

JUST LENT



A FIVE SESSION COURSE
EXPLORING CHRISTIAN SOCIAL JUSTICE

FROM **SOUTH CARDIFF** MINISTRY AREA



A Five Session Course for Lent
Exploring Christian Social Justice

SOUTH CARDIFF MINISTRY AREA

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JUST LENT

INTRODUCTION

Lent is a time of prayer, fasting and almsgiving, when we increase our gifts of charity with a special concern for the poor. Our sacrifices bring benefit to others. 'The fasts of the rich are a feast for the poor.' Lent is also a time of repentance and reconciliation. It is the Springtime of the church, a season of growth, a time for change.

JUST LENT consists of five sessions which provide an opportunity to explore what we mean by Justice in the context of the Christian Gospel.

It begins from the catholic perspective of social justice including our belief in the dignity of every human being, the call for solidarity and community, appreciating Gods love of the poor, and a call to care for God's creation. The course relates each of these areas to the celebration of the Eucharist, so we can appreciate more deeply the link between our worship and our life of service, between our prayer and daily living.

THE SESSIONS

For each session there is a video which you may want to encourage participants to watch beforehand. The text of the video is also included. In the outline for each Session, there are several suggestions for areas of discussion. They could be discussion starters or provide material to move the initial conversation on, but leaders shouldn't feel it necessary to try to address all the questions. They are provided more as a 'buffet' than a formal five course dinner, so just help yourself to whatever is on the table! The Video, along with other resources are available on our website: www.southcardiffministryarea.co.uk

We've refrained from giving too many statistics so that this resource doesn't become outdated too quickly or relate too specifically to a particular area of the UK, and the material is flexible enough to be able to adapt to your own local circumstances, and to explore instances of injustice. However, this resource has grown from South Cardiff Ministry Area, and, to embed it in some context, the opening videos feature images and reflections of Cardiff without restricting their use to wherever you are - they are just the medium to explore common and global challenges.

CALL TO ACTION

Towards the end of each session is a Call to Action – this could be a particular commitment of change, or there may be a consensus to move towards exploring the issues raised in more detail so that the local church can make a more effective response. We provide a few pointers and examples to guide this process.

In whatever way each session is completed, by the end of the whole course it is expected that there will be a significant decision made in terms of the response of the local church to some of the issues of injustice experienced in our world today.

PRAYER

Finally, at the end of each session should include a short time of prayer. A meditation is offered for this which, if you wish to use it, can be accompanied by an appropriate Bible Reading from the session (some texts are provided at the beginning of this booklet), as well as other prayers. Alternatively, you can come up with your own ideas.

ONLINE

It is also our aim to provide additional online resources and opportunities for people to participate in the conversation, whilst also delivering the course in person, and supplementing it with other local activities. We'd love to hear what you come up with in your own communities.

OUR PRAYER

Our prayer is that Lent and our lives will be just.

May we love justice, and respond to the presenting needs of our world, local and global, with a true and effective concern that makes a real difference to people's lives and reflects God's Kingdom of Love.

Fr Dean Atkins | South Cardiff Ministry Area

JUST BIBLE REFERENCES

There are Scripture references throughout each session, as we explore how the Bible and the Tradition of the Church speaks to injustice. However, the following few references are offered as reflections for the Course Leader in their preparations, and as easy references when guiding the conversations in each session.

Luke 4:16:20

When Jesus came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.’

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, ‘Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.

Genesis 1:26-27

Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.’ So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

Isaiah 1:17

Learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow.

Deuteronomy 16:20

Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue, so that you may live and occupy the land that the Lord your God is giving you

Matthew 23:3

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint, dill, and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. It is these you ought to have practised without neglecting the others.

Luke 6: 17- 36

Jesus came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon. Then he looked up at his disciples and said:

'Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God

'Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled.

'Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.

'Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice on that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.

'But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.

'Woe to you who are full now, for you will be hungry.

'Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep.

'Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets.

'But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. Do to others as you would have them do to you.

'If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.'

Jeremiah 1:4- 10

Now the word of the Lord came to me saying,

'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
and before you were born I consecrated you;
I appointed you a prophet to the nations.'

Then I said, 'Ah, Lord God! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy.'

But the Lord said to me,

'Do not say, "I am only a boy"

for you shall go to all to whom I send you,
and you shall speak whatever I command you.

Do not be afraid of them,
for I am with you to deliver you,
says the Lord.'

When the Lord put out his hand and touched my mouth; and the Lord said to me,

'Now I have put my words in your mouth.

See, today I appoint you over nations and over kingdoms,
to pluck up and to pull down,
to destroy and to overthrow,
to build and to plant.'

Acts 4:32-35

Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

Psalms 139: 1-6, 13-18

O Lord, you have searched me and known me.
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from far away.
You search out my path and my lying down,
and are acquainted with all my ways.
Even before a word is on my tongue,
O Lord, you know it completely.
You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is so high that I cannot attain it.
For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works;
that I know very well.
My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.
Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.
In your book were written
all the days that were formed for me,
when none of them as yet existed.
How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God!
How vast is the sum of them!
I try to count them—they are more than the sand;
I come to the end—I am still with you.

JUST LENT

SESSION ONE: JUST DIGNITY

AIM: To explore what it means to believe in and value the dignity of every human being as made in God's image.

VIDEO: MOVING STATUES

TEXT:

In 2020, following the killing of George Floyd in the US and the growth of the Black Lives movement, many statues and memorials were pulled down and removed in the UK. Some were removed behind closed doors in calm and privacy after a time of review, others were pulled down in anger by crowds in public. This was a new beginning of re-evaluating the heritage of our country, our history, the story of who we are. It looked afresh at who we celebrated, and why. To ask who isn't celebrated. It was about beginning to retell the story, to hear a new narrative, for people to own and tell their own story, for themselves.

Meanwhile, as statues were being removed or re-evaluated, in 2021 a new statue was unveiled in Cardiff. It was the first statue of a named woman in a public place in Wales, the first of more to come. It also happened that this was the first statue of a named *black* woman, Betty Campbell, the first black Headteacher in Wales.

Another statue, close by, is of the boxer, Peerless Jim Driscoll, who lived in the old Newtown area of Cardiff Docks. In a fictional retelling of his life in a novel by Alexander Cordell, there is a strike in the mining community of the Rhondda. As twenty miles away, in a completely different community, working class men take to the picket line, so in Cardiff, the dock workers are beginning to feel the pinch. "When they cough, we sneeze," says the boxer.

There is a similar saying in Mogadishu. 'When it rains in Mogadishu, the umbrellas go up in Minnesota.' Although separated by distance, each of us has an effect on the other. At times, there seems little distance between us. We are interconnected. We are part of a community which extends beyond boundaries and borders and each person, regardless of race, colour, belief, gender or sexuality has the right to be treated with dignity.

The Christian Gospel teaches that every human being is made in the image of God (*Genesis 1:26*) and that Christ came into the world because he loved the world (*John 3:16*). Jesus, the Word, became flesh and lived among us (*John 1*). "He emptied himself taking the form of a slave" (*Phil 2: 6-7a*) and became like one of us in all things "except sin" (*Hebrews 4:15*). The Incarnation reveals the dignity of being human. Jesus embraced the outsider, he welcomed the foreigner, he tore down barriers, kicked up boundaries, stood alongside the poor, stretched out his arms in love. He created a community of love. Through his death and resurrection, he has redeemed us and the whole of creation.

- Invite some initial shared reflections from the Video which may naturally incorporate or lead on to any of the following.

EUCHARIST AS COMMUNITY

In his book, *'Dare to Break Bread'* by Geoffrey Howard (DLT, 1992), the author writes the following:

"So I come to the Eucharist, wondering what evidence of Jesus I will find. As I administer the bread, the first person at the communion rail is Amy, eighty years old. Next to her is three year-old Carmen, waiting to receive a blessing. Her sticky fingers clutch a lollipop, which she swings on the rail. Brian, a thirty-three year old School teacher is next to her. Then comes Harry. He can neither read nor write and lives in a squalid bedsitter. Debbie, a local journalist is next and then William, the homeless alcoholic, followed by Susan, a single mum. Shoulder to shoulder with her is Paul an electronic engineer, followed by Ron who has recently been convicted of theft...Only Jesus of Nazareth could gather together round one table such beautiful and diverse people."

- Think about your own experiences of the Eucharist, and the different kinds of people with whom you gather at the altar. How do we welcome the stranger? How do we welcome those sometimes assumed to be 'difficult' or 'challenging' stranger? (cf Matthew 25 :34-50 "As you did this to the least of my brothers and sisters, you did it to me.")
- Does the gathered community reflect the diverse nature of the wider community? Is our local Community of Faith diverse? Are there people who may feel excluded? In what way are they excluded? How can the church be a (more) welcoming and embracing community for all?
- The Equality Act of 2010 brought together various anti-discrimination laws into one single Act around various 'protected characteristics' which include age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. How do we respond to people with these protected characteristics? How are they made to feel welcome and included at the Eucharistic table and the life of the church?

BELONGING

In his book, *'Maybe I Don't Belong Here'* the actor David Harewood shares his experience of 'Race, Identity, Breakdown and Recovery,' and the experience of finding it difficult to belong because of the society of which he is a part, the experience of which contributed to a time of psychosis. He recounts a moment when he was eleven years old, when an older white man walked towards him and within arm's length told him to 'Get the fuck out of my country, you little black bastard!' Harewood writes:

"Maybe I don't belong here. I was shocked and rooted to the spot. He glared at me for a moment, before slowly turning and walking away. I watched as he strode off, working out what he had just said to me...And That's when it happened. The two halves of me split. There was now a black half and an English half and I could feel myself slowly coming apart. At times in my life I've been able to fuse these two halves together, but occasionally the gap between them is just too big and I struggle."

- What can we do to create a community – and a country – which is fair, open and loving, accepting of difference, based on the dignity of every human being, so that all people can experience a sense of wholeness?
- How is the Eucharist a festival for all, and how can we be a healing presence?
- Have you ever experienced or witnessed racism or other incidents of discrimination – how did you respond and why?

- How do we welcome the stranger? How do we welcome the assumed 'difficult' or 'challenging' stranger? (cf Matthew 25 :34-50 *As you did this to the least of my brothers and sisters, you did to me.*")

THE HEAVENLY BANQUET

Thomas Merton, in his book, 'The Living Bread' writes of the Eucharist as a banquet and, more than a banquet, a *convivium* (or *sacrum convivium* – *sacred banquet*) a word which, he says, means more than feast or banquet but

"a mystery of the sharing of life – a mystery in which guests partake of the good things prepared and given to them by the host, and in which the atmosphere of friendship and gratitude expands into a sharing of thoughts and sentiments, and end in common rejoicing.

"The Eucharistic Banquet is at the very heart and centre of the Christian life which is to culminate in the banquet of heaven. Now we must remember that a banquet is not a banquet if it is attended by only one or two people. A feast. is an occasion of joy for many people...the Eucharist is a 'convivium', a sacred banquet. It is the celebration in which the Christian family, the Church, rejoices together at a common table with the Apostles and all the saints and all believers."

- Think about the global nature of the Eucharist, celebrated across countries and cultures, each day, in different languages and in slightly different ways. Separated by distance, how do we feel united to them through the Eucharist?
- How, when only a few people are gathered for a celebration of the Eucharist, do we feel as though we are gathering with all believers everywhere – as well as the saints and apostles, the angels and the host of heaven
- How does our experience of the world influence the way in which the Eucharist is celebrated or appreciated in our local church? How does our own celebration of the Eucharist change our perspective of the world?

DAILY DIGNITY

Very often we may think about instances of injustice, crimes against humanity, and actions which rob people of dignity as being a global issue, something which affects only countries - a national or international problem for others to solve. Our thoughts will naturally turn to the Holocaust and other experiences of Genocide, of Apartheid and Racism, of the experience of Refugees and displaced victims of war, violence and climate change.

However, every day we are faced with the situation of being called to treat everyone we meet, and everyone with whom we are interconnected, with dignity and respect, seeing everyone as made in the image of God. Also, we should expect to be treated with dignity.

The beautiful reflections in Michael Rosen's book '*Many Different Kinds of Love*' (2021) reflect upon his experiences of being extremely ill with COVID, his recovery, and the care he received from others. Here he mentions the diary in which those who cared for him wrote during a coma which lasted for almost two months:

*"I read their diary letters to me
that they wrote
in a little black book when I was in the coma.
Why did these strangers try so hard
to keep me alive?
It's a kindness I can hardly grasp.
The words tell me
that they wanted me to survive*

*I may never meet them again
Let's talk about life."*

- Are there any thoughts or personal experiences that come to mind from this brief passage?
- In what ways do we have an effect or influence on others – to use the Jim Driscoll image, who makes us sneeze? Who do we make cough? This can be both in terms of personal encounters but also the way we live, shop, make decisions, etc
- Returning to the Eucharist, how does receiving communion make you feel as an individual? What does it say about our dignity and our relationship to others? How does it interconnect us? What does it mean to be in communion with one another?

CALL TO ACTION

Some examples include:

- What is our collective response as the local church and as individuals to this session, in terms of valuing and respecting the dignity of every human being?
- Is there a particular commitment (personal or shared) that we can make or explore?
- Perhaps ideas may emerge such as learning more about the lived experiences of others, particularly those who have experienced discrimination or been treated in an undignified way. Can we be committed to getting our 'language' right in terms of speaking to and of people who are different from us? Do we need to change or enrich the way we greet or welcome one another? How can we enable everyone to be fully involved in the Eucharist, and to feel valued, loved, and respected?

MEDITATION: YOU SAW THAT ALL WAS GOOD

From the dust you raised us,
breathing into our lungs
as we emerged into a startling world,
finding our way.
You looked at us
and saw that all was good.
And as the first light reflected in our eyes,
you saw the beauty of your own Son's face,
staring back.

You grew into our world,
which was your world,
shedding the cloths which had wrapped your infant form,
reached out to us
across a scorched land
as we lost our way,
burned by our own mistakes.

Your arms, stretched out across the beams,
dropped your blood into our world
which was your world.
Startled and subdued,
your heart beat to the rhythm of love.
Your lips spoke peace,
even as you breathed your last,
and gave up the ghost.

You emerged from the cold earth.
A dark cave had homed your scratched, serrated body,
had hidden you from the world's rude eyes,
wrapped in cloths which now lay neatly folded,
like you had all the time in the world.

In darkness your love shone,
turned stones,
moved the earth.
You looked at us,
breathed into our lungs,
which heaved with the sheer beauty of it all,
as we emerged into a new world
which was your world,
startled by your love.
Your breath blew off the dust.
You saw that all was good.

JUST LENT

SESSION TWO: JUST COMMUNITY

AIM: to explore the call to solidarity as we see ourselves as part of a community, the human family, which seeks the common good

VIDEO: *A SHOUT OUT TO THE COMMON GOOD*

TEXT:

A shout away from Cardiff Castle, home to the Marquess of Bute who at the time was reputed to be the richest man in the country, is the statue of the Welsh MP, Aneurin Bevan. He is regarded as the founder of the National Health Service which was built upon the ideology of free health care available to all, regardless of wealth. It was and is a service based on medical need rather than the ability to pay. Bevan's statue shows an animated figure, frozen in time, mid debate. He was noted for his gift in public speaking, and he may be regarded as one of the greatest parliamentary speakers of all time.

The gap between the rich and the poor widens. The richest 10% of the global population currently take home 52% of the income. The poorest half of the global population earns just 8%. And this is not just about individuals. Whole communities may be identified as being deprived, not just in terms of financial investment, but also in terms of opportunity and resources. In some cases, poor communities can sit right alongside those who are most affluent. And yet the Christian gospel preaches the message that the fruits of the earth are for all, and not just for a few. The gospel also calls us to speak up about injustice, to challenge and to bring change. Speaking into politics is something demanded of us. It's not an optional extra reserved for a few meddlesome clergy.

In Cardiff Bay, now standing on the redeveloped bed of Butetown and the Docks, we see how the shift of power has changed and emerged, with more powers being devolved to Wales from the UK government. Here, in the Senedd is the seat of Welsh politics. It's a place of power, a citadel of decision making. Its glass frontage perhaps suggests a transparency, an openness, and an invitation to be involved.

A shout away, in its shadow, between its slated steps and the sea, is a memorial to Merchant Seafarers who died during war time. It is a sacrifice that some made for the common good.

This idea of sacrifice is embedded in the Christian story. Love demands sacrifice and Jesus told us that if we wish to follow him, we must take up our cross and follow (*Matthew 16:24*). Living well and helping to create a world of justice and peace will often demand sacrifice, as we put aside our own individual needs so that all can benefit. In the Acts of the Apostles (*Acts 4:32-35*) the Church is described as holding all things in common, and there was a care for each other, for those in need and for building up the common life. If we can create a community where all can flourish and have what they need regardless of their ability to pay, perhaps we will come close to God's justice, and his designs for the world.

- Invite some initial shared reflections from the Video which may naturally incorporate or lead on to any of the following.

THE CHURCH AND EUCHARIST

Jesus called and created a community of people. The Apostles were at the heart of this community, but it extended beyond this to many disciples, including members of his own family, as he gathered people close to him. He reached out and called to people from the House of Israel and beyond, gathering people into the Kingdom of God. The Church is a community but within that community we experience an ever deeper and more intimate sense of communal sharing which we may call 'communion' with God and one another. We are united in Christ. 'Our life is hidden with Christ in God.' (Colossians 3:3). Cardinal Basil Hume in his book, *To Be a Pilgrim*, wrote:

"The Church and the Eucharist are so closely connected that you could almost say one explains the other When I think of the Jesus Christ I think, with St Paul, of the body of Christ of which we are members, and he is the head; when I think of the body of Christ, I think both of the Church and the Eucharist. I feel deeply this relationship, for after all the Church is communion and the Eucharist too is communion. The Eucharist is the high point of the life of communion."

- What does the word 'community' mean to you? What does 'communion' mean to you?
- How does our celebration of the Eucharist express a deep sense of community?
- How could the arrangement of the liturgical space and the eucharistic celebration more effectively express this sense of community?

SACRAMENT AND SERVICE

In the gospel according to John, we are not given an account of the Institution of the Eucharist. However, in John 14, we are given the example of Jesus, who rose from table and stooped to wash his disciples' feet. It was an example of love and service, a commandment, a *mandatum* which sits alongside the command to "Do this in remembrance of me." Sacrament and service belong together. When we serve others, it means looking to the needs of others, rather than our own, standing alongside them and with them.

- What does 'a servant church' look like?
- How do we serve others? Who do we serve?
- How do others serve and minister to us? Do we willingly receive the ministry of others?

SACRIFICE AND OFFERING

In the Eucharist, we receive all the benefits of Christ's sacrifice upon the cross. In the earliest written account of the Eucharist, St Paul, in his First Letter to the Corinthians (cf 11:16-32) said: 'When we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes again.'

St Teresa of Calcutta said,

"The Eucharist is connected with the Passion. If Jesus had not established the Eucharist we would have forgotten the crucifixion. It would have faded into the past and we would have forgotten that Jesus loved us. To make sure that we do not forget, Jesus gave us the Eucharist as a memorial of his love."

- In what ways is the Eucharist a sacrifice? (A sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, a sacrifice of self which is part of what it means to worship, a sacrifice of giving/ offering?)
- How is it related in your mind with the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus?

- During the Lockdown experience of 2020 and 2021, churches were closed for public worship, but some priests continued to celebrate the Eucharist day by day and week by week even when there was no congregation. This was, of course, a case of exceptional circumstances. Why do you think it was important to some priests for them to continue to celebrate the Mass? Do you think it was important? Did it make any difference to you?

GIFT EXCHANGE

In her book, *'I am Malala'*, the author offers some insights into her culture as a Pashtun Muslim, and in one chapter entitled *'Why I Don't Wear Earrings and Pashtuns Don't Say Thank you,'* Malala Yousafzai, writes:

"We are a people of many sayings. One is 'The stone of Pashto does not rust in water,' which means we neither forget nor forgive. That's also why we rarely say thank you, manana, because we believe a Pashtun will never forget a good deed and is bound to reciprocate at some point, just as he will a bad one. Kindness can only be repaid with kindness. It can't be repaid with expressions like 'thank you' and then forgotten."

This idea of gift exchange may be helpful in understanding the Eucharist and Community. In the Eucharist, we offer to God what he has already given us: Bread and wine, fruit of the earth, fruits of the vine and work of human hands, are offered as gifts, along with financial offerings for the church and the service of the poor. There is an exchange of gifts, as God receives our offerings and, through the work of the Holy Spirit, consecrates them and transforms them into the Body and Blood of Christ.

At the heart of the Eucharist is thankfulness. Eucharist means thanksgiving, and our prayers, particularly at the Eucharistic Prayer are filled with praise and thanksgiving. At the beginning of the Eucharistic Prayer is the exchange between priest and people:

*"Lift up your hearts
We lift them to the Lord.
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God:
It is right to give our thanks and praise."*

However, just saying 'Thank you' is not and can never be enough. Having received the sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood, we are to be a people who are transformed, so that we can live Eucharistic lives. The Eucharist may very well be *'the most important act of Christian worship'* (*Church in Wales Book of Common Prayer, 1984*) and the **summit** of our lives, but it is also the **source** of all that we do, so that our whole lives can be lived in service of God and one another, offering ourselves as a gift as St Paul says *"I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship"* (Romans 12:1-2)

As he approached martyrdom, St Ignatius wrote about his death using eucharistic language and imagery.

"Let me be food for the wild beasts, for they are my way to God. I am God's wheat and shall be ground by their teeth so that I may become Christ's pure bread. Pray to Christ for me that the animals will be the means of making me a sacrificial victim for God."

- How can and does our life be of service for others, so that we can create a community where all are cared for, and work for the common good?
- Spend some time, discussing this idea of the Eucharist as an exchange of gifts.
- What does it mean to live a Eucharistic Life?

NO ONE IS SAFE UNLESS EVERYONE IS SAFE

In an article published on *The Guardian* website (31 December 2022), addressing the Cost of Living, Rowan Williams writes:

“The cost of living crisis is in fact an example of costs being transferred from the powerful to the powerless – from ambitious speculators, market fundamentalists (in and out of government), naked profiteers and, in the past horrendous 10 months of war in Ukraine, foreign dictators, to a population pushed with increasing aggressiveness into debt, housing, food and energy poverty, and insecure working conditions. It is a sign that we have once again forgotten the “covenantal” character of community. It was repeated often enough during the pandemic that no one is safe unless everyone is safe: have we really not noticed that this applies to our economic as much as to our medical wellbeing?”

- How can we help to create strong and resilient communities? What is our responsibility as the Church to create a strong community, working with others, regardless of faith or belief?
- How are some communities disadvantaged? How are some communities given an advantage? Are there particular communities who experience specific obstacles to being able to flourish?
- Is acceptable that some have lots, and many have little or nothing? How do we hold in tension the need of the individual and the community?

CALL TO ACTION

Some examples include:

- What can we do as a local church to work with others to strengthen community life? Are we willing for it to cost us something? Or do we always expect to receive? Are we willing or able to sacrifice something (spend money, invest time) to strengthen and improve the lives of others?
- How can we celebrate the Eucharist in a way that constantly and creatively reminds us that what we are doing is for others? For the world?
- What presenting needs do we discover in our local community?
- How do we respond to global needs?

MEDITATION: WILL YOU STAND WITH US?

*The following can be read by one or more voices, or used as Litany with the collective response, “**We stand with you.**”*

You, who look beyond the scorched mountain,
with hopes of a safe place,
seek a paradise compared to the pounding of the earth
by missiles and explosives
which disrupted and destroyed your home,
whilst we sit here so comfortably
and where only rain falls from our sky. **We stand with you.**

You, who reach your hand into the deep back of the sofa
looking for coins, like lost treasure,
or count pennies found at the back of the drawer
for bus fare to the next job interview. **We stand with you.**

You, who share what you have with others,
give of your time and your talents,
and fall into bed after a day of work and worth
as you try to make the world a better place. **We stand with you.**

You, who have given up some time ago on seeking work,
because your name does not fit,
or your postcode means your application is overlooked,
raises alarm bells of discrimination. **We stand with you.**

You, who skirt the supermarket aisles
avoiding the security guards and cameras,
to walk out with a meal for the night,
hidden beneath your coat. **We stand with you.**

You, who take to politics to change the world,
and find the decisions too difficult to make,
but remain to fight your corner,
and walk the unpopular route. **We stand with you.**

You, who bow your head into the Foodbank’s doorway,
clutching an empty bag,
waiting for your tinned food
to take home to make the most of other’s giving. **We stand with you.**

You, who take the whistle to your lips,
shuffle your studded feet on muddy ground,
and kick a ball around with the young,
to let them know you care and they have a future. **We stand with you.**

You, who speak to power,
although you feel so powerless

and feel like giving up
when the odds are stacked against you. **We stand with you.**

Prayer

Sovereign God,
whose Word took flesh,
living as one of us,
standing alongside us
living for us.
May we stand with him now,
present in the poor and the vulnerable,
calling us to create communities of love and peace,
strengthening the weak,
and raising up all who are bowed down with burdens too great to bear alone.
May we, your church, speak out against injustice,
and be open to the unsettling power of your Spirit,
who empowers us to bring change
and believe in the possibilities of your Kingdom.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

JUST LENT

SESSION THREE: JUST POVERTY

AIM: To explore poverty, its presenting needs and the causes of poverty and how and why Christians should respond

VIDEO: MUSIC FOR THE POOR

TEXT:

In the shadow of the Wales Millennium Centre, famous for song and drama, music and theatre, is the statue of a son of Cardiff, Ivor Novello, a Welsh actor, dramatist, singer and composer. He was one of the most popular British entertainers of the first half of the twentieth century. The Ivor Novello Awards for song writing and composing are named after him.

Songs speak to us and speak into our situation. They can revive us and express how we feel, whether its sorrow or pain, as we take the tunes and the sentiments of someone else and apply them to our own situation. Music unites us – whether in choirs, on the terraces, singing our national anthem, or songs of resilience and demonstration.

In another song in the hill country of Judah, Mary's prayer spills out. Her song is inspired by the words of Hannah (*1 Samuel 2:1-10*). Perhaps as she made that solitary Journey to Elizabeth, she could relate to the experience of Hannah and the sentiments included, and she made it her own, and allowed the words to express how she was feeling. It is a song which praises God for all he is doing, and it is filled with strong and challenging images, of raising up the poor, pulling down princes from their thrones, sending the rich away, empowering the weak and the vulnerable. (*Luke 1:39-45*)

Throughout his life, Jesus reached out to the poor, he spoke up for the poor. He showed God's special concern and love for them and has given us a lived experience of how we should respond to those in need. If God has love for the poor, then we are called to respond in the same way as Christians, not simply responding to need but also challenging the roots and causes of poverty. Then, perhaps, we will experience what is meant by God's justice for the poor.

- Invite some initial shared reflections from the Video which may naturally incorporate or lead on to any of the following.

THE MAGNIFICENT MAGNIFICAT

Read the Magnificat song of Mary (*Luke 1: 47-55*)

*'My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,
for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.
His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.*

*He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants for ever.'*

- In terms of thinking about poverty, what phrases in the Magnificat stand out?
- What do they mean for us today, and to whom do they speak, challenge, comfort or affirm?
- What do we actually mean by poverty? What different kinds of poverty are there? Child poverty, food poverty, fuel poverty, period poverty, housing poverty and so on.... Poverty of opportunity, resources, aspiration, and so on. Is there a difference between the extreme poverty experienced in some developing countries and the poverty experienced in our own?

THE POVERTY OF THE EUCHARIST

"We must be faithful to that smallness of the Eucharist," said St Teresa of Calcutta, "that simple piece of bread which even a small child can take in. We have so much that we don't care about the small things. If we do not care, we will lose our grip on the Eucharist – on our lives. The Eucharist is so small."

At the Eucharist, we present offerings of bread and wine, but also our financial offerings for the Church and gifts for the poor and those in need. Through the Eucharist, we are strengthened to serve God in the world, to be his hands and his feet, but also to wash the feet of others and so discover that *'as we did this to the least of our brothers and sisters we do it to Jesus. (Matthew 25:40)* The Eucharist is a Sacrament which enables us to serve.

St Teresa of Calcutta said:

"Like Mary, let us be full of zeal to go in haste to give Jesus to others. She was full of grace when, at the Annunciation, she received Jesus. Like her, we too become full of grace every time we receive Holy Communion. It is the same Jesus whom she received and whom we receive at Mass. As soon as she received him she went in haste to give him to John. For us also, as soon as we receive Jesus in Holy Communion, let us go in haste to give him to our Sisters, to our poor, to the sick, to the dying, to the lepers, to the unwanted and the unloved. By this we make Jesus present in the world today"

- Henri Nouwen described the Eucharist as *'the most ordinary and the most divine gesture imaginable.* 'How do value the 'smallness', or perhaps the simplicity and poverty of the Eucharist?
- How can we 'connect' the celebration of the Eucharist to our service of those in need?

CALLED TO THE STREET

St John Chrysostom said:

‘Do you wish to honour the Body of Christ? Then do not disdain him when you see him in rags. After having honoured him in church with silken vestments do not leave him to die of cold outside for lack of clothing. For it is the same Jesus who says, “This is my Body” and who says “You saw me in the hungry and did not give me to eat...The Body of Christ in the Eucharist demands pure souls, not costly garments. But in the poor he demands all our care...Give him then the honour which he himself has asked for, by giving your money to the poor. Once again, what God wants is not golden chalices but golden souls.’

- If we remember that it is Jesus who calls, invites and welcomes us at the Eucharist — he is the host and the food - as well as sending us out, how does that make us feel about ourselves and others, and the way in which we gather for and share the Eucharist?
- In what ways does the Eucharist reinforce our call to respect and value the dignity of every human being?

CHALLENGING POVERTY

Bishop Desmond Tutu said,

“There comes a point where we need to stop pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream and find out why they’re falling in.”

In ‘A Place of Redemption, A Christian Approach to Punishment and Prison (Burns and Oates, 2004) the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales stated

“In coming to live among us and in dying, without protest, on the Cross, God chose vulnerability. But for many people in our society their vulnerability is enforced. Popular opinion would not include in that category the 74,000 men and women who are confined in our nation’s prisons today. They are not seen as individuals in need of the love of God so much as people who have been hell bent on destroying the lives of other people....All the research shows that the men and women in British prisons today are extraordinarily disadvantaged and vulnerable individuals.”

Whilst we are called to attend to need and want, clothing the naked, quenching thirst, feeding the hungry, we are also called to address the underlying issues which have caused that situation. *The Trussell Trust*, for example, has hundreds of Food Banks throughout the country, feeding people in crisis, but they also work and campaign against the causes of poverty which produces the needs to which they respond.

- What needs are presented to us – locally and globally?
- Why are people poor?
- What is the responsibility of the church to speak out against poverty, and how can we challenge the roots of poverty? How can we effect change? What campaigns can we be part of?

CALL TO ACTION

Some suggestions include:

- What can we do to address the presenting needs of poverty in the local/wider community?
- Are there existing projects in which we can be involved and support?
- Can we support charitable organisations which work to support people living in extreme poverty throughout the world?
- Are there particular campaigns in which we can be involved?

MEDITATION: YOU WERE POOR

You were poor
when they wrapped you in tight bands of cloth,
and placed you in a feeding trough
for stinking shepherds from the night-time shift to see
what has been signed to them.

You were poor
when you fled to the pyramid land of Egypt
seeking safety in the place that once enslaved your own people,
as we waited for a new Exodus,
a liberation of love.

You were poor
when you moved away from your Nazareth home,
and found nowhere to lay your head,
the foxes' heads more comfortably laid,
the birds of the air branched and nested,
as you walked the border lands of difference and danger.

You were poor
when, stripped of your clothing,
they hung you high
between two thieves,
your strange companions in death,
as you promised paradise
even though all seemed lost.

You were poor
when from a borrowed tomb
you rose from death
to pour peace upon your friends,
breathing out a new life,
and a new way.

JUST LENT

SESSION FOUR: JUST PEACE

AIM: To explore our responsibility to work for peace in the world, and how this can be achieved

VIDEO: PEACE STARTS WITH A SMILE

TEXT

There's a gentle smile from the face of this painting, a mural which celebrates the multicultural and inclusive Cardiff. Perhaps, in gazing at the smiling face, we smile too. St Teresa of Calcutta said that 'Peace begins with a smile.' Really, is that possible? Is that the seed of peace? Can a smile silence gunfire, can it render rockets and missiles speechless, can it disengage tanks and disarm soldiers? Can a smile do all that?

Peace is the cornerstone of our faith. Jesus is the Prince of Peace (*Isaiah 9:6*) Jesus was the one who said, 'Peace I leave you, my own peace I give, a peace the world cannot give, this is my gift to you' (*John 14:27*). It is God's desire, as shown in the life of Jesus, for there to be peace. Scripture tells us that he 'brought peace by his blood on the cross' (*Colossians 1:20*). And so peace, the reality of peace, the need for peace is at the heart of the Christian Faith. So, how does a smile get elbowed into all of that?

Perhaps the same emotions and motives which begin war within and between nations are the emotions and motives which exist in every human heart. Jealousy, greed, anger, hatred, cynicism, the need to retaliate, to take what is not ours, to feel more powerful in the face of someone weaker than us, insecurities, the inability of being able to sit down and talk about disagreement. And yet the antidote to war also exists in the hearts of all – the capacity to love, to empathise and sympathise, to be compassionate and forgiving, to know what is right, to want peace.

A smile, a true smile, rather than a shallow and fake smile, comes from the heart. It begins to break down barriers, brings delight to others, causes others to smile too, begins to create friendships, veers us away from anger. A smile can so easily reflect a smile in the face of another. Yes, there are challenges in the world - there is war and violence and division and so many atrocities, but how can we begin to extend that peace if it doesn't exist in our own hearts and in our own lives? Where is the need for peace today – in the world, in our own country, in our communities, in our family, amongst our friends, in our street, in our home, in our own lives? Where do we start?

- Invite some initial shared reflections from the Video which may naturally incorporate or lead on to any of the following.

A COMMUNITY OF PEACEMAKERS

Henri Nouwen wrote:

"As a community of peacemakers it is our task first of all to recognize and affirm the great human gifts the warmakers carry within themselves. We have to see them as caring, loving, concerned human beings, who, just as we, desire peace and freedom, even though they are for fighting their way to it."

As much as we have to confess our own dark forces to each other, so much do we have to reveal the gifts of peace in those who lives and works we hope to change. When those who are for fighting recognize that they have real

talents for peace making within and among them, they may become free enough to let go of their fears and claim their ability to live together as brothers and sisters without guns, bombs, B52s, cruise missiles, and Trident submarines.” (Seeds of Hope, DLT 1989, page 179)

- Is it possible to turn ‘warmakers’ into ‘peacemakers?’ When should attempts and negotiation for peace give way to armed response? Within the Christian tradition there is a theory known as a ‘Just War.’ What do you think?
- What is peace? And what is the peace that Jesus bestows that ‘the world cannot give?’
- How does the Church exhibit its calling to be a community of peacemakers in the world?

THE COST OF LOVE

Rowan Williams, in a sermon to mark the end of military operations in Iraq in 2009 said:

“When we as Christians consider the sacrifice that purchased peace and mercy for the whole world, we think not only of the death of Jesus on the cross but also of the cost of love and openness to the stranger that marked his entire life. We can recognise the same thing at work in a lesser degree in any life that is dedicated to taking the world a little further out of barbarity and violence: it is not only the moments of high tragedy that matter, but the patient acceptance of daily frustrations and confusions, and the need for painstaking attention in every detail to the work that is there to be done.”

- How can each of us ‘take the world a little further out of barbarity and violence?’
- How can we bring peace – to what, to whom?
- Is there anything that threatens peace in our own communities?

THE EUCHARIST AND PEACE

Cardinal Basil Hume, in his book ‘To be a Pilgrim (page 185, St Paul’s Publications, 1984) wrote:

My nightmare is that man will undo at the end of time what God had created in the beginning. I fear that the human story which began with Genesis may end with a fearful chapter given over to nemesis. Will we have to endure the return of God’s world to that primeval chaos from which it emerged. Intellectually, I can accept that the policy of deterrence is morally defensible, but only on the understanding that it must be no more than a stage towards multilateral and total disarmament. Nonetheless, everything Christian and human within me cries out in protest against the sheer horror of a world where these weapons are allowed to exist at all.

- What is this ‘nightmare’ vision? What kind of ‘paradise’ do we long for?
- What are our thoughts about the presence of nuclear deterrents in the world?
- At the Eucharist we share the gift of peace before we present our gifts at the altar – or before we receive communion. How does the Sharing of Peace ‘feel’ in our local church?

CALL TO ACTION

Some suggestions may include:

- Are there opportunities for reconciliation within the church or wider community?
- Does your church have a Communication or Social Media policy or guidelines that empower you to 'tweet' peacefully and with respect? How do you respond to unpleasant or challenging exchanges online?
- Is praying for peace part of our regular pattern of prayer? Can our prayers be enriched and more informed with particular details? Can we become more informed about places of war and conflict?
- Using our buildings, etc, how can we provide a peaceful, healing space for local people? How can we help individuals to be 'at peace.'
- Can we explore activities and projects with people who are different from us? Can we work in an Ecumenical and/or Interfaith way so that we can forge friendships and build a peaceful community?
- How can we tackle false and hateful narratives in our communities and country and counter them with truth and messages of love?

SESSION FOUR | PRAYER RESOURCES

MEDITATION: **MAY PEACE ABOUND UNTIL THE MOON IS NO MORE**

It was reported some years ago that, in the 1950, a plan was explored by the US to 'nuke' the moon to demonstrate their power to the Soviet Union. It is this which forms the basis of the following meditation, following the words of Psalm 72.

*May he live while the sun endures,
and as long as the moon, throughout all generations.
May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass,
like showers that water the earth.
In his days may righteousness flourish
and peace abound, until the moon is no more. (Psalm 72)*

Can you believe
there was a plan to blow up the moon,
to send it to oblivion,
a cold war gesture to the Soviets
that the American arm was strong,
as the lunar light went out
and dust exploded across space,
announcing to the world that 'the moon is no more.'

Can you believe
this night there is a child hiding,
with her father who covers her like a bomb shelter,
as they wait for the sounds of war to cease,
as buildings are blown to oblivion around them,
as homes are reduced to rubble?

Can you believe
this night there is an inflatable boat
fighting with the flow of the sea,
filled with those who have paid the fee to safety,
lined the pockets of human traffickers
who offer no money back guarantee
if death comes their way,
as they fly away from war?

Can you believe
this night there is a troop of soldiers
hiding behind a wall,
sent with instructions to take a land
that is not their own?

Can you believe
this night there is the endless promise of peace,
breathed by Christ upon his Apostles
and every day and night
since that moment in the upper room,
which provides an echo of the angel's song
above the shepherds' heads

on Bethlehem's moonlit hills?

Can you believe
this night that peace is possible?
That Trident Missiles could disappear
as deep into the past
as they are in the sea this night?

Can you believe
this night that peace is possible?
Where does it start?

*May he live while the sun endures,
and as long as the moon, throughout all generations.
May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass,
like showers that water the earth.
In his days may righteousness flourish
and peace abound, until the moon is no more.*

JUST LENT

SESSION FIVE: JUST CREATION

AIM: To explore our calling to live responsibility as part of God's Created Order

I: VIDEO: MOUNTAINS AND MOLEHILLS

TEXT

This monument, moved from just outside Central Railway Station to Cardiff Bay Wetland is intended to reflect the mountains which surround Cardiff, and the life of the valleys which have now become so much greener in its post-industrial age. Pit heads and wheels long ago gave way to wind turbines which are scattered on the mountaintops, and the coal tips and slag heaps have given way to green mountains as nature returns once more, and the valley communities seek a new future.

We are now well aware of the impact that we have upon the planet, and the global environmental damage done by the dominant and destructive hand of humans. There are many challenges and much that must change before the planet is brought to breaking point. It's not too late.

What is our calling as Christians? If we return to the Genesis story of Creation, we read that 'God saw all that he had made and behold it was very good.' How good a job does God think we human beings have made in being stewards of the gifts he has given us? The world is God's gift to us, and he set us as stewards of all that he has made. St Charles Foucauld prayed "*Give me the grace to see nothing else but you, nothing but you in all created things; never to be arrested by them, never to see the natural or spiritual beauty that is in them as being born of themselves, but only as being part of you.*" If we are able to make that prayer our own, how on earth can we carry on regardless?

It's not only war which displaces and devastates people. The environmental damage we are doing to the world is also to blame. Whilst the responsibility of governments and leaders lies heavy, so it also falls to each of us to live responsibly upon this earth, to play our part in caring for the created order, to treat with gentleness and gratitude the gifts that God has given us. The further we live apart from and in contradiction to the natural world, the further we stray from the designs of God, and from God himself. Every small thing we do can have a major impact for good or ill. The molehills of our lives can become mountains of change – if we act now and live well, as we seek God's justice for all he has created.

- Invite some initial shared reflections from the Video which may naturally incorporate or lead on to any of the following.

THE BEAUTY OF CREATION

Pope Francis in his encyclical, *Laudato Si: On Care for our Common Home*, said:

“If someone has not learned to stop and admire something beautiful, we should not be surprised if he or she treats everything as an object to be used and abused without scruple. If we want to bring about deep change, we need to realize that certain mindsets really do influence our behaviour. Our efforts at education will be inadequate and ineffectual unless we strive to promote a new way of thinking about human beings, life, society and our relationship with nature. Otherwise, the paradigm of consumerism will continue to advance, with the help of the media and the highly effective workings of the market.”

- When have you been particularly moved or struck by the beauty of creation?
- There are some things in the natural world which some people may find upsetting. How can we see beauty and order in all things? Is it possible to have an over-sentimental appreciation of nature? What are the consequences of viewing animals in an anthropomorphic way?
- How or in what ways does all of creation praise God?
- What is the role of humanity in creation, as ordained by God? What is our relationship to nature? How can we or should we live more in harmony with nature?

ALL THINGS CONSIDERED

Pope Francis continued:

“The ultimate purpose of other creatures is not to be found in us. Rather, all creatures are moving forward with us and through us towards a common point of arrival, which is God, in that transcendent fullness where the risen Christ embraces and illumines all things.”

Christ has redeemed the whole of creation, and all things are held together in him. In the Letter of St Paul to the Colossians (1:15-20) we read of Christ:

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.”

- How sacred is creation? In what ways does Creation reveal something of the Creator?
- Julian of Norwich said, ‘It lasts and ever shall, because God loves it.’ In light of this, how do we feel about humanity’s treatment of creation, and how we treat Creation as individuals?

THE EUCHARIST AND CREATION

In the Eucharist, we offer fruits of the earth and the work of human hands, and experience that transformation and consecration of Creation. Through the use of material, ordinary and everyday things, the Sacraments illustrate the way in which God uses his creation to fill us with his grace.

Henri Nouwen wrote:

‘We will never fully understand the meaning of the sacramental signs of bread and wine when they do not make us realize that the whole of nature is a sacrament pointing to a reality far beyond itself. The presence of Christ in the Eucharist becomes a ‘special problem’ only when we have lost our sense of his presence in all that is, grows, lives and dies. What happens during a Sunday celebration can only be a real celebration when it reminds us in the fullest sense of what continually happens every day in the world which surrounds us. Bread is more than bread, wine is more than wine: it is God with us – not an isolated even once a week but as the concentration of a mystery about which all of nature speaks day and night.’

- How can our celebration of the Eucharist more fully express our connection with God in nature?
- Do we take decisions as a local church based upon our environmental impact?
- The Eucharist is a foretaste of the heavenly banquet – how does that image inform our approach to celebrating the Eucharist?

‘When I think of the Eucharist, and look at my life as a priest, as a Bishop and the Successor of Peter, I naturally recall the many times and places in which I was able to celebrate it. I remember the parish church of Niegowic, the collegiate church of Saint Florian in Krakow, Wawel cathedral, Saint Peter’s Basilica and so many basilicas and churches in Rome and throughout the world. I have been able to celebrate...in chapels built along mountain paths, on lakeshores and seacoasts; I have celebrated it on altars built in stadiums and in city squares. This varied scenario of celebrations of the Eucharist has given me a powerful experience of its universal and, so to speak, cosmic character. Yes, cosmic!’ John Paul II (Ecclesia de Eucharista)

ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS AND THE POOR

Climate change amplifies the divide between the rich and the poor. As global temperatures and sea levels rise, and the oceans become acidified, people living in poverty are most severely impacted. Climate change affects everything from where a person can live to their access to health care, and so millions of people could be plunged further into poverty with worsening environmental conditions. This is especially true for poor people living in low-income countries which have fewer resources to deal with the problem. The world’s poorest communities often live on the most fragile land, and they are often politically, socially, and economically marginalized, making them especially vulnerable to the impacts of climate change with more extreme weather, frequent and intense storms, flooding, drought, and changes in rainfall patterns.

- How do our decisions affect others around the world?
- What responsibility do we feel towards people on the other side of the world?
- As a church, what is our response to times of crisis and disasters throughout the world?

CALL TO ACTION

Some examples include

- If its not be done already, could the local church work towards an environmental award with A Roche?
- Could the local church adopt an environmental policy?
- Can you commit to ensuring that all church activities consider their environmental impact?
- Is it possible to adapt our buildings, or for any building plans, to include environmental consideration?
- Can we have an impact on our local communities, working with others to create a clean and green community?
- Are we a Fairtrade church, or can we work to becoming a fairtrade community?

MEDITATION: PRAYER FOR A WORLD TO CHANGE

The following is an imagined 'beatitudes' which was written at the time of the COP26 Summit and is also available separately on the website of St Mary's CF10 (www.stmaryscf10.com)

*'When Jesus saw the crowds,
he went up the mountain
and after he sat down, his disciples came to him.
Then he began to speak.' (Matthew 5:1-12)*

Blessed are the poor in spirit,
those who feel demoralised by disaster,
the down and the destitute who live with little hope.
The fearful and frightened,
their lives fractured by the thought of a future now undone.
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn,
with loved ones lost to a warming globe.
The fire-struck and flooded,
the drought and disaster stricken
left to sift through hot dust,
waiting for a harvest,
for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek,
those who feel they have no power to bring change,
but who call from the streets and the side-lines,
halting traffic, hailing banners.
Placard waving protesters
sticking themselves to tarmac,
brushing off the belting sound of car horns,
and the bellowed anger of drivers,
for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for the unpredictable prophets
and the unexpected crowds who follow the voice of a child.
The scientists and conservationists,
the environmentalists and advocates,
the researchers and inventors
whose lifetimes' labour brings a world of change.
Those whose soapy hands at oil slicks
pull apart the feathers and the plumes,
clearing the dark mess of human living,
trawling through the rubbish tip of our seas,
picking out plastic,
or planting trees across the landscape of our lives,
or trudging across the dry ground of Africa,
pushing back poachers, empty-handed.

Blessed are the merciful,
for those who rebuild communities destroyed,
who walk with the sanctuary seekers,
their backs turned to their sometime home,
their lives lit only by gunfire
and wrapped in the smoke of war.
The displaced and the disconnected,
the refugees who drag what they own behind them,
holding onto a future that is not yet their own
for they will receive mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart,
for the young and the old standing head to shoulder
and stare into the future
with open eyes, with speechless mouths,
who wonder what the future holds,
for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers,
those who stand between the disagreeers and deniers
and the call-for-changers and the eco-warriors.
For politicians playing their part on the stage of the world,
for those whose words undermine injustice,
and all who speak to the gallows of gunfire,
beneath a sky of exploding shells,
they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted
for righteousness' sake,
for scientists whose voice had gone unheard
in the midst of denial and derision.
The truth-tellers, the challengers and changers
who stand tall against the giants of our world
with their gold-lined pockets,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you
and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account,
those labelled as loony or misled,
the impractical and unimportant,
whose unpopular words move us,
drive us,
tell us,
that things must change.

Rejoice and be glad,
for your reward is great in heaven,
for in the same way they persecuted the prophets
who were before you.

Prayer

Lord God of the mountains and hills,
the oceans and forests,
the peaks and the plains,
the sky and the deep caverns of the earth,
your hand can be seen in all you have made.

We grieve for all that humanity
has done to harm the world you have created.

We pray for all the leaders and governments of the world,
and all who are called to action
to make bold change,
to save the world.

May we too, in our call to them,
commit ourselves to change the way we live,
to cherish the world you called us to care for.

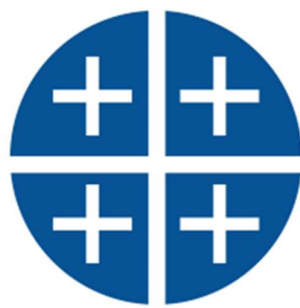
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Canticle of Creation

O Most High, all-powerful, good Lord God,
to you belong praise, glory,
honour and all blessing.
Be praised, my Lord, for all your creation
and especially for our Brother Sun,
who brings us the day and the light;
he is strong and shines magnificently.
O Lord, we think of you when we look at him.
Be praised, my Lord, for Sister Moon,
and for the stars
which you have set shining and lovely
in the heavens.
Be praised, my Lord,
for our Brothers Wind and Air
and every kind of weather
by which you, Lord,
uphold life in all your creatures.
Be praised, my Lord, for Sister Water,
who is very useful to us,
and humble and precious and pure.
Be praised, my Lord, for Brother Fire,
through whom you give us light in the darkness:
he is bright and lively and strong.
Be praised, my Lord,
for Sister Earth, our Mother,
who nourishes us and sustains us,
bringing forth
fruits and vegetables of many kinds
and flowers of many colours.
Be praised, my Lord,
for those who forgive for love of you;
and for those
who bear sickness and weakness
in peace and patience
- you will grant them a crown.
Be praised, my Lord, for our Sister Death,
whom we must all face.
I praise and bless you, Lord,
and I give thanks to you,
and I will serve you in all humility.

St. Francis of Assisi

FEEDBACK: We'd love to hear if **JUST LENT** has been of use to you, how it has been used and adapted, and how we can improve and enrich it for future publications. Please get in touch!



SOUTH CARDIFF
MINISTRY AREA