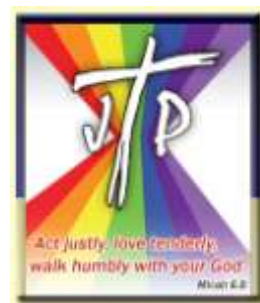




Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth

The Diocese of Portsmouth covers Hampshire, the Isle of Wight, the Channel Isles and parts of Berkshire, Dorset and Oxfordshire



Justice Peace and Social Responsibility

“Things that Make for Peace”

On behalf of the Diocese I just returned from the 37th National Justice and Peace Network Conference 2015 in Derbyshire. I was not sure what to expect, I found plenty of friends, families, prayer and joy of the Gospel as well as a packed weekend of talks guided my Pat Gaffney from Pax Christi to think about peacemaking globally, in our communities and our homes. I met up with Rita Belletty from Woodley Parish and Anne Dodd from Abingdon and we are all very keen to share some of what we heard. Perhaps next year a few more people from the Diocese will join in, there were great events for children and young people too.

A Prophetic Voice

This very experienced Professor Paul Rogers from Bradford University opened the conference by giving us a reflective overview of world development. His theory is that the world is currently at a curial point of transition where we have to learn to live within the capacity of the resources of our planet and therefore if we seek a peaceful world something has to change. He highlighted:

1. Our economics – the current system is failing the gap between rich and poor is widening greatly and this is leaving increasing numbers of people marginalised and vulnerable.

2. Our attitude of looking for our security with military solutions alone, an attitude he called “lidism” keeping a lid on problems like terrorism and migration through closing borders and suppression without trying to tackle the underlying causes.

3. He sees the biggest threat to peace as the issue of climate change, as the devastation of more floods and bigger storms effect poor countries worst. Then more people will seek refuge, migration will grow even more and competition for resources may create even more conflict.

Despite creating this picture of doom Professor Rogers managed to weave his story as one of hope, he feels there is the possibility to change. He used the example of anti nuclear rallies in the 1960’s as one of the success stories of people protest changing attitudes. We can change our attitudes to money and support more mutual’s and cooperatives we can work together with our neighbours and need to encourage our political leaders to do the same.

To learn more about this presentation there is an almost identical talk at www.foodsystemsacademy.org.uk/videos/paul-rogers.html

The Accidental Environmentalist –giving voice to the voiceless



The next morning we were introduced to the very modest Fr Edu Gariguez from the Philippines who was awarded the Goldman Environmental Prize in 2012 for voicing protests on behalf of indigenous communities against large scale mining projects. He talked about his vocation as priest to live among the poor and how in serving the local church of Calapan in Oriental Mindoro he worked to empower the indigenous people to speak up for their land. For where the central government was very keen to encourage mining for much needed investment Fr Edu took a different view that life was much more important, he explained that for the people their land was “life,” it provided all their needs they could not survive without it – To support this alternative world view to persuade the government Fr Edu became involved in looking at alternatives for more sustainable development, this is why he calls himself the “accidental environmental”

“If we are pro-life, we must be pro-environment,” he called for “concerted collaborative action, working together in building the common home.”

<http://www.goldmanprize.org/recipient/edwin-gariguez/>

Community builders

The next two speakers gave testimony to their efforts closer to home. **Lorraine Dinnegan** from London told us the very sad story about the murder of her teenage son, Martin in 2007. How her family have struggled to come to terms with this lost and leave bitterness behind. Also how with the help of her parish J&P group she has worked with the police and the community to provide safehavens for youngsters in danger.



Sister Marie Hayes gave a short insight into her grassroots work with the inter faith community in Luton, a town with a large Muslim community and home to the English Defence League. She told how despite hostility that people of different faiths pull together with annual peace walks and sporting events. “We strive to build community cohesion working to empower Luton’s faith and cultural communities” www.grassrootsluton.org.uk/

In contrast to local stories we also had a video talk from **Fiona Mwashita**, Progressio regional manager in Zimbabwe, and her work to empower women making sure they know their rights and get support for their needs.

Together we can make a difference This is a short summary of the main speakers, we also had workshops and a just fair to meet all sorts of individuals and groups doing big and small but amazing things.

Starting a justice group If you have been inspired we have now collected all sorts of contacts and resources to help with starting a parish, or ecumenical group if you would like some guidance get in touch. Maureen at ipsr@portsmouthdiocese.org