



Caritas Plymouth

Exercising the Ministry of Charity

Reflection by Deborah Fisher OBE, Caritas Manager

Walking with the Poor

The next World Day of the Poor will be on Sunday 14 November 2021. Caritas organised a Diocesan event on 9 October to prepare for this important date in the calendar and to reflect on this year's [message from Pope Francis](#). You can read more about that event on page 2 of the newsletter.

This year's message is an important one which reflects a fundamental element of the work of Caritas—there is an *'inseparable link between Jesus, the poor and the proclamation of the Gospel. The face of God revealed by Jesus is that of a Father concerned for and close to the poor.'* Jesus teaches us that poverty is a concrete sign pointing to his presence among us and that we can see him in the lives of the poor, in their sufferings and needs.

It is easy to see the poor as different to us - people "outside" our communities. We can slip into a practice of charity or *Caritas* as a relationship between giver and a receiver, with the poor as beneficiaries of our generosity. Pope Francis challenges us to see *Caritas* as an opportunity for mutual sharing and fraternity; *'as a way to strengthen solidarity and lay the necessary foundations for achieving justice and peace.'* The poor are a sacrament of Christ; they represent his person and point to him. Unless we choose to become poor in passing riches, worldly power and vanity, we will never be able to give our lives in love; we will live a fragmented existence, full of good intentions but ineffective for transforming the world'.

We are challenged this year to think of a *different approach to poverty* and to look for new social models capable of countering the new forms of poverty that are now sweeping the world. We are challenged to look outward, to *'be open to reading the signs of the times that ask us to find new ways of being evangelizers in the contemporary world'*. In our immediate reactions and responses to the needs of the poor we must not overlook the need to look for new ways to show our Christian love and charity to reflect the new forms of poverty experienced by humanity today.

The poor won't come knocking on our door; we need to reach out in our communities *'to understand how they feel, what they are experiencing and what their hearts desire.'*

'Love one another as I have loved you' John 13:34-35



NEWSLETTER

10th Edition October 2021

In this issue:

World Day of the Poor, 2021

Tackling Poverty

Environmental Activities

News from our partners

Refugees and Migrants

Intergenerational Linking

Justice and Peace

Upcoming Events

'The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love'

Galations 5:6

WORLD DAY OF THE POOR 2021

“The poor you will always have with you” (Mk 14:7)



On 9 October over 50 people came together to pray and reflect on this year's Papal message for World Day of the Poor. Bishop Mark remarked that ‘the grace of God is truly at work in the hearts of all those who, without fanfare, spend themselves for the poorest, sharing with them in concrete ways’. The full presentation can be found [here](#)

Raymond Friel, CEO of Caritas Social Action Network reminded us of the words of Pope Francis that *“Christ’s Gospel summons us to display special concern for the poor and to recognize the varied and excessive forms of moral and social disorder that are generating ever new forms of poverty.”* Catholic Social Teaching offers us an opportunity to see what is happening in our local and global communities, to judge and then to act.

In the afternoon, participants were invited to reflect on the needs in their own communities and parishes and what action we might take to address those needs. Their reflections and comments will feed into a review of Caritas Plymouth’s strategy for 2022.



TACKLING POVERTY

‘For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink’

Matthew 25:321

In the first half of 2021, *Caritas Plymouth* distributed over £40,000 as food vouchers and essential grants in partnership with the Catholic Children’s Society (Plymouth). The funding was a generous donation from the Albert Gubay Charitable Foundation. The funding was distributed as direct grants to individual families, through food vouchers or food parcels distributed by schools and other partners and through provision of meals. To reach those in need, *Caritas Plymouth* worked with 19 partners including St Vincent de Paul groups, parishes, small local organisations providing community food support and primary schools. We reached 326 families and 1900 individuals.

‘I just wanted to share our appreciation for the supermarket vouchers... they have been a huge help to our family especially when there are seven of us. During the lockdown periods my husband was off work... and we were worrying about paying our rent, putting food on the table, milk for the babies, nappies etc... thanks once again.’

‘It has provided the much-needed food and essentials to struggling families and taken away the stress of parents not being able to feed their children. It has also strengthened our parish family during these difficult times’

Environmental Activity Across the Diocese

On 17 July, Caritas Plymouth held an event, chaired by Canon John Deeny, to promote reflection, prayer and discussion about the Diocesan [environmental policy](#). We were delighted to be joined by Bishop Mark O'Toole; Sister Margaret Atkins, a Canoness of St Augustine in the community at Boarbank Hall, Cumbria and Francis Stewart from the CAFOD theology team. Over 50 people from across the Diocese joined the event.



Bishop Mark O'Toole opened the event referring to Chapter 3 of St Mark's Gospel and what sits at the heart of our environmental policy: that whatever the Church does, She is seeking to gather people close to the Lord to respond to the apostolic invitation to be close to Him; in being close to Him, He encourages and mandates His followers to go forth. This is an important twofold dynamic of our environmental policy: it is very important that we take time to pray and study the scriptures to come close to the Lord and out of that, we then embark on action. 'Rather than a problem to be solved the world is a joyful mystery to be contemplated with gladness and praise'. (Laudato Si') The full recording of Bishop Mark's introduction is [here](#).

Sr Margaret Atkins reminded us that the cry of the earth and cry of the poor are interconnected and something that should be integrated into every aspect of life. Being environmentally aware is central for us, but because of our faith it has a much deeper connection and the interconnectedness is part of that deeper dimension. The goodness in creation calls out our gratitude; the wisdom and understanding we find in creation calls out our humility and the wonder of life calls out our generosity.

So what can we do?

It can be easy to feel pessimistic in the face of negative messages about the state of the environment but Sister Margaret stressed the importance of hope and an understanding that every action is important—not matter how small. The global Climate Conference in Glasgow in November could offer a turning point and we are all asked to lobby our MPs and politicians so they know how we feel. There are a number of great campaigns that you can sign up to from home

CAFOD's campaign – Reclaim our Common Home offers Dioceses and parishes the opportunity to influence this global agenda <https://cafod.org.uk/Campaign/Reclaim-our-common-home>

When Catholics come together and live out our faith, amazing things happen. Sign the 'Healthy People, Healthy Planet' petition <https://thecatholicpetition.org/> aiming to get 500,000 signatures in advance of the November Conference.

The new Laudato Si' Action Platform has just been launched with lots of ideas for parishes and individuals <https://laudatosiactionplatform.org/> There are also lots of resources on the super new Journey to 2030 website <https://journeyto2030.org/>



Stella Maris – Life at Sea Report shows seafarers' need for human contact. Case studies cover abandonment of ships; human rights abuses and modern slavery; death and suicide at sea; issues of wages, shore leave and repatriation; piracy; and the impact of all these issues upon the mental health of many seafarers.

You can read the full report here <https://www.stellamaris.org.uk/life-at-sea-a-world-in-lockdown/>



SVP AWARENESS MONTH

September this year marked SVP awareness month. Throughout September the SVP hosted webinars and activities highlighting the breadth of the work undertaken by members and volunteers. SVP have conferences across the Diocese of Plymouth doing great work to help those in need. The prognosis for millions of people affected by the pandemic doesn't look good, however we have a little thing called 'hope', and when that is combined with action, we can affect change. If you would like to get in touch with your local SVP conference, or start a new conference, Caritas would be happy to put you in touch.

CATHOLIC CHILDREN'S SOCIETY PLYMOUTH CHRISTMAS CARDS

The Catholic Children's Society (Plymouth) will be selling packs of Christmas cards again this year following the success of the packs produced back in 2019.

Children in our Catholic schools have been asked once again to get creative and we are hoping that we will receive even more than the 337 entries we received for the first competition.

We hope to have packs available by the beginning of November. If you would like to pre order a pack or packs, you can request a pre order form by emailing vicki.dunstone@prcdtr.org.uk

Thank you for your support of CCSP.

ST PETROCS, CORNWALL

Eden Sleepout—25 November

Last year the Eden Sleep Out happened virtually with people bedding down in their gardens. This year however, it will be back, between the Biomes of the magnificent Eden Project. This will be the eighth year that the Eden Project has hosted an annual Sleep Out and the events have raised thousands of pounds for two charities, St Petrocs and the Amber Foundation.

You can find out more [here](#)



REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

We cannot fail to have been aware of the plight of refugees and migrants through pictures of people arriving in small boats on our shores and images of those fleeing the conflict in Afghanistan. Many of us want to help but are not sure what to do.

As people arrive in the UK seeking refuge, there are lots of opportunities for people to get involved such as offering vacant properties and housing for refugees, as well as community and cultural activities, English language support and other options. Donations – specifically baby equipment, clothes and homeware – are also being welcomed in some areas. Councils are leading on resettling families and those who want to help can search their postcode on this website, to find the specific help their council is looking for: <https://www.gov.uk/help-refugees>

There are many organisations which regularly seek clothing and other material support and you can often find out about them from your local church networks. The following are just a few charities operating in our Diocese:

◇ Refugee Support Devon <https://refugeesupportdevon.org.uk/>

◇ Care4Calais. The charity has collection points around the UK for donations, which are sorted according to the number and age of people in nearby hotels <https://care4calais.org/>

◇ The British Red Cross is appealing for donations www.redcross.org.uk

There is also the opportunity for community sponsorship, which allows parishes to welcome a family. Community sponsors provide housing for the refugees and support them in integrating into life in the UK. They help to arrange access to medical and social services, English language tuition and support towards employment and self-sufficiency. Caritas Plymouth is a lead sponsor—supporting groups throughout the sponsorship process. Just get in touch if you would like to find out more!

COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP

It has been seven months since Companions Sidmouth welcomed a Syrian Family to their community as part of the Community Sponsorship scheme. On 23 September the group was joined by Canon John Deeny and Deborah Fisher to reflect on the progress which has been made in supporting the family to settle in the UK.

Companions Sidmouth have taken to heart Pope Francis' call to us all to 'Welcome, Protect, Promote and Integrate' refugees (Fratelli Tutti). The group have helped the family to access health, education and other opportunities as well as providing friendship and encouragement. The relationship has been one of mutual support and companionship. One volunteer commented:

I would encourage any community who is considering taking on the Community Sponsorship journey to just jump in and do it. The joys far out weigh the problems (of which there have been a few!) however, it is truly by doing a little bit of good that you receive so much more in return.

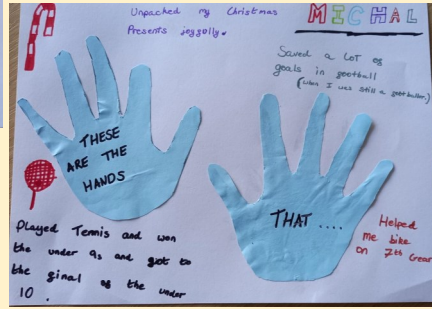
Companions Sidmouth were presented with a Caritas in Action Award in recognition of their outstanding example of Catholic Social Teaching in Action.

Caritas Plymouth will be organising an event in November in Plymouth to share the learning from this group and to encourage others who are interested to come along and find out more. If you would like to join us please email caritas@prcdtr.org.uk.



INTERGENERATIONAL LINKING

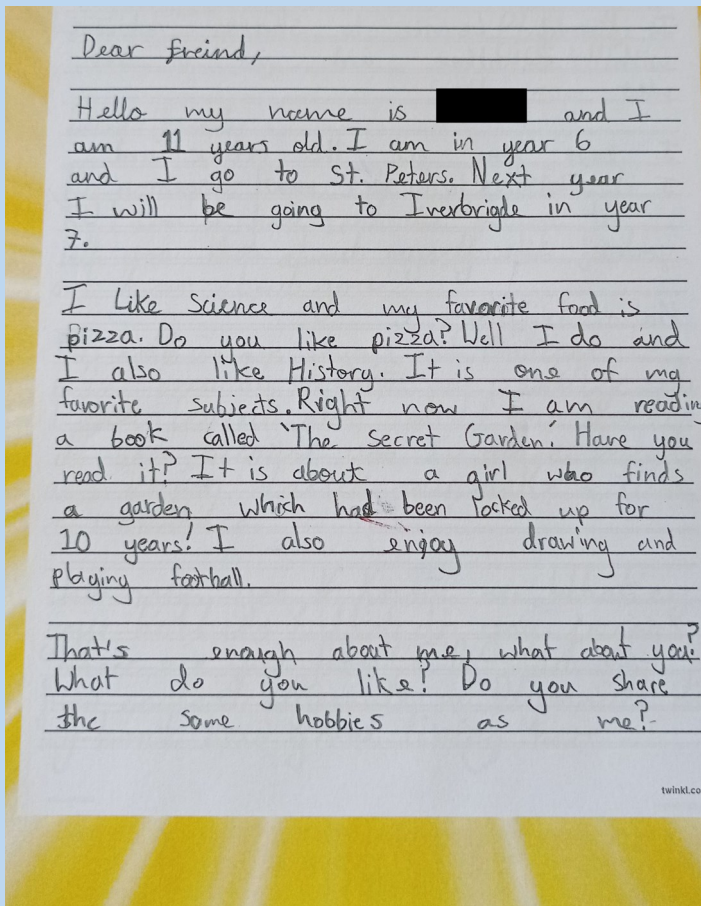
Caritas Plymouth, in partnership with Plymouth CAST Multi-Academy Trust, has started an ambitious 18-month funded project as part of an exciting national initiative known as Care Home Friends and Neighbours: Intergenerational Linking, which promotes young people's engagement with older people living in care homes across England.



Ten primary schools from Plymouth, Devon, Torbay and Dorset have now established links with local care homes and three have already started to make new connections.

Children have already been busy introducing themselves to Care Home Residents sharing artwork and letters.

St Mary's RC Primary in Poole took part in their first inter-generational project with Magna Care Centre in July 2021. They painted rocks for 'Our World Rocks' Project. The school's rocks were shared with the residents who sent photos of the ones they had painted.



Children at St Peter's in Plymouth wrote some lovely letters and are eagerly awaiting responses.

What a creative start to these new links!

JUSTICE AND PEACE



In the last few months it has become more and more obvious ...we are all affected in some way by the Covid pandemic, all seeing the suffering resulting from climate change, all witnessing the outrages of war and watching the flows of migrants and refugees; all in our Diocese affected by the tragic shooting in Plymouth.

On our own we cannot take up all the issues in the work for justice and peace. But we can do more if we work together - leading prayer, reading and campaigning. In our various groups and networks, we can try to weave a web in which the strands of justice and peace are strong and supportive.

Mary Bradley from Falmouth Parish has written about the Falmouth and Penryn Churches Together Justice and Peace group which she set up 8 years ago and which now has 12 members. *'The aim of the group is to raise awareness of current issues of Justice, Peace and persecution, taking small concrete steps to address them. The group meets once a month and shares prayer, good news before focusing on a particular topic or action. The group remembers and prays for Christians and others suffering persecution.'* The group makes a real difference. Mary says: *'We believe and hope that our prayer, actions and perseverance bears fruit for our brothers and sisters in need locally, nationally and globally as we fulfil the Mission of Jesus in care for the marginalised and suffering of our world today'.*

We would love to have more Justice and Peace groups across the Diocese so please get in touch if you would like to start something in your local area caritas@prcdtr.org.uk

Journey to 2030

On 1 October, there was an event for schools and parishes to explore how we can be Live Simply parishes and organisations as part of our commitment to tackling the climate crisis, inequality and poverty. A new website has been created which makes it easy to find all the resources you need to follow the Live Simply journey [home - The Journey to 2030](#) The website shows how putting Laudato Si' into action could help your community thrive, at the same time as tackling huge world issues. The Parish guide to Laudato Si' is an online encyclopaedia for parishes trying to respond to the Pope's teaching on care for our common home, pulling together inspiring stories and practical actions, wisdom and goals in one place.

For a Synodal Church – Communion, Participation, Mission

"For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them."
Matthew 18:20



A two-year 'synodal' process is taking place in the Catholic Church from October 2021 that culminates in the final Synod Gathering of Bishops in Rome in October 2023. On 17 October, Bishop Mark will launch the Diocesan Phase of our Synodal journey. This is a wonderful opportunity for everyone to contribute to the future of our Church. The aim of the Diocesan phase of the Synodal Journey is to encourage **maximum inclusion and participation**, reaching out to involve the greatest number of people possible, and especially those on the periphery who are often excluded and forgotten.

More information will be sent to parishes, schools and other groups about how to participate in this journey in the coming weeks. Any questions can be sent to Synodfeedback@prcdtr.org.uk.

PRISONS WEEK 2021

On 12 October we held an online event in partnership with Caritas Clifton and Arundel and Brighton to explore the challenges facing prisoners and their families and how we can take action in our parishes. You can find more information on our website www.plymouth-diocese.org.uk/prisonswereport/

Prisoners and their families are often some of the most socially excluded people in our society. Even for people of faith they are often forgotten or come lower down on a list of causes to support. This event included speakers from [Prison Advice and Care Trust](#) and prison chaplaincy. It offered an opportunity to direct our thoughts and prayers to prisoners and their families and to reflect on how we are serving those affected by imprisonment.

Bishop Mark opened the event and Deacon Nick Johnson offered a closing reflection and prayer

Prayer of Dedication by Alan Paton

O Lord, grant that we may not be conformed to the world, but may love it and serve it.
Grant that we may never shrink from being instruments of your peace because of the judgement
of the world.

Grant that we may love you without fear of the world, grant that we may never believe that the
inexpressible majesty of yourself may be found in any power of this earth.

May we firstly love you and our neighbours as ourselves.

May we remember the poor and the prisoner and the sick and the lonely, and the young
searchers, and the tramps and the vagabonds, and the lost and lonely, as we remember Christ,
who is in them all.

May we this coming day be able to do some work of peace for you.

Welcome to our new team members!

Caritas has been joined by Fran McMullen who will be working full time in the Caritas Office supporting all aspects of our work; Tanya Trevena who will be leading an exciting new project to explore social action in Plymouth over the next 15 months and Caspian Lipman, who is on a three- month internship to strengthen our communications and engagement approaches.

All can be contacted via caritas@prcdtr.org.uk

Events and Dates for your Diary

Anti Slavery Day

Monday 18 October

An opportunity to raise awareness of human trafficking and modern slavery, and encourage government, local authorities, companies, charities and individuals to do what they can to address the problem.

UN Disarmament Week

24-30 October

This is a week to focus on disarmament to build a safer, more secure world and to protect people from harm.

UN Climate Change Conference, Glasgow

1-12 November

This will focus on the climate crisis and global efforts to combat climate change.

Diocesan Synodal Journey

There are two online events for people from across the Diocese to find out more about our Synodal journey on 20th and 23rd October. You can find out more on the website <https://www.plymouth-diocese.org.uk/synodaljourney1/>

World Day of the Poor 2021

Sunday 14 November

CSAN have produced some great resources for World Day of the Poor including a beautiful Novena <https://www.csan.org.uk/worlddayofthepoor/>

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