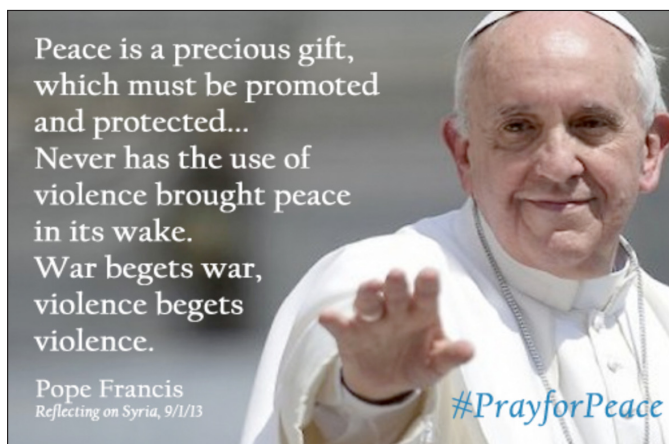


JUSTICE & PEACE

THE JUSTICE & PEACE GROUP NEWSLETTER OF SS JOSEPH & SWITHUN, BROMLEY
SUMMER 2018

Act justly, love tenderly, walk humbly with your God

Millions of people have kind hearts and want to help those who are poor or in distress. But when men and women start to follow Jesus earnestly, they discover that deep within them their view of the world is changing. Seeing the world through God's eyes they recognise that there is an urgent need to change the world so that justice is done and peace is achieved in the way that God desires.



It is central to our Christian faith that God desires a world in which justice is done. However, the past hundred years have revealed the scale of injustice in the world to be greater than anyone had previously imagined. Global forces that are deeply unfair determine the destiny of the world's poorest people and cause damage to the planet's environment. War and suffering follow.

Striving for justice and working for peace, particularly for the world's poorest people, are at the heart of what it means to be a follower of Jesus. The good news that Jesus came to announce was that suffering and oppression could be brought to an end. Christians believe that their faith should lead them to be the people who help bring that about.

The word peace is used in the Bible in a very broad sense. It takes in the well-being and health of people, as well as the absence of violence. Christians pray for the

end of conflict between nations and religions. But they are also called to promote harmony in their communities, families and anywhere that they can make a practical difference.

Justice and Peace groups share a vision of a world in which people live in peace and harmony, where our common humanity is respected, and where all are able to contribute freely to the common good. So what does that mean in practice to Ss Joseph and Swithun Parish? We have several groups which already work effectively to follow this vision in one way or another. There are also some areas of justice and peace where we could be doing more. This newsletter highlights some of the work we are doing as a parish, and more information will be provided in future newsletters.

PAX CHRISTI

This month we commemorate International Conscientious Objector day on 15 May, an opportunity to remember those living, and from the past, who actively distance themselves from acts of war and violence by refusing to undertake military service. For those countries that still have conscription there is often a penalty to pay for this act of conscience. Just last week we heard of a young Israeli, Matan Helman, who has refused to serve with the Israeli Defence Force and as a result has spent 110 days in prison. On his release he lamented the bloodshed on the Gaza border in recent weeks. He said, "I walk out of prison with my head held high with the knowledge that many youth of conscience and integrity in Israel will refuse to take part in the occupation and in Israel's policies of oppression vis-a-vis the Palestinians."

21 May marks the feast day of one of the few Catholic conscientious objectors of the Second World War, Blessed Franz Jägerstätter. An Austrian farmer and father of four, Franz refused to serve in Hitler's army. He was imprisoned and on 9 August 1943 was beheaded in prison in Berlin where he wrote these words: 'I am convinced that it is still best that I speak the truth, even if it costs me my life. For you will not find it written in any

of the commandments of God of the Church that a man is obliged under pain of sin to take an oath committing him to obey whatever might be commanded by him by a secular ruler.’

As peace-makers, each of us has to consider ‘the point beyond which we would not cooperate’, perhaps not paying the same price as Matan or Franz, but recognising that peace-making can be costly.

■ For more information, see the Pax Christi website www.paxchristi.org.uk

SVP (SOCIETY OF ST VINCENT DE PAUL)

Our St Joseph’s group has 11 members, the most in living memory! They include those with legal, financial, teaching and social backgrounds, as well as of course a caring ethos which is essential to being a member.

The essence of our work is person to person contact and spending time with people is our greatest gift. We visit people in their own homes, in hospital, and in care homes. One of those is St Cecilia’s where we help to support some of the residents and day visitors, play games and participate in the regular fetes and fairs. The residents become our friends!

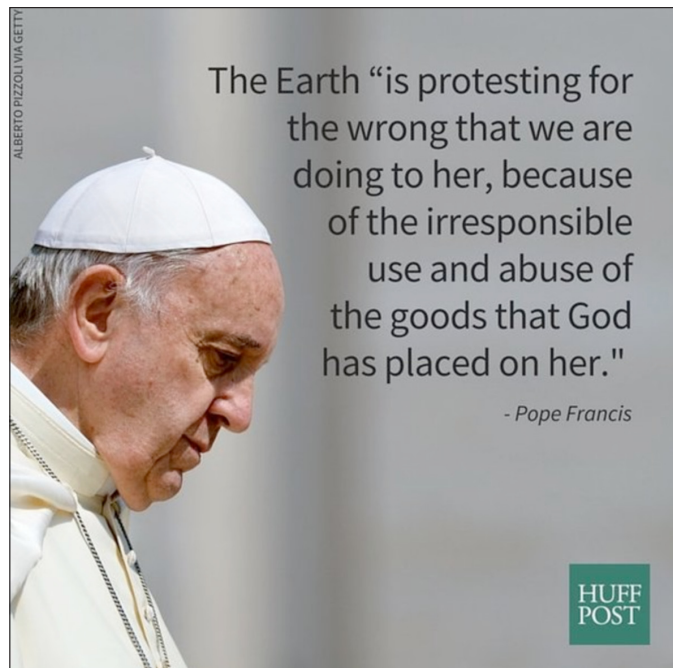
We also offer practical support to those in need whether by helping them with limited financial assistance, or by giving advice on various matters. But often just listening and befriending is the order of the day. At Christmas we take presents and flowers to some members of our parish community.

Each year we sell SVP raffle tickets in March (which always get snapped up!) and have an SVP Awareness month in September which includes posters displayed at the back of the church showing examples of our work. We are also fortunate to have the Maundy Thursday collection donated to our group which greatly helps with our funding for the year.

Nationally we now have 10,000 volunteer members and in the Southwark diocese alone we have about 120 groups. Our work, nationally, includes community shops, furniture stores and advice centres, youth work, holiday provision and overseas aid. We are also part of a huge international organisation – nearly all countries have an SVP.

New members are always welcome.

■ For more information, see the SVP website <https://www.svp.org.uk/>



CAFOD

Contributing freely to the common good is not possible where many people live in poverty and suffer under injustice. The Catholic Agency For Overseas Development (CAFOD) is the Catholic aid agency for England and Wales. It is an international aid agency working to alleviate poverty and suffering in developing countries. It is a member of *Caritas Internationalis*, a confederation of 165 Catholic relief, development and social service organisations operating in over 200 countries and territories worldwide. Collectively and individually their mission is to work to build a better world, especially for the poor and oppressed. Our parish CAFOD group actively and effectively gives financial support to CAFOD in its work; £1,600 was donated by the parish following the recent Family Fast Day appeal. The challenge Christians face is to have a personal way of life that does not add to the world’s problems. This means adopting a simple lifestyle in which the world’s resources are not wasted, buying goods that have been fairly traded, and changing habits that damage the environment. In the richer parts of the world many people support and give money to organisations such as CAFOD that are seeking to improve the conditions of the world’s poorest people, to end conflicts, and to preserve the planet.

■ For more information about CAFOD’s work and campaigns, see the website <https://cafod.org.uk>

BROMLEY HOMELESS SHELTER

At the most basic level, in order to survive, each of us needs food and water, healthcare, and somewhere to rest. We also need a safe place of shelter from which we can

develop our lives. Having gained these we can begin to develop as individuals in a community, being included, being respected and being loved.

The months of December to March are the coldest and most difficult time of year. That is when The Bromley Homeless Shelter really gets going. It is run entirely by volunteers from Churches Together in Central Bromley, including a number of parishioners from Ss Joseph and Swithun's. Each night we 'shelter' 14 guests (and two overnight volunteer sleepers) in a church hall, providing them with a warm, safe place for the night.

All the guests have some connection with Bromley. They are referred to the Shelter through Bromley Council's Homeless Team. Each has their own story to tell. Each has their own set of sad circumstances that has led them to seek help from the Shelter. Some are there because of family breakdown, some because of domestic abuse, and some because debt has overwhelmed them. There can be any number of reasons why a person has become homeless.

You recently supported us in our annual fundraiser for the sleep-out where a few of us (a growing number this year, with 45 sleepers) spent a cold and wet November night in the grounds of Bromley Parish Church.

You may wonder where your money goes. Over the 16 weeks of the coldest months we provide home-cooked meals – breakfast and dinner – money for showers, help with incidentals and lately an all-year-round advocacy service for all those at risk of homelessness in our borough. Parishioners of Ss Joseph and Swithuns sleep in the shelter regularly, socialise with guests at mealtimes, and prepare food. We have set up a laundry team – 16 men and women who over the 'season' wash, dry and iron over 200 sets of bedding to ensure the comfort of our guests. During the day guests will have opportunities to meet a housing officer and access other services supporting and helping them to rebuild their lives.



Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation
The Diocesan Justice & Peace Commission Spring Assembly 2018, entitled *Laudato Si! Responding to the Call of Pope Francis*, will be at St Mary's Church, Croydon, Surrey, on Saturday 2nd June, 10.30am to 4pm, preceded by Mass at 10am celebrated by Bishop Lynch.

Archdiocese of Southwark
Speaker Ellen Teague. Free event. Everyone welcome. Please bring a packed lunch. Tea and coffee provided.

One of St Joseph's overnight volunteers gave the following account of his experience last winter. 'This was my first year volunteering as an overnight sleeper. Sleeping in a cavernous church hall with lots of strangers, many of whom spent the night coughing or snoring, took some getting used to. However guests are not "unwashed down-and-outs". They were just ordinary people, young and old, male and female, who had had the misfortune to have lost their home. They were mostly well-behaved, cheerful, optimistic and appreciative of the help that was being offered. I find that interacting with other people is rewarding and is after all the foundation of our Christian life.'

■ Hopefully we will have inspired you to volunteer or to donate next winter. For more information regarding the Bromley Homeless Shelter, please see their website <https://bromleyshelter.weebly.com/>

CAPBP (CAP BROMLEY PARTNERSHIP)

Helping people who become homeless is increasingly necessary, but how much better to prevent people becoming homeless in the first place. CAP (Christians against Poverty) is a debt-counselling service provided by nearly 300 local centres nationwide. In Bromley the service was started by St Joseph's, along with the churches of St Mark, Bromley Christian Centre, Cornerstone, and Jubilee Church. The Bromley service started in April 2017 and there are now 40 clients registered, three of whom are already 'debt-free'. Twenty six volunteers are working with existing clients, and more are required, particularly women volunteers who are needed to befriend women with debt problems. A team from St Joseph's parish supported a fund-raising quiz night in Orpington in November 2017 – unfortunately without winning any prizes!

Looking ahead, the Bromley Christian Centre is running a CAP Money course soon, and two Orpington churches are planning to run a CAP Job Club. Looking further ahead, CAP are working with a local housing association (Affinity Sutton, now part of Clarion Housing) to help their residents, CAP Bromley will be involved with this locally, increasing the workload significantly.

■ For more information on the work of CAP, see the website <https://capuk.org>

PACT (PRISON ADVICE AND CARE TRUST)

When people are convicted of serious crimes and are in prison, they are well looked after, but their dependants may suffer hardship; so we support the Catholic charity called Prison Advice & Care Trust

(PACT), which helps offenders' families to survive and ex-offenders to be rehabilitated back into society when they are released. *An increasing problem is the plight of prisoners who are released with no support or means of subsistence, and who consequently end up homeless and sleeping rough.*

In March this year, Sister Maria Carla and a group from our parish celebrated Sunday Mass with the prisoners at Brixton Prison, and had coffee with some of them afterwards. Their stories were amazing, and the experience was very moving. More such visits are planned for later in the year.

■ For more information regarding the work that Pact do, see the website <https://www.prisonadvice.org.uk>

LIFE

What do women do who think they might be unintentionally pregnant? They are most likely to get out their smartphone and Google 'pregnancy'. And then make sure they are pregnant with a simple test.

That's where Life is, there in the Google search, there with her request for a pregnancy test, there on social media, there at the end of the phone line at three in the morning, there on the high street. There for them, offering support and showing them that there are many more options than abortion. After all, the vast majority of women know, deep down, that there is a new human being growing within and it's not just a clump of cells.

Life is there for her with one of their team of skilled listeners, discreet, unthreatening, giving her the space she needs. And if she chooses life for her unborn child, we stay with her, providing housing, practical help, emotional support – even life skills training. Often they are younger women who are homeless, vulnerable, escaping abuse or at risk.

Life operates a national network of 23 houses with support workers and an online counselling service approved by BACP (British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy), backed up by local volunteers in 74 groups. It works with partner organisations, voluntary and statutory, at both local and national levels. The charity frequently finds itself helping pregnant women from chaotic backgrounds, helping them to adapt successfully to family life and to equip and help them into independent living.

Life also trades through 24 high street Life boutique

shops, which also act as discreet points of contact for the women who need our help.

According to the Most Rev. Vincent Nicholls, this is what Catholic social teaching is all about – bringing the gospel perspective of love to those in need and respecting the sanctity of life from conception. But, he goes on to say, love and justice go hand in hand.

This is why Life works in partnership with schools, providing education and resources aimed at enabling students to develop healthy relationships, inspiring behaviour which values one another and life in general. Last year Life reached 24,000 students, equipping them to be ambassadors for social justice in the future.

In addition, Life champions the plight of our beneficiaries to government and in the media. The charity works with the All Party Parliamentary Pro Life Group and provides staffing for the pro-life research unit based in Westminster.

■ The National Helpline telephone number is 0808 802 5433. For more information on the work of Life, see the website <https://lifecharity.org.uk/>

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

You will be kept up to date with everything that is happening in our parish relating to justice and peace and the integrity of creation, both for the groups listed above, and also for the following groups and organisations.

- **LATCH** provides assistance to all homeless people in Bromley, Greenwich and Lewisham, mainly through placing them with host families; recently a total of 14 homeless people had been helped in this way, and more hosts are needed.
- **Careplus** volunteers help to support older people in their own homes, thus helping to avoid them having to go into expensive care homes; more volunteers with just a few hours to spare from time to time are always needed.
- **Global Healing** is a film-based event which is planned for our parish in September this year. It will inform, challenge and equip people to engage with Pope Francis' vital call to *Care For Our Common Home*.
- **Human Trafficking** and slavery are often seen as something that happens far away, but in fact trafficked people from far away can end up in this country. Following a presentation in March, a further presentation, involving younger parishioners, is planned for this autumn.
- **Racial Justice**
- **Christian Unity**