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Blessed are the Poor

Martin Newell's Home Office Vigil Reflection

"Woe to the rich" (Luke 6:24)

Those words are probably the least quoted words in the Gospels. They're not popular, especially in rich countries. "Happy – or Blessed – are the poor" (Luke 6:20) is at least more popular.

But who are the rich and poor today, in the world we live in? It helps to understand our context. Despite there being a debate about whether global inequality is rising or falling, it is clearly true to say that there has never been a bigger gap between the richest and the poorest in human history. While Elon Musk is worth $400bn, and the super-mega-rich can talk of space tourism and going to live on other planets, millions of the poorest globally still die young, even in childhood, of preventable diseases, lack of clean water, and not having enough to eat. Obviously, we can see refugees desperately seeking a new life in the UK and Europe, risking their lives crossing the Mediterranean and the English Channel, and those who arrive here as among the poor, among those most vulnerable, suffering and in need of safety and welcome. And what happens on our borders reveals a wider truth: that the poverty and suffering of the poorest is not an accident, but the result of deliberate policy decisions designed to protect and enhance the place and wealth of the rich minority.

Christ the Shepherd, Jaroslav, 2025

I think it's also true to say that the biggest class divisions in the world are not between the working class and middle and upper classes, but between those who have access to "First World" lifestyles, passports and social security systems, and those who don't. And it is the gulf that still exists between these worlds of Dives and Lazarus (as in Jesus' parable in Luke's Gospel) that is both a push and pull factor in driving global migration. But it would be good to dig a little deeper.

Catholic Workers used to talk a lot about being at the heart of Empire. We compared ourselves to the people of Rome in the time of Jesus. Jesus lived and died, was executed,

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on the margins, the peripheries, of Empire. But the early Christians in Rome had to work out what it meant to follow Jesus while living at the heart of that same Empire. We – Catholic Workers – saw ourselves in a similar situation. Catholic Workers in the US certainly live in the heart of a global Imperial power. And in London, we live in a similar place, where there is a concentration of economic, financial, political and military power. Such a place is crying out for communities of faith and resistance, to stand in places such as this place of power – the Home Office.

Ched Myers in his book *Who Will Roll Away the Stone: Discipleship Queries for First World Christians*, compared our situation to that of Peter, warming his hands by the fire while Jesus was being tortured nearby: like Peter, we are warming our hands with the minor privileges of Empire, while off stage we can hear the screams of the crucified of our times being tortured. And so Catholic Workers talked about repenting from the privileges of Empire, and resisting its violence and injustice from within.

These days, the talk on the political left is more about de-colonisation than resisting Empire. I guess it essentially means the same thing. Working for the end of Empire, or Empires. While the age of the visible European Empires is over, the spirit of colonialism lives on.

Interestingly, it seems to me that the voices calling for de-colonisation often start from the global south. Which seems very right and to the point. And to me, they often seem to be the same voices that criticise things like "white saviourism" and "Band Aid" type portrayals of Africa and Africans as all being poor, starving wretches who need westerners to come over and save them.

I mention this partly because it strikes me that these days, pretty much every country in the world has what might be called a "First World Sector" and a "Third World Sector" – and others in between, but in very different proportions in different countries. Visually, virtually every country has a city with at least a district that looks like a west European city, for example. As a result of this increased prosperity in the global south, there are articulate voices from every country demanding respect, equal voices and economic equality, and saying "we don't want to be represented like THAT! We don't need your charity, your help, we need you to take your foot off our necks!" Revolutions are usually started by those who have newly entered the educated aspiring middle classes, who still feel they are being kept out of true freedom, opportunity and respect. It seems to me that the same is happening around the world today.

Those who make it to our shores are not from among the poorest in the world. The poorest might be lucky if they can make it to the nearest border or refugee camp. But those who do arrive carry with them the voices of their people, as well as sending money back home out of whatever they have, whether that is little or plenty, as witnessed to by the adverts on the tube for such things as the Remitly app.

As distressing as it is when there is so much suffering along the way, the great flow of migration at this time in history also represents something positive, that more and more people have the resources, the opportunity, the drive and the energy to seek and find a better life for themselves and their families. At the same time, as Pope Francis has said, there is such a thing as "internal colonialism", such that at least some of the voices we hear from the global south don't represent the poor at all, but the local elites, who may identify themselves more as part of the rich world, while happening to live in exile among the "great unwashed".

I could go on, but I've said enough. Let us pray for soft hearts and open ears to hear the cries of the crucified of today, wherever and whoever they are, and to hear what the Spirit is saying to the Churches.

Martin Newell

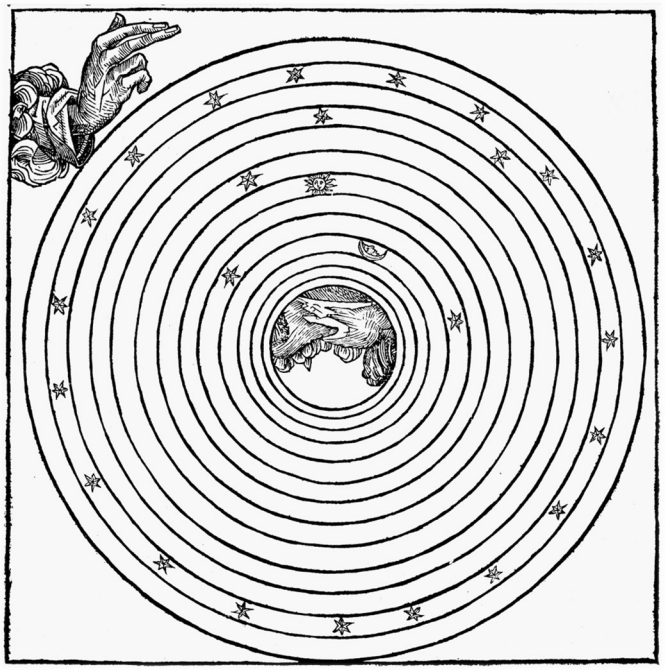
The Importance of the Imagination in Life, Faith and Art

James Catterson on how imagination nourishes faith, creativity, and human understanding

When we imagine something, we picture it; the very word *image* is located within the word *imagination*. Art W. Lindsley articulates that to truly understand the meaning of a concept or word, we must have "a clear image that we can connect with it." Forming images in our minds is therefore essential to comprehending the complex world we live in. Stephen Hawking states that the world's "age, size, violence and beauty require extraordinary imagination to appreciate it." Without using our imagination to form pictures of and bring understanding to what we encounter, we can jeopardise truly seeing things and invite the deadening of our enchantment towards what surrounds us.

Using the imagination in art makes sense, art often being a tool of explorative sense-making. Let's begin this exploration by traversing the nature of the first artist, the first to imagine.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, in a famous statement in his *Biographia Literaria*, identifies human imagination as "repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM." In saying this, he alludes to the possibility that prior to initiating the creation of the world, God may first have imagined the world, picturing what He would create and the love He wanted to share, bringing to life the words of Ephesians 1:4, "for He chose us in Him before the creation of the world." Through His imagination and creativity, in human beings God chose to imagine Himself, creating us in His image, and then later imagined Himself in the image of His Son Jesus in human form, revealing through Jesus "the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15). However, even as He reveals Himself through Jesus and human beings, God ultimately chooses to convey only the likeness of His appearance (for example, Ezekiel 1:28), leaving much of what He looks like—His being—to our imagination.



God Creating World, Hartmann Schedel, 1493

Yet He gives us descriptions that help us to build a picture of Him and His nature, as Father (Matthew 5:48), compassionate (Exodus 34:6), and shepherd (Psalm 23:1), feeding the imagination that He gave us.

Jesus Himself even relied on imagination, teaching in parables, stories and metaphors, calling His listeners to picture the images He cast. As such, the imagination is pivotal in helping us to comprehend and behold "the mystery of God" and faith, and therefore aids us to grow spiritually. It is vital for us to imagine and form an image or concept of God, as how we picture God to be is intrinsic to our belief, and to the intimacy of our relationship with Him.

Because of the significance this carries, it is key that we have ways of expressing and fathoming our imaginings. This is often why people turn to art—making to "attempt to grasp the ineffable and transcendent." For Christians or those exploring faith, this may derive from a desire to explore and fathom the glory of God, but this concept also applies to the use of art-making to understand the meaning of life and existentialism more widely.

But let's dig into what the imagination is a little more. Berys Gaut usefully recognises that imagining is "entertaining a proposition." As we think and ideas arrive, we can either entertain them or let them pass by, and if entertained, this does not necessitate that we are committed to their truth; we are merely exploring them. This means that through the imagination we can play with concepts and experiment with different ways of thinking about and realising them. This is central to creativity and artistry; the mind is acting as sketch paper, a vehicle to progress ideas. Lev S. Vygotsky identifies that "every act of the imagination has a very long history," suggesting that ideas grow through the collection of thoughts and realisations, resulting in the birth of a creative act (whether artwork, statement, or a piece of writing) that has internally undergone a significant period of gestation or formulation.

The imagination also allows a person to broaden their personal perspective by venturing out from the boundaries of what they themselves have experienced, to conceive how *another* might experience a situation. We see this in the empathetic phrase "I can imagine how hard that must be". A creative work allows the imagination of an artist to work alongside a viewer's, as a viewer receives and interacts with an artwork from their own unique imaginations and experiences. The ultimate expression and example of this is humans interacting with God's creation of the world. God even invites us to imagine what might be beyond the earth, a place of "no more night" (Revelation 22:5), and restoration (Acts 3:21).

Many think that the imagination solely belongs to childhood. Children tend to freely express creative ideas and narratives, leading adults to believe that children have a greater ability to imagine than they do. Vygotsky points that this is not the case, as one's creative ability is based on what one has previously experienced, thus the more experience a person has had, the more life they have lived, the greater is the nuance and complexity of the stimulus the imagination can draw from. However, there are logical reasons as to why adults believe this. Loris Malaguzzi in his poem "No Way. The Hundred is There" articulates that as we grow up, we are taught that things like *reality* and *fantasy*, *science* and *imagination*, or *work* and *play* do not go together. This kind of teaching shuns the imagination, and instead instils in us that life is to be taken practically and intelligently, based on the concrete, and that one's uninhibited creativity belongs in childhood alone.

Artists who have been able to follow a different narrative, who have followed their imagination, point to the need to slow down and truly take note of the world. Mary Oliver in her poem "Evidence" calls us back to enchantment of the everyday, echoing the encouragement of Matthew 6:26 to consider the natural rhythms and processes of renewal that surround us, reminding us to "keep some room in [our] heart for the unimaginable". Oliver alludes to the reality that we have lost space for our imaginings, wonder, and active engagement with our senses, which ultimately inhibits us from enjoying the intricate and sensual world that God created for us.

James Catterson

God Creating the World (with Angels), Woodcuts, Anon., 1867

No Faith in War

Moya Barnett on DSEI, resistance, and the demand for justice

Every two years, the Defence and Security Equipment International (DSEI) arms fair transforms London's Excel centre into one of the world's largest marketplaces for the weapons industry. And amidst horrific conflict around the world, the sale of weapons is booming.

The DSEI arms fair welcomes thousands of exhibitors and buyers, among them the militaries of Israel, Egypt and Iraq. Some of the weapons sold here will be used in the ongoing genocide in Gaza or in the catastrophic bombing of Yemen by Saudi Arabia. Britain has already licensed more than £8 billion worth of arms to Saudi Arabia since 2015, according to government statistics, fuelling attacks on schools and hospitals and plunging Yemen even deeper into a humanitarian crisis.

The arms fair sells weaponry from rifles and tanks to drones, warships, missiles, and surveillance technology. It also exhibits riot control gear like tear gas, advertised and sold to countries such as Egypt, known to use these weapons against protestors. In 2007, two exhibitors were expelled from the event for advertising leg irons, which attach to feet and restrict movement; they are banned for sale by EU countries to non-EU countries. Then, in 2021, Amnesty International reported the advertising of "waist chains and cuffs with leg cuffs," a full body restraint also banned for sale. Even the few limits which are put on arms dealers seem to be easily disregarded in the name of profit.

To host the arms fair is to facilitate war crimes and enable genocide. Christ rebuked armed defence in Gethsemane: "Put your sword back in its place," Jesus told Peter, "for all who draw the sword will die by the sword" (Matthew 26:52). This is a warning not just to us as

Police and Protestors at DSEI, Alisdare Hickson

individuals, but to our society; a culture that builds security on the trade in weapons inherits the violence it sustains.

As Christians we are not called to enable the machinery of war; our faith must take flesh in resistance. On the 9th of September, the London Catholic Worker joined many other faith groups for a No Faith in War protest outside the gates of the Excel centre. We organised a memorial service for the people who had been killed with the weapons advertised and sold inside, and for those who would continue to be affected. The protests continued to the 12th, with many people camping by the centre in witness. We pray, we resist, but as long as our government continues in its complicity, there will always be more to be done.

As Dorothy Day said, "Our problems stem from this filthy rotten system." London does not need DSEI, just as the world does not need more weapons. What we need is the hard, costly work of peace: justice, reconciliation, food for the hungry, and homes for those who have none.

Moya Barnett

A New Kingdom Within the Shell of the World

Harry Wills on the call to prefigure the Kingdom to Come

When the Son of Man comes in His honour and all the messengers with Him, then He will sit upon His throne of honour. And all the peoples will be gathered before Him and He will separate them from one another, like the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. Indeed, He will set the sheep on His right and the goats on His left. Then the King will say to those on His right: "Come, those praised by My Father, inherit a Kingdom prepared for you from the throwing down of civilisation."
(Matt. 25:31-34)

Christ Dividing the Sheep from the Goats, Mosaic, Basilica di Sant'Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna

In the KJV Bible, Matthew 25:34 reads: "...the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." In the NIV, it reads: "...since the creation of the world." There are ten instances of this phrase throughout the New Testament and, generally, the above translations are correct. There is, however, some depth to it that I feel is overlooked and should be examined in relation to the Gospel message of prefiguration, beginning with an analysis of the Greek and ending with an interpretation rooted in the broader context of the New Testament.

The word translated in the above passage as "world" is κόσμος (kosmos), but in Koine Greek this does not denote the physical earth (γῆ, ge). Instead, this word should be understood as "world order, government, civilisation, humankind, etc." It is in this sense that Jesus uses the word throughout the Gospels. See, for example, John 15:18–19:

If the World hates you, know that it hated Me before you. If you were of the World, the World would love you as its own. You are not, however, of this World, for I chose you out of the World and the World hates you because of this.

And in Revelation 17:8 we see both *earth* (γῆ) and *world order* (κόσμος) in the same verse, reinforcing the distinction:

And those dwelling on the earth (γῆ), whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the World (κόσμος), will be astonished, seeing the beast which once was, and now is not, and yet will be.

Next, the word καταβολή (katabole), usually translated *foundation*, has the literal meaning *throwing down*, from the verb καταβάλλω (κατα = down + βαλλω = to cast/ throw). This is a versatile word which can mean the laying down of a foundation, i.e. the base or beginning of something, but also the throwing down, slaying, or overthrow, i.e. the end of something.

Therefore, a more literal translation would be: "from the throwing down of the world order." Regardless of

whether it is intentional in the context of this parable, I find the lexical ambiguity of καταβολή thought-provoking. Taking the word in both its senses we get a kingdom prepared from both the foundation and overthrow of the world order. It does follow, after all, that in order for a new world to be realised, the old one must abdicate or be overthrown:

You do not pour new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins and both wine and wineskin will be ruined. No, you pour new wine into new wineskins. (Mk. 2:22)

Perhaps one implication of this understanding of "world"—as something human or social—and the new kingdom's preparation "from/since its foundation" is that this new kingdom is being prepared through us. Every act of radical love, "the blood of every saint and prophet shed from the foundation of the World" (Lk. 11:50), paves the way for its eventual fulfilment. In other words, it is prefigured.

Prefiguration, in politics, is the philosophy that in order to realise a desired future society we must live out that new society in the present: to build a new world within the shell of the old. This is an important element of anarchist thought and praxis, and it was the methodology of Christ and the early Church. Rejecting the *lex talionis*, private property, and human authorities, they instead practised transformative justice, built communities of resilience, and obeyed God above all others. They were living out God's Kingdom within the shell of the Empire and, in the process, unmasked its tyranny and idolatry.

And having disarmed the powers and authorities, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross. (Col. 2:15)

This is what the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats (and the entire Gospel) is inviting us to do: to live prefiguratively in preparation for God's Kingdom. To live and love as though we are not of this World, since Jesus has chosen us out of it (John 15:19; 17:16). Clearly, the Apostles interpreted the goal of the Christian to be living according to a new Way in spite of human structures when they declared: "It is necessary to obey God, not human beings" (Acts 5:29). For, as Petr Chelčický said, "he who obeys God needs no other authority." Paul, too, dedicates much of his letter to the Colossians to the topic of living a new life in spite of worldly order:

Do not be held captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy which depends on human tradition according to the principles of the World and not according to Christ … He blotted out the writing against us in the decrees which were adverse to us … If you have died with Christ away from the principles of the World, why, as if living in the World, do you submit to decrees … having taken off your old self with its practices and having put on the new self, being renewed in knowledge according to the likeness of its Creator, where there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian or Scythian, slave or free…. (Col. 2:8,14,20; 3:9-11)

To summarise, Jesus promises a new Kingdom, a new World, but to have a share in it, He warns, we must become anew ourselves (Jn. 3:3). To be inheritors, we must persevere in love, living prefiguratively until the World is eclipsed by the Kingdom of God. As it is written, "everyone born of God overcomes the World" (1 Jn. 5:4), for the World, as it is, is already dead and condemned. And so we, having become dead with Christ to the principles of this World, will become alive. Only through this new life, by living in the World but not being of it, can the evil of the current system be disarmed. (Jn. 3:18; Rom. 8:13; Col. 2:13-15, 20-22)

To Him be the glory and the power forever. Amen.

Harry Wills

Hiroshima and Empire: A Glimpse of Transfiguration

Sr Katrina Alton on the signs of God's glory amidst the wounds of history

On August 6, the Church celebrates the Feast of the Transfiguration, the moment when Jesus' divine nature shone through his humanity in blinding radiance on Mount Tabor. For a moment, the disciples saw the truth of who Jesus is: "His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white." Yet this same date, August 6th, is seared into modern memory for another dazzling, blinding light: the atomic bombing of Hiroshima in 1945.

Eighty years ago today, at 8:15 a.m., a man-made sun exploded over the city of Hiroshima. In seconds, tens of thousands were killed. In the days and months that followed, the death toll rose, and the long shadow of nuclear violence fell across the world.

It is no accident that these two events are held in tension on this date. One is the shining revelation of God's love; the other, the devastating consequence of humanity's pursuit of power and security through nuclear annihilation. One transfiguration glorifies life, the other reveals death dressed in light.

The Transfiguration of Christ, Abrecht Altdorfer, 1513

This morning, over twenty members of Pax Christi gathered outside Westminster Cathedral. We came not to protest, but to witness—to share leaflets, prayers, and presence. In the spirit of nonviolence and remembrance, we stood in solidarity with the victims of Hiroshima, daring to hold the light of Christ in the midst of the dark legacy of nuclear war.

Our vigil closed with prayer, and as the words of today's Gospel were read aloud—"This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to Him!"—a homeless man approached the circle. No one knew his name, and at first he said nothing. He simply entered the space and stood in our midst - still and silent, as though the voice from the cloud had hushed his troubled soul. His vestments were colourful, and his liturgical movements subtle and symbolic.

When the reading ended, the silence broke. With deep anger the man began shouting about the British occupation of Ireland—colonial violence, historic trauma, the Empire's wounds. His pain echoed the prayers that had just been offered. Though seemingly dissonant, his voice belonged in that space. For the trauma of Empire is not buried in the past. It lives on, in bodies, in memories, in broken systems and broken spirits.

Then, without explanation, he laid a white rose in the centre of the circle. A gesture of peace, of memory, a precious offering from the little he had.

Tonight that same rose is being carried to a Hiroshima memorial service, and laid not just as a symbol of peace for the victims of nuclear war, but as a sign of interconnected suffering: of occupied lands, of forgotten people, of all who have stood, and still stand, beneath Empire's shadow.

What does it mean to celebrate the Transfiguration in a world still scarred by Hiroshima, still shaped by Empire, still deaf to the voices crying out for justice? It means believing that God's nonviolent love still breaks through. Not only on mountaintops, but on city streets. Not only in shining garments, but in tired and traumatised faces. Not only in heavenly visions, but in interruptions—when someone steps unexpectedly into our space and breaks them open with pain we would rather not see. The Transfiguration is not an escape from history, it is a revelation within it.

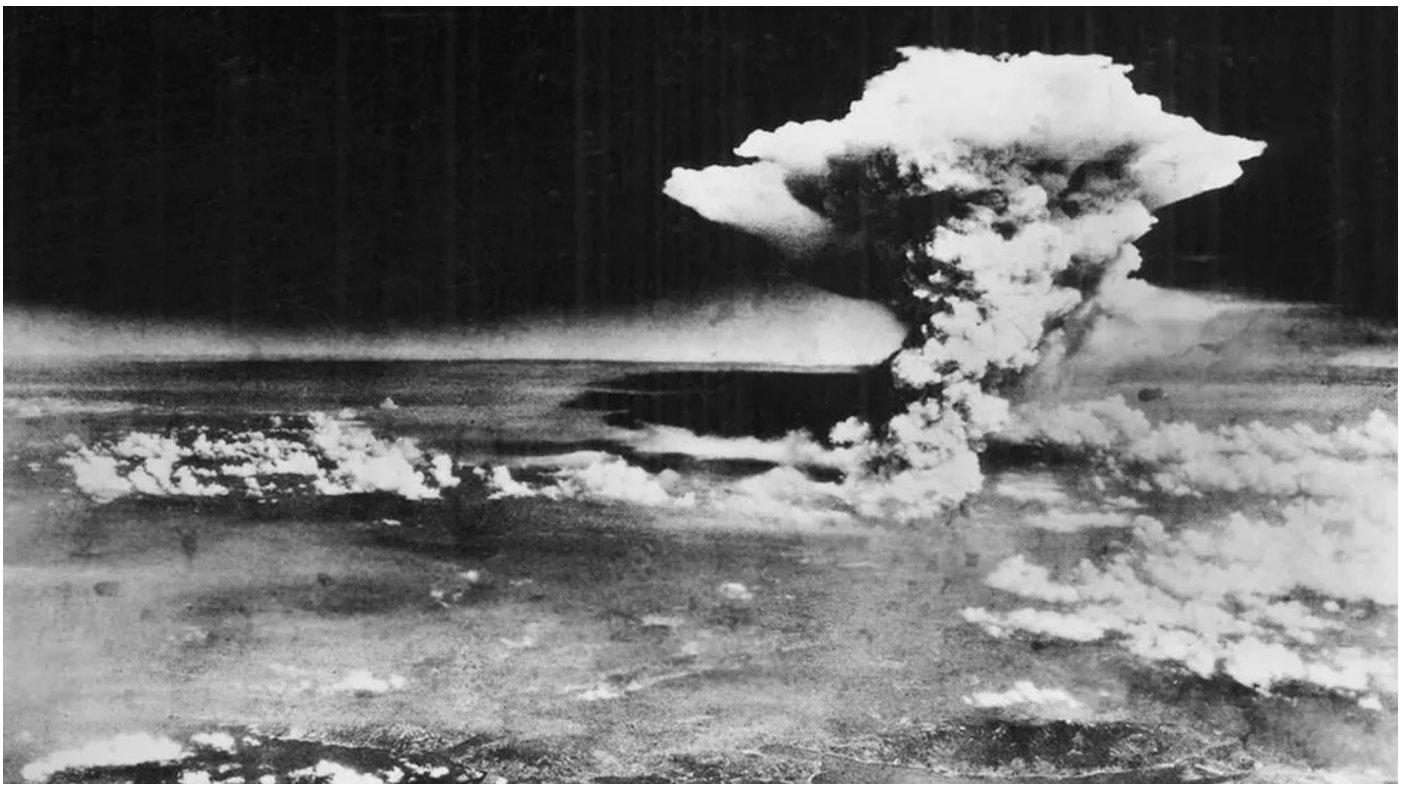
Jesus did not remain on the mountain. He came down, and walked toward Jerusalem, to the heart of Empire, to the cross. The light of Tabor was not to dazzle, but to guide and give strength for the road ahead. It is the same light that Pax Christi members carried this morning, and the same light glimpsed in the homeless man's silent presence and heartbreaking cry.

This is the transforming power of the Gospel: suffering can be transfigured, and the things that break us can become the places where grace enters.

That white rose, passed from a man whose name I don't know, to a solemn ceremony in remembrance of a global catastrophe, is no longer just a flower. It is a symbol of resistance, of memory, of hope. It reminds us that Jesus is still being transfigured among us—if we have eyes to see.

Let it remind us that our work is not only to remember the dead, but to listen to the living, especially those whose voices disturb our peace. Let it remind us that even in Hiroshima, even in homelessness, even in Empire's aftermath, the glory of God can be glimpsed. It may not be dazzling, it may come in silence or in a shout. But it will come, and when it does, may we be ready to say, like Peter: "It is good for us to be here."

Sr Katrina Dalton



Aftermath of Nuclear Bomb Dropped on Hiroshima, 1945

Common Good and the Border

Thomas Frost reflects on migration and the Cross

What surprised me most about Calais was how ordinary it was. You could easily spend a week or two there as a tourist, as people often do, and have no idea that it is the site of a humanitarian catastrophe caused by the brutal British-French operation, costing hundreds of millions of pounds, to prevent migration across the Channel. Great effort has been spent keeping migrants, and violence against migrants, out of sight. The proliferation of walls topped with barbed wire, and former public parks filled with boulders to prevent the pitching of tents, would not speak of the tear-gassing of children, of their being fired at with rubber bullets, of masked police sinking boats filled with terrified people by slashing them open with knives, or of the denial of medical treatment for injuries to those who didn't already know about them. The authorities have decided that, for the sake of the common good in their countries, migrants have to be treated as though they were not human beings, and so, to avoid offending those who would see them as humans, they keep their practices largely hidden.

Refugees in the Korem Camp, Sebastião Salgado, 1984

Even within political movements advocating for migrants there exists a tendency to overlook the dignity of some people for reasons of pragmatism. Most people in this country will still acknowledge that we have some collective responsibility to "genuine refugees," so it is tempting to focus exclusively on the stories of those we might expect to be regarded as "genuine"—often children and those fleeing relatively well-publicised warzones—in the hope of convincing as many people as possible that some change of policy is required. A focus has been on the creation of limited "safe, legal routes" for at least some people to claim asylum without making the dangerous crossing. While the existence of such routes would be an improvement on the situation as it stands, they will fail to solve the problem just to the extent that they are limited.

Those excluded will continue to take dangerous routes, or remain in intolerable situations from fear of violence. The Refugee Council, against the overwhelming majority of groups working directly with migrants, supported August's "one in, one out" deal between France and Britain on the basis that it would create an extremely limited route of this sort. Since under the deal equal numbers of migrants would be forcibly expelled to France, we might consider exactly what judgments need to be made about the dignity of the deal's victims and the value of their interests for it to be regarded as supportable.

Christianity should provide a model for political thinking. Attention has to be continuously redirected towards the more marginalised and most easily ignored if we are to have a politics which genuinely reflects human dignity, and to think about the Cross should always be to think of these groups. Unfortunately,

Catholic thinking on borders and migration has become very confused. If you are unwise enough to search the internet for the Church's teaching on the matter, you will find a series of articles referring to paragraph 2241 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (*CCC*), which, after it refers to the obligation of wealthy countries to welcome foreigners in search of security (including economic security), states that political authorities may restrict the exercise of the right to migrate "for the sake of the common good to which they are responsible". Even publications more sympathetic to migrants have taken this as a general authorisation for the illegalisation of migration whenever it might adversely affect the social or economic situation of the receiving country. More alarmingly, J. D. Vance has cited it to justify the spectacle of cruelty currently being carried out under the name of immigration enforcement by his government which, unlike most of its European counterparts, no longer feels a need to conceal its brutality. These being the stakes, it is worth thinking carefully about what the "common good" really involves.

The *CCC* itself refers, as it generally does when discussing political community, to *Gaudium et Spes* (*GS*), which defines it as "the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfilment". *GS* refers to the need, in an increasingly interconnected world, for governments to consider a universal common good as well as a common good within their own communities, an idea taken forward by Pope Francis in *Fratelli Tutti*. But even leaving that aside, while the provision of basic needs such as food, shelter, and clothing are necessary for human fulfilment, they do not constitute it in themselves. Human fulfilment, ultimately, is to know and love God; this is the end for which Christians believe we are made. And to know and love God is to know and love him in his creation, and particularly in other people. *GS* goes on to identify the perfection of human community in the Church, a community defined by the self-giving love of its members towards one another (*GS* 32). If, therefore, political authority derives its legitimacy from its contribution to the "common good" (*GS* 74), which is the creation of conditions in which human fulfilment is made most possible, the proper role of any political institution is not dissimilar to Peter Maurin's mandate to "make the kind of society where it is easier for people to be good".

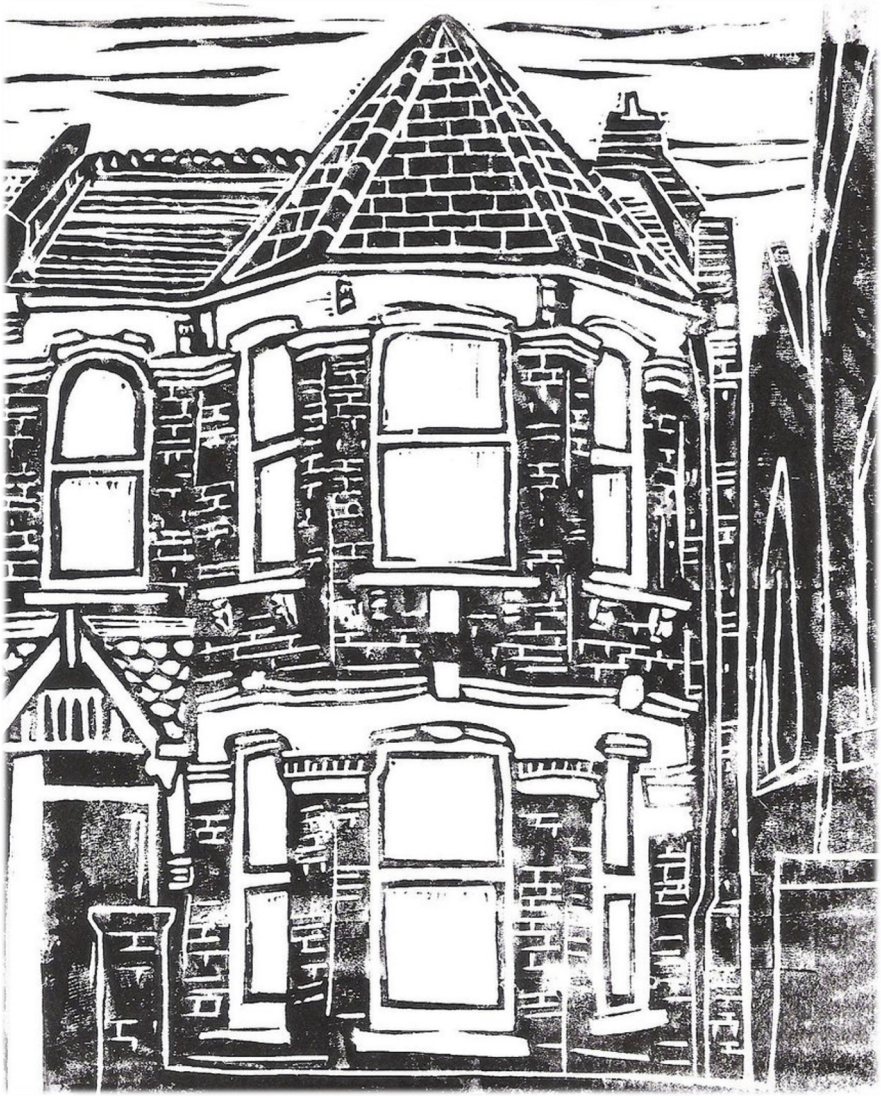
Consequently, the idea that a border policy based on exclusion, let alone one based on brutal violence, could be a means of promoting the common good of its members is incoherent. Our faith obliges us "to make ourselves the neighbour of every person without exception," and "everyone must consider his every neighbour without exception as another self" (*GS* 27). We do not need to count up exactly how many people we are willing to let drown or starve to sustain the GDP, or preserve social cohesion, or win political concessions from right-wing governments, because as soon as we have decided to sacrifice some people for political ends we have lost the only legitimate basis for politics, which is to love all of our neighbours without exception. If we take our responsibilities seriously, we cannot accept any of the violence of the border, in its practice or its effect as a threat. Whatever life is left in our culture or political institutions will be destroyed by the very means that are being employed in a misguided attempt to save it. We will not save our country by turning it into a fortress surrounded by walls topped with barbed wire. We will be left with no country at all.

Thomas Frost

Anniversaries, Change and Renewal

Martin Newell reflects on the past, present, and future of the London Catholic Worker

In May we celebrated the 92nd birthday of the Catholic Worker movement, launched as it was as a radical newspaper on May Day 1933. We also celebrated some other significant anniversaries that will pass this year: 25 years of the London Catholic Worker, 20 years of the Urban Table soup kitchen, and 15 years of Giuseppe Conlon House. Trying to see Christ in the least of his sisters and brothers who we welcome, and to advocate and witness in solidarity with them and others who are also the "crucified of today," remains the animating and challenging force among us.



Giuseppe Conlon House, Print, Sarah Fuller

It might sound like an impressive story of continuous life, work, and witness. On the other hand, since I moved back into the house here, only one other person remains. Both guests and members of the live-in community that is the foundation of our life and work come and go. Like the human body that completely renews itself with new cells every seven years, the community here is a living organism. As I write, the Catholic Workers here are myself (Martin), Thomas, Moya, Harry, and James. Naomi will have joined us by the time you read this. I will have moved out nearby, but will still be working for the community at least part-time for the time being.

The newest good news is that Thomas and Moya have said they want to commit long-term. This is a real blessing. Deo Gratias! It is a gift from them, and a real commitment, because none of us are paid a wage. We give of ourselves freely in return for little more than subsistence living, and the joy and challenges that life in community, in a house of hospitality, brings. Some of us are planning to move on in the next few months and others are expected to join us. And that is how it goes. But we look with hope for more who are willing to make that long-term commitment—even the "lifers" who may discern that this is the vocation that God has in mind for them.

Dorothy Day once wrote, "It really is a permanent revolution, this Catholic Worker movement of ours." She was adapting Trotsky's call for a permanent revolution to the personalist idea that the Kingdom of God, or the revolution, is not

so much something to be aimed at for the future, as something to be lived out each day, each moment. She saw in this movement an attempt to do that, to be a permanent ferment in society, bringing God's love to bear on the critical issues of the day.

We are still trying to do that here. The constant changes mean that there is another way our community and our movement continue to be a permanent ferment. Life in the house here never ceases to change. Not only do people come and go, but the way we live and work and have our being here changes as well.

When we first moved to Giuseppe Conlon House in 2010, we spent a lot of time cleaning and fixing and organising the place, and collecting what we needed from so many different places and people who gave us donations.

It did not always go straightforwardly. I remember borrowing a van to pick up two rolls of carpet we were offered. But the carpet rolls were about twice as long as the van, so we had to leave them behind. And we had perhaps our most difficult day when local councillors and governors from the school opposite came, thinking we were going to bring "disruptive elements" into the neighbourhood. And I guess we have—just not in the way they were thinking of.

We ran the basic night shelter in the hall for nearly five years. For the first three years we were also supporting our other works started a few years earlier: Dorothy Day House, Peters Community Café, and the Urban Table. The Urban Table is still going—20 years this year, now independent. After five years the community at the time had the imagination to re-organise the space here so that nearly all the 20 men staying in the shelter could have proper beds in proper bedrooms for the first time. But it was still a (more comfortable) night shelter, three and four to a room for the guests, and sometimes for short-term volunteers too. Lots of activism came through the house too. In the early years, it was mostly Christian peace witness. Then there were women's groups, refugee groups, and community groups. Later, pre-Covid, it was most notably Christian Climate Action, Extinction Rebellion, and Palestine Action, whose nonviolent resistance and civil disobedience all owe a debt of gratitude to the hospitality offered here, and the networking a community makes possible.

Now, we have twenty-five people staying here. Fifteen live in the communal house setting where nearly everyone has their own room—ten guests and five Catholic Workers. And since March, ten men have also been sleeping in the basic night shelter, back in the hall. The place is full and busy again. After the money spent, and the work done, on the extensive renovations of the last few years, the buildings look better and it is a better place to live.

The registration of Giuseppe Conlon House CIO as a charity gives the work of hospitality a more reliable foundation, and hopefully access to more resources. But visitors should not be fooled—it is only comfortable in comparison to how it was before. We are still dependent on community members and volunteers willing to make a personal sacrifice, work hard, and do what is needed, as well as generous donors of all kinds, for whom we also thank God, to keep body and soul together and the roof on! May we continue to allow ourselves to be inspired by the Holy Spirit, and may the Spirit too bring us not just what, but who, we need. Amen.

P.S. If you are able and want to GIFT AID your donations, please send them to our new GCH CIO Registered Charity bank account—rather than the LCW account. And complete and send in the GIFT AID form on page 15 of this issue. Thank you!

Martin Newell

Eating the Journey

Anthony Capildeo FRSL is a Trinidadian Scottish writer of poetry and non-fiction. Recent work includes Polkadot Wounds (Carcanet, 2024), and an essay series on touch and mourning. They are writer in residence at the university of York.

In reply to Yousif M. Qasmiyeh

Better a dinner of herbs, with Yousif and Elena –
but must the herbs be bitter?

The silent monk speaks by silences
and, speaking of silence, from silence,
peels to its pith the world: bitter.

Carthusian bitterness, chartreuse,
salt-pale fringe of artemisia turned over –
is it medicine, tonic, perfume

or the reminder we are not in Heaven?
soon enough – Do we need the reminder?
– soon enough with you.

In Paradise, I had a silver crescent, and then
I had a half-moon, a mezzaluna,
to zither over the billow of herbs.

Our music would not be bitter.
The shadowed valleys below our eyes
not precipitate out crystals of tears.

But now, our vision pearls and lingers
on half-moons of onions, chopped that way
to flavour our astronomical lentils with sharp heavenly savour.

Onions can work as blood-thinners, you know, yaa Yousif,
in hospitals still standing in India, it has been known
that medicines have run out, but abundance of onions
permitted the patient's life to be saved.

Thicker than water, the season of tears,
or anything but ash as food under the stars we counted together
in the histories that no longer count, O my sister?

In French the lentilles mean 'lentils' or 'lenses'
and mine, which are glass, overnight in my eyes

Les moines Chartreux, © Monastère de la Grande Chartreuse

when sleep crashes me into wherever my body ends up.

My dreams chew on glass like proteins,
they taste the blood of lost tongues and shared tongues.
Is our domestic restaurantism called al-Andalus?
There must be charges, they will bring us up on charges.

I fall asleep fasting, not by design, so may nights
as news passes over and nothing passes and nothing is over
so many nights with glass in my eyes
gradually I lose the clearness of sight.

After breakfast one day, a friend turns their tongue to challenge:
"What you call 'genocide'." I can no longer see

but as if through swirls like Sophia dancing,
as if through windows, not to the soul

but to a world that cannot be cleaned
but by a ladder of angels

wrestling, reaching creation back beyond blood
beyond seed, beyond names. Beloveds, witness:
Bisou, Coco, Yousif, Elena.

Charity Gift Aid Declaration – multiple donation

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

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 Road
London
N4 1BG

Your name: _____

Your address: _____

_____

_____

_____

PLEASE USE BLOCK CAPITALS

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: GB61CAFB40524000037144

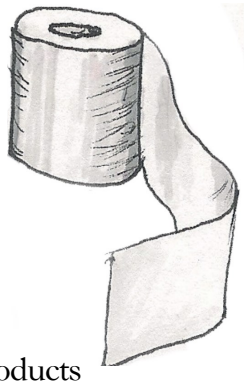
Giuseppe Conlon House Wishlist

FOOD

Instant coffee
Tinned tomatoes
Cooking oil
Kidney beans
Lentils
Chickpeas
Rice
Herbal tea
Sugar
Peanut butter
Honey
Chilli sauce
Soy sauce
Breakfast cereals
Porridge oats
Long-life milk
Coconut milk
Fruit Juice and squash

TOILETRIES

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



CLEANING

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

SUPPORT OUR WORK

At Giuseppe Conlon House we run a house of hospitality for destitute asylum seekers unable to work or claim benefits.
We are a part of the radical, Christian, pacifist Catholic Worker movement started in 1933 in New York by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin.

DONATIONS WELCOME!

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

The Catholic Worker in the UK

London Catholic Worker: Giuseppe Conlon House, 49 Mattison Road, London N4 1BG; Tel: 020 8348 8212; Email: londoncatholicworker@yahoo.co.uk; Web: londoncatholicworker.org;
At Giuseppe Conlon House we run a house of hospitality for homeless and destitute asylum seekers who are not allowed to work or claim benefits, and organize 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: 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: catholicworker.org.uk
The Glasgow Catholic Worker offers a place of welcome for asylum seekers and destitute refugees in the centre of Glasgow at the Garnethill Multicultural Centre, open Sat 9:00 – 1:00. and a soup kitchen on Friday nights. We keep a regular vigil at Faslane Nuclear Base as well as having monthly meetings and prayers.

Rimoaine House: The Wirral, Merseyside; Tel: 0151 953 0220; Email: rimoainehouse@yahoo.com *Rimoaine House is a community house practicing mutual aid and hospitality. As a house we are supported by and involved in the Methodist Church. We are friends of the Catholic Worker movement and would love to be in touch with anyone in our area interested in hospitality, faith and social justice.*