

## Laudato Si' Seven years on

We have recently celebrated the seventh anniversary of the publication of *Laudato Si'*. Each year a week in May is designated *Laudato Si'* week and this year the theme was 'Listening and Journeying Together'.

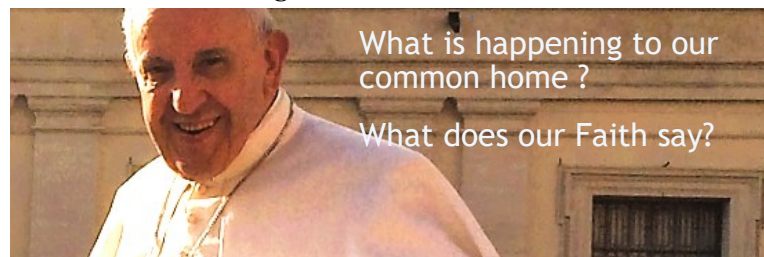
I have recently been fortunate to take part in a four session formation course in response to *Laudato Si'* – The *Laudato Si'* Animators' Course; one of the responses to Pope Francis' encyclical. This is a global online course and integral to that has been listening to people from all corners of the world. Listening to stories is perhaps the most energising experience we can engage in. The Global possibilities through zoom meant that I could meet and listen to people from the Philippines, from Kenya, from USA – to mention a few. The situations one reads about then become real. Our brothers and sisters in Africa contribute the least to climate change but disproportionately suffer the consequences. People of all faiths worldwide see care for our common home as a vital part of their life's vocation.

The *Laudato Si'* Animators course invites participants to join a global movement of hundreds of thousands of people committed to prayer and action for our common home. The four modules are based on the 'See, Judge, Act' paradigm. 'What is happening to our Common Home?'; 'What does our faith say?'; '(Laudato Si' and Catholic Social Teaching); 'A commitment to personal ecological conversion'; and 'Action in the light of our faith'.

These sessions confirmed yet again for me the knowledge that we are all inter-related and interdependent. We are indeed doing this 'together'.

More information and details can be found at :

[laudatosianimators.org](http://laudatosianimators.org)



During the last week of the course we were able to access a 'taster session' for the upcoming film 'The Invitation' directed by Nicholas Brown which takes up Pope Francis' wish "to address every person living on this planet"; so that all understand the Church's concern for the cry of the earth and the poor. The film follows diverse ecological advocates from around the world: a climate refugee from Senegal, a 13 year old activist from India, two marine biologists from the US and the leader of an indigenous community in Brazil. They all receive an "invitation" to meet Pope Francis at the Vatican and their stories are brilliantly presented. The director confessed that the film transformed him in that initially he had been ignorant about the Church's commitment to climate change. Through meeting Pope Francis he understood that "without the spiritual aspect we are not going to be able to solve the climate crisis". He encouraged churches and communities to watch the film together.

It will be available for viewing later this year and will be accessible for all to use.

More details and information can be found at:  
[theinvitationmovie.com](http://theinvitationmovie.com)

Barbara Hungin.

### What is a Refugee/Asylum Seeker?

People come to the UK for many different reasons. Terms and Definitions are bandied about indiscriminately within the media and it is helpful to know the correct designations.

**A Refugee** is someone who has been granted refugee status because of:

*"a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, nationality, religious belief, political opinion or membership of a particular social group; is outside the country of his (or her) nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country."*

**An asylum seeker** is someone who has applied to be recognised as a refugee and is waiting for a decision.

The right to seek asylum is enshrined in

international law.

People are entitled to government support for the duration of their asylum claim.

***There is no such thing as an "illegal asylum seeker"***

A person is considered to be a 'refused' or 'failed' asylum seeker if their claim for asylum or claim under Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights, has been refused and any subsequent appeals have been unsuccessful. Unsuccessful asylum seekers are often referred to as 'appeals rights exhausted (ARE)'.

If a refused asylum seeker is single with no dependent children, any support they have been receiving from the Home Office will stop 21 days after their asylum claim has been fully refused.

**Migration** is for individuals crossing

*borders voluntarily for reasons like employment or education. Should a migrant elect to return home they would continue to receive the protection of their own government.*

**An Illegal immigrant** is someone who has crossed a border but intentionally avoided informing the authorities.

**Trafficking** is the unlawful act of transporting or coercing people in order to benefit from their work or service, typically in the form of forced labour or sexual exploitation.

The recent legislation known as the 'Nationality and Borders Bill' is considered a very negative piece of legislation Refugee Organisations and will make it harder for those fleeing danger to apply for asylum if they have entered the UK 'without valid clearance'.

## Fr. Keogh and Parishioners of St Hilda's, Whitby Welcome Asylum Seekers

In 2014, aware of the plight of refugees on Teesside, Fr Pat invited Mary Frankland and two asylum seekers from the Congo to speak to us. We were moved by their personal stories and the seeds of Christian fellowship were sown, and a few parishioners adopted individual asylum seekers in offering friendship and support.



In 2015 we invited a group of asylum seekers for a fun day out in Whitby. They enjoyed a hot meal and took back donations of food and toiletries, but what they appreciated most was the warm welcome offered to them.

As the idea grew more groups from the area joined in, including Churches Together, Hinderwell Art Group and many friends of parishioners with no links to a faith. As the initiative developed, the trustees of the United Reform Church offered the superb facilities of the Trinity Centre, with staff volunteering to serve food prepared by St Hilda's parishioners.

We received a card from one of the visitors, 'We were made to feel welcome and cared for from the moment we arrived .... The variety of food on offer was amazing ... then being given

the choice of going to the areas of our wishes. Thank you to all those who made this possible'

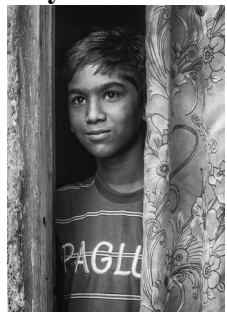
The Covid virus made it impossible to host the group for two years so, as a Parish, we decided to make Christmas appeals for food, toiletries, and warm clothing. The response was overwhelming from our regular supporters, but also from the community of Goathland and the food bank. Many individuals responded with generous monetary gifts, which were especially welcome in such difficult times. Former asylum seekers sorted out the mountain of donated food, along with toiletries and gifts, and distributed 50 bags to families and individuals in Thornaby. They were overwhelmed by the generosity.

This year we are hosting two groups of 25 asylum seekers, young women and children and single young men from many areas where war rages, or militia groups control their lives. We will again welcome them with a warm meal and conversation, with plenty of toys to entertain the children. Small groups are then guided around Whitby, while the mums and children visit the park or the beach. When they return, they are each given a bag of toiletries and essential foods, and can choose from donated clothes, toys and books.

We end the day sharing sandwiches, cakes and drinks and more chat. Hopefully, the visitors will entertain us with songs from their homeland. All volunteers have said how much they benefit from the contact with people from desperate situations, who charm us with their bright smiles. The visitors appreciate the welcome they receive, and the break from the stress they are under while waiting ages for permission to stay in our country. All they want is to work and to repay the gift of having a safe place to stay.

We feel lucky as a parish to have such a warm, welcoming Parish Priest in Fr Pat Keogh, who encouraged us to fulfil our Christian commitment, especially in the light of Pope Francis's message of opening the doors and working in the community.  
*Elizabeth Atkinson*

### "Eyes of the Heart" A book published to help The Hope Foundation for Street Children, in Kolkata (HOPE)



Celine Alexander-Brown has published this book for charity. Her aim was to capture the inner beauty of the people in the slums and on the streets of Kolkata with the lens of her camera and her heart. All donations for the book will be sent to The Hope Foundation to help street children in Kolkata. Their vision "A world where it should never hurt to be a child".

HOPE was set up in 1999 in Ireland by Maureen Forrest to help restore basic human rights for street-connected children in Kolkata. There is now a branch charity in the UK, where the

focus is on raising awareness and raising funds to help.

Living on the streets, children are exposed to physical and sexual abuse. Those who survive are often left to fend for themselves, with no promise of a safe future. They are often forced to work from as young as five years old to earn money for food and so cannot go to school. HOPE's goal is to protect those children from abuse and to give them a chance of a better life, by providing access to education, medical services and protection in homes where necessary. Donations go directly to projects working with these children and their families.

Copies of the book are available at St. Mary's Cathedral Shop, Middlesbrough where a donation can be made or you can place an order at [eyesoftheheart18@gmail.com](mailto:eyesoftheheart18@gmail.com) (Copyright)

**Prayers for Peace in Ukraine** continue in earnest throughout the Diocese and especially for the people of Ukraine as each day we see more devastating effects of the war, far beyond words. There have been many initiatives both individual and in our parishes to raise funds and get help for those fleeing from the Ukraine. On the next page there is an example of an initiative starting at Warsaw Station, and now successfully bringing families to safety in North Yorkshire and Middlesbrough.



# Support for the Ukraine crisis from Warsaw

Since the outbreak of the war in February, Warsaw Central Station has seen a flood of Ukrainian children, mothers, and



grandparents dragging suitcases and pet carriers as they seek safe refuge. The dominant emotions on display have not so much been anger or grief over the decision to leave behind their homeland and loved ones, but tension. This may be because until they reach their destinations, there is a job to be done and emotions must remain bottled up. Yet there are also few tears from children, which speaks to the resilience of Ukrainians – and perhaps, also, hints at the hope of many that this is just a temporary excursion, and that before too long they can return home.

No doubt many amongst us, in moments of petulance and despair after being told off by parents whilst tempestuous children, toyed with the idea of packing a duffel bag and running away. Generally, such childish rebelliousness gave way to a fleeting appreciation for the safe and loving home available to us once tempers cooled. As we grow up, we forget such moments. Yet to witness over a sustained period people who must flee, from no choice of their own, is enough to make one more permanently thankful for what we have, and to make us want to give a little of this security to those that have none.

Warsaw's main station has seen many hundreds, probably thousands, of volunteers over the past three months put on yellow fluorescent jackets and assist with refreshments, childcare, and travel help for Ukrainians passing through. Some have been local Poles wanting to help neighbours, a few volunteers have been from North America or Britain, while others are Ukrainians who have themselves fled the country only to turn around to help those following them out. The situation for these Ukrainian volunteers is generally far from secure. Even if they have found long-term accommodation for themselves, which many have not, they often still have siblings, parents, grandparents to help bring to safety. The experience of volunteering alongside Ukrainians has the effect of blurring the lines between those providing help and those needing it. But isn't this what life is always like? We may help someone one day, but the next day, we ourselves need help.

One of the more cynical criticisms to the British response to the Ukrainian crisis has been to ask where this help and solidarity has been in every other refugee crisis. Such frustrations amongst those who have been working with refugees for years or decades are of course understandable. There is no good answer to this question. Yet to look at it charitably, perhaps the response to the crisis suggests a wake-

up call for much of Britain, and a shift towards the Christian view that we are all brothers and sisters, along with an understanding that a refugee is not, in fact, an 'alien' or an 'other', but, instead, is simply someone in need of refuge.

From hobbits to Greek heroes and prodigal sons, homecomings after long journeys seem to provide sources of inspiration. And so it was that as I listened recently to a member of the Crathorne parish, where I had once been an altar boy, speak on the meaning of 'charity' at an auction in my home town of Middlesbrough, I felt a sense of having learned certain lessons in recent months, about what it is to have a home, and to be a refugee without one. Perhaps also something about what it is to be Christian.

Living in Hong Kong during 2019 and 2020, during which the city was gripped by fierce protests and police clashes, churches became temporary refuges. They were marked on digital makeshift maps as places where protesters, many of whom had been rejected families that opposed the pro-democracy movement, could go to find food, shelter and emotional support.

Prominent Catholics in Hong Kong spoke loudly about the need for compassion and dialogue. Today, several of these figures face arrest and potential long-term imprisonment, such as the publisher Jimmy Lai, barrister Martin Lee, and the 90-year-old cardinal Joseph Zen. During Soviet times in Europe, the story was of course similar, as prominent religious figures faced persecution after speaking out. In Russia this year, priests have been arrested for opposing the war. We can easily forget the personal costs that many Christians face by standing up for their principles.

In April, Warsaw Central Station was blessed with a visit from an Anglican Polish Priest and a Deacon from Swainby who have been providing sponsorship for Ukrainian families as part of a local network supported by IPC, the migrant and refugee charity in Middlesbrough. Reverends Robert and Lisa brought a great calm and wisdom to the Station, speaking with anxious Ukrainians and successfully helping to find local hosts for a doctor couple who arrived last week, and we hope will be able to pass local qualifications and find work at James Cook Hospital.

On behalf of all of the appreciative Ukrainians we have met and been able to support in Warsaw, we would like to express our deep gratitude to the local families and Churches that have supported Ukraine through hosting, donations, or prayers.

*Ed Pinkney*

## Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal



**CAFOD.**

Help families fleeing conflict through Caritas organisations, who are already working on the ground, responding to this humanitarian crisis.

<https://cafod.org.uk/News/Emergencies-news/Ukraine-crisis>

## Our response to Laudato Si

Three schools within the NPCAT trust (St Patrick's Primary, Christ the King and St Therese) have made Pope Francis' encyclical Laudato Si a key focus throughout their school.

**Class 7** have responded to Pope Francis' message by planting flowers to attract wildlife.



To launch our year of Laudato Si, Joe Hammill was commissioned by NPCAT to write a song based on Pope Francis' message. This is a beautiful and poignant song, which urges us all to make changes in our lives and to work together to create a better world for future generations.

[NPCAT Laudato Si Message 2022](#)

Throughout the year we have reflected on Pope Francis' words and implemented his words in our actions. On the feast of St Francis of Assisi, we celebrated the conclusion of the season of creation within our curriculum. We have shown how we care and appreciate our Earth through making bird feeders, collecting harvest to make apples, planting bulbs and picking weeds in the prayer garden. In addition to the garden,

classes have planted seeds to help attract a wider range of insects and birds to our school grounds.

In our schools we have been fortunate to have the opportunity to speak to a range of individuals from different organisations. We listened to how they have raised their voice in response to Laudato Si.

Bishop Terry spoke to Year 6 children about how the diocese has responded to Pope Francis and inspired many of us to think about how we can respond as a whole school.

Barbara Hungin from the Justice and Peace commission spoke to Year 5 children and shared a range of wonderful ways that we can care for our common home.

Matt Vickers MP, Mike O'Reilly (Stockton Borough Council) and Ann Neale (Cafod) spoke to the younger year groups about how their organisations follow Pope Francis' words. Both children and staff were inspired by these visitors and are now planning their next Laudato Si day which will be putting Pope Francis' words into action.

If the Earth had a **voice**, what would it say? Class 4 are using art to think about how we can follow St Francis and look after God's creation.



**Jen Colley**

## **Synod –next steps in our Parishes**

In our winter newsletter Terry Doyle wrote about how we can reach out to people on the margins. At the Diocesan Synod Day in May, parish representatives amongst other things, considered the next steps in becoming a field hospital. How can we reach out to those around us in need of love and support, and how can we take the good news out into the world? Where is God calling us to do His work?

We were inspired to go out and seek those around us who are in need, consider how to connect with them, listen to them and identify what they would like help with. Keep it simple and provide the help needed first, whilst building up a

relationship and accompanying them.

In our parish communities, we need discernment and space to find our gifts, skills and calling, as well as relevant formation and good governance. We must be relational. A prayerful community in relationship with God and each other, listening to the Holy Spirit.

We also need to link and build relationships with others, exchange good practice and learn from each other. Parish communities to work side by side with our schools where Catholic Social Teaching is both learnt about and lived. To keep in mind what God's work should look like as we touch the suffering flesh of Christ, with close accompaniment, gentle love, and tender mercy.

*T Lyth*

## **Anthony Storey Memorial Lecture**

Tuesday June 21<sup>st</sup> at 7.00p.m. via Zoom.

'Thinking about Faith and the Environment.

What do we want to sustain?'

Speaker: Dr. Carmody Grey. Assistant Professor of Catholic Theology at Durham University.

To register for the lecture please email [bhungin@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:bhungin@yahoo.co.uk) (Diocesan Justice and Peace Commission)

Dr. Carmody Grey is a columnist for The Tablet and an inspiring speaker. She is in great demand to speak on these issues. An important focus for her is on science, nature and the environment. Her recent Hook Lecture was widely acclaimed and she will be using the themes from this for the Storey Lecture. She particularly delights in supporting and enabling individuals and communities including schools, churches, NGOs, and a range of lay groups and associations.

Please pass on your ideas for future Newsletters and share what is happening in your community. *We also welcome letters, requests for more information and comments.*

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