

Yahad

That peace
may come
to our
beloved
land



**“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is
for brethren to dwell together in unity.”
(Ps 133,1)**

YAHAD: This term in Hebrew is used in the Bible most often as an adverb in the sense of “together” and “with each other”. It also conveys the sense of unitedness and community.

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The main aim of the Justice and Peace Commission, within the Archdiocese of Malta, is to promote Catholic Social Teaching. It also strives to work for a society in which the human dignity and the human rights of all – and especially those of the most vulnerable - are respected, and a culture of waste is replaced by a culture of encounter which helps us recognize each other as brothers and sisters.

For more information visit jp.church.mt

Foreword

Daniel Darmanin
President of the Justice
and Peace Commission

On the first of January, the Church annually celebrates the World Day of Peace. Fresh from the Christmas message of the angels bringing 'Peace on earth to people of goodwill', the Church extends its vision of peace for the whole world.

Locally, the Justice & Peace Commission seeks to find ways in which this message of peace can be lived daily in our communities. Indeed, throughout the year there are plenty of occasions during which we observe a serious lack of peace on this little island nation. Whether due to partisan politics, religious creed, support to a particular band club or football team, or because of personal issues, divisions abound. Moreover, this year a general election is expected, and as always, partisan polarisation, ever-present in our society, will intensify.

The Commission believes that it is therefore opportune that at the beginning of this year, before our society gets caught up in the election frenzy, we stop for a moment and reflect on how we can act constructively to build peace within our nation. Words such as national unity and national reconciliation have become common in our leaders' speeches. Indeed the need for both is real and urgent. However, this national unity cannot be brought about by wishful thinking or stakeholder meetings alone. In order for our society to be able to flourish, a concerted effort needs to be made on a national scale to face all that is not good within our society. We need to recognize that each one of us has in one way or another contributed to the breaking down of peace in our society, and that each one of us is equally responsible for rebuilding this peace.

The Justice & Peace Commission through this document offers a reflection on what has been, where we are, and where we want to go. This document is being offered in the hope that it serves as an aid for our nation on this path of national growth and reconciliation, so that the divisions between us are bridged, the scars are healed, and we truly become one. – Yahad!

Introduction

Malta's recent history has, in more ways than one, been a success story. According to countless criteria which are traditionally used to measure the development of a country, our society and economy has made the most of all the opportunities which were presented to it. This is the result of the efforts of all stakeholders, policymakers and citizens who in various ways have strived to improve our standard of living. When it comes to GDP growth, for example, pre-covid, Malta experienced unprecedented growth. This economic growth in turn, allowed the Government to expand its portfolio of social services and economic aid to various categories of people including pensioners, working parents as well as investing in the general infrastructure of the country. The number of people in employment has also shot up, with Malta having consistently one of the lowest unemployment levels in the European Union.

“The names and memory of Lassana, Daphne and Miriam will be our guides, companions and inspiration as we reflect on those broken relationships which need to be renewed and reconciled.”

responsibility as a Church to be “the ‘eyes that see’ and “ears that hear” the cries emerging from the peripheries. There, we can be attentive and responsive to all the wounded among us—no matter how hidden their suffering might be.”¹

And yet, this success is not without a price which had to be paid, and this price is indeed high. This paper starts by a meditation on the Polyptych of Victims - a symbol of those who paid the highest price; a depiction of those who, in more ways than one, are the victims of our success. It is a meditation which rises from our

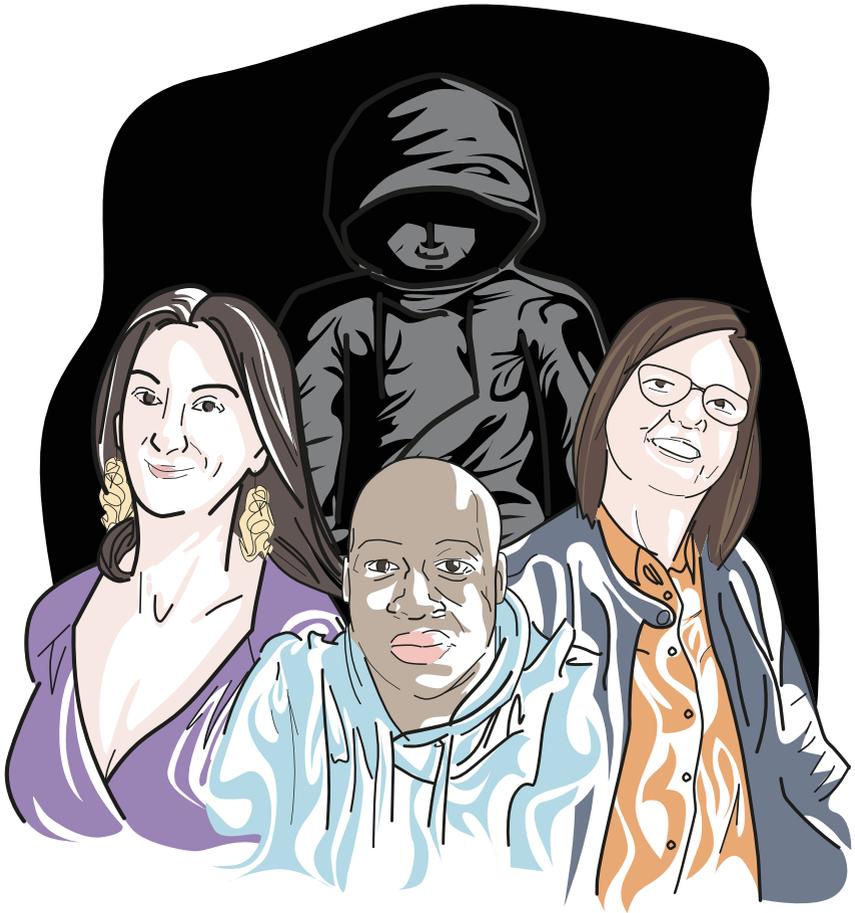
¹ ARCHDIOCESE OF MALTA, *One Church, One Journey. A process of ecclesial renewal*, 44.

The names and memory of Lassana, Daphne and Miriam will be our guides, companions and inspiration as we reflect on those broken relationships which need to be renewed and reconciled. We will also be guided by the cry of the Faceless Victim, who represents all those who are trying their best to live a virtuous life in circumstances which, at times, make it much easier to go with the flow and engage in behaviours and practices which create even more victims of injustice. We will reflect on the kind of society we wish to live in, a society which, unwilling to “leave a part of itself on the fringes”², refocuses on people and their quality of life, beginning from those at the margins of society. In this process, let us however keep in mind that these victims are not just “symbols” of something much greater than them. They are first and foremost people, loved and cherished by friends and family whose life will forever be marked by grief and loss, and to whose memory this document is also dedicated.

This document is divided into three sections. In the first section we will focus on these instances when these wounds of society were uncovered. In the second section, inspired by the rich tradition of Catholic Social Teaching, we will reflect on a number of key virtues, which can serve as our guideposts as we embark on this process of healing, reconciliation and renewal. In the third and final section, all people of good will, Christians and not, will be invited to pledge their commitment towards a society in which the “culture of waste” makes way for a “culture of encounter”. In fact, in the unforgettable words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer “we are not to simply bandage the wounds of victims beneath the wheels of injustice, we are to drive a spoke into the wheel itself”³.

² POPE FRANCIS, *Fratelli Tutti*, 235.

³ DIETRICH BONHOEFFER, *No Rusty Words. Letters, Lectures and Notes 1928-1936*, Harper and Row, 1965, 225.



A Polyptych of Victims



Daphne

16.10.2017

On the 16th of October, 2017, a car-bomb ripped through a car in Bidnija and took the life of Malta's foremost investigative journalist: Daphne Caruana Galizia. In more ways than one, we can say that this was truly a watershed moment when it comes to Malta's modern political history. There is a clear before and after.

Much has been said and written about the social and political implications of this gruesome execution. Here we will limit ourselves to three considerations which emerge from the report issued at the conclusion of a public inquiry into the circumstances of Daphne Caruana Galizia's murder.

It is often said that the only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men and women to do nothing. One thing which emerges with shocking clarity in the Daphne Report is the series of extremely serious "sins of omission" committed by those who had the responsibility not only to protect Daphne but also to prevent the creation of a de facto "state of impunity" which led those behind the execution to literally think they could get away with murder. This atmosphere of impunity was generated from the "highest levels in the heart of the administration within the Office of the Prime Minister that like an octopus spread to other entities, such as regulatory institutions and the police, leading to the collapse of the rule of law"⁴.

Whether through wilful inaction or gross incompetence, the result was that Daphne was left alone, vulnerable and exposed to a degree which ultimately led to her murder.

⁴ BORD TA' INKJESTA – DAPHNE CARUANA GALIZIA, 388.



In the light of this wound which will forever stain our collective psyche, we might want to ask ourselves if we, common citizens, should do more to raise our collective voices in defence of what is right in order to stand shoulder to shoulder with those who take the risk of standing up to be counted, often at great personal risk. What kind of fear keeps us from acting in solidarity with fellow citizens who bravely fight for justice in our midst? Of course, we might prefer to “play it safe” and delegate to others the role of fighting for a better society. In that way, we will never be wrong, we can never fail and we will never be singled out for criticism⁵. Daphne, in her own inimitable and often controversial way, never shirked away from this thankless task.

“What kind of fear keeps us from acting in solidarity with fellow citizens who bravely fight for justice in our midst?”

⁵ “Because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth”; REV 3, 16.

And for this, she paid the ultimate price. Following her example, maybe we should take more seriously the invitation which comes directly from these words pronounced by President Theodore Roosevelt:

“It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.”⁶

The second point we wish to highlight is the constant campaign of demonization to which Daphne was subjected with increasing virulence and force. This campaign of hatred was indeed shocking, not only in its intensity but also in view of the fact that part of these vicious attacks seemed to have had the backing of the State. No one, least of all journalists, should ever be subjected to this level of hateful attacks. How can we ever hope of building a peaceful and just society if our level of public discourse very often descends into pitiful and partisan attacks? One of the basic tenets of a truly democratic society is the ability to dialogue. Sadly, we live in an increasingly polarized and atomized society, in which members of particular groups isolate themselves in echo-chambers in which only like-minded people are welcome. As a society, we urgently need to rediscover the art of respectful dialogue⁷. We can move forward and strive for the common good only if we are able to listen to others instead of destroying them⁸.

⁶ THEODORE ROOSEVELT, *Speech given April 23, 1910*.

⁷ JUSTICE AND PEACE COMMISSION, *Called to work for justice and peace. Statement by the Justice and Peace Commission one month from the murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia*, 3.

⁸ Cf. *Seeing the truth beyond our inconsistencies*, <https://jp.church.mt/seeing-the-truth-beyond-our-inconsistencies/> (accessed 13/10/2021)

Lastly, the inquiry report highlights with sobering clarity, the inappropriate closeness between business people and politicians. All those who read her articles know how highly critical Daphne was of this intimacy

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between big business and government. This proximity and cosy relationship was a determining factor behind a number of large-scale projects which ended up under the scrutiny of the auditor general and magisterial inquiries. Many of these reports and inquiries found significant irregularities. Big business seized the opportunity to

forge ahead with their projects with minimal administrative oversight, and through the “manipulation” of top officials.

The Daphne inquiry report also underlined the duty of public administration to safeguard the rule of law. The lust for money and profits by businessmen or public officials can never be allowed to destroy any semblance of good governance. Unfortunately, the report describes a system whereby instead of our elected officials being at the service of the common good – “where the “whole” (the wellbeing of the polis that serves all) is indeed greater than the sum of parts (or our individual interests)”⁹ - they were serving the interests of a select powerful few. We are here miles away from the principle of good governance according to which elected public officials are elected to “administer” the public goods in the best interest of the common good, and most especially the interest of the most vulnerable. In this instance, the wealth and power associated with the role were used to further the private interests of a restricted group of powerful and wealthy people.

In its own way, the pre-electoral barrage of phone calls asking people if they need anything, is another sign of the long road ahead, when it

⁹ ARCHDIOCESE OF MALTA, *One Church, One Journey. A process of ecclesial renewal*, 58.

comes to good governance. Daphne fought tooth and nail for a country in which ministers and MPs exercised their delegated authority with honesty, transparency and a spirit of service, instead of behaving like some sort of feudal lord who hands out public goods as “favours”. The incestuous marriage of convenience between the two most powerful centres of power in the country represented by businessmen and politicians, led to the near-creation of a Mafia state¹⁰. It took the death of Daphne for many of us to realize to what extent the ideal of good governance and public service had been corrupted and perverted.

¹⁰ Cf. BORD TA' INKJESTA – DAPHNE CARUANA GALIZIA, 388.



Lassana

06.04.2019

On the 6th of April 2019, Lassana Cisse Souleymane, a 42-year-old migrant worker from the Ivory Coast, was killed in a drive-by shooting in Hal Far, in what is believed to be Malta's first racially-motivated murder. Two other African migrants were also injured in the attack. From what we know so far, it seems as if Lassana was killed for no other reason than that he "looked different". In May 2019, the Armed Forces of Malta soldiers Francesco Fenech and Lorin Scicluna were charged with the murder of Cisse and attempted murder of the two others, along with the attempted murder of another migrant in a hit and run attack the previous February. At the time of writing, the accused have pled not guilty and the trial is still ongoing. Lassana was the father of three children, and himself an only child.

Lassana represents all victims of the prejudice and hate of those who are unwilling to respect the dignity of others in their unique otherness. His name stands beside the names – often unknown – of all those people who have died in the sea around us and who are victims of local and European policies which makes it practically impossible for asylum-seekers to reach Europe in a safe and legal manner, even if that means that thousands will die and thousands other will be sent back to Libya to face conditions which have been repeatedly been flagged as extremely dire. Lassana is also the face of all those who, on a daily basis, are the victims of micro-aggressions in the form of subtle, intentional/unintentional interactions that communicate bias towards other people because of differences in the colour of their skin or race. Online as well as offline, our language often reflects an alarming hostility and violence towards people who

“Online as well as offline, our language often reflects an alarming hostility and violence towards people who are “different” from us.”

are “different” from us¹¹. It is only in recent weeks that police action is finally being taken against those who spread racial hate from the comfort of their screens¹². Moreover, racial discrimination is not limited to the beliefs and actions of individuals. It is also systemic and institution-alised¹³. For example, whilst the yet unpublished internal inquiry report which followed Lassana’s murder found no evidence of racism in the Armed Forces, an independent inquiry would have been a much more adequate response to the seriousness of the situation.



¹¹ Cf. *Footage emerges of black man getting beaten, thrown in sea in Gozo*, <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/footage-emerges-of-black-man-getting-beaten-thrown-in-sea-in-gozo.888865> (accessed 16/09/2021); *Asylum seeker warns of danger in Marsa street after assault*, <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/asylum-seeker-warns-of-danger-in-marsa-street-after-assault.899852> (accessed 16/09/2021).

¹² Cf. *Another 20 people to be charged with online hate speech*, <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/another-20-people-to-be-charged-with-online-hate-speech.898453> (accessed 16/09/2021).

¹³ “It is clear even to the casual observer, that racial, ethnic and religious minorities in Malta face structural discrimination in the areas of housing, employment, in policing and in the justice system.”; “Racial and ethnic minorities are subjected to systemic racism when coming into contact with law enforcement and the criminal justice system”; PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIAT FOR EQUALITY AND REFORMS, *Towards a National Action Plan against Racism and Xenophobia*, 8; 15.



Lassana, like many other migrants, was contributing to the economic success of this country. It is a fact that we are often ready to “welcome” migrants, as long as we need them to sustain our economic activity, only to be discarded when injured and not needed. We certainly won’t allow them to call Malta their home. This was evident during the Covid crises when policymakers made it abundantly clear that, given the downturn in the economy, all migrants should be sent back to their country of origin, since they were no longer “needed”¹⁴. Only for the same policymakers to raise the alarm about the lack of “workers” as soon as the economy re-opened in 2021¹⁵. Numerous studies have shown how our economic success-story depends in part on the presence of migrants and locals who in recognition for their hard work are paid the minimum wage or less.

¹⁴ Cf. *Foreigners who lose jobs will ‘go back to their country’* – minister, <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/governments-priority-is-to-safeguard-jobs-of-maltese-nationals.778874> (accessed 16/09/2021).

¹⁵ Cf. *Restaurant and hotel sectors facing employment crises*, <https://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2021-06-12/local-news/Restaurant-and-hotel-sectors-facing-employment-crisis-6736234274> (accessed 16/09/2021)

Given that this wage is often not enough for a decent living¹⁶, many are those who end up living in sub-standard housing which once again does not respect the dignity of human beings and the right to family life¹⁷.

Our aim here is certainly not that of analysing in detail policies and issues which are obviously extremely complex and multifaceted. It is rather that of raising a number of uncomfortable questions about the norms and values which govern our living-together, in a bid to uncover the fault lines of the current system which make it unsustainable in the long term, both from a moral and economic point of view. We have to ask ourselves, for example, if we're comfortable granting citizenship to people with no genuine link to Malta as long as they are ready to pay for it, whilst making it practically impossible for people who have been living here in Malta for years to become Maltese citizens. When it comes to asylum seekers, we recognize that European countries can and should do more when it comes to offering concrete help to border countries such as Malta. On the other hand, the constant use and misuse of the "full up" argument can never exonerate us from our legal and moral responsibility in responding to calls from boats in distress. If the true measure of a society is how we treat its weakest members, all the above should represent a wake-up call which can no longer leave us indifferent.

¹⁶ Cf. CARITAS MALTA, *A Minimum Essential Budget for a Decent living 2020*.

¹⁷ Cf. *Watch: Migrants found living 'inhumanely' in Cow stalls in Qormi*, <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/enforcement-team-hones-in-on-farmhouse-in-qormi.686704> (accessed 16/09/2021).



Miriam

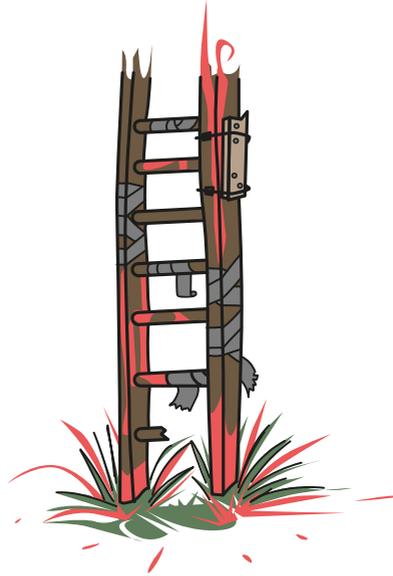
02.03.2020

On the 2nd of March 2020, Miriam Pace was dug out from under the rubble of her own house. What was supposed to be a place of safety and comfort became a tomb. Various court proceedings are still ongoing to determine the culpability of the persons involved. But what is certain is that, in the words of Archbishop Scicluna during her funeral, Miriam was a victim of injustice¹⁸. All too often, regulations and policies which are supposed to be in place to protect people as well as the natural environment, are either not properly enforced or interpreted in a way which always favours “economic development”. Citizens are expected to be on a 24 hour watch just in case a new “development” or policy needs to be objected to. This gives rise to a situation where we have an unlevel playing field between those who want to safeguard and promote a form of development which puts at its centre the quality of life of people and those who plan the latest mega-development or takeover of public land for purely economic reasons. Moreover, the latter not only have more access to politicians and policymakers but infinitely greater resources at their disposal.

It is now widely recognized – even from within the sector itself¹⁹ - that when it comes to planning and construction something is seriously wrong. At stake are the lives not only of those who live in terror every time a construction site pops up next to their homes. But also, the fate of countless construction workers, who, because of negligence and poor enforcement, have in recent years suffered serious injuries or lost their lives. It is also an open secret that this sector is heavily dependent on migrant workers, many of whom are employed irregularly and heavily exploited. After all, is no coincidence that many of those injured or killed

¹⁸ Cf. *‘Miriam is a victim of injustice’ – Archbishop Scicluna*, <https://newsbook.com.mt/en/photos-people-gather-to-celebrate-the-life-of-miriam-pace/> (accessed 16/09/2021).

¹⁹ Cf. *Good Governance absent from proposed construction reform – architects*, <https://newsbook.com.mt/en/good-governance-absent-from-proposed-construction-reform-architects/> (accessed 16/09/2021).



in recent years were migrants. In this sense, Lamin Jaiteh is but one of many²⁰.

Whilst we acknowledge that construction is an inherently hazardous job, more can surely be done to ensure that all safety procedures are in place and properly followed. A report drafted after the tragedy that claimed the life of Miriam Pace that in a bid to cut time and costs, certain practices going on in the construction centre, coupled with a chronic lack of proper enforcement, are “nothing short of playing Russian Roulette with the lives of third parties”²¹.

Finally, it is also important to recognize that, on a wider scale, we all end up suffering the consequences of poor planning decisions based on a narrow and myopic understanding of development. When it comes to

²⁰ Cf. *Migrant worker allegedly dumped on roadside after building site fall*, <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/migrant-worker-allegedly-dumped-on-roadside-after-building-site-fall.903872> (accessed 13/10/2021).

²¹ *Playing with lives – dangerous building and excavation practices*, <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/playing-with-lives-dangerous-building-and-excavation-practices.846720> (accessed 15/10/2021).

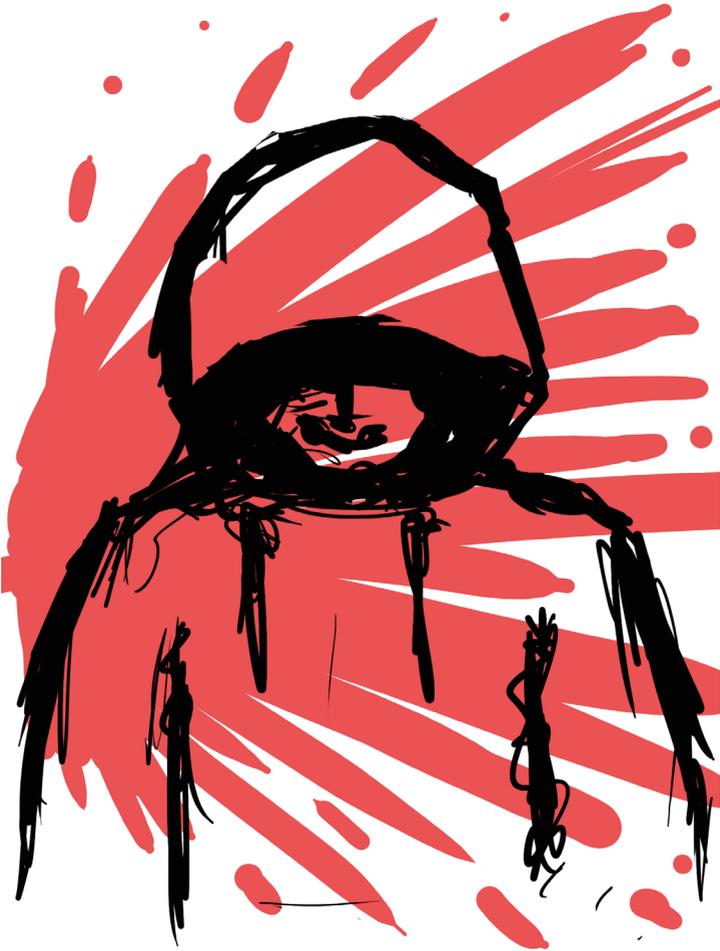
aesthetics for example “we are living in an environment where ugliness burdens the soul and makes the ordinariness of daily life that much more distressing”²². A lack of green open spaces – preferably untouched from development and not artificially created as some sort of compensation for destroying the natural environment – seriously affects our mental health. In the words of Pope Francis, it’s a delusion to think that we can stay healthy in a world that is sick²³. And God forbid we reach a state where public green spaces become so limited and public foreshore encroachment becomes so widespread that only those with considerable economic means will be able to continue enjoying – in Malta or abroad – the healing and life-giving relationship with nature.

“It’s a delusion to think that we can stay healthy in a world that is sick.”



²² ARCHDIOCESE OF MALTA, *One Church, One Journey. A process of ecclesial renewal*, 59.

²³ Cf. POPE FRANCIS, *Extraordinary Moment of Prayer presided over by Pope*, March 2020.



Faceless Victim

EVERY DAY

After listening in some detail to the triptych of voices which is guiding us in our reflection, we will now dedicate some space to the voice of a fourth victim: the Faceless Victim. This victim is faceless not because he/she doesn't exist. He/she is faceless because the faceless victim represents a multitude of victims with a plurality of backgrounds and stories. There is no date for this tragedy. It is a tragedy that doesn't happen at a precise moment in time, but unfolds over time with every action or inaction.

We remember here the tax-paying citizen. Not one day passes by without news stories testifying to the widespread misuse of public funds and the proliferation of sophisticated tax-avoiding and tax-evasion techniques. The principle of solidarity which gels a society together and without which all slogans about “being in this together” are null and vacuous, is not lived primarily by giving donations to worthy causes. When not everyone gives his/her due by contributing to the financing of public services, education, health etc according to his/her means, a situation of gross economic injustice is created and solidarity becomes an empty buzzword.

We remember those who do not offer or ask for “pjaçiri” in order to get a job or a service which is theirs by right. Deciding not to be part of this corrupt system means that others – possibly less deserving – will jump the queue, perpetuating even more the need of asking for favours in order to receive what you rightfully deserve or are entitled to. Those who stand firm against this temptation are labelled as stupid and naïve.

We remember those who are not well-connected. In a society like ours, many things get done only by speaking to the right people. When trying to navigate public services, those at the margins of society often face the double barrier or triple barrier of language, prejudice and the

“We remember those who are not well-connected.”

lack of personal connections.

We remember all workers who, in the name of productivity and economic growth, often are obliged to work for very long hours, sometimes with no right to disconnect. Caught up in this economic rat race in which a full-time salary is often not enough to pay off loans and keep up with the cost of living, a part-time job often becomes a necessity, more than a choice. This frenetic lifestyle takes its toll not only on the individual involved but inevitably ends up affecting all our relationships, including the quality-time which can realistically be dedicated to other family members. We all end up with “always so ‘little time’ for what is truly meaningful”²⁴.

We remember those thousands of children who are at risk of poverty and social exclusion and who risk getting caught in an intergenerational poverty trap²⁵. Although, over the years, the welfare system in Malta has been strengthened in numerous ways, more needs to be done to address the root causes of poverty and ensure that all children, whatever their background, are given the necessary tools and possibilities to reach their full potential.

We remember all those elderly people who feel marginalized and lonely. In a society which values productivity in a pre-eminent way, many are those who feel that in their old age, they have nothing left to contribute. Moreover, with many caught up in a frantic pace of life, we might easily forget that “grandparents and the elderly are not leftovers from life, scraps to be discarded. They are a precious source of nourishment”²⁶.

We remember all those women who are victims of hatred, violence and discrimination, just for being women²⁷. Whether in the street, within families or on the workplace, for far too long Maltese society has tolerated

²⁴ ARCHDIOCESE OF MALTA, *One Church, One Journey. A process of ecclesial renewal*, 59.

²⁵Last year, 22.6% of Maltese minors were at risk of poverty or social exclusion – Eurostat, <https://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2021-10-28/local-news/Last-year-22-6-of-Maltese-minors-were-at-risk-of-poverty-or-social-exclusion-Eurostat-6736237874> (accessed 11/01/2022)

²⁶*Elderly are to be valued, not discarded, says Pope*, <https://www.ncronline.org/news/spirituality/francis-chronicles/elderly-are-be-valued-not-discarded-pope-says> (accessed 11/01/2022)

²⁷*Woman found murdered off Sliema promenade. Suspect arrested outside Church*, <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/woman-found-murdered-off-sliema-promenade-suspect-arrested-outside.925174> (accessed 21/01/2022)

unacceptable levels of disrespect and violence – in words, attitudes and deeds - towards women. Over and above any legislative changes, we need to urgently address the underlying misogynistic culture at the root of this violence.

These are just an example of countless persons who on a daily level are victims of injustice, whether perpetrated by individuals or the result of systemic and structural issues. To these victims we may also add future generations who unfortunately will inherit not only a public debt burden which might in future become unsustainable but also the full impact of the climate emergency many are still choosing to ignore.



Our Toolbox

As the country prepares to elect a new government, the memory of the victims outlined above is not meant to lead us to despair or hopelessness. We believe that as a country and as a community of faith, we have the necessary resources in our toolbox to continue building together a better society which promotes the common good and enhances the integral human development and wellbeing of everyone, especially of the most vulnerable. In essence we also want to contribute towards a society in which it is easier for individuals to be good²⁸. To help us in this journey, we will open the toolbox which is offered to us by the tradition of the Catholic Church and highlight four virtues and attitudes we cannot afford to ignore if – each in his/her own way - we want to engage in the urgent and messy work of “politics”, which as Pope Francis reminds us is one of the highest forms of charity²⁹. Change is possible. But it cannot be left to “others”. It needs all of us.

²⁸ Cf. DOROTHY DAY, *On Pilgrimage*, T & T Clark, 1999, 152.

²⁹ Cf. POPE FRANCIS, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 205.



Truth

In the years following the assassination of Daphne Caruana Galizia, the cry for justice became a defining feature of our political and social landscape. On the other hand, the need for reconciliation has never been felt so acutely. By now, we have got used to the fact that, people will tend to emphasize justice or reconciliation, based on their political beliefs. But can there ever be reconciliation without justice? After all, a common thread which runs through the tragic stories described above is that of a widespread culture of impunity. And if our commitment to pursuing justice is primarily restorative rather than retributive, a justice which keeps open the hope of a peaceful life between “enemies”, can justice ever exclude reconciliation? We strongly believe that quest for reconciliation and the quest for justice go hand in hand. And the value which underpins these interconnected quests is truth.

“We strongly believe that quest for reconciliation and the quest for justice go hand in hand. And the value which underpins these interconnected quests is truth.”

There can never be true reconciliation if the horrors of our past are not named, acknowledged and judged publicly. As highlighted recently by the Archbishop of Malta, to defeat the enemy of hatred dwelling among us “we cannot simply erase the past with a magic rubber. Even Pope Francis tells us that it would be foolish to forget injustice when seeking

reconciliation, as that would only ensure that the injustice is repeated.”³⁰ There can never be true justice if the truth is not uncovered. It is crucial that those who are directly and indirectly responsible for the death of, for example, Daphne, Lassana and Miriam are brought to justice. But it is also crucial that our quest for justice includes a desire to live in a just society “where the rule of law is guaranteed, where rights and obligations are respected not just by the State but by each and every individual, and where all are truly equal before the law”³¹.

Unfortunately, another value which is in short supply in our society is trust. Many of the scandals which have recently hit the headlines – whether in Malta or abroad, in the political /economic field as well as in the Church – can be described as a betrayal of trust. We often underestimate the importance of trust in our daily lives. When using a debit card to pay at the supermarket, one trusts

that the right amount will be debited from the card; when boarding a plane, one trusts that the pilot will safely take the passengers to their intended destination; when sending a message to a friend, one trusts that that message will truly be sent to that friend and not to others. If

“By definition, a virtuous person is someone who does good even when no one is looking and who acts from a sense of one’s own dignity and that of others.”

we had to start doubting these daily transactions and operations which are largely based on trust, our lives would become unliveable. And if, at a higher level, all trust is lost in institutions which are supposed to lead us, guide us, protect us etc, we wouldn’t be far away from a total break-down of our polis. And trust is a fragile thing – easy to lose and hard to regain.

The Commission strongly believes that, apart from an ethically and rule-of-law founded reform of many of our social, and economic institutions, in order to rebuild trust, the virtue of honesty is crucial. “A society that is held together just by compliance to rules is inherently fragile, open to

³⁰ *On Victory Day, Archbishop warns of the enemy within*, [https://newsbook.com.mt/en/live-archbishop-celebrates-mass-on-the-feast-of-marys-nativity/Homily 7th September](https://newsbook.com.mt/en/live-archbishop-celebrates-mass-on-the-feast-of-marys-nativity/Homily%207th%20September), (accessed 16/09/2021).

³¹ JUSTICE AND PEACE COMMISSION, *Called to Work for Justice and Peace. Document by the Justice and Peace Commission One Month from the Murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia*, 2.

further abuses which will be met by a further expansion of regulation.”³² By definition, a virtuous person is someone who does good even when no one is looking and who acts from a sense of one’s own dignity and that of others. We need honest citizens and politicians to counteract the narrative of sleaze, opportunism and dishonesty which is poisoning our social fabric. In the absence of honest citizens, no rule, regulation or law will ever be enough to uphold the rule of law.

The twin quests for reconciliation and justice involve a long and costly process. As Christians, nothing short of an intentional and energetic pursuit of these goals will suffice. Honesty, truthfulness, openness and transparency should not only be values we seek in others and in ourselves as individuals, but hallmarks of our communities of faith. Our mission to build, through dialogue, a more just and reconciled Malta, can only come about if the wounds of our society are nursed to health with the balm of truth and honesty.

³² BISHOPS’ CONFERENCE OF ENGLAND AND WALES, *Choosing the Common Good*, 12.



Creative Courage

In the apostolic letter *Patris Corde*, Pope Francis praises the virtue of creative courage which emerges in the face of difficulty, when “we can either give up and walk away, or somehow engage with it. At times, difficulties bring out resources we did not even think we had”³³. We believe that our times – on both a worldwide and local level – urgently require the combination of creativity and courage if we are to avoid the twin pitfalls of cynicism and resignation.

As we read in Book of Proverbs: “Where there is no vision, the people perish”³⁴. This failure of vision is also a failure of imagination, a failure to imagine a different future than the present we live in, a failure to dream that another society and world is possible. Ultimately, this widespread lack of vision reflects a lack of hope. In fact, not without reasons, many are those who adopt the cynical attitude of: Things have always been this way, there is no difference between political parties, it’s useless trying, nothing can be done (“m’hemmx x’taghmel”).

In this context, our society urgently needs to hear and rally around a prophetic and credible vision for us and our children. The vision proposed by the Church and specifically by Pope Francis in *Laudato Si* and *Fratelli Tutti* speaks of a society built on justice, truth and solidarity. It is a society whose wealth no longer depends on the production of “waste” – products and people – but which promotes the common good which should always be similar to a multiplication sum: if any one number – or person

³³ POPE FRANCIS, *Patris corde*, 5.

³⁴ PROV 29, 18.

in this case - is zero then the total is always zero. If anyone is left out and deprived of what is essential, then the common good has been betrayed. In other words, the common good is the whole network of social conditions which enable human individuals and groups to flourish and live a full, genuinely human life. The fulfilment which the common good seeks to serve is the flourishing of humanity, expressed in the phrase “integral human development”. This is the vision which should capture the imagination of all people of good will and which requires a strong dose of creativity given that we are miles away from this reality.

In fact, many are those who will object to this vision, not in principle, but by arguing that it is an impossible and hopeless task. It is our duty, as Christians and citizens of good-

will, to provide indications of hope. We are maybe in the presence of something new which is being born which, alas, is not clearly discernible in the alternatives of the

“It is our duty, as Christians and citizens of goodwill, to provide indications of hope.”

present³⁵. The Church itself ought to be a key indication of hope, a living alternative, infusing and challenging the social sphere with a more radical vision of God’s dream for humanity: In the priority we give to those with no economic value, in the way we strive for justice even when all seems lost, in the way we continue to faithfully engage in dialogue when all around us walls of prejudice are being erected, in the way we continue to serve faithfully in the absence of visible results.

Only in this way can we become beacons of hope and be credible witnesses when we declare that our broken relationships with God, each other and our common home can be restored, healed and reconciled. In the eyes of God, there is no lost cause. Not only on an individual level but also when it comes to the possible transformation of the political, social and economic structures which led to the death of Lassana, Daphne and Miriam. It is up to us to embrace that kind of hope that “creates a willingness

³⁵ Cf. DIETRICH BONHOEFFER, *Prisoner for God. Letters and Papers from Prison*, Macmillan Company, 1953, 14.

to position oneself in a hopeless place and be a witness, that allows one to believe in a better future, even in the face of abusive power”³⁶.

It goes without saying that this hopeful creativity must be lived with courage. It’s the courage of those pioneers who choose the less-trodden path, of those bridge-builders who risk being misunderstood by all sides and labelled as outsiders by everyone, of those upright and principled people who end up politically homeless, of the fool who “chooses the well-being of the most forgotten

“It takes courage to abandon the comfort of your “clan” or the comfortable neutrality of the armchair critic.”

over the comfort of the crowds”³⁷. It takes courage to abandon the comfort of your “clan” or the comfortable neutrality of the armchair critic. As a community of faith we always have to ask ourselves if we are sometimes guilty of living the complacency of those who find themselves on the side of social privilege and thus fail to work courageously to transform the sinful structures of society. The transforming force of the Gospel can never be domesticated, and it’s up to us to make sure that a holy restlessness continues burning from within as we engage in the hopeful renewal of society with courage and creativity.

³⁶ BRYAN STEVENSON, *Just Mercy. A book of Justice and Redemption*, Spiegel & Grau, 2015, 219.

³⁷ ARCHDIOCESE OF MALTA, *One Church, One Journey. A process of ecclesial renewal*, 41.



Temperance

As we journey forward, we now turn our attention to the virtue of temperance. Traditionally, temperance has been understood as the virtue of moderation. Hardly a popular or attractive virtue in a society like ours in which it is much easier to say “is that all?” than “thanks”. And yet, if we want to dare to dream of a different way of relating to each other and to creation, we have to rediscover the values of simplicity, sacrifice and sobriety in a world which, contrary to the assumption underpinning neo-liberal capitalism, is finite with limited resources³⁸.

Correctly understood, temperance and sacrifice should not be equated or associated with a kind of self-denial which is an end in itself. In fact, temperance, detachment, sacrifice are countercultural values which, properly understood, lead us in the direction of happiness, greater freedom and care for others on a personal and communitarian level. When we distinguish between our wants and our needs and strive to overcome that limitless greed which is at the root of so many of the wounds described in the first section, we start glimpsing that happiness which belongs to those who know how to limit the wants which diminish us, whilst freeing us up to the many different possibilities which life can offer³⁹. When we learn “familiarity with the simplest things and how to enjoy them”⁴⁰, we will necessarily question – as individuals and as a society - the priority we give to economic advancement at the cost of our relationships, our health and our environment. This “idolatry of money”, intimately connected

³⁸ Cf. KATE RAWORTH, *Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st-Century Economist*, Chelsea Green Publishing, 2018.

³⁹ Cf. POPE FRANCIS, *Laudato sii*, 223

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

to corruption in all its forms, leads to the disintegration of the social fabric we are witnessing here in Malta and which is leaving in its wake countless victims.

A social and political conversion of the kind we are proposing, cannot begin without allowing ourselves to be decentred, in a movement which always implies a degree of renunciation and sacrifice. Imbued by the Church's social teachings we are challenged "each one of us, personally and communally, to be a Church for and from the peripheries, seeking their justice above our wealth, their well-being above our comfort"⁴¹. In the context of the grave challenge of climate change, for example, many are those who refuse to live simply so that others may live, on the basis that they would not receive any immediate benefit from adopting a more sustainable lifestyle ("Ma jaqbillix"). Such a response betrays not only an irresponsible short sightedness, but also an insensitive unwillingness to pay a price in order to stand in solidarity with those who will suffer the most from the devastating effects of climate change. In fact, we all know that the impact of this crises created predominantly by the world's richest and most industrialized countries, will be felt disproportionately by the world's poorest people.

On a political level, the virtues of temperance and sacrifice are often better left unsaid. But people deserve to be treated as adults by being told the truth, even when this truth is inconvenient. When faced with difficult realities, such as during the Covid-19 pandemic, citizens all over the world rightly demanded to be told the truth, without any spin or sugar coating. This same spirit of leadership in truth, as opposed to a form of populism which only tells people what they want to hear, should be the norm, not the exception. We know

"One person living temperately gives a good example. A community living temperately represents a political force which can change a society for the better."

⁴¹ ARCHDIOCESE OF MALTA, *One Church, One Journey. A process of ecclesial renewal*, 59.

that the construction of more inclusive society built on truth, justice and respect for our common home doesn't come easily. All those who promise us otherwise are doing society a great disservice. And as Christians, we should be at the forefront in taking up the invitation to respect those limits which are imposed by our love towards others and towards our common home. Our "calling to renew the world must be lived with temperance"⁴², by denying the urge to always have more and be more. In this we must be guided by the hope that one person living temperately gives a good example. A community living temperately represents a political force which can change a society for the better.

⁴² *Idem*, 40.



Merciful Patience

“Sometimes it seems that our work is fruitless, but mission is not like a business transaction or investment, or even a humanitarian activity. It is not a show where we count how many people come as a result of our publicity; it is something much deeper, which escapes all measurement. It may be that the Lord uses our sacrifices to shower blessings in another part of the world which we will never visit. The Holy Spirit works as he wills, when he wills and where he wills; we entrust ourselves without pretending to see striking results. We know only that our commitment is necessary. Let us learn to rest in the tenderness of the arms of the Father amid our creative and generous commitment. Let us keep marching forward; let us give him everything, allowing him to make our efforts bear fruit in his good time.”⁴³

As we come towards the end of these reflections, we feel that is important to acknowledge that sometimes it is very easy to feel discouraged. Our attempts at building a reconciled society founded on truth and justice not always seem to bear fruit. Our efforts seem to be largely futile. Like Peter along the lake of Gennesaret, we work hard all night without catching anything⁴⁴. In these instances, the temptation of the People of God becomes ours. When the “promised land” is nowhere to be seen and we are tiredly walking in a hostile environment, we are tempted to turn back

⁴³ POPE FRANCIS, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 278-279.

⁴⁴ Cf. LK 5, 5.

to “Egypt”, to what is familiar and “safe”, even though we know that it is the land of slavery. Like them, besides trusting in God, we are called to be patient, with ourselves and with others.

True to the characteristics of our age, we tend to want it all, and to want it now, with clear and measurable deliverables defining the measure of our success. As a community of believers who follow a Crucified God, we should maybe question a certain definition of success. In this we are guided by those who, like Christ, stand shoulder to shoulder with those who live at the margins of our society. In the words of Greg Boyle, a Jesuit who runs a gang intervention and rehabilitation program, “success and failure, ultimately, have little to do with living the gospel. Jesus just stood with the outcasts until they were welcomed or until he was crucified — whichever came first.”⁴⁵ Pope Francis also reminds us that “time is greater than space” and more than obsessing with having a neatly-packed finished “product” we are called to be process-starters even when the destination – or even less its “success” – is far from clear and the time required to reach it is open-ended⁴⁶.

In this long journey, marked by uncertainty and frustration, we also have to learn the importance of being merciful, towards others, as well as towards ourselves. The companions we choose to accompany on this journey will at some point or another disagree with us. The temptation to surround ourselves with like-minded people is never far off. Even more challenging is that fact that, if we truly want this journey to be one of reconciliation, we will share at least parts of the journey with people who are in need of our forgiveness. Sadly, the themes of forgiveness and mercy have at times been misunderstood as implying a need to forgive all wrongs and ignore all hurts. But true mercy can never replace justice.

**“True mercy can never
replace justice.”**

⁴⁵ GREGORY BOYLE, *Tattoos on the heart. The Power of Boundless Compassion*, Simon & Schuster, 2010, 172.

⁴⁶ Cf. POPE FRANCIS, *Amoris Laetitia*, 3.

What we should fight for is just mercy. Mercy, given or received, is always undeserving and cannot be demanded. It can only be freely given. But justice, devoid of mercy, can never break the cycle of victimization and victimhood, retribution and suffering. “Only love can build up, whereas hatred produces devastation and ruin. The deadly cycle of revenge must be replaced by the newfound liberty of forgiveness.”⁴⁷

In their social and political activism, Christians will not separate themselves from the “world” through special markings or even by the formation of a dedicated “Christian” Party. Our distinguishing feature is the way we live out and seek this just mercy in our everyday actions. “As Karl Rahner SJ put it, Christians in the world are “mystics” through everything they do; they infuse all their action with God’s mercy wherever they are”⁴⁸.

Having received God’s mercy⁴⁹, we joyfully share with others the Good News of God’s everlasting mercy towards the world. In a political context where the desire to crush the opponent is ever-present, in which political parties seek to outdo their opponents by engaging in daily shows of strength, there hardly seems to be space left for weak-looking mercy. And yet, if our aim is that of building a society, in which no one is crushed or eliminated, we first have to meet each other in our humanity. Instead of looking upwards and indulging in an alienating exultation of strength and power, we look downwards as we strive to create a culture of encounter which can only be born out of our common brokenness. Because it is only there that we experience the need of mercy and open ourselves up to the possibility of sharing with others

“Instead of looking upwards and indulging in an alienating exultation of strength and power, we look downwards as we strive to create a culture of encounter which can only be born out of our common brokenness.”

⁴⁷ POPE JOHN PAUL II, *Message for the XXX World Day of Peace, January 1, 1997*, 3.

⁴⁸ ARCHDIOCESE OF MALTA, *One Church, One Journey. A process of ecclesial renewal*, 40.

⁴⁹ Cf. 2 COR 4,1.

what we ourselves have received. As pointed out by Bryan Stevenson, an American lawyer who for years has been fighting injustice in the criminal justice system:

*“There is a strength, a power even, in understanding brokenness, because embracing our brokenness creates a need and desire for mercy, and perhaps a corresponding need to show mercy. When you experience mercy, you learn things that are hard to learn otherwise. You see things you can’t otherwise see; you hear things you can’t otherwise hear. You begin to recognize the humanity that resides in each of us.”*⁵⁰

We started our journey by putting a face to the victims of our society. We end it with the invitation to recognize the humanity that resides in each of us, including in those furthest and most different from us. Faced with numerous centrifugal forces which drive us further from each other,

“Faced with numerous centrifugal forces which drive us further from each other, we dare to propose a path which brings us together.”

we dare to propose a path which brings us together. Besides tending to the wounds of the victims, we are called to listen to their voices and learn about how they ended up there and seek concrete and creative ways to put spokes in the wheels of the underlying injustice. Only by listening attentively to these voices can our hearts and minds

be moved. True listening allows us to be true seekers of that truth without which justice and reconciliation will remain forever an illusion. True listening will allow us to meet others as fellow brothers and sisters. If we dare to do so, our lives will become “wonderfully complicated”⁵¹ as we experience intensely what it means to be agents of reconciliation and hope in this beloved country of ours.

⁵⁰ BRYAN STEVENSON, *Just Mercy. A book of Justice and Redemption*, Spiegel & Grau, 2015, 290.

⁵¹ POPE FRANCIS, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 270.



In Practice

The calls to action suggested below are not meant to be an exhaustive list. In fact, the twin traditions of Catholic Social Teaching and spiritual discernment allow for a diversity of responses to our common challenges. The suggested actions should therefore serve as open invitation to action from all people of good will and a template which every individual, community, family and political party can use to discern their concrete response to the urgent needs identified in this document.

All People of Good Will

Social Justice

Beyond Me: Evaluate how your decisions - which can range from the way traffic rules are routinely ignored to widespread tax evasion practices - have a real impact on others and on the common good.

Environmental Justice

Live simply: Go beyond paying lip service to environmental concerns by consuming much less, embracing public and active (walking, cycling) transport, working towards zero waste, advocating for renewable energy and eating less meat.

Racial Justice

Befriend: Beyond denouncing and reporting any episode of racial hate and discrimination witnessed online or in-person, help breakdown the “us and them” mentality by befriending the migrants and refugees you meet on your workplace, in your community or within your social circle of friends.

Good Governance

Enough is enough: With your vote and behaviour, say no to a corrupt system whereby candidates try to “buy” the vote of their constituents by bypassing systems which should be in place to ensure transparency and fairness.

Christian Communities

Social Justice

Create physical and virtual spaces of encounter and reconciliation: Accompany people in the re-discovery – in a journey of truth and justice informed by mercy - the lost art of fraternal dialogue between all those who refuse to accept to live in a permanently conflicted and divided society.

Environmental Justice

Reconnect with our common home: Given that no one protects what they don't care about and no one cares about what they have never experienced, tap into the Church's rich tradition of contemplation and meditation by joining the Laudato Si Action Platform (<https://laudatosiactionplatform.org/>) and proposing in a creative way spiritual experiences with and in nature.

Racial justice

Speak out against racism: All Christians in positions of leadership are to denounce any theory or form of racism and racial discrimination as morally unacceptable and incompatible with our Christian faith.

Good Governance

Implementation of Gift Acceptance Policy: Draft and implement, at Diocesan level, a Gift Acceptance Policy which safeguards and furthers the values of transparency, good governance and environmental/ social justice.

Political Parties

Social Justice

Adopt a wellbeing budget: Rather than being centred around economic metrics such as GDP, the yearly budget should go Beyond GDP (<https://bit.ly/3zAUicG>) and target a much broader range of outcomes, such as improving mental health, reducing child poverty, addressing inequalities, and transitioning to a sustainable economy.

Environmental Justice

Leave nature alone: Instead of creating “green spaces”, protect existing open spaces and ensure existing planning laws and regulations are enforced, whilst giving nature – and citizens - some respite by moving away from car dependency and promoting sustainable mobility.

Racial justice

Implement the National Action Plan against Racism and Xenophobia: Reconcile the goals of this Plan with all laws, policies and practices, including those governing search and rescue, reception conditions and collaboration with third countries in the management of migration flows.

Good Governance

Combat corrupt clientelism: Strictly regulate lobbying by means of a new law and make political parties and MPs less dependent on donations from individuals and businesses by introducing state-financing of parties and shifting to fulltime MPs.

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