



Shrewsbury Diocese Justice and Peace Commission **QUICK NEWS NETWORK**

Issue 2:2010

April/May 2010

GENERAL ELECTION: Message from the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales

Shortly we will be choosing our next Government. It is an important responsibility and all Catholics should use their vote.

There are questions to be asked about the party you are considering voting for, and about the particular candidate. This message sets out some of the considerations we should all have in mind when making those choices. As Bishops we are not advocating any particular political party. That is not our role.

There are limits to what any Government can do on its own. On their own, targets, rules and regulations cannot improve the quality of our shared life. People do that. They do it by choosing the common good rather than pure self interest. We are all responsible and we need to put our moral values to work in a spirit of neighbourliness and mutual support. That is what happens in a crisis, but we need to see it every day as well. We depend on each other. And we need a Government that draws out what is best in all of us, and which aims to serve the common good.

So the fundamental question we each need to ask ourselves in deciding who to vote for is not who will best

serve me, but who will best serve the common good of all of us.

This is about restoring trust at the heart of our society: trust in each other and in our institutions to do the right thing by choice, not by constraint.

In early March 2010 we published a pamphlet "Choosing the Common Good" which explores these ideas more fully. We encourage you to study and discuss it. It can be obtained from Alive Publishing or downloaded from catholicchurch.org.uk.

We note some specific issues and questions which we believe are particularly important (see below). We encourage you to ask Parliamentary candidates where they stand on these issues. You will also be able to download this as a PDF.

We also ask you to pray for God's guidance on the choices we all make, and for His guidance for our future Government and for all those who are called to serve society as Members of Parliament.

April 2010

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Some Issues and Questions for Parliamentary Candidates

Here are some issues and questions which may help inform your decision on who to vote for. They are open questions with no single 'right' answer. But from the responses given you may form a better idea of how far any particular candidate will be addressing the needs of the common good. You may well, of course, have other questions of your own to ask. This list is not exhaustive.

1) Firstly in valuing life. That means opposing abortion and euthanasia, and life-cramping poverty, and the neglect of the elderly.

What does respect for life mean to you? Do all lives have the same value? Older people and the infirm ... the severely disabled ... the unborn?

2) Families are the basic building block of any stable society. Marriage provides the best context for bringing up children and must have the clear support and encouragement of Government.

What will you do for marriage and the family? What practical measures will you take to encourage and support stable family life and the institution of marriage?

3) Migration is not about numbers, it is about human beings. Wherever the Government sets the boundary on who can or cannot live here, it must apply its rules

with fairness, decency and respect for the individual.

What beliefs and values underpin your approach to migration? And how will you show them in practice?

4) Our care for each other is also shown in how we support the development of the world's poorest people, and how we use – or abuse – the environment we share. We must be good stewards of God's creation, not selfish exploiters of it.

What do you think is our responsibility to the poor, in this country and overseas? What is our responsibility to safeguard and protect the environment?

5) Our faith is at the heart of our lives. Religious belief is not just something private: it helps create a society that wants to see everyone flourish. It has a contribution to make and must be allowed to do so in accordance with its teachings.

What do you think is the place of religion in society?

Whoever you decide to vote for, from whichever political party you decide to support, send back to Parliament someone who understands and will work for the common good.

Copies of Choosing the Common Good are also available from Joan. whybother2010.org is an excellent website produced by the Live Simply Youth Network. Do encourage any young people you know to look at it - and look at it yourself!

DIARY DATES

APRIL

4 **Easter Sunday**

MAY

8 **Peace Vigil**

St Agnes Church, Darmonds Green, West Kirby, Wirral. CH48 4DU. 3.00 - 4.00 p.m. All welcome.

9-15 **Christian Aid Week**

Christian-aid.org.uk

10 **West Kirby**

Prayer and the Planet making connections between Christian faith and environmental concern. St Agnes Church Hall, Darmonds Green, West Kirby, Wirral. CH48 4DU. 7.30 p.m. (Tea and coffee from 7.p.m) Led by Joan Sharples (J&P) and Sue Bownas (CAFOD).

15 **NJPN Networking Meeting & AGM**

Venue: London
Time: 10.45-4.00.
NJPN

15 **International Conscientious Objectors' Day**

Pax Christi paxchristi.org.uk

21 **The Feast of Blessed Franz Jägerstätter.**

See www.paxchristi.org.uk

21-23 **J&P Retreat Discerning the right actions for J&P work'**

A reflective weekend with Pat Gaffney and Stephen Hoyland at Loyola Hall, Rainhill L35 6NZ. Information through Liverpool J&P office 0151 522 108. Booking through Loyola Hall 0151 426 4137.

22 **Behind the Changing Face of Britain** (See box.)

JUNE

5 **World Environment Day**
unep.org/wed

12 **Peace Vigil**

St Agnes Church, Darmonds Green, West Kirby, Wirral. CH48 4DU. 3.00 - 4.00 p.m.

12 **Earth-Keepers and Story-Weavers:** 'Green' theology, spirituality, stories and action

Speaker: Andrew Francis (green activist, broadcaster)
Venue: Tabor Carmelite Retreat House, Preston
Time: 10.00-4.00.

Suggested offering £12.00 (booking essential)
Contact 01772 717122.

19 **Pax Christi AGM**

Blackfriars, St Giles, Oxford, 10.30 AGM. 13.00 shared lunch followed by speaker: Jane Clements, Director of FODIP, Foundation for Discussion of Israel and Palestine.
Contact Pax Christi 0208 203 4884
paxchristi.org.com

19-27 **Campaign Against Arms Trade STOP Week**

CAAT caat.org.uk

14-20 **Refugee Week**

Different pasts, shared future
refugeeweek.org.uk/

JULY

10 **Peace Vigil**

St Agnes Church, Darmonds Green, West Kirby, Wirral. CH48 4DU. 3.00 - 4.00 p.m.

11 **Sea Sunday**

apostleshipofthesea.org.uk

16-18 **National J&P Conference** (See box)

Diocese of Shrewsbury

Catholics for Racial Harmony Group

Behind the Changing Face of Britain

Last May people from Shrewsbury diocese gathered together to hear of the experience of seven parishes in the diocese.

The diocesan Catholics for Racial Harmony group is inviting those who took part in this initiative and anyone else concerned with the issue of racial harmony to a further conversation to share stories of our own faith and life and also thoughts and ideas to help further our contribution to a more harmonious society.

Saturday 22 May, 2.00-4.30 p.m.

St Vincent's Parish Centre, Westleigh,

Altrincham WA14 2BP

(Westleigh is behind St Vincent's on Groby Road)

It would be helpful if you could let Joan know that you are going to be there.

National J&P Conference

Our Daily Bread: Food Security, People and Planet

Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire
16 - 18 July 2010

Now booking: forms available from justice-and-peace.org.uk or from Joan.

What Can We Do?

- ◆ Join the **MP Accountability Network** and hold your MP accountable for their promises. Members of the Network will receive three briefings a year and are encouraged to meet their MPs regularly, build an ongoing relationship and work together on the issues that concern them. Contact Church Action on Poverty 0161 236 9321 church-poverty.org.uk
- ◆ Mark **Refugee Week**
 - The Refugee Week Website refugeeweek.org.uk suggests simple actions: cook a recipe from a different culture, read a book about exile ...
 - Download the **Mobiles, Money & Mayhem** booklet from refugee-action.org.uk - a handy, well-produced pocket guide to counter misinformation on the asylum system.
 - Write letters to detained asylum seekers. Contact Sr Margaret, Jesuit Refugee Service 020 7357 0974.
- ◆ Plant some seeds and watch and wonder as they grow.

Please send me your dates and news, so that they can be included in future editions of the **Quick News Network** mailing.

If you would prefer to receive Quick News Network electronically as a pdf, please email me and let me know.

Justice and Peace Coordinator:
Joan Sharples, 16 Wellington Road,
Nantwich, Cheshire CW5 7BH
Tel 01270 620584

joansharples620@btinternet.com
jp-shrewsburydiocese.org.uk

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