



# Catholic Social Teaching: Sharing the Secret...

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

**2 October:** Economy of Francesco 2021 Global Online Meeting. The UK Hub plans local activities in London beginning at 10:00 and linked to the global programme broadcast live from Assisi (14:00 to 17:00). They will also link the UK's role hosting the international climate change conference COP26 in Glasgow in November.

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**2 October:** Christian Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) AGM, in Newcastle (Jesmond Methodist Church, 68 St George's Terrace, NE2 2DL). The meeting will also be streamed online. Keynote speaker is Dr Nick Megoran, a Baptist minister and lecturer in Political Geography at Newcastle University specialising in religion and the war on terror. For more information, please contact [christians@cnduk.org](mailto:christians@cnduk.org) (phone 020 7700 4200).

## Home Secretary Under Fire for Numerous Policies

The summer and early autumn of 2021 have not been an easy time for Home Secretary Priti Patel. Hardly a week has gone by without a good deal of criticism from various sections of the population, including government. Although the criticisms relate to various Home Office policies and actions (cracking down on lawful protests, lying to parliament, vote of no confidence by Police Federation, issuing of removal orders for EU citizens who applied to stay in UK), the most serious are those connected with asylum seeking. Among the charges are the following, every one of which contravenes the principles of Catholic Social Teaching:

- The Home Office has acted unlawfully---and secretly--- in a rush to deport asylum seekers, without properly considering their claims to asylum
- Children who have crossed the channel have been sent directly to immigrant removal centres, and unaccompanied minors have been classed as adults
- Asylum seekers have been denied access to lawyers
- Actions by the Home Office are not those of a "civilized and compassionate nation"; many of the provisions of the proposed bill are "unnecessary, cruel and clearly baseless"
- UN: the UK is shirking its international responsibilities and using "an almost neocolonial approach"
- Asylum seekers, including victims of torture and trafficking, are prejudged and their stories disbelieved as a matter of policy---in direct opposition to the legal presumption of innocence until proved guilty (only valid for citizens?)
- The new borders bill criminalises asylum seekers---and anyone who helps them
- The bill in reality will endanger lives, as desperate people turn to more dangerous routes and possibly criminal groups
- The excessively harsh policies on migration are in reply to "a crisis that doesn't exist"; some commentators have called it a "deliberate political construct"---creation of a backlog, which allows the Home Office to give the impression it is being overwhelmed by immigrants
- The Home Secretary is refusing to process asylum claims or place seekers into decent accommodation, instead creating "quasi ex-military prison camps that have horrific conditions"
- UK's offer to Afghan refugees (a mere 5000 this year and a total of 20,000 in future tears) is not generous but "blindly inhumane"

10 – 17 October: Week of Prayer for World Peace. A national UK gathering is planned for Sunday 10 October.

<https://weekofprayerforworldpeace.co.uk/>

11-17 October: Challenge Poverty Week



Rivers do not drink their own water; trees do not eat their own fruit; the sun does not shine on itself; and flowers do not spread their fragrance for themselves. Living for others is the rule of nature. We are all born to help each other. No matter how difficult life is.... Life is good when you are happy; but it is much better when others are happy because of you.

Pope Francis (2021)



Some people say "My country is always right."

Some people say "My country is always wrong."

Some people say "My country is sometimes right and sometimes wrong, but my country, right or wrong."

To stick up for one's country when one's country is wrong does not make the country right.

To stick up for the right even when the country or the world is wrong is the only way possible to make everything right.

Peter Maurin (1877-1949), *Easy Essays*



I brought you into a plentiful land to eat its fruits and its good things. But when you entered you defiled my land, and made my heritage an abomination.

Jeremiah 2:7

- The government also does all it can to repatriate those who have already gained asylum, often deeming countries of origin "safe" without adequate basis

Why does it matter so much? In its rush to appease the anti-immigrant groups post-Brexit, the Home Office has over the years developed what Kenan Malik in the Observer (22/08/2021) has called a "bunker mentality" in which everyone seeking admission needs to be viewed with utmost suspicion and all possible ways sought to reject them. The Windrush scandal is a very sorry example of the results of such a mentality.

With respect to Afghanistan, the Government's has dual rationales for its malicious refugee policies: "We can't let everyone in" (which actually nobody is arguing for) and "The British public won't stand for a less strict approach". But a majority of Britons do want UK to help Afghans more, with a full 41% wanting either tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands to be admitted. In many cases, the new bill is in clear contravention of the UN's 1951 Refugee Convention and the European Convention on Human Rights. The craziness of the Home Office position was illustrated by Kenan Malik (Observer, 11/07/2021), in which he points out that the proposed bill provides for differential treatment of refugees depending on how they arrived here. Unbelievably, only those who came through "regular channels", with papers or permission to enter UK, will be eligible to claim asylum. Anyone who knowingly arrives without leave to enter could be jailed for up to four years, then deported.

This seems to show total blindness to the reality of the life situation for people who claim refuge; the experiences of Afghan citizens in recent months have laid bare in glaring detail how the risk to life makes them desperate. As one refugee who arrived without papers asked wryly, "Could I have gone to the Taliban and said to them that I am fleeing your regime, would you please issue me a passport, and then comfortably walked to the British Embassy to complete a simple form to seek asylum in the UK?"

And there are other horrors. Virtually all "safe and legal" routes have been closed down, and the proposed new bill criminalises not illegal entry but the very act of seeking asylum.

Moreover, the present law makes it an offense to aid immigrants without documents for gain. Malik notes that the new bill removes the words "for gain", meaning that people can be jailed--even for life!--for providing humanitarian assistance. This will mean we cannot legally practice a very important part of our Catholic/Christian faith: to welcome the stranger, help those in need, and carry out other works of mercy.

As stated by the Anglican Bishop of Leeds, Nick Baines, "Christian faith has always been clear: we protect and defend the poorest and weakest people among us. Rather than demonise refugees and asylum seekers, we need to show the sort of costly love and mercy that we would wish for ourselves, were we to find ourselves similarly bereft. The government needs to be challenged on its view of basic human value in a contested world."

Various organisations have created petitions against this bill. See the following link for more information:

<https://imix.org.uk/what-can-we-do-about-the-new-nationality-and-borders-bill/>



Catholic mystic and artist Caryl Houselander describes once riding the underground and seeing Christ permeating and radiating from all her fellow passengers:

Quite suddenly I saw with my mind, but as vividly as a wonderful picture, Christ in them all. But I saw more than that; not only was Christ in every one of them, living in them, dying in them, rejoicing in them, sorrowing in them—but because He was in them, and because they were here, the whole world was here too . . . all those people who had lived in the past, and all those yet to come.

I came out into the street and walked for a long time in the crowds. It was the same here, on every side, in every passer-by, everywhere—Christ.

*Caryl Houselander (1901-1954), A Rocking-Horse Catholic, 1955, pp. 137–138.*



Father of Creation, God of justice,

Restore us that we may be restored,  
that your church may arise with healing  
in its wings.

In the year of the COP26 Climate Conference, set us on fire with a love for all of your creation, that we, your covenant people, would shake off our parasitical past and instead be the stewards, caretakers and love-filled creatures you have called us to be.

Let your church be so empowered that we would peacefully and publicly join with others in rebelling against the extinction of so many species you created, which our actions have caused.

*Jon Swales, 26 Prayers for the Climate and Ecological Emergency, 2021*

For the full article by Kenan Malik:

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/jul/11/after-privatization-has-finished-which-refugees-will-carry-a-torch-for-britain>

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## Donate to Help Poorer Countries Get Covid Vaccines

Gavi is an international vaccine alliance that helps to protect nearly half the world's children against a large number of deadly and debilitating infectious diseases. This organisation has recently expanded to include Covid-19 vaccinations.

With COVID-19 now reported in almost all Gavi-eligible countries, the Vaccine Alliance is providing immediate funding to health systems, enabling countries to protect health care workers, perform vital surveillance and training, and purchase diagnostic tests. Gavi will support countries to adapt and restart immunisation services, rebuild community trust and catch up those who have been missed both before and during the pandemic, while also investing in strengthening immunisation systems to be more resilient and responsive to the communities they serve.

The organization welcomes donation to help their work:

<https://www.gavi.org/covid19>

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## CSAN: Free Resources on Catholic Social Teaching

The Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN) has joined with CAFOD to make available a number of excellent resources dealing with the many themes of Catholic Social Teaching. Most of these are free to download.

The **CST Card Packs** are for both individual and group reflection; these packs introduce basic concepts, with real-life examples of the teaching in practice from agencies in the Caritas network in England and Wales. The cards provide guidance, an introductory powerpoint and publicity flier for parishes and schools. They are a flexible way to introduce groups and individuals to CST and help them to grow in a faith that does justice.

**Caritas in Practice** is an induction and refresher resource for trustees, employees and volunteers working in Caritas member agencies. It is designed to assist people – whatever their cultural or religious tradition – to become familiar with the main elements of Catholic Social Teaching (CST) which underpin our work. It assumes no previous knowledge of CST. For those who are not members of the Caritas network in England and Wales, a donation of £20 is requested for downloading the resource.

See the following web page for links to obtain the resources:

<https://www.csan.org.uk/about-csan/publications/>