

# That you act justly . . .

[Br John Deeney](#)

1948

That was the year when the world was presented with the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Second World War was the compelling warning that precipitated this declaration and it proffered the hope that in a more just world humanity would be able to enjoy a more peaceful existence. The nature of human activity has proved difficult to bring into line with the ideals and there is a long list of wars and injustices spread over the last 60 years and running into this year. It has become obvious that every few years we need a vigorous reminder of the ideals that most of humanity has acknowledged so that we face the current challenges anew. We have had the Millennium Campaign and Make Poverty History; we have annual reminders such as Peace Sunday and Fairtrade Weeks. Participation in shared action for greater justice should really have a place in our life as Christians because we share in the mission of the Lord's Servant:

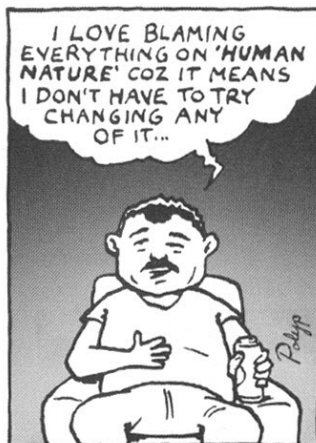
"I, the Lord, have called you and given you power to see that justice is done on earth." (*Isaiah 42*)

## The God of Love:

Justice & Peace Scotland is a Catholic organisation and it publishes a magazine from which I would like to quote some thought-provoking sections of a recent editorial. It starts by talking about certain 'scientific' and atheistic demolitions of the idea of God and then leads us towards a Christian understanding of the God of love.

"The opposite of truth is not so much lies as a fanatical belief in the rightness of our version of the truth. Here is the root of much of our social problems, the fundamentalisms of economics and politics, science and religion. ... Ironically, the notion of a truth that excludes is common to scientific atheists and religious reactionaries. It is part of what Hugh MacDiarmid called 'the cursed conceit o' bein' richt that damns the vast majority o' men'. If truth is not open and inclusive it cannot set us free. And St. John also points out that truth is something done rather than merely known (Jn 3.21).

The Catholic philosopher Jacques Maritain, who was one of the main architects of the UN Declaration of Human Rights said, 'Yes, we agree about the rights, but on condition no one asks us why'. Presumably, because then we get entangled in justificatory ideology. And that is why governments often find themselves seeing human rights as a dispensable luxury rather than a basic prerequisite of a civilised society.



For Gabriel Marcel, another French Catholic philosopher, it is this very capacity to love and be responsible for one another that is an argument for God's existence. 'The very enormity of these responsibilities,' says Marcel, 'is beyond purely human capacity'. Made in the image of a God

of love, we cannot but love one another if we act in fidelity to ourselves. We may know people, like a list of trades people in the kitchen, useful for the problems they can sort. Or we may know people deeply and responsibly, as if we really meant the old expression, 'I am at your disposal'. This brings us, says Marcel, into the realm of mystery, problems we find ourselves inextricably drawn into alongside others. Justice and Peace does not simply confront us with problems; it involves us with others in the mystery of human suffering.

Here God is a presence rather than the conclusion to a logical argument. ... The incarnation is not a philosophical statement or a scientific explanation. ... God is revealed as being completely at our disposal in Christ."

"My children, our love should not be just words and talk; it must be true love, which shows itself in action." 1 John 3.

**Fairtrade Fortnight** runs into the first week of March and gives us an opportunity to think about how we use our spending power.

**PAX CHRISTI:** on the 1<sup>st</sup> March there is a conference in London which includes, amongst others, a workshop on 'Developing children's skills for a peaceful classroom' – something that teachers could no doubt benefit from! Information from [education@paxchristi.org.uk](mailto:education@paxchristi.org.uk)