



Catholic Social Teaching

First Sunday of Lent Year A, 13 March

The disproportionate distribution of wealth and poverty and the existence of some countries and continents that are developed and of others that are not call for a levelling out and for a search for ways to ensure just development for all. **John Paul 11, Laborem Exercens** (On Human Work) (1981).

FAIRTRADE COTTON

These words of Pope John Paul encourage us to act at an individual level and what better way than whenever possible to choose the Fair Trade option for food and clothing.



Cotton is vital to the global textile industry and to the social and economic development of developing countries. There's no difference in quality between Fairtrade cotton and normal cotton. The real difference is that the person at the very bottom of the textile supply chain who has grown the cotton has been paid a fair price for his/her crop. It is not the finished fabric or item of clothing but cotton itself which is Fairtrade certified.

Fairtrade cotton can be organic but is not necessarily so. This is because Fairtrade aims to support the most marginalized farmers who cannot always afford to convert to organic farming. It can take years to convert a crop to organic, but it is something many Fairtrade cotton farmers are working towards as they receive an even higher price if their cotton is organic. Fairtrade maintains very strong and clear environmental standards such as the strict control of chemicals and reductions in pesticides. Fairtrade also encourages sustainable farming so farmers establish their own environmental development plans to ensure that where possible, waste is managed, materials are recycled, and steps are taken to avoid soil erosion and water pollution. Genetically modified seeds are also strictly forbidden.

More and more High Street stores and supermarkets now stock a wider range of Fairtrade cotton garments. 'Wear Fair' a campaign led by The People & Planet student group aims for all UK schools to have Fairtrade cotton uniforms by 2015. The UK school uniform market is worth £1 billion per year! If even some people swapped to Fairtrade cotton uniforms that would deliver enormous benefits to producers – so check the labels and ask!!

ASYLUM

The coalition is accused of watering down its promise to end the detention of child asylum seekers by setting up new centres to detain families refusing to leave the UK. The new "pre-departure accommodation facilities" will be run under a more lax system but the families will still be kept in "secure" units behind high fences for up to a week, reigniting concern over the Coalition's flagship policy of ending child detention, announced by Nick Clegg in a fanfare of publicity last year.

Case study: 'Before I knew it, I was behind barbed wire' Sufyan Rashid

Sufyan was 15 when he and his family were taken to the Dungavel removal centre in South Lanarkshire. His family had been in Glasgow for six years after fleeing Pakistan. He told the charity Positive Action in Housing: "We were taken into a room, where my three brothers were sitting. The immigration officers said we were going to be deported to Pakistan on Saturday. They took our belongings and locked us in a van. I was in shock, it happened too quickly.

"I was like a zombie when we arrived at Dungavel. It had huge barbed wire fences and looked worse than I had heard. It was 8am for breakfast, or we wouldn't get anything. I woke the next day and instantly felt sad. I was scared for what would happen to us in Pakistan.

"Saturday was getting closer. We kept to the routine of waking and eating when we were told. On the Friday, I was sick. I felt nervous, upset and I prayed that something would happen for us to be released, but I knew lots of families were deported and thought why would we be any different? On Saturday, I felt like crying when the immigration officers told us we were to be released and would be going back to Glasgow. Within four months, we were given our leave to remain in the UK. This means we will be safe for the rest of our lives."

CLIMATE CHANGE

Lights Out for climate change.

By simply turning off your lights between 8.30pm and 9-30pm on Sat 26th March (Earth Day) you could be part of a growing global phenomenon aiming to take a stand against climate change. Now in its fourth year, World Wildlife Funds Earth Hour is an annual event hoping to send a clear signal to decision makers that there is strong public support for action on climate change. In 2010 hundreds of millions of people in 128 countries took part. In Scotland this included some iconic landmarks such as Edinburgh Castle and the Wallace Monument.

While switching off the lights for an hour will not save the planet it is an easy way for us all to show we care. Visit www.wwfscotland.org.uk/earthhour for more information.

Prepared by St Josephs Justice and Peace Group, Milngavie

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