a cup of tea, in the joy and the pain of what happens. In these people lives my relationship with God has deepened and changed me. I now understand for myself more what it means to meet Christ in the stranger.

In the following weeks we will see how we can start working again in Calais with new arrivals refugees and migrants. No, the work hasn't finished but it will change. While in the jungle refugees could come to us, now we have to find the refugees ourselves, taking our services to them.

Caritas (Secours Catholique Calais), Auberge des Migrants, Salam, Medicin du Monde and our house Maria Skobtsova will keep on working in Calais and surroundings. We still will need your prayer and support.

Broeder Johannes Maertens founded the Catholic Worker in Calais. Maria Skobtsova House offers hospitality to volunteers and vulnerable refugees

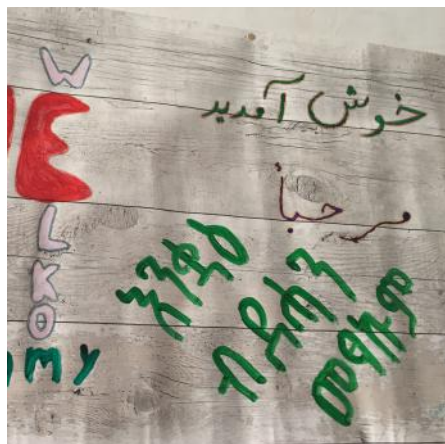
The Big Sister House

Tim Gee

Tonight 28 people gather for dinner at Maria Skobtsova House, celebrating the arrival of paperwork for the Afghan en route to meet family in Britain in the morning.

Like the Parisian flat of the revolutionary turned nun whose name graces the entrance, Maria Skobtsova House is a base for support efforts for people unreached by other services and a place of political and theological discussion as residents and visitors discern their most useful course of action.

For Alex, a French-British law graduate. that means helping



Welcome in five languages, Maria Skobtsova House photo Henrietta Cullinan

people with their paperwork. For Juliet, a Baptist minister, that means accompanying unaccompanied children to be registered with the French authorities in the hope that the documentation will be completed in time before the eviction. For Sister Anne-Laurence, who stays at the nearby convent, it means joining multilingual visits to hospital to keep people company, ceaselessly encouraging the learning of French. For Francois - a Frenchman in his twenties awaiting his first job in banking - it can be as simple as driving the van, contributing to the household chores and being part of what each day brings.

Then there's Simon who likes to say "Je suis un pacefacteur" at the camp entrance. When I ask what that means, he replies, "We're not here to save people. We're here to walk alongside." Once the first aid, food and clothes distribution operations were up and running he noticed plenty of people rushing around in groups of 30 before rushing out again, but very few people simply listening. So nearly every week for the past year, that's what he has been there to do. Though every day brings new challenges.

Today comes the news that some aid workers are now being denied access to Calais altogether, including a Jungle teacher connected to the house. People have seen lorries of police horses, water cannons, and the town seems to be increasingly patrolled. Stories circulate about people having their shoes taken off them by police. If the aim is to damage morale, it is working. On site you can see people packing up, moving on, some not wanting to throw in their lot with a system they

have learnt to distrust, others willing to take their chance in whatever part of France their bus takes them to.

The community of the project is beginning to change too, which we mark with an Iranian meal with a group of refugees who have become volunteers but are now moving on. They each tearfully explain how helping others has transformed them. "Before I volunteered I thought there were no good people, but here I have experienced such love with this community that I feel a duty to help others" explains one. Another says he has learnt in practice that if you do good for others the good will be returned many times over. And all the while I find my perspective changed. I came to Calais expecting to find a humanitarian crisis and a pit of despair. I didn't expect that within it I would find a well of humanity surviving against the odds. In the face of the imposed identities that determine who can walk where, I've been part of a place where divisions begin to be dissolved through mutual service. Most of all, every act is a reminder that, even in the shadow of the deepest injustice, everyone's light can shine.

There's a story that there is a plan to turn the land where the Jungle now stands into an adventure park eventually. Maybe eventually there will be a museum though, with a scrap of fence left where coachloads of school parties will marvel at the ways that human desire for freedom triumphed over the forces that aligned to restrict it.

Tim Gee volunteers at Giuseppe Conlon House. He visited Maria Skobtsova House in October, just before the camp eviction.

-
- **Donations :** •
- **Association Maria** •
- **Skobtsova** •
- 170 Rue Anatole France •
- 62100 Calais, FRANCE •
- IBAN: •
- **FR7615629026250002172700193** •
- **BIC: CMCIFR2A** •
- **Bank: CCM Calais, 85 rue** •
- **Mollien, 62100 Calais, France** •
- **Your support for this** •
- **work is appreciated!** •
-

Thank you for your honesty..

Juanjo Peris, translated by Magda Cullinan

“Thank you for your honesty, but being homosexual and working for the church is not compatible”. It was not the first time I had heard these words put an end to something in some way or another. This time, having reached the big four-oh, I decided to end this stage of my life and start a journey outside of ecclesiastical institutions. After an unsuccessful year looking for work in Spain, I migrated to London for some linguistic immersion. So I arrived at Giuseppe Conlon House, a community of Catholic Workers. There I lived with seven volunteers and 22 destitute asylum seekers (from Sierra Leona, Burundi, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Iraq, Ghana, Nigeria, India, Argelia, Georgia...).

It certainly seemed inconsistent that, having decided to begin a new era outside of ecclesiastical institutions, I found myself living inside a physical temple. Giuseppe Conlon House is housed in a disused Methodist church that was handed over to the Catholics for lack of worshippers. Living temporarily in London with a community that welcomes the excluded and generates networks of solidarity seemed an appealing way of commencing a new chapter. Following the advice of a good friend (a non-believer), and after some studying at the University of Loyola in Andalusia and an Easter spent in the rambling community, Pueblo de Dios, I decided to go for it.

I ended up living with the London Catholic Worker for 16 months. During this time, I carried out groundwork for the opening of a new house of hospitality for refugees from the Jungle in Calais. Through the Jesuit Refugee Service, I visited detention centres for London migrants. These are the only ones in Europe to be detained indefinitely.

Taking stock of this time I can say firstly that living with a community of migrants that have escaped countries of conflict, persecution for belonging to an ethnic minority or for their sexual orientation, has brought me to a healing space. I felt especially

welcome in the Jungle, where before I could even put up my tent I was invited to join the Sudanese in theirs. There I experienced the difference between the structural hospitality that we can offer and what they offered me.

This time has been a space of care and kindness in a context of regression of rights and structural injustice. Living with migrants who left their countries years ago and with little evidence to document their story and have no chance of legalising their situation, has made me keenly aware of injustice. There are those that, having left their country after escaping armed individuals out to kill their family, are unable to access documents that prove their origin because they come from failed states. As told by an asylum seeker in an Amnesty International meeting, there are also those who, to protect themselves from persecution, have spent their whole lives eliminating any trace that would reveal their sexual identity. This, as a result, makes it rather difficult to back up their story with evidence. We are not protecting those that we must protect. The system does not listen. It's as if it is designed to operate on predetermined quotas rather than to protect. We have even seen a regression of rights that until now had always been respected. For example, the protection of minors deteriorated during the dismantling of the Jungle in Calais. Without a serious diagnosis of the situation, the press presented ridiculous figures of the number of minors the government was willing to protect, which in no way corresponded to the inferior reality. The message is that the system cannot protect everyone and consequently offering refuge goes from being a universal duty to just being a kind and gracious act. Vulnerable people can no longer count on a system of protection and thus rely more and more on charitable organisations and solidarity networks. We must respond with hospitality and restore the political space.

My time at Giuseppe Conlon House was a time of shared simplicity. It was about learning to care about what is important, and to disregard what is not. It was about generating networks with anonymous people, like the parishes and nearby organisations that visited us and cared for us. It was about learning that you could live relatively well solely from donations. It was about anger and sadness when living

with people who, after years of waiting and not achieving their dream, suffer episodes of mental illness. Or others that while just trying to get by end up being criminalised; locked away in a detention centre and deported. The majority of people that I visited in the detention centre had already been in the UK for a while and were hunted by the police after taking themselves to the agency that had offered them work.

Giuseppe Conlon House is a learning space of invisible networks of solidarity and the creation of synergy. Some migrants take part as volunteers in organisations that work with refugees. This can include handing out food, offering information and support, or cooking in day centres for homeless people. Others visit and cook for people that for health reasons cannot do it themselves. Others also organise awareness actions and protests related to the situations of their communities back home. As well as this, the house is a point of reference for other Catholic Workers. These included volunteers and activists mostly from the USA and other parts of the UK stopping over in London, who we gladly welcomed and enjoyed sharing experiences with.

It was a place to reaffirm my story, where I could assert what I believe and what I am still unsure about. There is still something inside the temple that excludes and something outside of it that unifies. I still feel the need to remain in these gaps in society, like the Jungle in Calais and the detention centres, for a consistency that is crucial. It is there where I feel overwhelmed by reality and it takes me beyond the ordinary. There I take action against injustice and suffering. I still do not know how to manage what is beyond my grasp. I no longer relate to the 'priestly' prayer that helped me in other moments of my life. I am still looking. The silence helps me determine the strain between what is and what should be.

Finally it has been a space of reaffirmation to continue working professionally in these societal gaps. With the tools of social work we can restore political space and shared simplicity. We can generate networks with those who come into our lives.

*First published in *Cristinisme i Justiciain*. Juanjo Peris was a live-in volunteer at Giuseppe Conlon House*

Giuseppe Conlon House update

We've had a busy Autumn with a lot of exciting events, but also because three Live-In Volunteers left during the summer. With one new volunteer, Sam, arriving in the end of November, there are now five of us living in the community at Giuseppe Conlon House.

In October the three Core members of the community, Roland, Mirjam and Nora, went on a three-day retreat to visit the Catholic Worker community in Amsterdam and do some long-term visioning and planning. It is always interesting to visit other communities and see how different they can be while based on the same ideals and values. It helps us broaden our perspective but also not be too hard on ourselves. It was good to spend time with our friends at Jeanette Noel Huis and have time and space to think about the bigger questions.

On the last Saturday of October we ran a stall and a workshop at the London Anarchist Bookfair. In our workshop on 'Christian Anarchism and Non-Violence', Nora spoke about Leo Tolstoy, how his ideas inspired her, and how they relate to the Catholic Worker (see page 2 for Nora's article based on the workshop). At our stall we gave out newsletters and sold books, chutney and banana jam.

Our November round-table discussion was led by Henrietta Cullinan on the topic of "just peace". You can read the report on page 3

Later in November together with Global Women's Strike we hosted a conference on 'caring work and anti-capitalist strategy'. Caring work is often made invisible in capitalist society because it is mostly performed by women and it is usually under- or unpaid. At the same time it provides a valuable, shared and critical perspective on oppression and injustice



Nora Ziegler introduces the 'Caring Work' conference in front of the Global Women's Strike banner photo Henrietta Cullinan

because it puts life, rather than profit, at the centre. 'Caring work' involves looking after, nourishing, accompanying and seeking justice for others. It also involves building community and supportive relationships, and caring for the environment. In many ways our work at Giuseppe Conlon House can be thought of as 'caring work'.

After an opening talk by Selma James, we had an open discussion and smaller group workshops about the different kinds of caring work in our lives, work and activism, and why it is important to think of these activities as 'caring work'. It was a diverse gathering of committed and inspiring people, including participants from Single Mothers' Self Defence, All African Women's Group, Winvisible (women with visible and invisible disabilities), Campaign Against Arms Trade, Voices for Creative Non-Violence, and the English Collective of Prostitutes.

We are now looking forward to a round-table discussion with Broeder Johannes Maertens on 1st December and our Christmas party on the 3rd. Johannes was a member of the community here and is now based in Calais where he founded Maria Skobtsova House (see page 6).

from Easy Essays

Peter Maurin

On Ghandi Lines

Strike news
doesn't strike me
but the sit-down strike
is a different strike
from the ordinary strike.
In the sit-down strike
you don't strike anybody
either on the jaw
or under the belt,
you just sit down.
The sit-down strike
is essentially
a peaceful strike.
If the sit-down strike
remains a sit-down strike,
that is to say,
a strike in which you strike
by just sitting down,
it may be a means
of bringing about
desirable results.
The sit-down strike
must be conducted
on Ghandi lines,
that is to say,
according to the doctrine
of pure means
as expressed by Jacques
Maritain.

Easy Essays can be read online
at www.easyessays.org

Write in!

We warmly invite you, the reader, to comment on what is written here. Please keep your letters topical and brief. We will be including interesting letters in our next issue, Spring 2017.

We also welcome drawings
and poems

Contact details: page 2

Urban Table

Joel Pullin

We all eat. We all drink. We all know what it feels like to be hungry and thirsty. Eating is an undisputed commonality that we all share regardless of gender, race, class, religion, language and nationality. It's a process which unites us. To cook, to serve and to eat is the reason why I volunteer every two weeks for Urban Table at The Clapton Round Chapel on Glenarm Road from 1.15 on Sunday. Despite rarely touching the food we offer my belly always feels full at the end.

Some of us want bread with no butter. Some of us eat pasta by itself. Some of us leave the pasta and have the sauce. Some of us like milk in our tea. Some of us take sugar. Some of us just want the sugar perhaps with a little tea and coffee. Some of us feel the coffee is too strong. Some of us feel it's too weak. Some of us bring our own sweetener or a special cup. Some of us just wait for the cakes. Some of us eat the orange with the rind. Some of us want the apples to be peeled. Some of us want the bread without the crust. Some of us just like the company. Some

of us want to be left alone. Some of us ask for kisses they cannot have. Some of us teach others new ways to stir a cup of tea.

From what little opportunities the people may or may not have at



St. Elizabeth
of Hungary

Ade Bethune, St. Elizabeth of Hungary, wood cut

Urban Table there are still choices. Choices that on the surface may seem small but are really as idiosyncratic and imaginative as the people who come week in week out. As idiosyncratic, indeed, as the people who come to eat at

our table just the once.

You choose to sit with strangers. You choose to travel across London under the promise of an unknown meal. You choose to ask for help. You choose to drink out of a Man U cup despite being an Arsenal Fan. You choose bread rolls over brown loaves. You choose to come again because it did not let you down the last time.

Choice is a weird and relative concept in our modern society. It can provide a brief feeling of empowerment and it can also be crippling regardless of whether or not the choices are many or few. Two years ago I chose Urban Table.

Now, I may not know everyone by name but I recognise all their faces. I recognise them walking down the street. Some smile. Some chat. Some don't even notice me. But now I know who wants bread with no butter. Who brings their own sweetener and a special cup. Who thinks the coffee is too strong and who thinks it's too weak. I know them and they know me and we are both better for it and that was our choice.

Joel Pullin volunteers at the Urban Table weekly soup kitchen

Wish List

for advice on ethical shopping see

www.londoncatholicworker.org

tinned tomatoes
nuts
raisins
cheese
tinned fish
chilli sauce
rice
couscous
kidney beans
chickpeas
lentils
olive oil
cooking oil

vinegar
mayonnaise
spices
sugar
sunflower seeds
low-fat spread
fruit juice and squash
herbal teabags
instant coffee
cereal and muesli
jam and marmalade
honey
peanut butter,
vegetable stock
chocolate spread
stock cubes
coconut milk
toilet paper
shampoo

liquid soap
deodorant
shaving products
body lotion
cleaning products
incense sticks
tealights

Deliver to:
Giuseppe Conlon House,
49 Mattison Road,
London N4 1BG

We can also collect donations from North and North-east London.
Call 020 8348 8212

**Please! NO tinned soup,
tinned spaghetti, baked
beans and pork**

'No Faith in Trident' day of action

The autumn issue of the London Catholic Worker (Autumn 2016) reported on the No Faith in Trident Day at Burghfield Atomic Weapons Establishment on June 27th. The day saw numerous faith groups join together to protest and disrupt the renewal of the UK's nuclear weapons system, and to witness to a future of peace and justice.

The No Faith in Trident Day was part of a month of action organised by Trident Ploughshares ahead of the parliamentary vote on the replacement of Trident. Although the House of Commons voted to replace Trident in 2007, the nature of the replacement or renewal was to be voted on in 2016. There was still time to convince MPs that replacement was not in the best interests of UK security or the economy, given that the total cost would be some £205bn over the lifespan of the replacement and that security must lie in building better relations rather than relying on weapons of mass destruction as a deterrent.

During the No Faith in Trident Day, the coalition of groups successfully blockaded the entrances to Burghfield to disrupt the manufacture of these instruments of death. There were arrests at two of the blockades, leading to charges being brought. One of these arrests has already gone to trial and the other set for mid-January

For most of the defendants, it is the first time they have been arrested and taking action as part of the No Faith in Trident day has been an important source of strength. Knowing that you are part of a community of shared values, with the solidarity that this brings, has made it a much more positive experience for all the defendants.

The court dates for Put Down the Sword affinity group are Mon 23rd, Wed 25th and Thur 26th January. The plan is to gather in Reading on Sunday night (22nd) to spend time together as a community working together to support each other and keep up the action for peace and justice.

For further information see: www.putdownthesword.wordpress.com. If you would like to contribute towards costs, email

putdownthesword@gmail.com

Upcoming Events

Thursday 5th January, 6.30pm
Life, workers and everything: Dave King of 'Breaking the Frame' describes Technocracy, connecting the fight against GM babies and synthetic life with the struggles of the Luddites against 'machinery hurtful to Commonality'

Thursday 2nd February, 6.30pm
Nora Zeigler leads a workshop on the arms trade and preparations for stopping the upcoming DSEI arms fair in September 2017.

Both events held at Giuseppe Conlon House, 49 Mattison Road, London N4 1BG



Regular events

Giuseppe Conlon House, 49 Mattison Road, London N4 1BG

Daily Prayers Monday – Saturday 9:00 am

Clarification of Thought First Thursday of the month, 6:30 pm

Bible Study Second and Fourth Thursday of the month, 7:00 pm

Monthly Prayer Third Thursday of the month, 7:00 pm

Rosary of the Oppressed Last Friday of the Month 6 pm

Vigil for Refugees First Tuesday of the month, Foreign & Commonwealth Office, King Charles Street, Third Tuesday of the month at the Home Office, Marsham Street, 12:30pm

All welcome. Call 020 8348 8212 for details

Live-in community members & volunteers are needed at Giuseppe Conlon House.

Come and be a part of a community of hospitality and nonviolent resistance. If you want to live simply, in community with the poor, and work for peace and justice, then this is for you!

Tasks are diverse and include housekeeping, repairs, gardening, administration, case work, organizing and taking part in workshops and vigils, random creative projects and spending time with guests. We usually expect volunteers to make a minimum commitment of 3 months. We offer free accommodation and meals.

We ask potential volunteers to complete a questionnaire and provide us with a reference. It often takes about 3 months until a vacancy comes up so please let us know in advance if you are interested in joining our community.

Volunteering

There are many other ways of getting involved if you want to be part of our extended community. We have regular volunteers who come in to help cook in the evenings, pick up food donations or help us run the Urban Table soup kitchen in Hackney on Sundays. We also rely on volunteers to help us with different aspects of our work by sharing their time, knowledge and skills. For example, we often need help with DIY, plumbing, book keeping, fundraising, IT, and publishing this newsletter.

Sign up to our email and mailing lists for regular updates and to our mailing list to receive our free newsletter.

Email: londoncatholicworker@yahoo.co.uk

Support our work with the crucified of today's world

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 independent financially. There are no headquarters, nor is there a central organization. More information is available on the U.S website www.catholicworker.com.

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

Cash donations

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 are all volunteers, so we are able to make the best possible use of what we are given, for the benefit of those in need.

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

If you would like to support our work at the house please consider sending us a donation or setting up a standing order.

£20 will pay for one day of heating at Giuseppe Conlon House

£30 covers the costs of one Urban Table meal for 60 guests

£50 covers one week's housekeeping including items like milk, sugar, margarine, toilet paper and cleaning products

£150 pounds will pay for a volunteer's monthly expenses including transport

Ways to donate

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

Online: London Catholic Worker, Triodos Bank, Account No. 20066996 Sort Code: 16 58 10

Paypal: a 'donate button' is on the front page of our website www.londoncatholicworker.org

Please consider setting up a regular donation. You can use the Standing Order Form provided below

We would be very grateful for any help you can give us.

Our accounts are available on request

Standing Order Form Please use block letters

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: ____ / ____ / 16 and monthly thereafter

Name of your bank

Address of your bank

Your account name

Your account number

Your bank sort code

Please pay:

Triodos Bank

Deanery Road

Bristol BS1 5AS

For the Credit of: London Catholic Worker

Account Number 20066996

Sort Code: 16 58 10

Until further notice the sum of the value indicated above

Signed _____

Date _____

Please return to :

London Catholic Worker

49 Mattison Road

London N4 1BG

Your Name and Address

Email