

GLASGOW CATHOLIC WORKER

'Faith, Works, Love, Mercy'

Letter from Afghanistan

*"Creating a World
Wherein It's Easier
To Be Good"*

*Kabul: 19 May
2015*

I've spent a wonderfully calm morning here in Kabul, listening to bird songs and to exchanges between mothers and children in neighboring homes as families awaken and children prepare for school. Maya Evans and I arrived here yesterday, and are just settling into the community quarters of our young hosts, The Afghan Peace Volunteers (APVs).

Last night, they told us about the jarring and frightening events that marked the past few months of

their lives in Kabul. They spoke about how they felt when bomb explosions awakened them on several mornings. And they described feeling almost shell-shocked when they discovered that thieves had ransacked their home. A notorious warlord issued threats against them when he condemned a human rights demonstration in which several of them were participants. In Kabul, a frenzied mob of about two thousand men watched and roared approval as a young woman, Faraghunda, accused of desecrating the Koran, was stoned to death. Our young friends quietly sort through their emotions in the face of incapable and often overwhelming violence.

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War and Scottish Schools



Should we as Christians teach our children to love or hate? Should we teach our children how to make peace or how to make war?

Jesus taught us that evil can only be overcome with good. That we must trust in God. That we overcome evil with love which requires forgiveness. But the world offers us the security of military force and so needs soldiers and works for war. Where better to build good PR and recruit soldiers than schools, the new target for army recruitment. As Brigadier David Allfrey said "Our new model is about raising awareness, and that takes a ten-year span. It starts with a seven-year-old boy seeing a parachutist at an air show and thinking, 'That looks great.' From then the army is trying to build interest by drip, drip, drip."

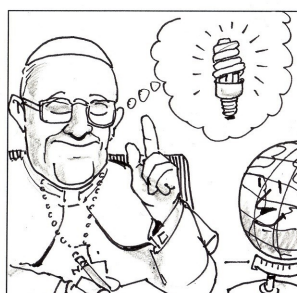
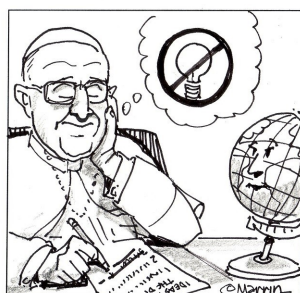
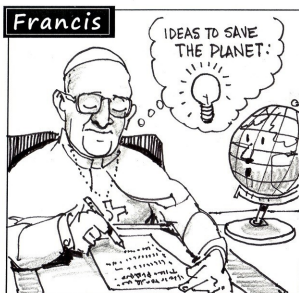
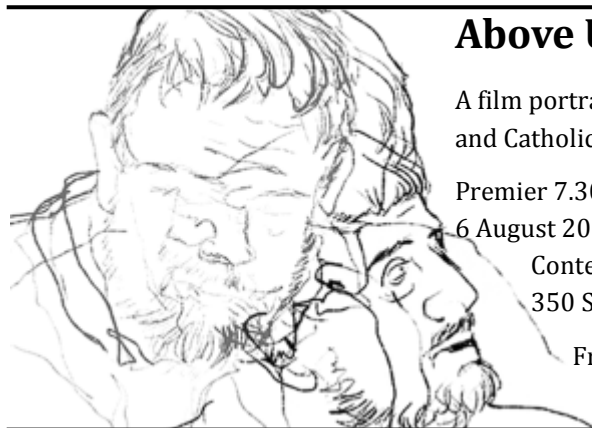
The military however must spin a lie, which talks to children of skills not of killing. The most recent Army publication *Your Guide To Army Life* is full of pictures of

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I thought about the bucolic setting from which we'd just come. In the UK, under brilliant blue skies over the Cudham Valley's woodlands, about three dozen people had joined an annual weeklong retreat for Catholic Workers who run various houses of hospitality in Europe. They're part of a movement dedicated to simple living, radical sharing, service, and, for many, nonviolent direct action on behalf of ending wars and injustices.

Maya Evans and I, co-coordinators, respectively, of Voices for Creative Nonviolence UK and US, were grateful guests of the gathering. On the last day, we donned tunics and scarves in preparation for travel to Afghanistan where we could look forward to being with kindred spirits, enjoying the dedicated enthusiasm of young people intent on creating, as Peter Maurin put it, "a world wherein it's easier to be good." Asked what we do while in Kabul, Maya and I would jokingly respond, "The dishes!" But essentially, our "work" is to listen to and learn from our hosts about their experiences living in a war zone and their efforts to create a better world.

The morning news was grim. Fighting between armed groups, across the country, has killed many dozens of people. We wrote to our friends to say we didn't want our presence, as westerners, to endanger them, they wrote back "please come."

The western presence in Afghanistan has already caused incalculable destruction, suffering and loss. A recently released Physicians for Social Responsibility report calculated that in Iraq and Afghanistan, since 2001, U.S. wars have killed 1.3 to 2 million civilians. ("Body Count, Casualty Figures after 10 Years of

the "War on Terror" Iraq Afghanistan Pakistan, March, 2015).

The authors of *Body Count* point out that, "at a time when U.S. and NATO casualties in the "wars on terror" have been, from an historical standpoint, relatively low, it has been politically important to downplay Allied forces' responsibility for the massive carnage and destruction in the region. It has been similarly essential for U.S. policymakers to hide from view the trillions of



Kathy Kelly at the Catholic Worker Euro Gathering

dollars expended since 2001, lest recognition of these costs contribute to war-weariness among the Western domestic populations. A politically useful option for U.S. political elites has been to attribute the on-going violence to internecine conflicts of various types, including historical religious animosities, as if the resurgence and brutality of such conflicts is unrelated to the destabilization caused by decades of outside military intervention."

"Understand how a base came to be," Anand Gopal writes in *No Good Men Among the Living*, "and you'll understand how cycles of war arose."

His book describes the cycles of revenge, exploitation and war that the U.S. /NATO war in Afghanistan has exacerbated. Successive generations learn the ways of war and become dependent on war for their

livelihood and survival. Anand Gopal says that in 2013, 60,000 – 80,000 armed private security employees were working for various Afghan "strongmen." The payroll for the Afghan armed forces working with the government included 135,000 army soldiers and 110,000 police. Tens of thousands of private militiamen were working for the Afghan government and also for the CIA and U.S. Special Forces. In all, 300,000 armed Afghan men were depending on U.S. patronage.

"If their funding is cut," according to Gopal, "commanders with men to feed and arm may privatize their activities by robbing homes and shaking down travelers." After having spent tens of billions of dollars on "security" in Afghanistan, the U.S. Special Inspector General on Afghanistan Report (SIGAR) now acknowledges

that Afghanistan is one of the most insecure and unstable countries in the world.

Our young friends have survived ravages of war, and each of them struggles with trauma. When we have gone with them to visit refugee camps outside of Kabul, several have told of their own experiences as children, running away when their villages were attacked or occupied. We learn from them about the sorrows their mothers endured when there wasn't enough food to feed the family or when the children nearly died from hypothermia. Several of our young friends experience flashbacks when they hear accounts in the news of family members killed by missiles or gunfire, as horrified loved ones watch the carnage. They shiver, recalling experiences they endured as children.

Yet they steadfastly cope with their own traumas by finding ways to

help people in Kabul whose circumstances are more perilous than their own, especially those who are among the 715,000 Afghans who are living in refugee camps. Children of the poorest families in Kabul will have better chances in life if they become literate. In spite of rising school enrollment figures, often cited by the U.S. military as evidence of improvements accomplished under U.S. occupation, the statistics from the CIA World Fact Book, last updated in March of 2015, reports that 17.6 % of females who are 15 or older have become literate; 31.7% of the total population over 15 years of age can read and write.

Recent U.S. visitors to the APV community in Kabul carried large bags of legos in their luggage. The legos are a big hit among children who come to an alternative school that the APVs have initiated for street kids in Kabul. Little children who are the main breadwinners for their families find no time to become literate or learn basic math when their normal day includes more than eight hours working in the streets of Kabul. Some are vendors, some polish shoes, and some carry scales so that people can weigh themselves. They work hard, but their earnings just barely feed their families and generally don't allow for necessities like warm clothing, in winter, or basic health care if they become ill.

After getting to know about 20 families whose children work in the streets, the APVs devised a plan through which each family receives, monthly, a sack of rice and a large container of oil. In exchange, their child attends informal classes at the APVs center and prepares to enroll in school. APV members be-

come social workers, organizers and teachers. I marvel at the atmosphere they've developed in the school. The children pour into the center's courtyard and immediately line up to wash their feet and hands

"Blood does not wash away blood."

and brush their teeth at a communal faucet. Then they scramble up the stairs to their brightly decorated classroom. As soon as their teachers assemble them for class, they settle down for lessons. Many of the thirty one street kids who were in the school last year learned to read and write fluently within nine months. Their teachers experiment with different methods, including individualized learning, in contrast to the government school systems where it's fairly common for seventh graders not to have gained literacy.

Our young friends have repeatedly asked us to tell parents in the United States not to send their children, as soldiers, to Afghanistan. "It's not safe for them here," says Ali. "They might be injured or killed. And by being here, they help continue the war."

Solemnly and clearly, they tell us that they've learned a major lesson in life: "Blood does not wash away blood."

Kathy Kelly

Join Us:

Round Table Discussions

On the 3rd Tuesday of every month we meet to discuss a topic and help us together to clarify our thoughts. We meet at 6:15. Please email us for details of where we'll be meeting.

Soup Kitchen

Help out at our weekly Soup Kitchen in Cadogan Street, Glasgow City Centre

Place of Welcome for Refugees: Saturdays 9am-1pm

Help teach English at Garnethill Multicultural Centre (Basement) 21 Rose Street Glasgow or just socialise.

Monthly Witness at Faslane Nuclear Submarine Base

Join us on the first Saturday of each month at 2:30pm outside the North Gate.

Website:

www.catholicworker.org.uk

Email: glw@catholicworker.org.uk

Twitter: @CatholicWorkerG

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In May, Catholic Workers and other peace activists took part in a symbolic representation of the deaths of migrants and refugees in the Mediterranean Sea outside the Home Office. Part of the solution to the crisis can not be to let our brothers and sisters drown.

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The UK is one of only nineteen countries worldwide, and the only EU member, that still re-cruits 16 year olds into its armed forces, (other nations include Iran and North Korea).

young people getting skilled. Not once does it mention the word killed. It doesn't mention those ex-soldiers we see at our soup kitchen on a Friday night. As David Gee says, "Many of the mental health conditions that soldiers experience reflect the conscientious, desperate rebellion of their own humanity against the base dehumanisation of war. We think of these as 'mental health problems' – and they are- but the primary injury is to the soul."

But the armed forces need their people so a concerted effort is made to reach children in schools. The latest information on school visits show that there were 1783 visits to 377 Scottish education institutions

living in the most economically deprived areas, short of jobs. The most visited school of all is also one of the poorest, Arbroath Academy with 31 visits by the armed forces with 27 of these visits being from the Army. The Navy seems to choose its targets from the opposite end of the social spectrum. When Royal Navy Lynx Helicopter from HMS Edinburgh chose 4 schools to visit it went to Montrose Academy, Perth



Statue of Duke of Wellington outside the Gallery of Modern Art in Royal Exchange Square, Glasgow,, erected in 1844 to mark the defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo.

Academy, Mearns Academy and Gordonstoun. The Army did not according to these statistics visit any Independent Schools in Scotland. However many already have Combined Cadet Force contingents

The youngest recruits – aged between 16 and 16 years, 3 months, are only allowed to join combat roles. These non-technical jobs typically involve very limited education and training that becomes virtually worthless to them upon leaving the army.

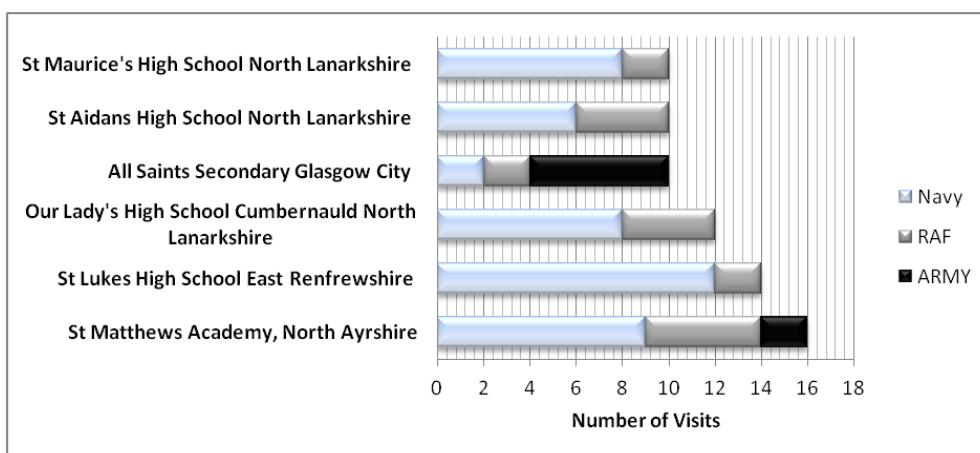
community and the military. Cardross Primary School gave their four new sports courts names with naval connections including Vanguard after getting a grant from the Armed Forces Covenant Community Grant Scheme of the Royal Navy. This grant is designed to promote closer ties with, or a greater understanding of, the military in the local community. HMS Vanguard is armed with Trident 2 D5 nuclear missiles and is perhaps the most deadly weapon created so far.

What to do

Ask the question at the next Parent Teacher Association meeting when the next Military visit will be, and oppose it. Suggest that a new course be introduced perhaps in tandem with Religious Education classes called 'Working for Peace'. Children could learn about why Jesus told Peter to put down his sword and about peacemakers like St Francis of Assisi, St Catherine of Siena, Mohandas Gandhi, Dorothy Day and Martin Luther King.

Ask the question, "What would the world be like if we took peace seriously and worked for it as hard as we work for war?"

Michael Sutherland



The above diagram shows the most visited Catholic schools with St Mathews Academy getting the most visits, 16 over the two years.

in a two year period. 83% of all state secondary schools were visited at least once during the two years.

The army seems to target the most vulnerable, those who are poor and

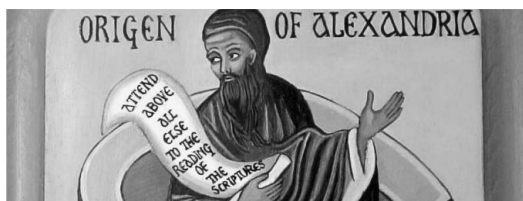
within the school which are supported by routine visits from regular forces service personnel.

Other ways to ingratiate the army with schools is by offering grants to build relationships between the

Is God's Love Inescapable?

I am currently reading "The Inescapable Love of God" by Dr. Thomas Talbot. Dr Talbot advocates a universalist position – believing all souls will eventually be brought into God's presence. Dr Talbot along with a growing number of other evangelical theologians, believe that Hell is a setting where souls are purified, and that God has eternity to help turn the hearts of sinners to him. I have become very interested in this topic and have been exploring various writers of different views about this ultimately most important question regarding our faith.

It is hard to write about such a huge topic in a limited word space, but I will try and synthesize a two thousand year old debate within a few paragraphs! The earliest followers of Christ included universalists. Saint Jerome, Origen, Clement and Gregory of Nyssa all at some point proclaimed a belief that at the ends of times, God's boundless love would take all souls to him. It was not an unusual belief in the early Church and indeed some scholars argue it was the prevailing belief of the early Church, particularly of the Eastern Church.



During the middle ages, Saint Augustine, and later Aquinas presented a far dimmer view – one that interpreted the biblical texts to mean that many, if not most, would be damned. Although these two

amazing thinkers of the Church also acknowledged God's boundless love, they seemed to limit that love to a small proportion of the population.

During the reformation and the years to follow, Luther and later Calvin very much followed in these footsteps. Calvin's followers came to a belief in strict election – that God created certain people to save, and others to be damned. The Catholic Church always believed in "some" form of election but insisted, contrary to Calvin, that God desires the saving of every soul on earth – and gives every person on earth the opportunity to be saved, though not all choose to accept salvation. The Catholic Church's theologians have had many debates about "how" this is done – for example Molina, during the 1500s, advocated a view that states God knew, from the beginning of time, who would or would not "freely" accept Him – and to those who would freely accept Him, He then put the grace in their hearts to do so. This is a view that seeks to combine both election and the free will of man. Karl Barth, probably the most famous reformed theologian of the 20th century, turned election on its head, saying that Jesus was elect to die for every single one of us and "nobody has the right to set limits on God's love".

The question of how many are saved can't be separated from "whether" those outside of the Christian faith can be saved at all. There have always been Christians and Catholics who exclude those of other faiths. But there have also always been those who advocate what I call the "CS Lewis inclusivist position". Indeed, some would say it was Saint Paul's position as well. This position argues that all people who are saved are

saved "through Christ", but HOW these people are saved, we can only speculate. Therefore God might save Muslims, Jews, and Hindus, because as Saint Paul proclaimed,



those who don't know the gospel can "follow the law as written in their heart". This view seems in line with the Second Vatican Council, as well as the Catechism of the Catholic Church, which shows great respect for the truths found in other religions, while still proclaiming the fullness of the truth is found within the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church claims that nobody is lost, except for those who completely and utterly refuse the love of God to the ends of their lives. Many people of other faiths love God as with passion and faithfulness, and they too might be in heaven at the ends of their days.

The diversity of belief in this topic seems endless! There are now prominent Protestant theologians who are not universalists, but believe in annihilation – they believe those who don't see God's glory when they die will cease to exist (not be tormented) and they show strong biblical bases for such belief. The great evangelical writer Clarke Pinnock fell into this category, and John Stott explored it. Rob Bell in his book Love Wins doesn't explicitly answer the ultimate question of who is saved, but shows how many Biblical texts point to diverse factors in salvation – most prominently how we treat the poor.

Throughout the Old Testament, love of God is shown by how the poor are treated time and again. Jesus speaks about how we treat the poor almost more than any other topic, and links salvation to this just as much as he links it with explicit faith.

So what is the answer to this age old question? It is in God's hands. However, I attest along with Von Balthassar that we as Christians can at least "hope" for the salvation of all – indeed we are taught we must pray for all souls, and do so regularly. If we believe that God IS love as the Gospel of John says, and if we believe God's will can never be thwarted – then we can at least hold out a hope that every individual is given the grace in this life to turn His heart to God - even if it is on his death bed. Or, as the French Roman Catholic priest Abbe Mugner once said "I believe in Hell because my faith tells me I must – but I don't believe there is anybody in it."

Tamara Horsburgh

"All is changed, changed utterly....."

Trident is a red line issue

Yeats' famous words about the Dublin Easter Rising of 1916 have a powerful resonance in Scotland today one hundred years later, and not just politically. Nobody really expected the SNP to annihilate the Labour party in Scotland, least of all the SNP itself. The 56 arrived at Westminster bewildered and excited like new kids in the High School. Their commitment to anti-austerity policies and saving the NHS from privatisation may well win support from some in the Labour Party, as will their hostility to

rights, benefit claimers, immigrants, and the poor generally. On these matters they may form a combined opposition.

There is one policy, however, which will definitely not be officially supported by the opposition Labour Party - and this issue is the most important of all. Morally, it renders all others comparatively insignificant. The SNP's principled rejection of Trident is a red line issue for the party - as it should be for everybody too.

The official posture of the Labour party is that they want to get rid of nuclear weapons, but support multilateral disarmament, not unilateral. Since multilateralism does not exist, and never has existed for the UK, this is real cop-out. No British weapon has ever been placed on the table at any disarmament conference - ever.

The phony distinction between (sensible, prudent) multilateralism and (reckless, dangerous) unilateralism has an ancient pedigree, and it has been repeated relentlessly for more than half a century now. It goes back to the days when Tory politicians employed it to attack CND. Now, like so many other Tory ideas, it has been adopted by the Labour Party.

This is the nuclear version of St Augustine's famous prayer: "Lord, let me be chaste - tomorrow". Actual disarmament is placed in the distant never-never land, a worthy but remote ambition, a pious platitude trotted out to exculpate the nuclear warlords. Morally, it is a contemptible evasion.

America and Russia have cut their arsenals substantially (they can each blow up the world only 5 times over now, not 15). But UK policy has always been to replace out-

moded weapons with newer, more effective ones. Thus, the obsolete free-fall W177 bombs were replaced by the superior Polaris missile; Polaris upgraded by Chevaline; Chevaline by Trident, and so on. We have taken no steps towards de-



escalation and elimination, but relentlessly modernized and improved.

Thus, Trident was described by the Defence Committee as "a significant enhancement of the UK's nuclear capability" (my emphasis). This in spite of the fact that UK has already agreed "to work in good faith for the elimination of nuclear weapons" in Article 6 of the NPT (Non-Proliferation Treaty) which we signed, way back in 1968.

The Labour Party's problem is that they are loyal unionist to the core, and are therefore obliged to uphold the political role Trident plays in the UK. Our nuclear fetish is the cornerstone of British identity. This is our national talisman, our Ark of the Covenant granted by divine favour to us, but forever denied to other lesser breeds. It is a symbol of the yearning for lost imperial status that lies at the heart of British nationalism. It is also the epitome of hubris.

Trident supporters accuse the SNP of operating a NIMBY policy, asking what difference does it make if it is moved a few hundred miles south. But as John Ainslie demonstrates in his expert report "Trident - No where to go" (which has been veri-

fied by UK and US defence experts) Trident cannot operate from anywhere else in the UK other than Faslane, because it depends on the supply system at Coulport. Here we have 200 H Bombs buried deep underground by the shores of Loch Long (the site was chosen to withstand a direct hit with a nuclear Bomb). You don't have mountains like that in England, so there is nowhere else they can operate from. Milford Haven and Devonport are not feasible because of safety considerations, being too near large population centres (Glasgow and Central Scotland apparently don't count).



There are only two options. One is to transfer Trident to America. This would demolish the myth of it being independent, and violate Article 1 of the NPT (Non-Proliferation Treaty), which prohibits the transfer of nuclear material between states. The other is to dismantle them, as we are pledged to do under Article VI of the NPT, which we agreed to do anyway back in 1968, half a century ago.

The cosmic joke is that an independent Scotland can render Trident harmless by doing absolutely nothing at all. If the subs are kept berthed at Faslane, they are not being deployed, and therefore cannot be used. We are then looking at a rather large waste disposal problem.

Scotland being the arsenal of all the UK's WMD is typical of our political role. We also have the biggest dump of conventional HE (high explosive) in Europe - 27,400 tons of it in Glen Douglas, near Loch Lomond. This is the NATO arsenal that stored the bombs dropped on Iraq. We have

the most polluted coastal waters in Europe, at the Holy Loch - an enduring legacy from our transatlantic cousins. We have the most radioactive coastal waters off Dundrennan in Dumfriesshire, where over 8000 DU (depleted uranium) shells were fired into the sea. We have Europe's largest live-firing range at Cape Wrath, the only place where NATO air-forces can drop 1,000lb bombs. This is the price we pay for being British.

The innate imperialism of the British state is most manifest in its nuclear idolatry and it is logical that all the Unionist parties support Trident.

We should meditate the prophetic words of Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's Minister of Propaganda. "Even if we lose, we will win, because our ideas will have penetrated the hearts of our enemies".

The Nazi doctrine of genocide is alive, and stronger than ever. Back in the bad old days, victims were loaded onto cattle trucks and trundled off to be burnt in ovens. Now, with the incredible advance in the science of industrialized killing, we can burn them as they watch TV, or sleep in bed, or play with their children. Then, we threw them into ovens, now we throw the ovens at them.

In 1982, in a statement the Scottish Bishops said: "We are convinced, however, that if it is immoral to use these weapons, it is immoral to threaten their use"

In 1997, addressing the United Nations, the Pope's envoy, Archbishop Renato Martino declared that "nuclear weapons are incompatible with the peace we seek for the 21st

Century. They cannot be justified. They deserve condemnation".

An International Conference on the Humanitarian impact of Nuclear Weapons took place recently in Vienna. In a message to participants, Pope Francis said "Nuclear deterrence and the threat of mutually assured destruction cannot be the basis for an ethics of fraternity and peaceful coexistence among peoples and states...Peace must be built on justice, socio-economic development, freedom, respect for fundamental human rights'. The Pope added "I am convinced that the desire for peace and fraternity planted deep in the human heart will bear fruit in concrete ways to ensure that

nuclear weapons are banned once and for all, to the benefit of our common home."

So there we have it. The Pope has said it: Ban the Bomb. We can do no less if we are to be faithful to the Gospel



Joseph Goebbels

The "sine qua non" of independence is control over war and peace, ie defence. Freed of British nuclear weapons, an independent Scotland could take a leading role in promoting an international treaty banning nuclear weapons. This is what over 105 nations of the world want - and the Pope.

Brian Quail

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Soup to die for

A reflection on our weekly soup kitchen

Every Friday for the past couple of years we have been running a soup kitchen al fresco in Cadogan Street. Ideally we would serve the food indoors but at the moment we don't have access to any premises.

We meet at the Place of Welcome next to St Aloysius church in Rose St about 8pm. We make up

sandwiches, normally ham, corned beef and cheese, and flasks of tea, coffee, hot chocolate and soup. About half past eight we drive down to the Hilton Hotel who very kindly give us 40+ hot meals. We provide the empty containers – they give us the meals – and not just to us but to different organisations 7 days a week – let's hear it for the Hilton. The food ranges from meat stew and vegetables to fillet steak. One week we were given GF and CC – see if you can guess what this stands for – answer below.

We then drive down to Cadogan St at about 9pm – and there are usually about 30 to 40 people waiting for us – this can drop if the weather is really bad. We hand out the hot food from the Hilton first and set up a table for the drinks. When all the hot meals are handed out – and occasionally some people don't get a

meal – we then hand out sandwiches and chocolate biscuits to go with the drinks. There are a hard core of about 20 people who turn up every week. Everyone has a story to tell – and you would need a heart of stone not to be moved. At times I feel that the soup kitchen is just applying an elastoplast to a wound which requires stitches – but I console myself with the thought that at least we are doing something – and that our actions are appreciated.



Soup to die for? – we have our own resident souperman Michael who makes a different potage every week – one week it's carrot and lentil the next it's lentil and carrot – variety is the spice of Michael's soup. I've listed below some of the comments about the soup from our delighted customers

"I've never tasted soup like this before" – Tosh McGurk

"The last time I tasted soup like this was at dinner school in primary" – Slide Rules O'Kay

And from the ladies

"My granny would swear by this soup" – Mary Hill

"I used to give soup like this to my ex" – big Bella Houston

By about twenty past nine all the food is gone. Latecomers have to content themselves with a drink.

We finish up at ten with a prayer normally The Magnificat – and also pray for anybody we have met that evening who was in desperate need of our prayers

When heading home I always find myself singing the Phil Ochs song,

Show me the whiskey stains on the floor

Show me the drunkard, as he stumbles out the door

And I'll show you young man

With so many reasons why

There but for fortune go you or I

And the food from the Hilton? – Guinea fowl and cous cous – a staple diet in the East End.

Tony Dimeo



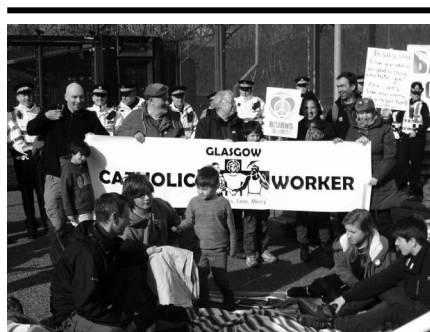
GMH

What would the world be,
once bereft

Of wet and of wildness?
Let them be left,

O let them be left, wildness
and wet;

Long live the weeds and
the wilderness yet.



With several hundred people at the blockade of Faslane in April



At the 2015 Catholic Worker Euro Gathering in Kent, England

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