

That You act Justly . . .

[Br John Deeney](#)

The Language of Peace

In October a group of Muslim scholars and religious leaders addressed a document to the Pope and other Christian leaders. It was a major bridge-building text aiming to identify common concerns and areas for collaboration. "If Muslims and Christians are not at peace, the world cannot be at peace. . . . Our common future is at stake. The very survival of the world is perhaps at stake." "The prophet Muhammad said: "None of you has faith until you love for your neighbour what you love for yourself." The key thinking shared between Muslims and Christians, says the letter, is the primacy of love for God and for one's neighbour. The invitation is made to all of us to act this out in our local and daily relationships, as the letter is not just directed towards academics and leaders.

There are currently many Catholic schools in the country that include Muslim students and that demonstrate the possibility of mutual respect and peaceful coexistence. That is an important contribution to the ideals proposed by this recent letter and to the drive for dialogue which the Church has maintained over many years and which may now move forwards.

The Language of Hatred

The continuing build up of tension between Iran and the US is fed by the language of threats used by both sides. As a political leader, if you threaten war (or even go to war) you stand a good chance of rallying lots of people to your cause. Those people may be angry or fearful or both. Fearful people often get angry and irrational as they try to avert a perceived danger and the President of Iran seems to gather a good crowd of these to bolster his position. The public pressure and severe warnings delivered to the country over its nuclear programme seem guaranteed to provide evidence to the fearful and the radicalised that they will be attacked if they do not defend themselves. And with terrorism seen as one means of defence there

is likely to be a continuing problem with security across the world. But resorting to violence is not the answer. The late Fr. Pedro Arrupe S.J., who was at Hiroshima, had this to say: "History shows that neither war nor violent revolution have ever solved our problems; nor will they ever. They are born of hatred and, though hatred harms, it does not heal. It can never be a human solution."



The language of hatred leads to violence and not to peace. This is as true at a domestic level as in the sphere of government. As St Paul reminds us: "Do not use harmful words, but only helpful words, the kind that build up and provide what is needed, so that what you say will do good to those who hear you." (Eph. 4).

Hotspots

The Marxist government of Eritrea has recently begun expelling non-native Christians working there. It is one overt example of the pressure put upon churches there in recent times and there are other countries where the situation is similar. There may not be too much pressure that we as individuals can exert on a country like that nor on Zim-

babwe, for example. But there are other countries where freedom is severely restricted that are more sensitive or vulnerable to international protest. Burma is one where the campaign for freedom and justice needs to be maintained and Pakistan (where all processions, rallies and political gatherings are outlawed) is another where the current situation needs to be improved. There is real point in joining internet campaigns which pressure politicians and governments to respond to what is taking place and to injustices carried out on individuals. [Cafod](#), [Christian Aid](#) and [Avaaz](#) are sites that enable people to do that in various situations. Amnesty International has recently fallen out of favour with the Catholic Church but still does great work to counter injustices.

Populorum Progressio

It is the last time that these notes will mention that this year is the 40th anniversary of the encyclical. Its relevance to our own time was recently highlighted at the [Cafod Pope Paul VI lecture](#) given in London by Vera Araújo. She pointed out “the sharp insight of a Pope who is so alert to the universality of the Christian message with all the weight of its social content.” And that social content applies on a global scale. The theme of the talk, ‘LiveSimply – our global challenge’ tied in the thought of the document with our need to be living witnesses to it today. [Cafod’s LiveSimply](#)

campaign spells out how we might go about this and it reinforces (with more profound motivation) much of what now appears in the media under the topics of energy-saving and global warming . I liked one final thought contributed at the evening – “It is through fraternity and simple living that we find our own dignity and peace as human beings.”

Cafod is running a [‘liveit!’ Sixth Form Conference](#) on Friday 14th March in Manchester in conjunction with the ‘livesimply’ event the following day.

[Cafod website](#): www.cafod.org.uk/

[Livesimply website](#): www.progressio.org.uk/livesimply