

Just Faith Project

During August 2014 SCIAF, Justice and Peace Scotland, and Mission Matters Scotland issued a joint statement that they had joined together across Scotland to form Just Faith, with the aim of sharing the social justice work of the Church, and that the group will be staging events around Scotland to encourage Catholics to connect their faith with action for change.

The initial idea stemmed from research undertaken during 2013 which examined how the Justice & Peace organisation was run, whether it could be improved and how well it was understood and perceived by Catholics at grass roots level. The findings concluded that work needed to be done to raise awareness of J & P activity and to take steps to re-stimulate interest in the work of the organisation, thereby attracting new members especially from younger age groups. This latter point was particularly important given the age profile of existing members.

It should be appreciated that, although they are very separate entities with their own objectives, there is and has been a close connection between Justice & Peace, SCIAF and Mission Matters Scotland owing to the issues which are common to each agency. As a result all three agencies shared the findings of the research. The timing of this coincided with the publication of Pope Francis' encyclical *Evangelii Gaudium*, instructing a radical renewal in how the Church and its mission should be run. It is fair to conclude that the Holy Father's encyclical acted as the catalyst which resulted in the collaborative venture we now see in the form of Just Faith. Just Faith aims to increase awareness of the work undertaken by all three agencies focussing on their complementary yet separate functions with the ultimate aim of:

- Re-enforcing the connections between the agencies within the life of the Church nationally and locally.
- Strengthening lay formation on Catholic Social Teaching and global justice issues.
- Building effective and long lasting relationships with individuals and groups within the Church to achieve their mission.
- Increase and better connect the range of activity within the Church at local level in support of social justice.

The programme, although aimed at motivating the laity, seeks to engage the essential support of the clergy to underpin the spiritual and moral aspects of the initiative at each stage of its development, and to encourage its promotion. It is recognised that further investment in outreach is required if all three agencies are to grow their engagement within Catholic communities and achieve their mission. The Just Faith project will test the feasibility of joint working at diocesan level to better achieve the individual aims of each agency, recognising that although we are one Church, each has its own mission, method and loyal following. That said, joint working will only be desirable where it allows each agency to better achieve their individual aims. This must be tested in practice through the evaluation of the pilot project initially being rolled out in the dioceses of Argyll & the Isles, Dunkeld and Paisley. It is intended that the experience gained and the outcome will allow the building of a sustainable outreach programme for the longer term.