

CATHOLIC WORKER

COMMUNITY, HOSPITALITY, RESISTANCE

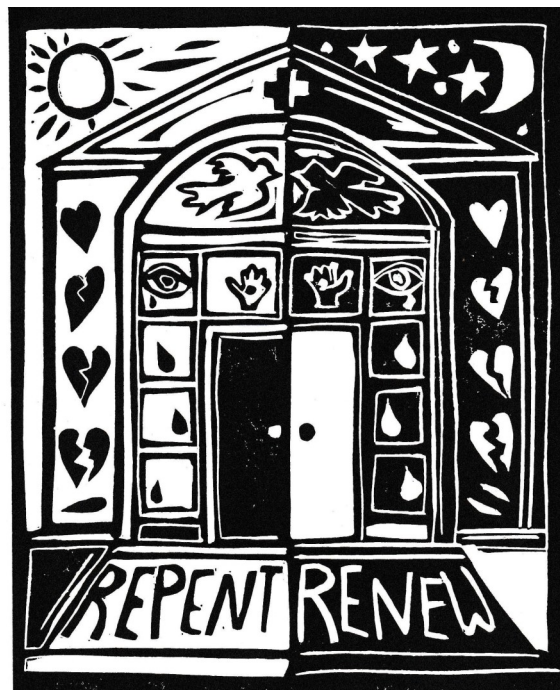
Opening Sojourner Truth House

Moya Barnett on a new Calais house of hospitality

On the 15th of June 2025 the Quaker House WhatsApp group was created. Four of us, Missy, Bradon, Martin and I, all Quakers (or, in Bradon's case, Quaker adjacent), all involved in refugee hospitality projects in Calais and with a dream of a new house of hospitality. We came together in response to the huge need we saw around us. From the everyday horrors of people living in tents with no access to running water, to the extreme emergency situations: women and children being sex trafficked, medical neglect, and police violence. We knew that there was a need for shelter and we hoped that we would be able to communicate this to people in the UK, particularly Quakers and people of faith, to raise the money for a new house for vulnerable refugee women and families.

The problems in Calais are systemic. Until the UK government stops using our taxes to pay for increased violence at the border, the unjust and immoral system of granting temporary asylum is changed in all European countries and, of course, we address the root causes of what people are running from, there will always be refugees. Climate change, causing droughts, floods, failed harvests and natural disasters. Wars, often sponsored by the same European countries that people flee to, and

Continued on p. 2



Church Front, Sarah Fuller, 2019

Anatomy of an Arrest

Tom Dennehy-Caddick on being one of the thousands arrested in Palestine Action protests

In the latest "Lift the Ban" protest at Trafalgar Square, I was the first of the 523 people arrested under the Terrorism Act for holding a sign reading: "I oppose genocide. I support Palestine Action". I was only first because I was short on time: my wife was ill and we were staying at her parents', so, to participate, I came into London with my 17-month-old son, who I left nearby in the capable hands of his aunt. My plan was to approach the police with my sign at 1pm – Defend Our Juries' official start time – hoping to be arrested quickly and released on street bail, so I could get back to my son. It was a compromise that ultimately left me feeling compromised.

Continued on p. 5

This Issue: Sojourner Truth House pp. 1-3; Anatomy of an Arrest pp. 1&5-6; Defend Our Juries p. 6; Gaza Schools p. 7; Caledonian Forest pp. 8-9; Thoughts on Birds pp. 10-11; St Peter and the State pp. 12-13; Book Review p. 14-15; A Grain of Rice p. 16-17; House Update p. 18; Poem p. 19

Opening Sojourner Truth House

Continued from page 1.

systems of injustice. These problems are huge, but we must do what we can. And what we can offer is a house and a community, even if only temporary. We can offer love and acceptance to people who have been hated and rejected at every turn. And we can offer rest along a long and arduous journey.

And so, using a GoFundMe, the four of us began to fundraise and spread the word. That summer, as the Union Jacks went up on lampposts, as the wave of hate we have come to know as normal became starkly visible, we also saw so many people give their money, prayers and support to our project. Quakers, Catholics, former refugees who had been through Calais themselves, people who had heard one of us speak about the project. It is one small, palpable way of fighting back against the wave of darkness.

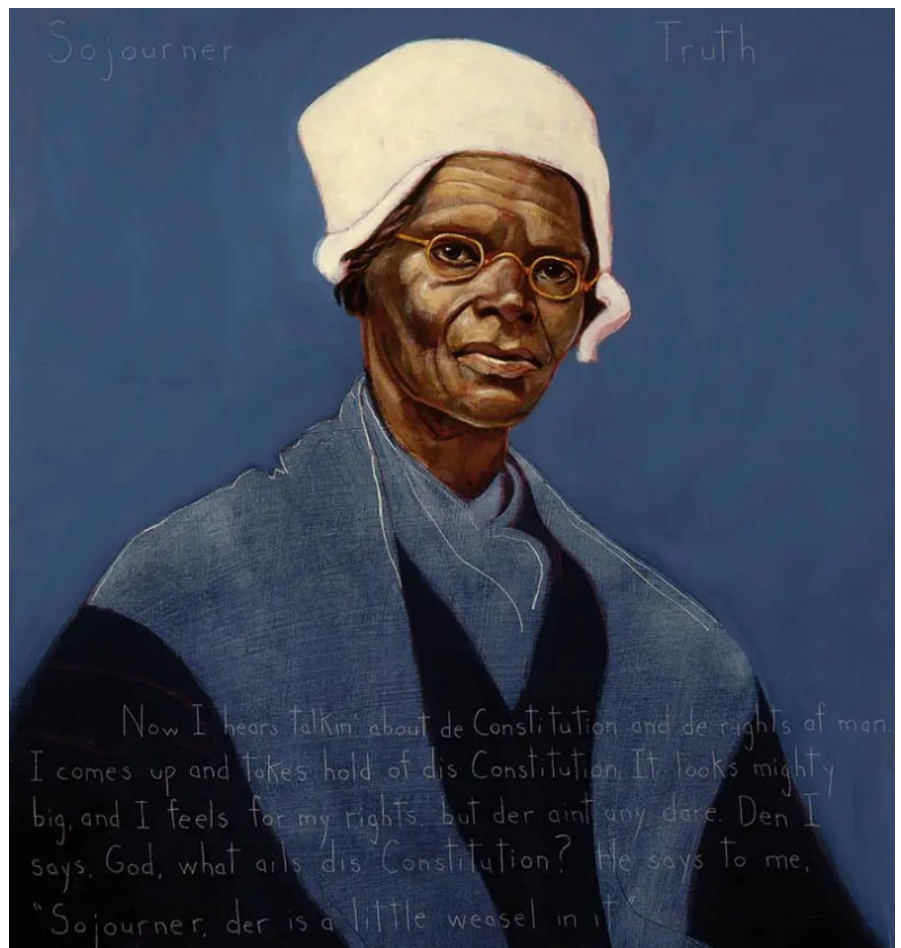
Soon we found a house that we could rent, a normal terrace with three bedrooms and a garden with a shed that could be converted into a garden bedroom. It has sympathetic neighbours, having previously been used for a hospitality project, and the landlord was very happy that the house was

going to be used for that purpose again.

A few months in, Paris joined our group. He had been involved with La Capuche, doing distribution of tents and bedding in Calais and he was doing a PhD in Ireland. Together, the five of us continued to fundraise, registered as a French charity, made safeguarding documents, talked about governance and ran monthly meetings for worship. Unfortunately, there was a lot of building work that needed to be done in the house and the landlord decided that he wanted to sell it rather than rent it. But, providentially, with the need came the resources and we found we

had the €136,000 to buy the house outright.

In January we all met up in person for the first time. While many of us knew each other individually before, it wasn't until then that we had a meeting that wasn't over Zoom or WhatsApp video call! And in the Catholic Worker tradition we chose a name for our house. In the words of Paris in his ministry at Britain Yearly Meeting 2026: "After much discernment and looking within, we have decided to name our house Sojourner Truth House. Sojourner Truth was an African-American woman, from the 19th century, who regularly attended Quaker Meetings.



Sojourner Truth, Robert Shetterly, 2003



Sojourner Truth House, Instagram, 2026

She was involved in the Underground Railroad. She was someone who lived in a very divided world, but who held fast to the dignity of every person, even when others denied it. Acknowledging her in the naming of our house is a reminder that what unites us is a shared commitment to truth, to justice, and to seeing that of God in one another across all divides.”

In March we received the keys for Sojourner Truth House, renting it while the paperwork for buying went through and Missy moved in. There was still work to do. With help from volunteers from other

associations, we painted, put up bunk beds and made the house a welcoming place. I trained and worked as a carpenter before becoming a Catholic Worker so in April I was at the house putting those skills to use. And finally in May we welcomed our first guests. Currently we have seven guests, three of them children. The house is full of life, play, laughter, toys strewn all over the conservatory floor. It is no longer an intangible dream of a house of hospitality, it has become a home.

There is still work to do; in the upcoming months we hope to

welcome more short-term volunteers, for a month or more, to live in community with our guests. We also hope to buy a van so that we can do big food shops and help people get around. And we are hoping to finalise all of our paperwork – French bureaucracy is notoriously slow and complex – so that we can begin to apply for grants. We wouldn’t have made it this far without so many people supporting us, praying for us and donating. Through everything we have felt the presence of the Holy Spirit moving through us and through those who support us. Time and again, problems have been solved and everything has moved faster than any one of us could have imagined. We hope that Sojourner Truth House will remain open for many years, but even if it does not, even these few months of hospitality have made an impact on people’s lives, the awareness of what happens in Calais has changed people’s hearts and we have a house, which, if needed, we can pass on to the next group with too much compassion and not enough money. I hope to be back in Calais twice more this year and then to spend a longer period of rest in the UK, followed by a year at Sojourner Truth House. Please hold us in the light and pray for us and the guests that we welcome.

Moya Barnett

Anatomy of an Arrest

Continued from page 1.

In the lead-up, the police presence dwarfed the protesters: the square filled with officers, vans and barricades, with barely a hundred of us milling at the foot of the steps. One protester plaintively abandoned his hope that the police might not have the capacity to arrest everyone.

I slumped on a bench, exasperated and sleep-deprived, struggling to collect my thoughts and prayers. Shortly before 1pm I caught up briefly with Anne Jones [p. 7], a friend of the house passing through. After discussing the legal paradox of arresting people under a ban the High Court had itself ruled unlawful, I wrote the prescribed words on my sign and approached the police. There followed an endless cycle of bureaucracy: waiting for an arresting officer, waiting in a van, waiting for instructions from higher-ups, waiting for the new pop-up processing facilities to process the process of processing me. In the end, matching me to their records took so long that I reluctantly admitted to being the same guy they'd arrested for a DSEI lock-on years earlier, simply to get back to my son.

Upon release, I felt an alienation from the whole

process unlike anything I had experienced in previous actions. At first I put it down to disappointment: early reports suggested only dozens had been arrested. Days later the true figure emerged: 523, the third largest single-day mass arrest in modern UK history, behind only the Battle of the Beanfield and the second "Lift the Ban" protest. I was delighted, yet something still felt amiss.

A second reason was that my state of life has changed. I am now a husband and father, with a second child due in September. The costs of protest are no longer mine alone. The threat of legal proceedings, conviction, travel restrictions and career consequences is now shared with my young family.



Mary and Jesus, Sarah Fuller, 2012

But the deepest cause was that this action belonged to something much bigger than me. With 3,500 arrests, "Lift the Ban" is possibly the largest campaign of civil disobedience in UK history. Unlike my earlier actions, planned among friends as forms of public communication we each helped shape, this followed a tightly organised script.

Simone Weil warned that "collectivity is the object of all idolatry": it suspends individual reflection and draws people into the mindless machinery of power they seek to resist. The danger is to "always say it, never think it", as Theodor Adorno put it, letting slogans replace reflection. Alasdair MacIntyre presses the same concern differently. Protest, he argues, once meant bearing witness "to something", and only consequently "against something". Modern protest collapses into negation alone, speaking chiefly to those who already agree and becoming incapable of either losing or winning an argument.

In the face of this, I have always defended direct action on three conditions. First, I remain transparently accountable. Second, my actions embody the change I wish to see, including non-violence. Third, they expose the contradictions of authority in ways argument cannot.

The “Lift the Ban” campaign, at its best, fulfils these principles. Holding a sign and waiting to be arrested is inherently transparent.

Proscription strips a movement of basic legal protections, including freedom of speech, so publicly opposing such sweeping state powers embodies a freedom denied to everyone. And by arresting largely elderly, law-abiding citizens for holding signs, the authorities undermine their own claim that such bans are principally about public safety.

This is where Christ’s cleansing of the temple, the trigger for his arrest, remains the model of Christian direct action worth returning to. Not because it was collective, but because of its purity of intention and total personal exposure: it was transparent, it embodied the purification it called for, and it forced the powers of this world to reveal themselves as the authors of death. That is the discernment I want direct action to retain; not mindlessly dissolving into a crowd, but a conscious, accountable and non-violent unveiling.

While I recognise the sacrifices Palestine Action activists have made, and maintain that the conduct attributed to them amounts principally to serious criminal damage rather than terrorism, I must also recognise that at times in word and deed

they have not met these threefold criteria. This forms part of wider disagreements within the peace movement.

Whatever one thinks of particular activist groups, though, those disagreements do not erase the legal objections to proscription. The High Court’s “chilling effect” proportionality case, the Home Secretary’s reliance on “disruptive benefits” of the ban, and the UN Special Rapporteur Ben Saul’s conclusion that even serious property damage does not itself amount to terrorism under international law, all remain substantial grounds on which the ban could yet be overturned, despite the Court of Appeal’s June verdict.

None of that fully resolves what I communicate through my own action. But perhaps it does not need to in the moment of arrest.

Discernment of our actions [see Martin’s article on p. 6] does not end when the handcuffs come off. It continues afterwards, in precisely this kind of reckoning: sorting what I actually said from what I meant to say, what I affirm and what I withhold, what principles I stand beside and what methods I do not.

What is certain is that restrictions on public expression often obscure

debate until the state’s own response brings it into view. Instead of answering uncomfortable questions, it can become easier to render them unsayable.

So when Palestine Action’s actions and the controversy surrounding the ban bring the genocide still unfolding in Gaza into sharper focus, we see with new clarity the need to cry out. It is that collective horror which has transformed targeted, discerning direct action into a mass movement large enough to challenge the state’s boundaries on speech.

MacIntyre’s warning nevertheless remains. Christ’s cleansing of the temple was first a witness to the sanctity of his Father’s house, and only consequently against what defiled it. That, I think, is the order protest must retain. Negation should never come before allegiance. What I meant to bear witness to on that day was not primarily the wrongness of a ban or the actions of a state, but the sanctity of the lives being erased in Gaza. Only because of that witness do I find myself standing against those who destroy life, and beside the Author of Life, who faced death not by disappearing into the crowd but by remaining, to the last, exposed, accountable and, ultimately, victorious.

Tom Dennehy-Caddick

Defend Our Juries

Martin Newell on the need to both resist and discern

As I write, the Appeal Court verdict on the proscription – the banning – of Palestine Action (PA) is due in one week. Many of our friends have been among the more than 3,000 arrested over the last year for their participation in the ‘Defend Our Juries’ protests opposing the banning of PA. The Ploughshares movement and Palestine Action have a number of things in common, as well as some differences. Many Catholic Workers, including myself, have also taken part in the Ploughshares movement over the 46 years since it started.

The Ploughshares movement and Palestine Action advocate a similar form of property damage as a way of resisting preparations for war. However, Palestine Action is banned in the UK, while the Ploughshares movement, and Trident Ploughshares specifically, are not. Then again, both the Ploughshares movement generally, and Trident Ploughshares in particular, have a highly developed philosophy, practice, and discipline of nonviolence. As far as I know, Palestine Action is far more pragmatic about the activism of its members. At the same time, it could be a very short distance



Lift the Ban Protest, indigonolan, 2025

from the banning of one protest (or nonviolent resistance) organisation to the same happening to another. It is worth remembering that if Jesus turned over the tables of the temple traders today, he could easily be charged with criminal damage too.

In November 2000 I was, along with Susan van der Hijden, part of the ‘Jubilee Ploughshares 2000’ action. With household hammers we symbolically and actually disarmed a part of the British nuclear warhead convoy – one of the trucks that carry nuclear warheads up and down the country from AWE Aldermaston, where they are made, to Faslane, where they are loaded onto the Trident nuclear missiles, ready to go on the submarines that are

based there. We waited to be arrested, were charged with over £30,000 of criminal damage, and eventually given twelve-month sentences for our witness. No one ever mentioned terrorism.

Susan and I had been through a long process of discernment and preparation for likely prison time as part of our action. I hope and pray that any PA activists who will spend, or have spent, extended prison time have had similar opportunities for preparation and discernment. There is no need to discern the truth of whether genocide has been happening in Gaza, any more than we needed to discern whether or not nuclear weapons were indiscriminate weapons of mass destruction. But there is a need to discern and understand how each of us, given our personal strengths and weaknesses and life circumstances, is best placed to oppose injustice and violence, and promote life and freedom. My prayer is for the proscription of PA to be ended; for all PA members to be acquitted and freed; for all those PA activists in prison to have the strength and support they need; and for freedom for the Palestinian people.

Martin Newell

Tent Schools for Gaza

Anne Jones on her latest cycling fundraiser for Palestine

Most readers of LCW are aware of the situation for Palestinians in the West Bank, particularly Gaza, where the "ceasefire" is regularly broken by the IDF. Watching a film showing children continuing to attend school amid rubble stirred me to get back on my bike, and I am grateful to everyone who supported me in cycling up Alpe d'Huez on May 27, 2026, to raise money for Tent Schools for Gaza through the Amos Trust.

Against this tragic backdrop, the experience brought unsurpassable joy. Halfway up the mountain I paused to catch my breath in a camper van. Beside me, my friends Ann, Meg, Trudy and Alaa stood chatting merrily. Behind them towered Col de la Morte, streaked with snow like a comforting presence. I felt riches beyond bank balances or possessions. Hopes, hard work and common purpose had come together. I was enfolded by goodness. Alaa is a young Paralympian cyclist with the Gaza Sunbirds team. His left leg was amputated after an IDF sniper shot him when he was eighteen. Yet he rode effortlessly to the top, then cycled halfway back down to accompany me, shouting with delight, "Go Anne, go Anne,



Tent School in Gaza, Amos Trust

we love you Anne! Viva Palestina!" Alongside Asfour, another Gaza Sunbird who also lost a leg, he revelled in the freedom of cycling these mountains. Before the destruction of Gaza, their training had consisted of cycling the length of the Gaza Strip. Both have families still unable to leave.

Birdsong, waterfalls and the little church of St James in La Garde made the mountain seem a place of peace. At the summit, where friends had waited patiently to cheer us over the finish line, we celebrated together before cycling to the famous Tour de France podium. At 84, I delighted in being photographed there beside genuine professional cyclists. As I cycled home across the dunes towards Dunkirk, I

reflected on the countless people whose quiet support had made the ride possible. Over these months I have discovered how many ordinary people are appalled by what they read about Gaza and the West Bank, yet feel powerless. "You are doing this for me. I would if I could," many told me.

Training had not been easy. Lyme disease had drained my strength and arthritis often threatened my resolve, yet encouraging doctors urged me to persevere. I also thought often of how fortunate I have been to grow up in a safe country with opportunities denied to so many others. The tragedy in Gaza remained the reason for every mile. Children are living in tents or among rubble, yet continue their education with remarkable courage. Some have tents in which to learn; others still study in the open while funds are raised. This small act of cycling up a mountain cannot change their circumstances, but it is one way of standing alongside them. I thank everyone who sponsored and supported the ride. Like all good things, I too have been immeasurably rewarded.

Anne M. Jones

Donate: tinyurl.com/yr2ju3u3

The Afterlives of the Caledonian Forest

Thomas Frost on the legacy of the Highland Clearances and Scotland's new lairds

It was cold and clear out on the moors. The crisp white ground crunched under their feet. They were looking for wood. The few ancient birch trees that straggled up the hillsides above the river were no good for building, though some people used them as couples in the roof, selecting them so that the natural twist could be laid to the ridge, following the curve of the thatch. But beneath the ground, perfectly preserved in the peat, lay the fallen remains of the great old Caledonian Forest. Where the pines lay close to the surface the frost did not lie, either because of the oil or the warmth in the wood. Alan Temperley, *Tales of the North Coast*.

The ancient Caledonian Forest reached its greatest extent around 6000 years ago, after the end of the last ice age and the melting of the glaciers which had carved out the broad valleys of the Highlands of Scotland. Subsequent periods of colder, wetter weather promoted the growth of peat bogs, which swallowed much of the old forest. Human deforestation began about 5000 years ago, when neolithic people started to clear away trees to make way for agriculture. From the late medieval period, these factors combined to reduce the ancient



Caledonian Pines (i), Lindy Furby

forest to scattered patches. The Gaelic-speaking people of Sutherland, in the far north, were driven by the shortage of timber to build their roofs from “bog fir”, ancient trees preserved in the oxygenless peat.

The proportion of land used for agriculture increased very gradually over the subsequent millennia, along with the slow growth of the population, until by the late 1700s almost every scrap of potentially arable land was being cultivated.

Consequently the Highlands became prone to famine in years of poor harvests, so that not only was it difficult for landowners to collect rents, but they were also obliged to fund relief to prevent widespread starvation. For the Duchess of Sutherland, in the first decades of the 19th century, the solution to this humanitarian and financial problem was to apply the same formula of “improvement”, of rural enclosure and the replacement of small-scale tenant farmers with large-scale commercial agriculture, which had already been applied to most of the island of Britain.

She decided that her vast estate would be used for commercial sheep farming, to make way for which almost the entire rural population would be evicted and resettled.

In the vast majority of cases her tenants refused to leave the villages which had been home to their families for centuries or millennia. Where this happened, they were removed by force, and in several instances the army was sent in to put down riots. To prevent them from returning, the roofs of all their houses were burned; the bog fir was irreplaceable, and being highly resinous burned very quickly. In at least a few cases, houses were burned down while occupants who were either unable or unwilling to leave were still inside, and many more people, especially infants and the elderly, died from starvation or exposure on the way to the bleak coasts to which they were resettled and expected to learn how to fish. Similar evictions happened across the Highlands, in the process now known as the Highland Clearances.

However, the price of wool fell over the course of the 19th century, reducing the profitability of the new sheep farms, so the handful of aristocrats who owned the Highlands were obliged to

turn to other sources of revenue. In the second half of the 19th century, bloodsport tourism became very profitable. The owners of the Highlands advertised the land their parents and grandparents had depopulated as a pristine, untouched wilderness, and the wealthy flocked there to catch salmon and to shoot deer and grouse.

In many respects the situation remains unchanged. Scotland continues to have the most concentrated land ownership in Europe, with roughly 400 landowners owning more than half of its rural land, the vast majority of which is managed to sustain artificially high populations of deer and grouse for shooting. The population of deer has tripled since the 1960s. This has been achieved through overgrazing, doing long-term damage both to peatland and to Scotland's remaining forests; only about 1% of the ancient Caledonian Forest now remains. The shooting estates have devastated biodiversity and contributed significantly to climate change, as forests and peatbogs are significant carbon sinks.

Recently, however, the potential for large-scale reforestation in the Highlands has made them a goldmine for "carbon credits", an attempt to commodify ecology. A company can plant some trees



Caledonian Pines (iii), Lindy Furby

and be awarded credits by an agency according to the quantity of carbon dioxide theoretically removed from the environment, and then sell the credits to a polluting company which can then claim to be "carbon neutral". The credits remain good even if, as happened in the Canadian wildfires a couple of years ago, the trees they are based on go up in flames. They are a form of "greenwashing", or, in the words of Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'*, an apparently "quick and easy solution" to the climate crisis "which permits maintaining excessive consumption."

The smokescreen carbon credits provide for the destruction of the planet is nonetheless very valuable, and investors have swept in. Even while the population of the coastal communities to which people were cleared shrinks, due to an absence of decent work, housing, and infrastructure, the price of land in the Highlands has risen considerably over the last decade, exacerbating the housing crisis. A new generation of "green lairds" has bought up much of the land, and even the shooting estates are now presenting

themselves as "rewilding" projects. Rewilding has become a new way of commodifying the depopulated land.

Some of the rewilding projects have been well-managed, which is at least an improvement on the deer monoculture of the past. But the problem remains that as long as the ownership of the land is concentrated in a handful of huge private estates, it will continue to serve narrow private interests which run contrary to the common good – the good of the communities living there as well as the good of the whole planet. For as long as humans have been living in the Highlands, the land has been shaped by their presence. Humans are part of their environment, and consequently a conception of "rewilding" which does not incorporate human communities is incoherent. We are mutually interdependent with the land we live upon, and the collective interest of the environment of which humans form a part will only be served if the land is collectively owned and managed. The need for collective ownership is as urgent for us now as it was for the men and women who built the burnt out houses of the broad valleys of the Highlands, the walls of which still stand, and will stand there for a very long time.

Thomas Frost

Thoughts on Birdsong

Naomi Orrell reflects on the healing power of birdsong in a wounded world

Since moving into Giuseppe Conlon House, I have become a little obsessed with birds. I'm not entirely sure why or how this happened – perhaps it's a response to being back in grey, polluted London; or perhaps because I am the oldest member of the GCH team (as the rest of the team love to point out) I am gravitating to a hobby with a stereotypical age profile. (Reader, I turned 30 this year). Either way, I can't stop noticing them.

We are lucky at GCH to be surrounded by so many birds. Not only do we have the river running alongside us, we also have two reserves within walking distance. In our garden, we have been blessed with a whole array of birds, including a family of blue tits in our bird box. Sometimes, it feels like I'm now tuned into a frequency that I can't turn off (if you're a "birder", perhaps you can let me know if this is normal!). Often, I find myself tuning in during prayer, hearing the call of a coot or a wren breaking through the silence of our morning contemplation. In a sense, this has added a spiritual element to my appreciation of birds. Perhaps this is to be expected from someone who is exploring a call to Franciscan religious life; after all, it was St Francis



Geese at Twilight, Woodcut, Neil Rizos

who took time out of his journey through the Spoleto Valley to preach to the birds:

"My sweet little sisters, birds of the sky, you are bound to heaven, to God, your Creator. In every beat of your wings and every note of your songs, praise him."

(Taken from "The Little Flowers of St Francis")

There is a great deal of embellishment to the hagiography of St Francis. Even so, his love and adoration for God's creation is a constant throughout the stories of his life; and what a glorious statement this is! With every movement of their wings, every note they sing, every fibre and sinew of their being, our "sweet little sisters" praise God. In doing so, they are bound not only to Heaven, but to our Creator. Imagine if we lived in such a way that every ounce of our being is a prayer

to our Creator; "rejoice in the Lord always; again, I will say, rejoice" (Philippians 4:4).

The divinity of birds is something others have picked up on: 20th century French composer Olivier Messiaen, for example, was obsessed with birdsong. A devout Catholic, his music is both deeply religious and imbued with birdsong, to the extent that his birdsong is often used to embody a kind of religious ecstasy. He once said that "the birds are the opposite of time. They represent our longing for light, for stars, for rainbows, and for jubilant song." What does it mean for something to be "the opposite of time" if not some reflection of the divine? The Christian understanding of God is the Creator beyond our human sense of time and space, something much larger than our comprehension. It makes sense, then, for something as ephemeral as

birdsong to feel like a spiritual experience. This is something Messiaen knew about too: “I give bird songs to those who dwell in cities and have never heard them, make rhythms for those who know only military marches or jazz, and paint colours for those who see none.” In a city like London, where we are weighed down by so much noise and pollution, I am beyond grateful to be tuned into a frequency which breaks through that noise, a fleeting moment in the song of God’s creation.

Recently, I took part in a blockade of an arms factory. While we were there, I found it striking (almost disturbing) how much wildlife there was around us. Here we were, a site of death, and we could see wildflowers in the grass outside the fence, the birds singing boldly and loudly above us.

(Side-note: I think I heard my first European Bee-Eater!).

The weapons we were stopping being produced and transported would almost certainly be used by Israeli forces against people in Gaza and the West Bank. I couldn’t help but think of the people in Palestine who are desperate to hear birds. Hearing birds would mean that the bombing had stopped; hearing birds would mean that they could rebuild their lives. Palestinian poet Heba Elnaami writes:

“One day, the sky will be soft again.

*No more noise, no more fire
just clouds drifting like they
used to.*

*We’ll look up without fear,
without holding our breath.*

*Just sky,
and maybe a few birds coming
home.”*

(Taken from ‘Hope Stays’ by Heba Elnaami)

We often impose harsh, restrictive lines on nature. We build concrete buildings, we build fences to keep people (and nature) out. But nature, thankfully, refuses to follow these rules. Flowers push through concrete, squirrels build their homes in attics (something we know all too well at GCH!), birds create their nests in the trees around a weapons factory. Even when we try to control it, nature has a habit of disrupting, of striking a match in the darkness of our world. As I grow more into my new identity as a “birder”, I hope that their song will always be a welcome disruption in a dark, grey world.

Naomi Orrell



Trumpeter Swans - Winter, Woodcut, Neil Rizos

Sojourners in Babylon: Saint Peter and the State

Harry Wills on living in exile as citizens of God's Kingdom

Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners (παροικος) and exiles (παρεπίδημος), to abstain from worldly desires, which war against your being. (1Pe 2:11)



St Peter as Founder of the Church, Woodcut, 1460-70

Living in the world, under human authorities, and expecting the imminent destruction of worldly power at Judgment (1Pe 4:7; Da 2:44; Hag 2:22; 1Co 15:24), Peter identified Christians as *paroikoi* (foreigners, non-citizens) and *parepidemoi* (exiles, sojourners). In addition, he identifies Rome as *Babylon* (1Pe 5:13), a key indicator of his opinion of the empire. *Babylon*, a watchword for tyranny and oppression against God's people, the land into which the Jews were sent into exile, was an apt analogy. The image invoked is that Christians under Roman rule are like the Jews exiled in Babylon, foreigners sojourning in an oppressive state. Peter himself highlights the tyranny of the human authorities in Acts 4:26-28, but the language of *foreigners* in an oppressive *Babylon* also invokes Christ's warning that *because you are not of the world (lit. world order, society), the world hates you... If they persecuted Me, you will also be persecuted.* (Jn 15:19-20) A warning Peter restates in his advice to *not be*

surprised at the fiery ordeal... but rejoice since you participate in the sufferings of Christ. (1Pe 4:12-13)

The world certainly hated them. From the outset the church was denounced as criminal and seditious. (1Pe 2:12, 15; 3:16) Some accusations, however, namely their refusal to participate in the imperial cult and state religion, were true and legitimate causes for concern to the Roman authorities since they undermined the basis of their power. Pliny the Younger, governor of Pontus and Bithynia, cites the desertion of the temples and refusal to worship the emperor as reason enough to torture and execute Christians in ca. 110 CE, but identifies no other sedition than their 'stubbornness', 'vowing to do no harm to anyone', and 'gathering for simple meals'. Clearly the early Christians of Pontus and Bithynia, to whom Peter's letter is addressed, followed his advice:

Keep such virtuous conduct among the pagans that, even when they denounce you as criminals, they might glorify God on the day of Inspection through the good works they have witnessed... But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear their threats... But revere Christ as Lord... If you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. (1Pe 2:12; 3:14; 4:16)

Like the Bithynian Christians who died in an act of defiant witness according to Christ's words, (Mt 10:18) Peter disobeyed the authorities repeatedly in defence of the faith and Peter invites disobedience when he twice declares: *It is necessary to obey God, not human beings!* (Ac 4:19; 5:28-9) In doing so, Peter necessarily denies the legitimacy of human authority, reminding me of the words of Speratus, one of the Scillitan Martyrs executed in 180 CE:

The empire of this world I do not recognise; but rather I serve that God whom no man has seen nor can see with human eyes. I have not committed theft; if I buy anything, I pay the tax, because I recognise my Lord, the King of Kings, and Emperor of all nations.

Following this line of thought and remembering Peter's advice to be as non-citizens abstaining from worldly desires, including, presumably, wealth and rank, we find Christians rejecting Roman sovereignty and precluded from participating in the state. Tertullian, in his *Apology*, expresses a sentiment similar to Peter's: *We, whom all the passion for glory and rank leave cold, have no need to combine [into a state]. Nothing is more foreign to us than the state. One state we recognise for all – the universe.* We can also assume that Peter was intimately aware of the admonitions of scripture to not imitate the ways of the Gentiles in rejecting God's sovereignty (Lev 20:23; Dt 18:9; Jdg 8:23; 1Sa 8:4-20) and Christ's explicit prohibition of top-down authority. (Mt 20:25-27; Mk 10:42-44). In other words, we are God's universal Holy Nation (1Pe 2:9) for whom there is one Lord. (1Pe 3:14; Ac 5:29)

Therefore, we might be left confused by this controversial passage:

Subordinate (ὑποτάσσω) yourselves, on account of the Lord, to every human being (ἀνθρώπου κτίσις); whether to the king, as being superior, or to governors, who are sent by him, for retribution to criminals and praise to well-doers. (1Pe 2:13-14)

The above translation clears up some of the confusion left by traditional ones. Firstly, Peter does not say or intend obedience – which is ὑπακοή (hypakoe) or πειθαρχέω (peitharcheo), words which Peter reserves strictly for Christ or God (1Pe 1:2, 14, 22; Ac 4:19; 5:29). Rather, Peter chooses ὑποτάσσω (hypotasso), which literally means to place or arrange under. But to whom? Often, we see 'to every human institution' but this is neither accurate nor well attested in Greek literature. NT scholar Paul Achtemeier uses a more literal translation of every human creature, or human being, better complementing verse 17: *Honour everyone, love the fellowship, fear God, honour the king.* As Achtemeier notes, Peter's careful and deliberate emphasis on human before listing the king and governors not only limits any subordination to the Roman authorities as equal to subordination to everyone, but also subversively strips the emperor of his divine claims, the basis of his authority. Rather than recognising human authorities, Peter is simply reiterating the obligation to love one another and love one's enemies. (Mt 5:43-48; 1Pe 1:22; 3:8)

Peter's strategy is summarised well by Petr Chelcický:

Men of faith do good without

waiting to be compelled to it by laws... But let them remember that the true authority is only that of God. Only under that authority can they fully live the Beatitudes... Then the pagan power becomes irrelevant.

More could be said concerning Peter's radical alternative to the state: leadership by good example, (1Pe 4:10-11; 5:1-7) a model exemplified by Christ. (Mt 20:25-27) However, I would like to leave space to mention how relevant Peter's imagery of sojourners in a hostile land is in Europe today. Refugees are denounced, their existence labelled illegal, they are harassed, dehumanised, imprisoned, and killed. They too seek to live peaceably, often blessing the country that persecutes them. They are God's children exiled to a new Babylon. We, as Christians sojourning in the world, must live in solidarity with them and Christians in authority must ask themselves some difficult questions about participation in the state. We mustn't hope in politicians to save us (Psalm 146:3-5), rather we must take up the sufferings of the dispossessed ourselves because *Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow in His steps.* (1Pe 2:21)

To Him be the glory and the power forever. Amen. (1Pe 5:11)

Harry Wills

Book Review

Martin Newell reviews Anna Blackman's history of the Catholic Worker in Britain in Lay Catholic Societies in Twentieth Century Britain

If you look on the 'About' page of our LCW website, you will read these words about the origins of the London Catholic Worker:

"The London Catholic Worker was brought together by the Jubilee Ploughshares 2000 disarmament action. Those who came together had long sensed the need for a Catholic Worker community of hospitality and resistance in the world's second imperial city."

In those early years after 2000, when I talked to others about wanting to start a CW house in London, the response I got was often "Oh, I thought that had finished in the 1950's?" At that time I thought this was because the most well known biography of Dorothy Day back then (by William D Miller) finished in the late 1950s, and almost no one in Britain seemed to be aware that her life and witness, let alone the movement she founded, continued after that.

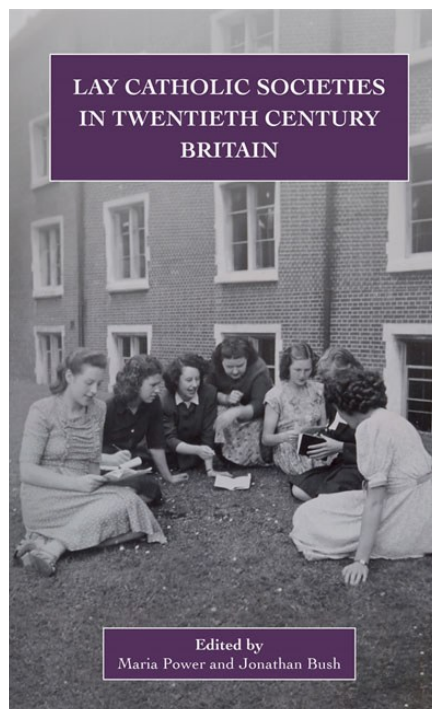
In recent years I realised there was another reason. This is due to Anna Blackman's chapter on the history of the British CW movement in "Lay Catholic Societies in 20th Century Britain". Her work on this story, and the research she did in order to write it, uncovers a vital part of our history which

until now had been largely forgotten.

Anna outlines the beginnings of the CW in Britain with the foundation of the London based version of the CW newspaper in 1935, just a year after the first edition of the Catholic Worker was published in New York, USA. The London version reached a peak circulation of 64,000 in 1936, which is comparable to the New York CW when the size of the country is taken into account. Relative to the Catholic population, the British CW paper was far more widely read. In addition to the newspaper, scattered around the country were support groups, bookshops, reading groups, and even a few houses of hospitality.

If the British CW was so well known in the 1930's, why was it forgotten? Speculatively, the reason for the greater immediate success of the British movement at the time is also the reason it failed to endure and is less well known now. That is to say, the British CW took a more moderate social and political position. Whereas the British CW focused on being a newspaper advocating Catholic involvement in issues of relevance to the British working class, the New York CW and the American movement it birthed became more well known for its pacifism, activism and houses of hospitality for the poor and homeless.

However, at the time, the British CW had a significant impact on British social Catholicism "out of all proportion to its size", to borrow a phrase from Mel Piehl's book on the US CW movement, "Breaking Bread: The Catholic Worker and the Origin of Catholic Radicalism in America" (1982). It acted as a platform for, and gave publicity to, otherwise marginal groups and views. These included Catholic anti-fascist voices at the time of the Spanish Civil War, promoted by groups like PAX and other





Catholic Social Guild, Catholic Workers College, Oxford, 1924. Inspired by the start of Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin's 1933 US movement, the Catholic Social Guild launched its own UK Catholic Worker newspaper in 1935.

peace movement groups. The founders of the British CW were also among the first members of PAX, and likewise helped birth the British version of the Young Christian Workers, and the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists, and supported the Catholic Social Guild and the Catholic Workers (in the more generic sense) college in Oxford. There were also connections with Christian CND in the 1950s.

After the newspaper closed in 1959, there continued to be CW inspired social activism, the founding of the Simon Community in 1963, a short lived CW house of hospitality in Notting Hill in 1968, to the founding of Catholic Peace Action in 1982.

However, it was not until 1992 that the current renewal of British CW practice took root in a CW house of hospitality, when St Francis House opened in Oxford. Another short lived CW followed in Liverpool from 1996 to 1999. Very much focussed on solidarity with East Timorese and anti-arms trade activism, it grew out of the CW related Ploughshares movement in Britain in the 1990's. During the same period, the Glasgow CW came and went before later returning in the form it has today. At the start of the 21st century, the Ploughshares movement also played a significant part in the origins and nature of the short lived Dublin CW after 2000, as well the early years of the London CW and CW Farm.

And so we come full circle, to the support group around the "Jubilee Ploughshares 2000" action that became the seed of, and inspiration for, the London CW and later our sister houses, the CW Farm in Hertfordshire and Martha House in Tottenham. We thank God for this journey, for Anna's work uncovering our roots, and pray that our life and witness too may have "an impact out of all proportion to our size", guided and inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Martin Newell

"Lay Catholic Societies in Twentieth Century Britain" by Anna Blackman. Edited by Maria Power and Jonathan Bush. Published 2025 by Boydell Press, for the Catholic Record Society.

A Grain of Rice

Sharmini Aphrodite on migration, memory and a travelling faith

I arrived in London at the start of the year, still in winter. It was miles away from the wet heat from which I had come, the blistering afternoons and regular sunlight. When I first conceived of my current research project years ago, it had been because of this landscape: tropical humidity is the optimal climate for rice-growing. I had originally intended to trace the development of rice rituals in Sabah in the latter half of the 20th century – how conversions had diminished the role of ritual specialists like my great-grandmothers who had once overseen the rice-growing process. How the regularity of tractor ploughing and imported pesticides had impacted the need for ritual prayers. How rice-growing itself was back-breaking work, thought of as better left in the past.

I had first gone into the archives years ago with these ideas in mind. I came out, instead, steeped in the language of my childhood: Christianity. The period I had set aside for my original research coincided with the formation of the Malaysian state and, with it, the suppression of ethnic and religious minorities, labourers, and Indigenous Peoples – all of whom challenged state



Rice Picking, Gihachiro Okuyama

hegemony. In the archives, I read about how Indigenous Sabahans during this time began to sculpt their identities around Christianity as a means of resisting state suppression and exploitation. These were things I had taken for granted growing up. The presence of crucifixes rising into the sky venturing into rural Sabah, my ancestral village cluttered with churches, wedges of crosses cut into the earth denoting the resting places of the dead. My grandparents converted to Catholicism in the wake of this in the 1980s; there is a tiny church in the vicinity named after an Italian mystic. All of

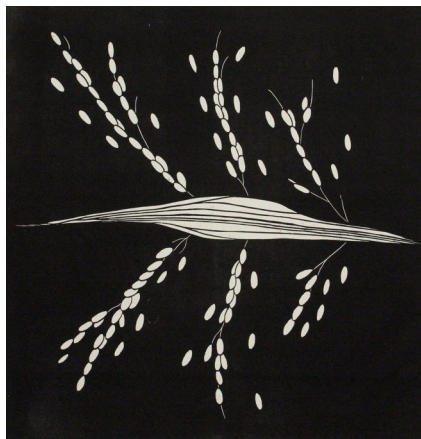
this made sense now, as did the rumours of state suppression heard during childhood and tucked away—simply part of the landscape. Central to my ancestors' religion had been the story of a sacrificed daughter, whose body was turned to rice to feed the hungry. You can imagine it didn't take much to hear about Christ holding up a loaf of bread, saying this is my body, and understand it. It is the story of an open table, an offer to sit and eat.

At some point, I visited the Mill Hill Mission archives, just off Liverpool. From this port city, in 1881, the Mill Hill missionaries first arrived in Sabah. They were separate from the colonial project, even helping locals advocate for land rights against the colonial administration's land grabbing. The missionaries found that to properly minister to people they had to, quite literally, learn the language: they had to work with them and learn from them, too. Through negotiation, the missionaries became an integral part of these communities, such that when the state declared in the 1970s that they were to be deported and expelled, in its efforts to stamp out both Indigenous identity and Christianity, these

communities rallied around them. Against state violence – tear gas, helicopters, police – they tried to protect these priests from being sent away.

In Liverpool, I met one such missionary. I sat at his side and listened to his stories of first coming to Sabah, in the midst of the Christmas season. I knew the district where he had been first sent; could see in my mind's eye the rice fields, the distant mountains. I told him that the faith was still going strong in Sabah; that I was here was proof of that. No matter how imperfectly I have practised, no matter what personal gripes I have had with the church (or churches), I was still here. It was a strange journey to make; over a century ago missionaries would have left this place for Sabah, now I had made the journey in reverse.

When I first arrived at Giuseppe Conlon House to help out, I met people from all over the world; saw the myriad other ways states enact violence. Christianity has always been a travelling religion, from missionaries to migrants. The churches I have known were filled with other Borneans who had to leave to cari makan (find food), as we say; with Timorese and Filipinos doing the same. A room filled with different languages. The story of Christ is a migrant story – we are



Uncooked rice, Jenie Gao, 2021

familiar with the journey to Bethlehem, of the Holy Family to Egypt, of the travelling of disciples and saints, of the violence that the state can do to those who trespass its borders in all forms. Without recognition of this, without a sustained effort to understand and challenge the structures of power that demand obedience to unjust practices, that leave some hungry while others are fed, that tell us there is only one way to be and act, what is this faith for? It is worth little if we forget that Christ was a child in the arms of a weary mother fleeing oppression, if we forget the sanctity of a grain of rice. In the few months I was here, these lessons returned to me. In the singing during the Stations of the Cross walking through London, in washing vegetables for dinner and sweeping the floors, in the house church seeing the face of Christ behind barbed wire.

The end of May is Kaamatan (Harvest Festival) in Sabah; during it, a Mass is said where

rice stalks are blessed in remembrance of ancestral practices. Fifty years ago, a few days after the year's Kaamatan celebrations, a man named Peter Mojuntin was killed in a plane crash. He had been instrumental at the height of state repression; founding the Persatuan Katolik Sabah for religious freedoms, standing up for peasants who were being threatened by the state, advocating for the missionaries to remain with the communities who had grown to love them and who they, too, loved. My research will soon continue; I will head to rice fields and churches, to ask people what fuelled their resistance to state domination. To ask what crafted people like Mojuntin and remains with us fifty years later. A few months ago, sitting with someone who had been part of a student movement, still advocating decades later for environmental justice and the rural poor, I received a surprising answer to this question. They said it was Liberation theology: the words of Gutiérrez and Freire, received decades ago, from Peru and Brazil. The life of Christ translated across continents. A travelling faith, making unexpected journeys to meet us where we need it most. So that we may be for others what they, too, in their own journeys, need most.

Sharmini Aphrodite

GCH House Update

A House of Hospitality is so much more than a house. But, in recent months, we have been reminded of material realities. Between warped windows and doors, a roof beam chewed through by squirrels, and even an exploding microwave, life in an old building is not without its challenges. Yet anyone who has spent time in a Catholic Worker house knows that these places are more than just a shelter. Patricia, one of the founders of MSH, a Catholic Worker house in Calais, often says that the house itself has a soul and a spirit, and that is certainly true here.

The live-in community continues to evolve; Thomas, Moya, Harry, and Naomi remain at the house, while Eva has moved on to study Environmental Science. At the time of writing, another community member is due to join us shortly, and we look forward to his arrival. Having a space for a shorter-term volunteer, as well as the stability of those of us committed for longer, is really lovely. We miss everybody who leaves us after 6 months, of course! But their influence lives on in the new ideas they have brought and our ever-expanding external community.

The past few months have also brought changes for our guests, three of whom have been granted leave to remain. At the time of writing, one guest has already moved into his own flat and the others are in the process of working out their next steps. After years spent in uncertainty and limbo, seeing people rebuild their lives offers a glimpse of hope. With the rise in anti-immigrant propaganda and violence, this feels particularly necessary; we must have hope in order to fight back.

The guests in our night shelter have also moved on now, whether to new lives or another

shelter, as the process for them continues. The shelter ran until the end of April and has closed over the summer, but we hope to reopen it this winter and once again welcome ten destitute men into our church hall and into our lives. In the meantime, many of our friends and former shelter volunteers have continued to use the church hall space for all sorts of creative and political events. Among other things, our friends Sharmini and Armand gave a fascinating talk about life as Christians in Malaysia, and we continue with our bi-weekly evening Bible study. Excitingly, Jade and Connor, who met at the Bible study, got married in July! Our good friend Andy also continues to run free bicycle repair classes from our church. Being able to cycle around London opens up a lot of opportunities for all of us, as public transport costs can be prohibitive, especially for our guests, who often have appointments and volunteering opportunities all over the city.

The house increasingly feels like a hub of activity; a place where new ideas are born, friendships (and a marriage!) are formed, and people find welcome. We are continually reminded that our community extends beyond any one house and is sustained by countless people who contribute their time, gifts, and presence.

The church creaks and groans, recycling is sorted into the wrong bin, or the water pressure stops working. Yet through it all, the London Catholic Worker remains a place of welcome, a place of community, and a place where hope continues to take root.

Once you have read this newsletter, please pass it on to others!

Blood of Christ, inebriate me

A new poem by Anthony Capildeo

They'll ask you not to
write this poem how
the wine-dark image
of the Homeric sea
cleared up sour claret
to their mind's glass eye
when you said how red
how purple sea gives
back the sun itself
apocalypsed or
documentary when
whalers spill whales' blood.
That colouring that
bothers them. You home
in on their Homer?
Nothing in nature
should outdo his words!
Whose young men set out
on past adventures
just as our saints did
fit men in small boats.



The crucified Christ bleeds into cups held by attending angels, Woodcut, Wellcome Collection 24598i

The Catholic Worker in and around the UK

London CW: Giuseppe Conlon House, 49 Mattison Road, London N4 1BG; Tel: 020 8348 8212; Email: londoncatholicworker@yahoo.co.uk; Web: www.londoncatholicworker.org; *Giuseppe Conlon House runs a house of hospitality for homeless and destitute asylum seekers, and organises acts of prayer, witness and nonviolent resistance.*

The Catholic Worker Farm: Lynsters Farm, Old Uxbridge Road, West Hyde, Herts, WD3 9XJ; Tel: 0923 777 201; Email: thecatholicworkerfarm@yahoo.co.uk; Web: www.thecatholicworkerfarm.org; *The Farmhouse offers hospitality, accommodation and support to destitute women and children, and has a poustinia and hermitage retreat.*

Glasgow Catholic Worker: Email: glw@catholicworker.org.uk; Web: www.catholicworker.org.uk;

Rimoaine House: The Wirral, Merseyside; Tel: 0151 953 0220; Email: rimoainehouse@yahoo.com
Rimoaine House is a community house practicing mutual aid and hospitality.

Maria Skobtsova House: Calais; +33 6 77 66 03 62; msh.volunteers@gmail.com; refugeehousecalais.org; *Maria Skobtsova House offers sanctuary and hospitality to vulnerable refugees, in the spirit of Dorothy Day, and Maria Skobtsova, 'Saint Mary of Paris'.*

Sojourner Truth House: Calais; quakersolidaritycentre@gmail.com; *A house of hospitality for women and families on the France-UK border. Short term volunteers are always needed, please get in touch!*

Giuseppe Conlon House Wishlist

FOOD

Instant coffee
Tinned tomatoes
Cooking oil
Kidney beans
Lentils
Chickpeas
Black & herbal tea
Sugar
Peanut butter

Honey
Chilli sauce
Soy sauce
Porridge oats
Long-life milk
Coconut milk
Fruit juice/squash
Instant noodles
Pasta



CLEANING

Eco-friendly products
Washing Powder
Anti-bac spray
Cream cleaner
Toilet cleaner
Floor cleaner
Dishwasher tablets
Washing-up liquid

TOILETRIES

Toilet paper
Disposable razors
Bars of soap
Toothbrushes
Toothpaste
Shampoo
Shower gel
Deodorant

Charity Gift Declaration—Multiple Donations

Boost your donation by 25p of Gift Aid for every £1 you donate. Gift Aid is reclaimed by the charity from the tax you pay for the current tax year. Your address is needed to identify you as a current UK taxpayer.

In order to Gift Aid your donation you must tick the box below:

I want to Gift Aid my donation of £_____ and any donations I make in the future or have made in the past 4 years to GIUSEPPE CONLON HOUSE CIO.

☐ I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

My Details: Title _____ First name or initial(s) _____
Surname _____ Full Home address _____

Postcode _____ Date _____

Please notify the charity if you want to cancel this declaration, change your name or home address, or no longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains.

If you pay Income Tax at the higher or additional rate and want to receive the additional tax relief due to you, you must include all your Gift Aid donations on your Self-Assessment tax return or ask HM Revenue and Customs to adjust your tax code.

Standing Order Form

PLEASE USE BLOCK CAPITALS

I wish to pay Giuseppe Conlon House CIO £10/£20/£40/other amount _____ per month/other _____

First payment to be made on: ____/____/____ and monthly/other thereafter.

Name of your bank: _____

Address of your bank: _____

Your account name: _____

Your account number: _____

Your bank sort code: _____

Please pay: CAF Bank, 25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent, ME19 4JQ. For the credit of: Giuseppe Conlon House CIO Account number: 00037144 Sort code: 405240

Until further notice the sum of the value indicated above.

Signed _____ Date _____

Please return to: Giuseppe Conlon House, 49 Mattison Rd, London, N4 1BG

Your name: _____

Your address: _____

SUPPORT OUR WORK

At Giuseppe Conlon House we run a house of hospitality for destitute asylum seekers without recourse to public funds. We are a part of the radical, Christian, pacifist Catholic Worker movement started in 1933 in New York by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin. For more information visit: www.catholicworker.com.

DONATIONS WELCOME!

We are not paid for this work. We receive nothing from the government. We rely on our readers' donations to pay bills, building maintenance, volunteer and guest expenses, and household supplies.

OTHER WAYS TO DONATE

You can also send a cheque payable to 'Giuseppe Conlon House CIO' to 49 Mattison Road, London N4 1BG, or donate online via our website. If you would like to make an online bank transfer, these are our details: Giuseppe Conlon House CIO, CAF Bank, Account No: 00037144, Sort Code: 405240, IBAN: B61CAFB40524000037144