

GLASGOW CATHOLIC WORKER

'Faith, Works, Love, Mercy'

Laudato Si': integral liberation for the poor and the planet

"Creation still retains the hope of being freed, like us, from its slavery to decadence, to enjoy the same freedom and glory as the children of God" (Romans 8: 21).

The first social encyclical of Pope Francis has been widely mis-reported as being "on climate change". While that issue does indeed receive accurate coverage and is mentioned some 14 times, the words 'poor' and 'poverty' are mentioned 73 times. As such, *Laudato Si'* is rooted firmly in the evolving tradition of Catholic social teaching. However, it goes beyond earlier formulations by responding comprehensively to contemporary challenges of environmental degradation, as revealed by the latest evi-



"LAUDATO SI', mi' Signore" – "Praise be to you, my Lord".

dence and scientific understanding. For Pope Francis, environmental degradation and poverty are two sides of the same coin.

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Preparing for one of the biggest arms fairs in the world -DSEi London September 2015

"Why are deadly weapons being sold to those who plan to inflict untold suffering on individuals and society? Sadly, the answer, as we all know, is simply for money: money that is drenched in blood, often innocent blood. In the face of this shameful and culpable silence, it is our duty to confront the problem and to stop the arms trade." Pope Francis

Refugees welcome here, not arms dealers

If like me you have been closely watching with horror the media coverage of the continuing movement of refugees from Syria, the middle east, and Africa, then you cannot have helped but notice the monumental shift in tone after the picture of the body of 3 year old Alan Kurid, washed up on the beach, went viral.

Volunteers and activists mobilised across Europe to welcome refugees, people even defied the threat of arrest to drive families across the borders into Austria and Germany. Around the UK 'pop-up' collection

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Tourists become Pilgrims in Argyll

The Cowal peninsula in southern Argyll is Highland country, but it is only a hop and a skip (a ninety-minute train and ferry ride) from Glasgow Central. And it is a wonderfully rich and diverse landscape. Whenever I go there I am refreshed by earth, sea and sky, and by the profusion of wildlife.



But that's not why I go there. I go because for just one year I have escaped from university life to work for the Church of Scotland in Cowal, to explore and promote this landscape as a destination for tourists or 'faith visitors'.

There are nine medieval church sites in Cowal, most of which are now occupied by more recent Church of Scotland kirks. But in many cases there are also survivals of medieval carvings, and even more ancient stones, some perhaps dating to the very earliest period of Christianity in Argyll – like the

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This is particularly evident in developing countries, of course, where large proportions of the population still live by subsistence agriculture and are thus especially vulnerable to the vagaries of climate, pollution of air, soil and water, soil erosion and depletion of water resources.

Non-human beings are even more vulnerable to such changes, and thus the dramatic losses of biodiversity in many parts of the world are not only

“... environmental pollution is now the single greatest cause of premature death in developing countries...”

tragic in themselves; like the miner's canary of old they indicate the degradation of the life-support systems on which humans also ultimately depend. Nor are city-dwellers immune: for instance, poor urban air quality is a major cause of premature death worldwide, as the most vulnerable pay the ultimate price for the burgeoning addiction of so many of us to private car travel.

But is a concern with the environment not merely a distraction from the traditional foci of Catholic social action, on economic injustice and the lack of access to resources and services that leave the poorest so vulnerable to disease and premature death? No. A recent report in the magazine of the Institution of Chemical Engineers highlighted that environmental pollution is now the single greatest cause of premature death in developing countries,



‘the inalienable human right of access to water’

accounting for 8.9 million mortalities annually. This compares with 1.5m due to HIV/AIDS, and 1m to each of malaria and tuberculosis. Globally, more than one death in seven is now due to environmental pollution. So there is no longer a legitimate commitment to the poor

that does not include a commitment to combat environmental pollution.

As he himself notes, Pope Francis is not the first pontiff to highlight these issues. As early as 1971, Pope Paul VI commented that “due to an ill-considered exploitation of nature, humanity runs the risk of destroying it and becoming in turn a

victim of this degradation”. It hardly need be stated that if everyone on the planet lived in accordance with the example of Jesus, St Francis, St Ignatius of

Loyola and many other saints, exploitation of nature would never reach the ill-considered levels that lead to degradation. Thus, at one level, a call to live as Jesus lived is in itself a call to a life more in keeping with a true “human ecology” (a term Pope Francis explores at length, but which actually entered the lexicon of Catholic social teaching from the lips of Pope St John Paul II). This echoes Dorothy Day's insight that “the greatest challenge of the day is: how to bring about a revolution of the heart, a revolution which has to start within each one of us?”

Yet Pope Francis is absolutely adamant that personal conversion is insufficient: the “problems must be addressed by community networks and not simply by the sum of individual good deeds”. Hence *Laudato Si'* is a call to “ecological conversion” - not just personal, but

social and political conversion too. Nor is Pope Francis simply appealing to practising Catholics: in a departure from most earlier encyclicals, *Laudato Si'* is addressed to “every person living on this planet”, seeking “dialogue with everyone so that together we can seek paths of



liberation”. Pope Francis acknowledges that “we Christians have at times incorrectly interpreted the Scriptures” and thus contributed to attitudes towards nature that range from apathy to “obstructionist attitudes, even on the part of believers, [ranging] from denial of the problem to indifference, nonchalant resignation or blind confidence in technical solutions”.

Specific solutions are not offered in *Laudato Si'*; rather, Pope Francis comments that “on many concrete questions, the Church has no reason to offer a definitive opinion; she knows that honest debate must be encouraged among experts, while respecting divergent views”. However, *Laudato Si'* is rich in principles, such as the inalienable human right of access to water, which Pope Francis emphasises is simply incompatible with privatisation of water services. Indeed, Pope Francis unequivocally states that “the market cannot guarantee integral human development and social inclusion. At the same time, we have “a sort of ‘superdevelopment’ of a wasteful and consumerist kind which forms an unacceptable contrast with the ongoing situations of dehumanizing deprivation”.

Countering these dehumanizing forces is not something Christians

can do alone; rather, we must make common cause with "other Churches and Christian communities – and other religions" as well as "civic groups" and all "those who tirelessly seek to resolve the tragic effects of environmental degradation on the lives of the world's poorest". Nevertheless, Pope Francis warns against the misanthropic attitudes of certain environmental extremists "who view men and women and all their interventions as no more than a threat, jeopardizing the global ecosystem, and [who] consequently [argue that] the presence of human beings on the planet should be reduced and all forms of intervention prohibited".

Laudato Si' is thus both a powerful call to personal conversion and a manifesto for profound social and political change. The richness of insights it offers deserve concerted study and urgent translation into practice. We will require much grace to live up to the challenges we are called to face. Seeking this grace, the encyclical closes with two prayers: one explicitly Christian, the other suitable for use with co-workers from other religions. This is a real innovation in a papal encyclical; its inclusion underlines the importance of seeking truly global solutions to global problems.

Paul L Younger

Soup in Europe- Kana

Kana is a Christian community of women and men who are concerned about the growing injustice and poverty in our society, especially about the plight of the homeless.

In 1991 we started to give out soup

on the streets once a week. Two years later, in June 1993, we were able to open the Kana soup kitchen in the Dortmund "Nordstadt", the northern part of the inner city with high unemployment and much poverty. In 2001 we moved to a bigger venue, where we now serve meals five times a week to sometimes more than 300 guests.

The soup kitchen has become the centre of our life as a community. Here we gather for work, meetings,



*Kana Soup Kitchen,
by Chuck Trapkus, 1996*

discussion, and worship. Over the years we have extended our activities - we also have a depot of sleeping bags and blankets for folks who are sleeping outside, we are initiating and joining actions for peace and justice causes, we are facilitating a meeting of soup kitchens and similar groups from the federal state of North-Rhine-Westphalia twice a year.

As a community we feel that we belong to a worldwide network of ecumenical communities concerned about peace, justice and the integrity of creation. The greatest influence on Kana comes from the Catholic Worker movement in the United States. Several of our founding members were part of the "Friends of the Catholic Worker in Germany", have lived at Worker houses and see Kana as their way to

put into practice the ideas of Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day in our context. We have participated in and hosted the annual European Catholic Worker Gathering. Several members of the movement from around the world were speakers at our regular round-table discussions, meant for "clarification of thought" in Peter Maurin's program of social change.

Unlike most Catholic Worker Houses of Hospitality we are not a live-in community. When we were looking for an open but reliable structure we learned from the Iona and Corrymeela Communities in Scotland and Northern Ireland, whose work for peace and reconciliation has inspired us. Like them the members of Kana commit

themselves for one year by promising to give part of their time and money to the community, share a common spirituality and work and pray for justice. These members form the core community, but there are many more people involved, such as about 70 volunteers helping in the soup kitchen and with other projects, and even more who support Kana by participating in our activities or through donations.

The guiding principle in our work in the soup kitchen is hospitality. We feel that our guests are at the heart of the Gospel, and our community statement starts: "We search for God, and we find him with the poor." That's why we try to make our soup kitchen a place where the poor are not only accepted, but welcome. They are our guests, whom

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points were inundated with donations of clothing, tents, and children's toys.

In the shadow of this out pouring of



'Carrying a child's coffin we processed through the streets'

boundless compassion the UK government was behaving shamefully.

Firstly, the numbers of refugees that Cameron said we would take was an embarrassingly small number: just 4,000 per year. Even when the number of people willing to take refugees into their own homes grew and grew (1,300 so far in Glasgow alone!), Cameron continued to throw money at building bigger fences and higher walls in Calais.

Secondly, that very weekend London was preparing to host one of the biggest arms fairs in the world; DSEi (Defence and Security Equipment International). With little media coverage you can be forgiven for having never even heard of this event which happens every two years and is paid for from tax payers' money! DSEi's own website boasts that in just one week 1,500 exhibitors, from 121 countries, will welcome over 32,000 arms dealers to purchase "tried and tested" guns, drones and missiles!

Past DSEi "Arms Fairs" have included military delegations from a range of abusive regimes; including

Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Libya, Egypt, United Arab Emirates, Afghanistan and Bahrain. Why, you might ask, is the UK government allowing this to take place? Isn't the correlation between countries torn apart by war and violence, and the number of refugees on the move across the world, obvious? Yes! But what continues to trump any human suffering is money. Let me give just one example. In the last five years the UK has sold arms to 19 out of the 23 countries



Our liturgy at the entrance to the arms fair

that the UN lists as violating international law by using child soldiers (of course the UK military also recruits children from the age of 16). In Somalia the UN recorded the recruitment of 1293 child soldiers. Yet Somalia has received 6.7 million pounds worth of arms from the UK since 2010.

So as followers of Jesus' how can we respond to the arms trade?

The Catholic Worker movement clearly states as one of its aims using non-violence to challenge the destruction caused by the arms trade. So on the 8th September 2015 I joined with a coalition of faith groups, under the banner "No Faith in War", to use prayer, liturgy, music, and non-violent direct action, to blockade the entrance to the DSEi Arms Fair and ensure ar-

moured vehicles were turned away.

With the London Catholic Workers I mourned for the victims of war. Carrying a child's coffin we processed through the streets and then held a liturgy at the entrance to Excel. Symbolic 'blood' was spilled across the road, and over 50 people of faith gathered around the coffin to ensure that for a few hours the arms dealers could not continue in their trade that leads to untold suffering and death. As Pope Francis recently said: "War is the mother of all poverty, a vast predator of lives and souls."

Instead of our UK government welcoming arms dealers, and using the police to protect them, let us continue to pray and protest for a disarming of hearts so that we may "beat our swords into ploughshares", and use our resources to welcome refugees not arms dealers.

For Jesus shows us a new way; "Love your enemy". In our witnessing to that Love, my we sow seeds of change in our own hearts, and in the hearts and minds of all those we meet, including those who profit from the arms trade.

Katrina Alton

To be or not to be - recognised

At the end of June this past spring I attended the two day conference on 'New Movements' in Glasgow. New Movements might be better called "lay movements" in the Catholic Church, as many are far from "new", but all are run largely by lay people. The Vision for this conference was 4 fold: To gather together new movements and communities in the

Catholic Church of Scotland; to be inspired and encouraged to be a witness to the action of the Holy Spirit in our lives; to be sent out to live our call to be renewal communities in the world; to continue to work together as lay movements for our Church.

The conference was inspiring, fun, motivating and full of the spirit! Groups such as Focolare, Communities of the Risen Christ, Charismatic Renewal, and the Catholic Men's Society were there, as well as many others. There was definitely a "party" feel in the air, with praying, singing, and the praising of our Lord at every turn.

When reflecting on what I learned, the same few themes keep coming back to me: 1) the question and wisdom of whether or not to be "formerly recognised" by the Church; and 2) the importance of sticking to one's charism. After some consideration I would argue

wider membership; a sense of stability and a recognition by the Church of the hard work and contributions of lay people. For groups that function well with a tighter structure, consolidation of resources and a need for national or world-wide organisation, "recognition" could indeed be a benefit.

But what are the possible

'The Holy Spirit is at work here. There is a clear plan of God in the unity of the Movements and in the witness to the world. Grazie a Dio.'
Maria Grazia Niola, Focolare

"downsides"? Depending on the charism of the group, a possible downside of recognition could be the requirement to have a constitution; the need for a clear hierarchy; the possible installing of voting rights, titles, positions, and bank accounts. Official recognition re-

well! Historically, the Catholic Worker has tried to stay away from committee meetings, minute taking, position giving, and hierarchy. Certainly there were times back in the early days when Dorothy Day would simply pray for the rent money to come in – and lo and behold, a kind benefactor would show up the next day with rent money in hand. The charism of the Catholic Worker involves prayer, clarification of thought, peaceful protest, feeding the poor, and healing suffering. Individual Catholic Worker houses and movements have done this in their own way and fashion, feeling little pressure to comply to the ways of other Houses, or have uniform structures. It would seem, given our history, that official Church recognition is not for us.

The beauty of the New Movements Conference was in pointing out how the charism of each group differed. For example, it was clear to see the Christ and Spirit focused prayer of the Community of the Risen Christ, and the beautiful ecumenical focus of Focolare. It is quite possible, for different groups with their different emphases, official Church recognition could help them follow the Spirit and move others to love God and their neighbours with all their heart. Therefore, I came away from the conference with no judgment that recognition is in any way "wrong" – but that it is down to the charism of the individual group, and how the Spirit leads. As one speaker pointed out – it is when we stick to our individual charisms and not try to branch out too wide, that we blossom and see the "fruits of the spirit" at work. Our prayer is that each group represented at this Conference continues to grow in their fruits of the Spirit, and that we all continue to work together.

Tamara Horsburgh



Archbishop Philip Tartaglia at the New Movements Conference

that these two points are intricately linked to each other.

The issue of recognition for New Movements seems to be a tricky one – "to be or not to be" recognized – that is the question! What are the benefits of recognition? Certainly, more concentrated Church support; possible financial help; credibility and the knowledge that one has official sanction, which could lead to

quires far more official structure. Basically, for groups like ours – the Catholic Workers – it would seem that official recognition could run counter to our very charism.

Why is that the case? The Holy Spirit has seemed to move the Catholic Worker in the direction of lack of structure, lack of rules, no national or international headquarters, and a sense that God will provide – even when we don't plan

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we serve with human respect and warmth. We are no social workers, who want to educate or help professionally, but normal people sharing the bare necessities of life with those who are excluded from participating in them.

We also try to speak out publicly for the poor, because we see the root causes of their destitution in the



Kana soup kitchen Dortmund, Germany

injust structures of our economic and state system. Over the years we have led several non-violent campaigns to protest injustices in our city and improve the plight of the poor and homeless here. Once a month we gather for a regular vigil: nowadays in front of the Deutsche Bank to protest against our unjust financial system, in former years in front of the main train station to protest against the eviction of so called "marginalized groups" from public squares and buildings. Each year we do an action to commemorate October 17th, the "World Day to Overcome Extreme Poverty".

The wedding at Cana (Kana) was the occasion when Jesus started his public actions. For us, this feast became a symbol of God's reign of justice, where all gather around the same table and have part of the affluence which is expressed by the changing of water into wine. We're glad to know that many people in different parts of the world share the same vision. We ask you to keep us in your prayers.

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simple cross-carved stone which has become the logo for the Faith in Cowal project.

There are also several wells where, in the past, men and women went to pray – not in a church but out in the sun, wind and rain. And there are the remains of ancient chapels on hillsides or loch-shores where people buried their dead and prayed for them.

The hope is that the local churches of Cowal will be able to use these resources to attract visitors – people who may be inspired by the relics of the ancient Christian past and by the early saints who are commemorated in old place-names like Kilmodan, Kilmun, Kilfinan, Kilbride – all containing Gaelic cill 'a church' and the name of its patron saint.

But this is not all about some ancient past. It is about harnessing the past to the living faith of modern communities. The earliest monuments are carvings of the Cross of Christ, who called on his disciples to take up their crosses and follow him. The silent stones still repeat that call to the modern visitor. It is a call that threatens to turn the tourist (someone who is essentially a consumer) into a pilgrim. And a pilgrim is something else altogether: someone who has taken a step outside their safety zone, who has become vulnerable by starting a journey in the steps of Christ. As St Jerome says, 'to follow the naked Christ, naked'.

The saints whose names appear in place-names also make their call.

Take St Munnu for example, the patron saint of Kilmun on the Holy Loch. In his medieval Life we read that he built a church at a place called Ath Kaien:

'One day he went out onto a high mountain to pray, and there he heard the shout of the men of Hell on the day on which the battle of Slemain was fought. Then he left that island saying, "I will not live in a place where I have heard the shout of the men of Hell."'

This was a world ruled by competing warlords, rulers who held power by their ability to distribute wealth to their fighting men. And they constantly led these warbands in raids on their neighbours to gather more wealth and so to increase their power.

But in this story Munnu's sanctity lay in his refusal of that world of violence, his withdrawal from 'the men of Hell', i.e. those who



White quartz stones in St Modan's Well represent the prayers of those who come here

live by violence. In this he was like many of the early saints of the Gaelic church, at odds with the dominant culture of the sword and the lust for power. It is per-

haps ironic, then, that Munnu's church at Kilmun (Gaelic cill Mhunnu) overlooks the waterways where the Trident nuclear submarine fleet is based.

We see a similar pattern in early Gaelic poetry. While secular poetry is largely written in praise of the heroic battle-might of the warrior aristocrat, monastic poetry takes that language and subverts it. In a poem written on the death of St Columba, for example, he 'won battles', but the battles he won were

'against gluttony', not against human enemies. He is called 'a fort', but not in terms of his strength so much as one offering shelter to the stranger. He is described, like any warrior of his time, as a destroyer, but what he destroyed was 'his body's desire ... he destroyed his meanness'.

In this poem (and there are others like it) the poet takes on the lan-



*An early cross at the ruined chapel of Ardtaraig,
Loch Striven*

guage of his heroic contemporaries, but turns it upside-down. The powerlessness of Christ is greater than the power of the warrior-king.

The monastic life was in itself meant to be a rejection of violence and the quest for power. And so early Gaelic monasticism became the birth-place of extraordinary new social and political thought. The ninth abbot of Iona, Adomnán (died 704 AD), wrote and promulgated a law which he called The Law of the Innocents. It was designed to protect non-combatants from violence – mostly women, but also children and clergy, those who did not bear arms.

Other saints celebrated in Gaelic tradition included people like Moling, whose intimacy with lepers echoed that of Christ, so that the most despised and excluded people were dramatically embraced. Sto-

ries about St Brigit celebrated her generosity to the poor and the hungry. Early monastic legal collections demanded that all Christians should offer hospitality to one or two needy people, but a bishop, 'if he does not receive everyone, is inhuman' – perhaps reminding us of Pope Francis's recent call on every parish and religious in Europe to welcome a Syrian refugee family.

A kind of re-understanding of ourselves comes when we listen to the traditions about these holy men and women. Perhaps even walking through this landscape will help. To leave behind the structures we normally inhabit, even for a few days, can help us gain the distance we need to reflect, to think critically about our own lives, our priorities. And to celebrate beauty in our direct encounter with it, not as consumers but as fellow-creatures, can be quite liberating.

Gilbert Márkus

If you would like to explore Cowal in this way, to find yourself as a pilgrim, have a look at www.faithincowal.org. This website is a growing body of pages about places and saints, carved stones, ecology, and modern concerns. There's also plenty of information for visitors about transport and accommodation. If you click on 'subscribe' you will get occasional bits of news and reflections on Cowal and its pilgrimage landscape. And perhaps we'll meet at a holy well or a ruined chapel on the hillside one day.

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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.

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If not you - who?

Many long years ago in Easter 1982 the Scottish Catholic Bishops issued a statement in which they condemned Trident "We are convinced, however, that if it is immoral to use these weapons, it is immoral to threaten their use. We are brothers and sisters and the earth is our common inheritance; we have a responsibility to share this world with everyone else, to pass it on uncontaminated, unpillaged, not despoiled, to future generation. We must totally reject any "arms race", any policy of revengeful slaughter, all greed and self-preservation at the cost of others".

So what has happened since then? Have Catholics risen up and demanded that these hellish Weapons of Mass Destruction be dismantled and destroyed? Have they renounced all cooperation with their deployment? Do they lead the campaign to stop Trident? Well, actually no. It's pretty much business as usual, I'm afraid. It's still a case of Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition, Onwards Christian Soldiers, My country right or wrong.

Our real hymn should be "Merrily we roll along, roll along".

Opposition to Trident comes from some political communities - the SNP, the Greens and the Socialists, the Yes supporters, and from secular peace groups. These are speaking truth to power, and - in this case at least - undeniably are doing God's work. Not us, the Catholic Community. The Church has, by and large, distanced itself from these groups. We are not providing the moral leadership. We leave it to others to give Christian witness, by campaigning and by peaceful non-violent direct action, in the tradition

of Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and the Berrigan brothers in America.

This is shameful, and wrong. If Catholics do not think that they should play a leading role in promoting peace, I must ask: who do they think should be?

At the entrance to Faslane Peace Camp there hangs a banner which reads:

"If not you - who?

If not here - where?

If not now - when? - which says it all.

Opposition to Trident must be firmly based on the moral argument, which is unanswerable. We must not fall into the trap of adopting the "We don't need nuclear weapons now because the Cold War is over" sort of approach. This implies that we did need them then, and that the Bishops were wrong and my many long years of campaigning were a mistake. And if we did need them then, what is to stop the situation arising in the future when we might once again "need" nuclear weapons? This type of argument completely evades the moral dimension, which lies at the very heart of a Christian's rejection of nuclearism. The theologian Walter Stein put it most clearly:

Nuclear deterrence is inherently wicked. This verdict is independent of the issue of human survival, though the possibility of extinction adds a literally apocalyptic dimension to this verdict. It is similarly independent of any question of mere risk-taking, though the risks involved (from multi-million catastrophe to extinction) proportionately heighten the wickedness. Most

immediately, this wickedness lies simply in the largely indiscriminate nature of nuclear warfare, and the impossibility of dissociating deterrence from willingness to engage in nuclear 'war' if deterrence breaks down. A conditional intention to massacre and deform innocent lives (on a wholly uncontrollable scale,

both of place and time) is no less decisively wicked for being thus conditional.

Murderous threats are murderous threats; whatever their ultimate consequences, they already heinously devastate

human limits. These threats are already atrocities. There is no hope for humanity that does not start with this recognition. The risks we have to accept are the risks we cannot avoid without already surrendering our humanity.

We are at a "kairos" moment. A momentous time of real and significant choice. Just as in the ancient Church a person could not go to the temple and offer sacrifice to Jupiter or Caesar, then turn up in the Christian Church and be welcomed. He had to choose; Christ or Caesar. So now we have a stark choice; Christ or the Bomb.

As a Christian, I am convinced that is long since time for this issue to be given "status confessionis", that is, an issue from which there is no derogation.

If you support Trident, you cannot call yourself a Catholic. End of.

Brian Quail

