

Intro: At the ACTA open meeting in April 2013 at Leeds Trinity University, Katharine Salmon, a teacher, gave this personal vision of a future Church where young people will play an essential part in a dialogue which links their faith to their evident concern for justice.

COMMUNITIES IN RENEWAL AND HOPE FOR JUSTICE.

My first encounter with the documents of Vatican II was as a French and Religious Studies teacher and volunteer with the LSP when I was invited to our Mother House in France to help rewrite the statutes for our Lay Fraternity with the help of the Vatican II documents relating to the Religious and the Laity. We had a small number of lay members at that time and our task was to bridge that gap between the commitment of those women who had entered the lay equivalent of Religious Life in a permanent commitment, and those of us who wished to commit to the community for a year at a time. Studying *Lumen Gentium*, *Christifideles Laici*, and *Vita Consecrata*, I learned what I could give to the church as a young lay woman and was inspired by the aggiornamento I saw in these documents, and how they linked to the Catechism which had just then come out in English. I witnessed at first hand the excitement of being at the beginning of a process of renewal and having our Association approved by Rome. In the years following this in the early years of the C21st, communities grew as lay men and women, married and single, sought to live out our vocation as committed lay people alongside the sisters.

This was something that over the years gave me a great deal of fulfilment as our community grew to 23 in Leeds, and over 150 in the UK. I was able to introduce my secondary school students to the Sisters, and to members of the different ecclesial movements I knew, and took groups to WYDs in Paris and Rome. Yet something was missing, and this became more evident as many young people enjoyed the visits and retreats we made, and engaged with the spiritual life of the communities, yet what I realised was missing for many of them was that commitment to justice and peace activism which was what drew so many of them when they got disillusioned with liturgy – they would still do CAFOD fast day or Pax Christi or march for Make Poverty History, but lost that link between activism and faith lived out in a vibrant parish or religious community.

I was privileged to see the lively renewal of religious life and lay ministry lived alongside religious community and ecumenical activity, and to be part of groups of young people actively engaged with faith and justice. Yet so often now it is that link between faith lived out in daily life and justice. When I ask the teenagers I work with on a daily basis what engages their faith, the most common responses are commitment to charity work, volunteering in a hospice or nursing home, or planning to take a gap year to work abroad. If this fits with a religious organisation, so be it, if not the important thing is to make the world a better

place-information about justice organisations goes viral, as they say, so fast via twitter and Facebook, the main forms of communication for any teenager. The church has been slow to engage with young people through social media, though I have now seen the new app allowing them to see what the Pope is doing! It concerns me that so many young people feel excluded from the dialogue that is going on, or token young people may, occasionally be consulted. We already have gaps we need to bridge, and through listening and engaging with teenagers where they are on their faith journeys that we will help. Added to that may be the desire to bring a stronger faith element into the social-justice groups and to foster a culture of vocation. We can get thousands at Christian festivals, but many of those do not see their place in a parish. However we go forward from here, my prayer is that we can share the dialogue with those of all ages and backgrounds who will part of the renewal of the people of God.

Katharine Salmon