



Demonstration against the arms trade and military spending

Build a future based on nonviolence

Theresa Alessandro

The term 'structural violence' is used to express the truth that we humans build-in injustice and inequality in our societies, in such a way that people are harmed.

As the world tries to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic, this structural violence has been laid bare. People whose work we rely on are among the most low paid and their working conditions may be the most precarious.

Those factors contribute to the same people being among those most at risk from Covid-19. We know that those most at risk have been overlooked at points during this crisis and we also know that large sums of money are spent on weapons rather than healthcare.

The UN has called for a global ceasefire so that the world can focus on humanitarian efforts at this time. While 'reading the signs of the times', the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative, a project of Pax Christi International, has been continuing its work to increase our understanding and commitment to active nonviolence.

We can understand nonviolence as a spirituality, a way of life and a program of societal action. It has been called 'a roadmap... to the future envisioned in Laudato Si'.

We already know that Pope Francis understands the value and process of nonviolence. He promoted this way of being in his 2017 World Peace Day message: "In the most local and ordinary situations and in the international order, may nonviolence become the hallmark of our decisions, our relationships and our actions, and indeed of political life in all its forms."

Practical examples of nonviolence include: promoting negotiation and conflict transformation; the interruption of violence; restorative and distributive justice; accompaniment

and civilian-based defence; disarmament; building and training social movements.

Most recently the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative launched an appeal which acknowledges all Pope Francis has done and calls for a companion reflection to *Laudato Si'*. Using the 'roadmap' image, the appeal suggests that such a reflection, by illuminating nonviolence for us, will help us work towards a world in which we prioritise integral human development and a more sustainable "common home". **We encourage you to find out more about the Appeal and consider signing it. See <https://nonviolencejustpeace.net/2020/06/23/pope-francis-appeal/>**

Theresa Alessandro is the director of Pax Christi (UK).



Your opinions: Letters to the Editor

We want to hear your views on the big Catholic issues.

Write to: Joseph Kelly, Editor, The Universe, Universe Media Group Ltd, 2nd Floor, Oakland House, 76 Talbot Road, Manchester M16 0PQ E-mail: joseph.kelly@thecatholicuniverse.com. Please keep letters concise; we reserve the right to edit.

Protect the at-home mums first

I was intrigued by the Universe article, *MP Maria Miller looks to protect mum's new jobs*. What about protecting mothers who have no jobs and are putting their babies and families first and 'protecting' them?

How can you be a good mother if you are part-time? All my babies woke me up every night, twice a night, for their first year and their needs were met. I, as their mother, could only do that. What employer wants a tired employee making decisions and handling machinery? Is that fair to both child and employer?

Tests have been done on children in nurseries and it is found that stress hormones are high. It is wrong young children are separated from their mothers.

Family life is being eroded all the time for 'the economy'. Parents scarcely know their children what with 'wrap-around care, after school clubs and school camps in the holidays. No wonder adult children make use of care homes when elderly frail are failing! Governments do not encourage family life because of the economy, ignoring the social benefits of the country. Children and old people are too much trouble; it is easier to put children in nurseries and for a mother to go out to work.

The co-parenting fad will fade and fail eventually because it has been tried in many previous times, and men cannot be truly mothers (and vice versa).

If God had wanted men and women to be the same He would have created Adam and Eve and all their descendants – that's us – identically without differences between the genders.

The best example of family life in the Holy Family, St Joseph, was the spouse of Our Lady and supported and protected her so she could care for her nuclear family.

There is no shame in poverty and the Holy Family knew poverty at times; just think of the first night! There was more poverty in the old days but people were happier, and less anti-social behaviour was about.

Mothers in the home often take up the slack created by adults who are working, looking after the children of others. Mothers in the home do not just drink coffee all day; they volunteer when they can, they repair damaged things to keep costs down, prepare good meals and are attentive to non-verbal signals of all their children and care for the extended family as much as possible.

Family life is so fragile nowadays that many parents do not know how to parent their children, and unless governments sit up, the situation will only get worse.

**Catherine Venture
St Austell**



Licence fee is a gift for all to enjoy

So, your noble columnist Leon Spence is no longer going to pay his licence fee, as he doesn't watch BBC.

Clearly, nor ITV, Channel 4 or Channel 5 either as, while it may seem perverse, you're not allowed to watch the advert-funded channels either if you don't have a TV licence, despite those channels not receiving any funding from the fee.

Nor, of course, will he be able to listen to Radios 1-6, nor can his children or wife. Oh, and he can't access local radio either, so that's Radio Leicester out.

So how is your columnist going to access news from the world on a day-to-day basis? Going off his columns, via the poisoned eyes of biased commentators at the *Daily Mail* and *Telegraph/Times*. My, what a warped view of life he will experience.

How ironic, too, that he really enjoys Britbox – a subscription service dominated by programmes funded by BBC licence payers of the past. Does he not wonder where future Britbox content will come from?

Does he also not understand that by retreating from his contribution to the central pool he directly impacts on the quality of future viewing for poorer members of the community, possibly elderly, whether the licence is free to them or not?

Paying the licence fee is like taking your children to be vaccinated. There is a herd immunity involved for the good of us all – or in this case, a herd payment. If we all pay, particularly those who can easily afford it, the BBC is well funded and can produce quality entertainment for all in society to enjoy. Poorer people who cannot go elsewhere – who don't have the resources of the Spence family to pay for Sky, Netflix, Britbox et al – will have to make do with poor quality public service broadcasting, to their detriment. This is life as experienced by people in the United States.

In the US, subscription to a cable

channel is a must have, such is the paucity of the viewing on offer for free. Does Leon want the UK to follow that path?

If well-paid middle-class people like Leon, who can easily afford the licence fee, stop paying it, the quality of the BBC's output will obviously diminish.

Those pensioners who cannot afford to go elsewhere for their TV will pay for his decision.

It's selfish; if we all pay, we will all have a broadcaster whose output we value.

Reconsider, sir.

**Michael Flynn
Preston**

Yes, let's throw the licence away

I agreed wholeheartedly with Leon Spence's article in last week's *Universe* re the reintroduction of the television licence fee for over-75s, when he said he would no longer be paying for one.

Another point to remember, though, is that scammers are going to have a field day.

I received my first scam email last week, and there are no doubt more to come. Unfortunately, many elderly people will be caught out.

I hope the BBC will be prepared to support those whose bank accounts have been emptied by sophisticated crooks.

**Edward James
Brighton**

No trust in warped Covid statistics

Matt Hancock, the Health Secretary, has ordered a review into recorded deaths after a positive Covid-19 test. Recorded deaths following a negative test should also be considered.

My 99-year-old father died in hospital of old age. His death certificate quoted Covid-19 even though he had tested negative for the virus just hours before he died. This was his second negative test.

I have had no confidence in the Covid-19 death statistics ever since, believing them to be over-inflated and a political football.

**Christopher J Templeton
London SW1**

Force is needed to rid streets of crime

Kneeling on the neck of someone armed with a knife is not excessive force when an unarmed police officer attempts to disarm that person and place him in handcuffs, as happened recently.

The officer's immediate suspension seems harsh when he was doing his job.

He should be supported by his superiors for removing a knife from the streets, not castigated by them.

**Tom Leach
Somerset**