



Do Justice!!

“Do Justice, Love Kindness and Walk Humbly With Your God” Micah 6:8

A Newsletter on Social Justice Issues

Welcome to the December 2015 edition of Do Justice. This newsletter, prepared by Auckland Diocesan Social Justice Group looks at various Social Justice Issues.

Paris

The attacks in Paris on November 13 have shocked the world and dominated our headlines of late.

Responding to the attacks, the Auckland Catholic Diocese’s Justice and Peace Commission put it well when they offered “our prayers for those who died and our sympathy to their families and friends at this very sad time.”¹

There are thoughtful caring and considered responses being made abroad, too. The Quakers in Britain note how the anticipated (and realised) military response of Western nations to terrorist attacks in fact only escalates the conflict, rather than resolving it:

*The military actions of Western nations recruit more people to the cause than they kill. Every bomb dropped is a recruitment poster for ISIS, a rallying point for the young, vulnerable and alienated. And every bomb dropped on Syrian cities drives yet more people to flee and seek refuge in safer countries.*²

The Quakers propose the need “to think through the likely consequences of actions to find a long term, lasting solution.”³ Some of their proposed actions include: prayer; bridge-building with people of other faiths and from different communities; welcoming refugees; and, calling on political leaders to respond from a position of peace rather than war.⁴

Locally in Auckland there are signs of people responding with such discernment. On November 21, the Grace Collective held an evening gathering, *Refugees are Welcome*.⁵ The latest Diocesan weekly video clip notes the militaristic underpinnings of our responses to the terrorist attacks; furthermore, it draws attention to the fact that this Advent also sees the beginning of the United Nations Conference on Climate Change in Paris.⁶

The bishops of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa New Zealand and Polynesia issued a statement addressing the unique opportunities presented by the Paris negotiations. The bishops note the effects of climate change are already being felt in the South Pacific and expressed that their prayer was “for an ambitious, fair, and legally binding agreement to be reached at the COP21 climate negotiations in Paris this December.”⁷

No 2015 Christian statement on climate change would be complete without an acknowledgement that the current Christian landmark document is the papal encyclical, *Laudato Si*. The bishops’ statement declares this as it affirms that:

*The Earth is God’s gift to humanity and to all creatures. In unity with Pope Francis we “forcefully reject the notion that our being created in God’s image and given dominion over the earth justifies absolute domination over other creatures.” As humans endowed with reason we are not the controllers and possessors of nature but its servants, just as we are servants of each other and of God.*⁸

The 2015 Auckland Diocesan Synod has already called on all ministry units in the diocese to study *Laudato Si*.⁹ The

¹ The Auckland Catholic Diocese Justice and Peace Commission “statement on the Paris terrorist attacks,” 16 November 2015.

² “Quakers Respond to Terrorism.” <http://www.quaker.org.uk/news-and-events/news/quakers-responding-to-terrorism>

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid. The Quakers suggest that British policy, for instance, treat terrorist acts as crimes and not acts of war and that the UK seek to “export peace rather than war, so that we can create the conditions the world needs to address its most serious problems, including climate change.”

⁵ The Grace Collective is the Young Adults Ministry in the Anglican Diocese of Auckland.

⁶ See the clip from the week of Sunday 22 November - Saturday 28 November 2015 at <http://www.aucklandanglican.org.nz/news/news/weekly-video-news-from-auckland-diocese>

⁷ The Anglican bishops’ statement, from November 27, can be found in full at <http://www.anglicantaonga.org.nz/Features/Extra/Bishops-praying-for-Paris-summit>

⁸ Ibid.

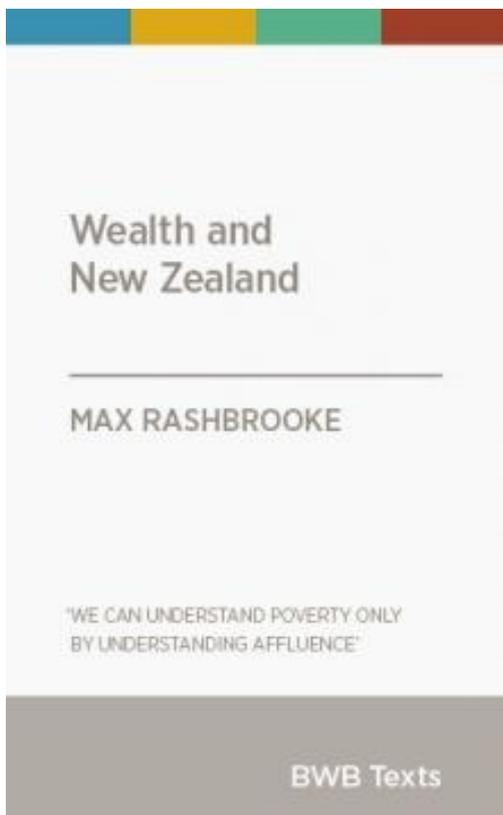
⁹ The Synod called on ministry units to study *Laudato Si* with a particular focus on a small part of the document that focused

whole document is set in the context of care for our common home (which influenced the service held after the People's Climate March on November 28, "Prayer for our Common Home"). If reading 40,000 words does not appeal then you can always watch a short youtube clip to get a sense of what the document proposes and its grounding in the Christian tradition!¹⁰

Inequality

Inequality is an on-going social justice focus in the Auckland Diocese. Inequality can often be seen to only consider the struggles of those who are the poorest without looking at the wealth that is being consolidated at the other end of the spectrum.

As Max Rashbrooke, author of recently published book *Wealth and New Zealand*, discovered there is a great suspicion and "backlash" in New Zealand about examining wealth and the rise in affluence.¹¹ The December *Talking Cents* offers quite a detailed look at the examination of wealth and the subsequent links to wider social justice issues.¹²



on housing (chapter 4, sections 149-152). The full text can be found here.

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/pa-pa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

¹⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1tYdOlqvpg&feature=youtu.b>

¹¹ <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/nov/23/new-zealanders-need-to-share-our-common-wealth-lets-start-by-discussing-inequality>

¹² <http://www.aucklandian.org.nz/what-we-do/social-justice>

Suspicion about engaging with inequality is often supported by myths such as how raising the minimum wage causes higher unemployment and forces business to close. Recent research out of UC Berkeley debunks this myth and is part of a range of new scholarship taking inequality seriously.¹³

Paul Mason's *PostCapitalism: A Guide to our Future*

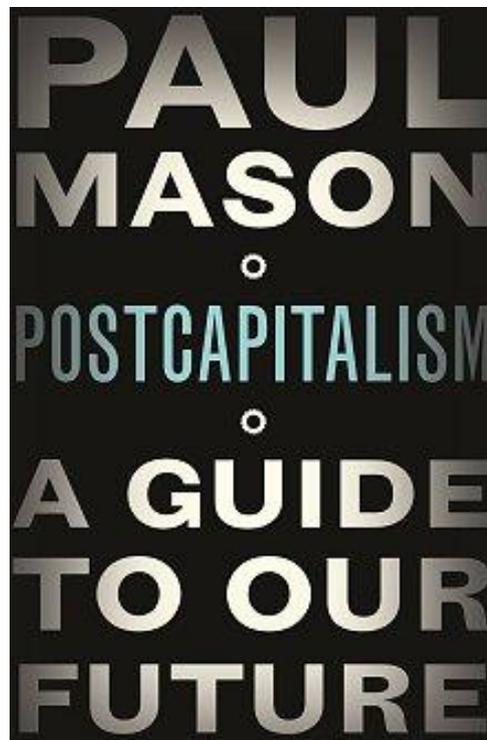
Mason's book examines the current anxiety with the direction our contemporary economic model seems to be taking us and the rise of an alternate vision for how humans can function.

Robert Gordon, the Manager of the St. Paul's Institute in the City of London, reviewed Mason's *PostCapitalism*. Gordon notes that Mason brings historical case-studies into dialogue with economic theory to chart how we came to our present crises.¹⁴

Importantly, Gordon observes that the book provides a clear roadmap for how the alternative vision for a postcapitalist future might play out and offer the following hopeful conclusion to his review:

"For those who feel that such radical thinking is nothing but a pipe-dream, the book leaves us in closing with a powerful rallying call:

"It is absurd that we are capable of witnessing a 40,000-year-old system of gender oppression begin to dissolve before our eyes and yet still see the abolition of a 200-year-old economic system as an unrealistic utopia." ¹⁵



¹³ <http://www.businessforafairminimumwage.org/news/00135/research-shows-minimum-wage-increases-do-not-cause-job-loss>

¹⁴ <http://www.stpaulsinstitute.org.uk/dialogue/robert-gordon/opinion/2015/oct/22/-review-of-postcapitalism-a-guide-to-our>

¹⁵ Ibid.