

THE LONDON CATHOLIC WORKER



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Christian Climate Action visited the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy on Dec 4th 2017 to perform a street theatre, hold a liturgy and call for a "Radical reformation of the economy now" to protect people and the earth. Phil Kingston as Martin Luther 5th from left. Photo: Mirjam Johansson

Does the Holy Spirit inspire our campaigning?

Phil Kingston

About 35 years ago I became a supporter of Cafod. Whilst my heart was clearly being stirred, my faith then came more from my head than my heart. I later joined a parish Charismatic Prayer Group and was introduced to a new understanding of the Holy Spirit. Through an Alpha course I came to appreciate more this prayer of the heart. However, in both the parish group and the Alpha course, I didn't experience much interest in

work for peace and justice, especially the social-structural approach of Catholic Social Teaching.

Since then I have always tried to link prayer and activism. I have come to recognise the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives, just as Jesus promised. This has been accompanied by puzzlement because both in homilies and talking with Catholics, including JPCC activists, I have heard little about the actions of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Assuming that this is a general aspect of British

Catholic culture, it is extraordinarily different from that described in the Acts of the Apostles where the Holy Spirit's presence shines throughout. A practical fruit of this was an amazing sharing where 'those who had acquired land or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of the sale to be distributed by the apostles according to each one's need'.

Pope Francis, in his clear and homely way, often speaks about the Holy Spirit.

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DOVE BY RITA CORBIN



The Catholic Worker in the UK and just across the Channel

London Catholic Worker

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Giuseppe Conlon House offers hospitality to destitute refugees. We also run the Urban Table soup kitchen on Sundays 2:30 — 4:30 pm at 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

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Glasgow CW offers 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. They keep a regular vigil at Faslane Nuclear Base and hold monthly meetings and prayers.

Maria Skobstova House

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Mother Maria Skobstova House is a residential community that serves people who have been pushed into the margins of society. We started working with refugees and migrants in the refugee camp called “the jungle” (February 2016) and as we discover homelessness in the city of Calais we are looking how to support homeless and poor people here and to build a community across the divide.

Does the Holy Spirit inspire our campaigning?

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Eg. as, ‘our travelling companion... the sweet guest of the heart’¹; One who gives strength, ‘to speak the truth without compromise’. ‘For anyone who is born of the Spirit, he or she follows... without knowing where it will end.’ And ‘The cross cannot be taken away from the life of a Christian, (so) ask God for the grace of not being afraid because the Lord said: the Spirit will tell us what to answer.’²

What now follows is a key experience of my life. Many years ago, I moved to a parish which had a parish priest and a young curate. The older man was a rather severe person and the younger was gifted with much joy and an easy-going nature. What I observed was the younger one being treated like a child and publicly humiliated. After I had been there for about six months, the curate upped and left. I was disturbed by what had happened and arranged a petition to the bishop for him to be returned to the parish if he wished to come back. Many parishioners signed this. The bishop’s response was that what I had done was not of the Holy Spirit and that we should be giving the parish priest our full support. This rocked me because at that time I firmly believed that the man who confirmed us knew more about the Holy Spirit than anyone else. For the next month I was in crisis as I tried to hold together the reality of the injustices to the curate with this belief. Then one morning I awoke with the realisation that although the bishop might know more about the Holy Spirit, he didn’t have some of the experiences of Him or Her which I had been given.

I was a shy person for much of my early life. I now do things which I wouldn’t previously have considered and I give thanks to God and the support of many people for that. I have become more willing to follow Jesus in his commitment to the poor, in speaking truth to power, and in his nonviolent actions in the Temple forecourt. My experience of the Spirit’s prompting is that when it arrives it usually feels exactly right; but that this is often quickly followed by thoughts like, ‘People will think I’m nuts if I do that’. I check this out with others who I believe are Spirit-filled, and usually recognise that my fear of consequences and of not being accepted are impeding the prompt of the spirit. I have come to trust that if I respond, then according to the discernment of others, an aspect of God’s reign usually results.

If there is an underplaying of the Holy Spirit in the British Catholic Church, what might be the reasons? It’s likely that the fear of ‘not knowing where it will lead’ can impede the lives of bishops and priests just as it does mine. And perhaps there is a concern within many clergy that lay people cannot be trusted to seek the discernment of others when the Spirit’s prompt arrives. I would like to hear the voices of others about this, especially clergy, if any are willing to write about it.

(Phil is a member of Grandparents for a Safe Earth and Christian Climate Action. This is an extended version of an article which was published in The Universe in September 2017).

(1) Pope Francis, Two Advocates, May 22nd 2017 http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/cotidie/2017/documents/papa-francesco-cotidie_20170522_two-advocates.html

(2) Pope Francis, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/cotidie/2017/documents/papa-francesco-cotidie_20170424_faith-is-concrete.html

Easy Essay

Peter Maurin

Co-founder of the Catholic Worker

Pie In The Sky

Bourgeois capitalists don’t want their pie in the sky when they die.

They want their pie here and now.

To get their pie here and now bourgeois capitalists give us

better and bigger commercial wars for the sake of markets and raw materials.

But as Sherman says,

“War is hell.”

So we get hell

here and now

because bourgeois capitalists

don’t want their pie

in the sky

when they die,

but want their pie

here and now.

Return to Calais

Juanjo Peris

The 'jungle' refugee camp in Calais was 'officially' dismantled in October 2016. However some of the camp's residents who were sent to welcome centres across France have returned, and, barely 500 yards away from the old one, another 'jungle' is being rebuilt and destroyed every day. In even more precarious conditions than those of the original Jungle, migrants now sleep under plastic sheets, out of sight, in the woods. The construction of shelters is not allowed. The police dismantle and confiscate the items that people use to shelter under. New migrants arrive with the hope of finding in the UK what they have not found on the European continent.



I would like to share reflections of my most recent trip: the rise of the number of children who are in vulnerable situations and of police violence towards them.

The profile of those who migrate is now much younger than a year ago. There are many young people, aged between 14-17 years, living in a state of exile. Many are Eritreans, Christians who speak Tigrinya, who have fled from having to enter compulsory, indefinite military service. They have crossed Sudan and Libya to reach Europe. There are also many families, especially Kurds, with very young children. Many of them try to reach the United Kingdom because



their asylum application in Europe has been rejected. Others were forced to give their fingerprints in the first EU country they entered and are afraid of being deported there if they claim for asylum in any other EU country than the United Kingdom.

A policy of hostility and 'zero tolerance' towards migrants has been promoted by the French Government. The few existing services such as the provision of drinking water points, the food distribution by humanitarian organisations, which had been banned by the Mayor's office, or the obligation to provide shower points, have only been achieved by force of judicial sentence. Child migrants who are obviously vulnerable and in need of protection are beaten and gassed by national riot police (CRS). CRS police harassment includes gassing and hitting migrants on the legs, kidneys, head, etc. while they are sleeping. The police smash their precious mobile phones, which contain vital evidence for asylum applications and contact details of their relatives. The police confiscate the very sleeping bags, tarpaulins, footwear and coats which have been provided by voluntary and religious organisations.

This level of violence is outside of the law. It also benefits traffickers. 'Every policy that the UK puts in place benefits traffickers,' a Caritas official in Calais said in a recent report. Since the new fence was built in Calais (financed by the UK) smugglers have increased the fare of the passage from € 1,000 to € 10,000. According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in the UK, 'Safe and legal ways for refugees seeking protection are vital to reducing human trafficking.'

Not all children arriving in Calais want to cross to the UK, although many conclude that that is the only option



they have. They distrust a country where the police constantly harass them and which does not respect human rights. Unaccompanied minors who arrive in Europe and who have family in the UK must have a legal route to be reunited with their families according to the law. But this has been limited by the quota system to children who arrived in Europe before the EU agreement with Turkey, so the number of children offered this legal safe route remains ridiculously low. Many children who, after the dismantling of the Jungle, were welcomed in official centres waiting for a possible family reunification, are seeing the months pass without any movement occurring and decide to escape to try again to cross on their own. There are minors and women who disappear. Colleagues social workers are concerned that many may end up in modern slavery: not only sexual exploitation, but also forced labour on farms and construction sites, in hotels, factories, and beauty salons. Currently there are 21 million slaves in the world, more than at any time in history. It goes unnoticed because the chains have been supplanted by the bond of debt.

New fences, hostile policies towards migrants and police violence not only create a toxic environment and promote hate speech, but are ineffective and benefit precisely those who traffic. Minors, being vulnerable, and as such candidates for modern slavery, are in need of shelter, protection and accompaniment. The best way to combat human trafficking and traffickers is to create – as the UNHCR said- legal and safe routes for refugees who are seeking protection.

(Translated from Spanish. Find the original article here:

<http://blog.cristianismeijusticia.net/2017/09/25/trafico-humano-la-trata-vias-legales-seguras-testimonio-desde-calais>)

Photos: Henrietta Cullinan

Choose to be with others, and for others'

Paul Salgado

'Where was God that day?' was the question quietly asked of a grieving witness - a question not asked to belittle the survivor's faith but to elicit a focus on the reasons why this latest mass killing of migrants and refugees had happened, in London itself, and in doing so, allow the heartbroken to stand taller and turn their witness into resistance.

'God is holding his head in his hands at the sight of that tower,' the witness replied. 'God didn't build that, anymore than God manufactures guns and missiles. He entrusted beauty and wonder to us with this Earth, but there are those among us who have taken that gift and turned it into ashes.'

This story is not about me, but I am sick of writing down witness testimonies for the community organisation in north Kensington that I work for, to present to an official inquiry that all of us know will end in leaving everything - the inequality, the privilege, the marginalised and the poor - exactly as it was, before most of us had ever heard of Grenfell Tower.

The silence the morning after was disorientating. London is never silent. This is how it must be on a battlefield, after a direct strike has destroyed literally everything and everyone. As the days passed and as the witnesses testified, we learnt that that was exactly what had happened.

The violence of poverty, inflicted by the indifference and greed of the wealthy on the marginalised and undocumented now has permanent witness amongst those who saw the flames burning until dawn, and in the tears of those who stood helpless at the foot of the tower, while the cries of those above faded.

'When society places hundreds of proletarians in such a position that they inevitably meet a too early and an unnatural death, one which is quite as much a death by violence as that by the sword or bullet; its deed is murder just as surely as the deed of the single individual,'

Friedrich Engels wrote, in *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, in 1845.

The community leaders, refugees from Eritrea, Sudan, Somalia, and Black British descendants of migrant workers from the Caribbean in the 1950s, had little choice but to live crowded together in Grenfell Tower. They tried to warn the wealthy landowners and their exclusively white representatives at the local council, that the building was unsafe, that their desperate living conditions made them feel discarded: 'No one listened to us,' one of the leaders said, 'No one here is rich, so no one thinks we are important.'



Grenfell Tower. Photo: creative commons from https://twitter.com/Natalie_Oxford/status/874835244989513729/photo/1 by Natalie Oxford,

The response of local people was overwhelming, even though many in the shadow of the tower possess little themselves. Mosques and churches opened their doors to those made homeless. Construction workers left their building sites to buy medicines and nappies in local shops, leaving the shelves empty, and waitresses brought coffee and water for the firefighters.

People pushing shopping trolleys full of water bottles, food and clothes crowded the streets, and we worked feverishly sorting, packing, loading... until, at one point, I stood and looked at the blackened tower against the beautiful clear, blue skies, and realised how many had died.

I walked back to my workplace, I passed young women in hijabs, men wearing fast food delivery uniforms

and schoolchildren, taping to the streetlights and bus stops pictures of their missing mothers and fathers, their workmates, and their friends who didn't come to school that day.

I have seen this before in Mexico: photocopied images of political activists believed to have been assassinated, and in Colombia, where the faces of indigenous women look out from posters entitled 'Disappeared' as if their suspected killers are magicians. The refugees from Eritrea and South Sudan I work with tell me there is something similar in bus stations in Sudan, messages from families looking for loved ones making the journey -

either voluntarily or forced - across the Sahara to the Libyan coast and the chance to make it to London perhaps, where they might end up with a space on the floor of a cramped apartment in a council tower block, where they might find somewhere safe, to rest, collect their thoughts, and prepare for the journey ahead - to steel themselves to struggle through the unforgiving hostility of the UK immigration system or to endure the exploitation of heartless bosses in precarious, low wage work. Not to burn to death in their own bed, or suffocate, choking on black smoke in a darkened stairwell.

I have written down their names and read them quietly as though saying a prayer. The countries they came from to find refuge and hope in London are a list of war-torn disasters - Afghanistan, Somalia, Sudan, Eritrea, Colombia,

Syria - that have now become one in the war zone, the disaster area, the crime scene, that tower that looms over us, reaper black, silent and unforgiving, with its glassless windows like the empty eye sockets of skulls unearthed from mass graves.

Few whose testimonies I recorded were able to make sense of the terrible event that had been so disorientating.

Freedom of Movement – a personalist perspective

Nora Ziegler

One of the intellectual influences of the Catholic Worker movement was French Personalism, a philosophical movement that emphasised the dignity of the person created in God's image. This movement developed in Paris between the First and Second World Wars in response to economic collapse and the rise of fascism in Europe. It critiqued the individualism of liberal capitalist ideology and warned that liberal 'human rights' were not grounded in a real understanding of, and commitment to, the worth and dignity of human life. Now, in the face of increasing nationalist and racist rhetoric, we need a more radical (rooted) perspective on the rights of

I remain touched and guided by the words of Pope Francis when he assures us that, 'Jesus wants us to touch human misery, to touch the suffering flesh of others. Whenever we do so, our lives become wonderfully complicated and we experience intensely what it is to be a people, to be part of a people. We do not live better when we flee, hide, refuse to share, stop giving and lock ourselves up in our own comforts...'

migrants and refugees.

In the past few years, as numbers of people moving to Europe have increased, we have seen the erosion of basic rights most people take for granted. In the UK thousands of people have no right to work or receive benefits, no right to secure housing, and limited access to health care and other services because the government, and many charities, deny responsibility for people they consider 'illegal'. In France hundreds of undocumented children sleep rough near the port of Calais and are routinely assaulted at night by police with tear gas and truncheons.

On the one hand it is claimed that human rights are linked inherently to the dignity of the human being, yet the responsibility for securing those rights mostly rests on state institutions. If there was indeed a basic human dignity that demanded certain basic rights, surely the responsibility of guaranteeing those rights would be on each and all of us?

The issue of migration shows why it

is too soon at the moment, but in time I hope also to have faith in these words, from The Joy of the Gospel, (Evangelii Gaudium), into which I read a call to resist those who would turn God's gift to ashes, 'Each day in our world, beauty is born anew, it rises transformed through the storms of history... and human beings arise time after time from situations that seemed doomed.'

is problematic to collectively delegate that responsibility to the state. The nation state can only protect the rights of individuals who enter a relationship with the state that it recognises as 'legal', for example through citizenship or the asylum process. It will not protect the rights of undocumented migrants or the right to move. Furthermore, delegating the responsibility to protect human rights to the state assumes that people's rights are unconditional and unpolitical. However, migration is caused by global inequalities, power games and histories of oppression, while the consequences for countries like the UK are felt by the poorest and least powerful. We need to find a way of thinking about the right to move that takes this into account.

Personalism shifts responsibility for the rights of the person from the state to the individual. The dignity of the person rests on their unique subjectivity and ability to love others, freely and at a personal sacrifice. The person is fulfilled by caring for others. This means it is my own dignity that



Members of the London Catholic Worker at our monthly vigil outside the Foreign Office. Photo: Olivia Mullen

compels me to care for the other, to share some of their suffering, to offer a moment of respite. The love I offer is a gift and I am also free to say no. However, recognition of my own dignity demands that I acknowledge it is my choice to say no and take responsibility for that choice.

Based on this perspective I would suggest that there is no unconditional right to migrate but there is also no unconditional right to create borders and shut people out. Perhaps a good starting point for thinking about freedom of movement is to think of both migration and the construction of borders as aggregated human choices rather than natural phenomena. To choose to leave behind your home and family, face an uncertain future and live with the often harsh consequences is a tough decision and if we value our own right to make choices in life we should respect in others the choice to migrate or seek refuge.

However, to set up and enforce border controls, to raid work places, detain and deport people, to deprive them of access to services and force people into destitution is also a choice. It is a

choice we need to take responsibility for as people living in the UK. It is easy to say 'no borders' but are we prepared to make personal sacrifices, to share our resources, to make space for other cultures, religions and languages? Are we prepared to enter into dialogue with people who disagree with us, to listen to their concerns and challenges? If so, we can start resisting the violence of borders by opening our own doors and welcoming strangers.

I believe that the Christian faith calls us beyond rights and borders. Our dignity lies in the fact that we are created in God's own image – with the ability and responsibility of making choices. Jesus did not say, 'You have the right to knock on someone's door if you're fleeing from persecution' or, 'You must open the door if someone is knocking'. He said, 'knock and the door will open' - why we knock and when we open is left to us.



Roma family in Paris. Painting: Olivia Mullen

Advent Reflection

Roland Dale

Recently a former guest visited us, someone who had stayed at Giuseppe Conlon House before I joined the community. I had met him a few times since he left us, and even though his English was not very good, I understood enough to know that things were hard for him. He stayed for a short while, took a shower, and had a cup of tea. We exchanged a little small talk, commenting on how the place had changed, remembering some of the volunteers who had lived here over the years. He told me he had been in a detention centre. "It's like a prison," he said, looking away, his eyes glazing over like he was busy remembering something. "Well not like a prison but..." As far as I was concerned it was a prison, and I said so. I was sorry that things had been so hard for him. He turned back and looked directly at me. "Some people... They have to see everything..." The statement hung in the air, and I didn't want to know what

he meant by it. He had come to this country seeking refuge, but had found homelessness, destitution, detention and worse. He didn't stay much longer. I wished him well, as best as I could, but I don't think he heard me.

Later on in the same day, I accompanied one of our current guests to hospital. The ward was incredibly busy, with the sick and injured brought in and taken out, families and visitors clamouring for more information, machines beeping, whirring, and sighing. It continued to be busy well into the early hours of the morning, but all the staff were moving around calmly. There was no trace of stress or strain on their faces. I thought I heard one of them comment that it was a quiet night. If that was quiet, what must it be like when it's busy? I didn't want to think about what they see on a daily basis, that they could keep so calm amidst all that was going on. It was too much. I remember looking at our guest as he lay on the hospital bed, resting fitfully, his face creased with pain and worry. I turned away and stared at my phone instead, but its news feed was all stories about Brexit, Donald Trump, climate change, catastrophe, and promotional offers.

Later on, our guest was discharged. We walked out of the hospital to the bus stop as the sun began to rise, accompanied by the occasional sounds of traffic and birdsong.

At all times, but especially during Advent, we are called to stay awake and keep watch, but in so many ways I turn away from the suffering of others and try to close my eyes. I know that for so many, this is not an option. Closing your eyes in indifference is next to impossible when life exposes you to raw suffering on a daily basis. If the times seem dark, in the run up to Christmas we say as Christians that this darkness is not real, but rather it is us who are blinded to the love of God. Because God's love burns ever more brightly in the midst of suffering. But that is a truth that cannot be seen unless we show it in our actions towards each other. I really believe that as Christians we are called to keep our eyes open, to see Christ in our neighbour, to do the works of mercy, and to turn away from indifference. In so doing, we can bear witness not only to God's love in the midst of suffering, but, as we approach Christmas, to happiness and joy as well.

Beyond the Pale: A grey area

Westley Ingram

As a child I was afraid of the dangerous creatures that live in the dark. My parents assured me I was safe, they had built a hedge around me and had chased all the snakes out of the garden.

However my parents told me 'don't talk to strangers' because they also feared the things that live in the dark. The wall they built was only so high. They were only strong enough to drive back some of the Monsters. At the same time these Monsters were having children of their own, building their own walls, fretting over their own snakes in dark places. I was not a Monster, I lived in the garden. I am innocent, I am not a snake. Surely this is true? Even if I were a snake I'd have to find another word for what I am. Who could live with being a Monster devouring other peoples children.

Most of you reading this do not live in a garden and are contemptuous of the idea of somebody building a wall around you. Instead we live lives where centuries of victories large and small have concentrated the worlds resources within reach. Our access to these resources is the result of victories large and small between those who control these resources and those who demand them.

Perhaps we don't live in a walled garden surrounded by shady snakes so much as we are living between walls enjoying the pleasures we have extracted from one direction and kept out of reach from another.

When our champions win resources and bring them over the wall we call that violence and injustice, however

when we wrestle those same resources from their hands then we call it just and our right.

Many of us think we can continue to enjoy the fruit of exploitation and call ourselves peace loving, just people. The people who make the gains are demons while the people who distribute the gains are angels.

An example of this is the NHS. We are often told that we should be slow to limit immigration to the UK as approximately one quarter of doctors are non-British. This also suggests that the NHS is an extractive industry

and others are for cruelty, corruption and the elites. Is one the party for the Mob and one the party for Mob wives? We are very good at telling ourselves that we are the good ones because we think the other side of the coin is a separate coin.

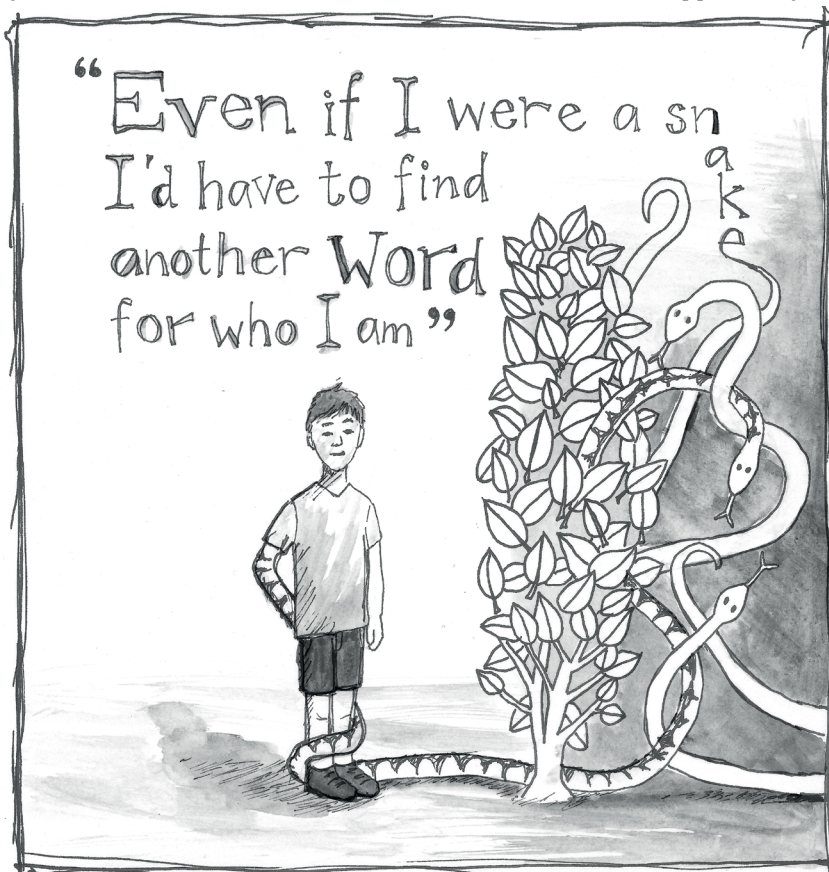
The left and the right vilify each other and each claims to be the solution to the excesses of the other. We may not spend much time vilifying the left but since it is now 100 years since the Russian revolution and it will soon be the centenary of the rise of Stalin perhaps we should take the opportunity to imagine the possibility.

For some, like George Bernard Shaw, it was beyond imagination that our ideological comrades were not innocent. It is harder still to imagine that we are at fault if we have been on the back foot for a long time but when we are losing the game it means we are still playing the game.

It is tempting to call for primitivism, direct democracy and spiritual escapism and to claim we are operating outside the system but we are not. We are in the system and the system is in us. Our situation is like a group of animals in a bankrupt zoo. We live comfortable but

unnatural lives; we cannot be released into the wild. Not least because our natural habitat is not coming back. What is more, this zoo is going out of business. Captivity no longer offers food and shelter. The last days of the zoo will involve some unspeakable but predictable acts.

Unspeakable but predictable is the purview of the prophets. Jesus Christ also lived in a society that was about to suffer unspeakable but predictable things. He was also presented with a number of simplistic, self indulgent analyses (e.g. the piety of the Pharisees, the militant nationalism of the Zealots). Jesus finds his society to be built on a series of barriers delineating inclusion



Painting by: Mirjam Johansson

that requires large inputs of the most skilled, motivated youth of countries unable to retain them. Can we be pro-NHS and anti-imperialist? Can a mob wife who expects to live in luxury but claims ignorance of where the furs are coming from be taken seriously? Is she an innocent child or is she a snake? Is the anti-austerity movement pro-justice or pro-imperialism? Is it Justice we want or Justice for Just us? This is just one of many examples. Remember we live in a country that grows half its own food and imports half the water it uses.

During the election last summer, it was often said that some parties are for compassion, justice and 'the people'

and status, often concerning the likes of sinners, tax collectors, lepers or gentiles etc. He begins from the outermost and at baptism is told he has status and is included in the heavenly society and the rest of his life is spent telling everyone else the same about themselves.

This was not just a self esteem movement though. To live a life included is to live a life of inclusion which sounds nice but seems to involve embodying truth and embracing necessary suffering. This message was not universally endorsed. His first public speaking engagement ends badly when he suggests the boundary around Israel's borders are not so meaningful. This is one of the first attempts on his life. This time it was the common people who wanted him dead. Jesus then assails one wall after another, tormenting the poor innocents on the other side with his monstrous words and deeds. This culminates finally in the curtain of the temple being torn in two and his crucifixion.

For the poor people defending the barriers that kept the bad people out and kept the good things in Jesus is a threat. The crucifixion is then an act of self defence by innocent children, crushing the head of a snake underfoot.

In case I am being misunderstood, throughout Jesus' life he practised personal boundaries, internal boundaries, logical, spiritual and relational boundaries. Let us not trip up on apparent synonyms nor make any spiritual sounding excuses for abuse or manipulative behaviour.

Jesus willingly embodies the sins of his people and becomes a criminal. The resurrection is his vindication revealing the invading lion to be an innocent lamb. Jesus did create a walled garden, a kingdom of heaven on this world but not of this world. There is a wall around the innocent of God who have access to the gifts he has won for us. This may sound similar but looks very different from the way of the world.

If we are to be followers of Jesus Christ today let us give up on our status as innocents and embrace our status as sinners redeemed. Let us be sustained by Grace and not by delusion and let us judge our progress on how we treat one of the least of these and not the average condition of the people we decide to include.

Six Hours in a Police Cell

Simon Watson

I arrived at Forest Gate police station around two o'clock on the last Saturday before the start of the DSEI arms fair. After being signed in, photographed and having my bag, belt and watch taken from me I was put in a cell for the rest of the day. I managed to keep my journal, fountain pen and a wash brush (a brush with water in the handle). Why not the watch? Why did I have to negotiate to keep the fountain pen?

I didn't know when I was going to be interviewed so I quickly set about sketching my cell. I sketch anything that interests me and although this incredibly boring room was little more than 800 tiles, and a steel loo, the experience was something to be captured on paper. For me drawing is a way of thinking about things, but as the sun shining through the mottled glass got lower in the sky I realised there was no rush. So I started recording more detail:

Concrete bed, blue plastic mattress, no pillow, no toilet paper, no toilet seat, CCTV, cream coloured tiles except two stripes of pink. I found this decorative detail strange. Why bother having this in a room designed to make you miserable? What else? A mirror dome to give a view of the cell, a buzzer to call my captors, some stencilled messages on the ceiling including this one,

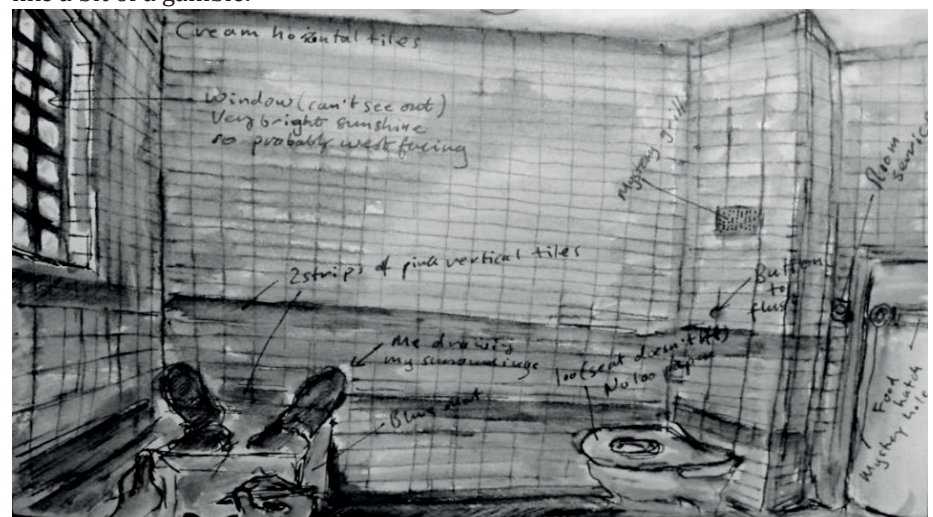
'You may have left more than your liberty behind. Prints, blood and DNA can be traced to YOU. If you admit to other offences now, they may be taken into consideration.' May? That sounded like a bit of a gamble.

After I got the drawing down I tried to do more worthy things like prayer. This proved difficult due to interruptions for food, drinks and the odd inspection.

Three hours in and the sun was behind the buildings outside. To keep myself occupied I made a primitive stethoscope out of a polystyrene cup, but I couldn't hear anything distinct through the walls. I tried knocking on the tiles but didn't get a reply. By now boredom had well and truly set in and I was beginning to feel isolated and generally forgotten.

This is how people are punished in a society that no longer has resource to a sound thrashing. Instead we have the opposite; the sensory deprivation of beige interiors set in a world of confusing legalese. The essence of the punishment is not just 'you will be forgotten and confused', but 'we have the power to make you feel forgotten and confused' (alienation with a sting in the tale). For someone like me who has a firm foothold in society this kind of exclusion is small and temporary. I have friends, family, work, education and enough of everything else I need to be content. It's just a warning of what's coming if I keep pushing my luck. But for an asylum seeker, or someone living on benefits coping with surly public servants, endless waiting in drab offices and figuring out arcane paperwork is a long-term reality. Society deals with the people it doesn't like by locking them up or locking them out.

After three more hours of tedium the door opened and I was taken up to the front desk. More bumbling around and I was 'released pending further investigation'. I was promised a letter determining my fate, but it never came.



Inside the Police cell. Drawing: Simon Watson

Giuseppe Conlon House update

One of the major events of our autumn season here was the week of action against the Defense and Security Equipment International (DSEI) arms fair in East London. In addition to making banners and placards and welcoming many out-of-town activists to stay at our house, we joined other religious groups in sponsoring the 'No Faith in War' day. Many people from diverse traditions gathered outside the ExCel Centre gates to pray and to disrupt the setup for the event by nonviolently blocking lorries full of military equipment from entering. Catholic Workers, Nora Ziegler and Henrietta Cullinan, were among those arrested that day, after lying down in the street and chaining themselves to homemade lock-on boxes. While we were unable to stop the arms fair this year, we did put them significantly behind schedule! Hopefully the continued resistance will cause the DSEI organisers to think twice about continuing.

Another big event on our calendar was the annual London Anarchist Bookfair, a gathering of diverse groups with similar commitments



Guests from our house doing woodwork at the Grange. Photo: Mirjam Johansson

movement, as well as home-made jam and dried fruit.

One of the sad parts of community life is saying goodbye to people when they move on. In September we bade a fond farewell to Sam, who has gone to Oxford University to study Victorian literature, and Andres, who returned home to Spain. We wish them well and look forward to future visits!

We have been privileged to welcome three new live-in volunteers recently. Olivia came to us from the USA by way of a six-month language course in Russia. Her artistic gifts add beauty to our lives and her wacky sense of humor keeps us entertained. Also joining us, though sadly only for one month, was

In between the big events, our lives are full of daily routines and seasonal changes. Autumn, as usual, brought an influx of harvest festival donations to be sorted and put on shelves in our storage area. Volunteers from Our Lady's High School were a great help in the task of separating the baked beans from the chopped tomatoes and the pasta from the rice. Other outside volunteers joined us for several DIWO (Do It With Others) days, where we tackled some of the constant cleaning, repair, and building projects that are always with us at the Catholic Worker.

But life here is not all work! In September some of our guests traveled with volunteers Mirjam, Clare, and Henrietta to the Grange, a guest house, for refugees and those who work with them, in the Norfolk countryside. Some of the highlights of the trip were an epic game of frisbee, a walk with a couple of Shetland ponies, some work in the gardens, and a woodworking lesson. Another fun outing took us to a Bonfire Night party at the Catholic Worker farm just outside of London. The evening featured a blaze nearly twice as tall as the average human, some really delicious jacket potatoes, and lots of catching up with old friends. Closer to home, we've recently hosted several nights of music and spoken word in our chapel building. The first two, organised by our volunteer chefs Eleanor and Sel, were fun open mic nights which featured a wide variety of performances, including a few by Catholic Workers Nora and Clare, and our superstar singing guest, Carlton. The third was organized by Ida, a friend of the community, and was a celebration of the feasts of All Saints and All Souls. We decorated the chapel with many candles and shared songs and stories in honour of the dead.



DSEI activist in court to plead not guilty. Drawing: Thomas Watson

to non-government based solutions to the world's problems. The day was filled with workshops put on by various organisations. Alexandre Christoyannopoulos, the author of *Christian Anarchism: A Political Commentary on the Gospel*, led a thought provoking and well received workshop for us. We also had a stall where we sold books on *Christian Anarchism* and the *Catholic Worker*

Michel from France. He had many fascinating stories to share of his long life of community, activism, and travel, and his knowledge of carpentry was a welcome gift. Our most recent arrival is Ghazal from London, a regular volunteer who has decided to be with us full time for a few months. Her prodigious cooking skills are a fantastic addition to our home.



Fly Kites not drones crew & pic-nic (below) Photo: Mirjam Johansson

Fly kites, not drones

Over the last six years Catholic Workers have been central to UK anti drone campaigning with activities which have included: entering drone control base RAF Waddington to plant a peace garden and carry out a citizen's inspection, blockading Israeli drone manufacturer Elbit Systems and regularly hosting the London event for Fly Kites Not Drones.

In the 5th year of the Fly Kites Not Drones campaign, Catholic Workers will again host the main event taking place in London, which will no doubt include what has become the customary accompanying picnic!

The campaign will see peace groups up and down the country taking part, flying kites in solidarity with children who currently live under armed

drones. Fly Kites Not Drones was started by the Afghan Peace Volunteers in Kabul who reported stories of Afghan children being too afraid to take part in their most beloved past-time of kite running. Since launching the campaign an education resource pack has also been put together so that young people everywhere can understand how and why drones operate. This action is a fun, inclusive and creative way of understanding a serious modern issue while also showing solidarity with thousands of children now terrorised by armed drones.

So grab (or make) a kite and join the London Catholic Worker on the 24th March, 2pm Parliament Hill, and bring food to share. Alternatively, organise a kite flying event in your area and let us know about it.

#FlyKitesNotDrones

@KitesNotDrones



Events

All events held at Giuseppe Conlon House, 49 Mattison Rd, London N4 1BG - unless otherwise indicated.

Regular events

Daily Prayers Mon – Sat 9:00 am

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

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

Bible Sharing Second Thursday of the month, 7:00 pm

Radical Reading Group, Fourth Thursday of the month, 7:00 pm

Vigil for Refugees

First Tuesday of the month, Foreign & Commonwealth Office, King Charles St.

Third Tuesday of the month at the Home Office, Marsham St. 12:30pm

All welcome. Call 020 8348 8212 for more details and to let us know you are coming.

Upcoming Events

1st, 2nd, 7th & 8th February 9:30am
Court support at Stratford Magistrates Court 389-397 High St, London E15 4SB. Support peace activists, including Catholic Workers, on trial for the DSEI-arms fair protests in Sept 2017,

14th February Ash Wednesday
Christian witness and resistance against nuclear war preparations. At Ministry of Defence. **Time tbc**

22nd February 7pm

This Evil Thing - "You can't force a man to murder against his will" a play with and by Michael Mears about conscientious objection. FREE! More info: www.facebook.com/thisevilthing

Saturday 24th March 2pm

Fly Kites Not Drones: We will fly home-made kites and have a bring-and share picnic at Parliament Hill, Hampstead Heath.

9-13 May Eurogathering in Dulmen, Germany (contact us for more info)

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. We also welcome drawings and poems.



GIUSEPPE CONLON HOUSE

IS LOOKING FOR LIVE-IN VOLUNTEERS & COMMUNITY MEMBERS!

Giuseppe Conlon House is a house of hospitality of the London Catholic Worker and part of the international Catholic Worker movement.

We are a young Christian ecumenical community based in North London where we live together with 18 male destitute asylum seekers and forced migrants. We help run a weekly soup kitchen, organise public talks and events, and publish a newsletter. We also take non-violent action against arms-trade, militarism, nuclear weapons and inhumane migration policies.

Community members and volunteers live and work full-time at Giuseppe Conlon House. Tasks are diverse and include housekeeping, repairs, gardening, administration, support work, organising events, taking part in meetings, creative projects and simply befriending and spending time with guests.

As a Christian community, our faith is at the heart of our work. Community members and live-in volunteers pray together every day. However, our house of hospitality welcomes people of all (or no) faiths.

Live-in volunteers are usually expected to make a minimum commitment of 3 months. We provide free accommodation in a shared room, meals and a weekly allowance. We ask potential volunteers to complete a questionnaire and provide us with a reference. Please email us for more information.

CONTACT: +44(0)2083488212 LONDONCATHOLICWORKER@YAHOO.CO.UK
WWW.LONDONCATHOLICWORKER.COM



Wish List for our House of Hospitality

Food

- Tinned tomatoes
- Peanut butter
- Olive and vegetable oil
- Kidney beans
- Chickpeas
- Coconut milk
- Easy-cook rice
- Couscous
- Lentils
- Vinegar
- Mayonnaise
- Cheese
- Spreads - marmalade, jam.
- Spices
- Sugar

- Muesli
- Cereal
- Honey
- Fruit juice and squash
- Herbal teabags
- Instant coffee
- Chilli sauce
- Brown rice
- Nuts

Toiletries

- Toilet paper
- Deodorant
- Shampoo
- Tooth paste
- Tooth brushes
- Liquid soap

Tissues

Eco-friendly cleaning products, especially:

- Anti-bacterial spray
- multi-purpose cleaner
- toilet cleaner
- Laundry detergent
- floor cleaner

Miscellaneous

- NEW Men's underwear M-XL
- Men's shoes in good condition
- Tealights
- Paint
- earplugs and eye masks

Find our ethical shopping tips at www.londoncatholicworker.org/ethicalwishlist.pdf
Many of our guests do not eat pork for religious reasons so please do not donate pork products. Also, please do not donate soup, tinned spaghetti, baked beans, christmas puddings and mince pies as we already have enough.

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 organization. More information is available on the U.S website www.catholicworker.com.

At Giuseppe Conlon House we run a house of hospitality for around 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 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: / / 17 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