



**THE
COMMON
GOOD**

Catholic Social Teaching: Sharing the Secret...

1 December 2023

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UPCOMING EVENTS

3 December, 3 p.m.: Prayer vigil sponsored by the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle Justice & Peace Co-ordinating Council, to protest the appalling living conditions for refugees and asylum seekers at the Derwentside Immigration Removal Centre in County Durham. Please gather at the gate to the centre, on Consett Road, Medomsley, DH8 6QY.

Those who cannot attend in person are invited to pray along with the group from their own homes. For a copy of the prayers and more information on these vigils, which take place on the first Sunday of every month at 3 p.m., please contact Liz Archibald:

lizarchibald.justiceandpeace@gmail.com



The church should be a place where messed-up people are welcome, outcasts are loved, underdogs find a champion, the hopeless find hope, and the friendless find a friend.

Clergy Coaching Network, 23 September 2023

Advent

Advent should admonish us to discover in each brother or sister that we greet, in each friend whose hand we shake, in each beggar who asks for bread, in each worker who wants to use the right to join a union, in each peasant who looks for work in the coffee groves, the face of Christ.

Then it would not be possible to rob them, to cheat them, to deny them their rights.

They are Christ, and whatever is done to them Christ will take as done to him. This is what Advent is: Christ living among us.

Saint Oscar Romero, 3 December 1978

God Does Not Cause Our Suffering

People often ask why God causes suffering in the world (or at the least allows it).

It was not God who sent it!

It was we ourselves who by our actions, by our sinfulness and selfishness, who established the spiral of violence, hatred and war. It is our pride that caused the weeping that surrounds us.

Isn't it natural that the One who knows and understands all this, realizes that our destructiveness can never be changed and our harmful actions toward others can never be corrected by mere words. The only means to block our sinful ways is by suffering, and God knows how to employ it.

Once we have been betrayed by someone we begin to appreciate our own betrayals. Once we experience for ourselves hunger, plague, war, or other evils we get some idea of the wickedness and cruelty with which we have treated others.

If we have ever behaved abruptly to an invalid, once we are ill ourselves we behave more patiently, more sympathetically. Suffering in our own flesh is sadly often the only way of learning to love anyone else properly.

Carlo Carretto, *Selected Writings*, 1994



The darker the night, the brighter the stars; the deeper the grief, the closer is God.

Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-1881), Russian novelist



I'm sorry, but I don't want to be an emperor. That's not my business. I don't want to rule or conquer anyone. I should like to help everyone -- if possible -- Jew, Gentile, black man, white. We all want to help one another. Human beings are like that. We want to live by each other's happiness -- not by each other's misery. We don't want to hate and despise one another. In this world there is room for everyone. And the good earth is rich and can provide for everyone. The way of life can be free and beautiful, but we have lost the way.

Charlie Chaplin, final speech after *The Great Dictator* film



Like it or not, migration is Christ knocking at the door – and who are we to ignore him?

Joseph Kelly, *The Catholic Directory*



Suffering has always been with us; does it really matter what form it takes? All that matters is how we bear it and how we fit it into our lives.

Etty Hillesum (1914-1943), Dutch Jewish author who had religious awakenings while undergoing Nazi persecution; she died in Auschwitz.



The Biggest Problem with Migration

It's really the notion of the 'economic migrant' that causes the moral objections, warps sympathy and tends to be weaponised by those seeking to exclude strangers. The great problem with the concept of economic migration is that, whilst numerous people on the move are undoubtedly seeking to improve their living circumstances, to object to or resist this human flow is to endorse the idea that some people have a right to a better standard of living than others. Inevitably this creates a distorted kind of meritocracy, where it is taken for granted that some will have unreasonable wealth, whilst others ought to be held down in their impossible poverty or are somehow in that position for metaphysical reasons. Sadly, I sense an increasingly vocal commitment to this terribly warped definition of society being expressed by those who claim to govern this country.

Joseph Kelly, *The Catholic Directory*, 02 October 2023

The School of Powerlessness

The message of Jesus as revealed by his teaching shows many paradoxes:

We suffer to get well.

We surrender to win.

We die to live.

We give it away to keep it.

We serve to lead.

Fr. Thomas Keating writes:

'To be powerless means to be absolutely helpless....This, oddly enough, is the best disposition for the beginning of a spiritual journey. Why is that? Because the deeper one's awareness of one's powerlessness and the more desperate, the more willing one is to reach out for help. [In the Twelve Step programme for alcoholics, for example], this help is offered in the next two steps. You turn yourself over to a Higher Power whom you believe can heal you and work with you in the long journey of dismantling the emotional programmes for happiness...

'The real spiritual journey depends on our acknowledging the unmanageability of our lives. The love of God is what heals us. Nobody becomes a full human being without love. It brings to life people who are most damaged. The Twelve Steps are really an engagement in an ever-deepening relationship with God.'

Richard Rohr, *Daily Meditations*, 12 September 2019



Warmest wishes for a blessed Christmas and a New Year of health and happiness!