

The Changing Face of Britain National Celebration Sat 7 Nov 2009

Around 400 people attended the national day of celebrations at Westminster Cathedral to mark the 25th Anniversary of CARJ. Also joining the celebrations were the Archbishop of Westminster, other Bishops, Ethnic Chaplains and Clergy.

Archbishop Nichols challenges CARJ to keep building the bridges

Archbishop Vincent Nichols challenged the Catholic Association for Racial Justice (CARJ) to act on the challenge laid down by Pope Benedict's latest Encyclical Caritas in Veritate to use globalisation to make us brothers and sisters. Celebrating mass at Westminster Cathedral as part of the 25th anniversary celebration, Archbishop Nichols paid tribute to "the steady and structured" progress of CARJ since it began. "Love and truth have been central as it responded to needs," said Archbishop Nichols. He referred to the difficulties with the Human Rights Act, the Equalities and Human Rights Commission and the new Single Equalities Act in finding a balance between different groups and individuals.

Others concelebrating the mass included Archbishop Peter Smith of Cardiff, Archbishop Bernard Longley of Birmingham, Bishop Kieran Conry of Arundel and Brighton, Bishop Pat Lynch Southwark Auxiliary, Bishop Declan Lang of Clifton, Bishop John Rawsthorne of Hallam, Bishop Brian Nobel of Shrewsbury and Bishop Howard Tripp and many other Ethnic Chaplains and Clergy.

Bishop Pat Lynch chaired the earlier National Meeting in which Labour MP

John Battle said there was still much to be done "to build an inclusive Church and society." Mr Battle recalled that despite legislative moves like the passing of the Race Relations Act that racism is still there and society is not as tolerant as some believe. The Leeds MP illustrated how the global has very much become local in his own constituency with asylum seekers and migrants from all over the world coming in. He recalled how the conflict between Hutus and Tutsis had erupted in microcosm between two families living in the same block in his constituency. "It is a challenge to the Church to address the local. We have to ask whether there is a moral responsibility to know the person next door. If we don't act now how can we build a community of brothers and sisters?" said Mr Battle, who suggested that when it comes to who lives next door, many people have quite a list of what they don't want. "The Church has to mix solidarity and prayer together in real action. We must reach out to neighbours so community can be built between brothers and sisters in their own neighbourhoods."

Fellow Labour MP Jon Cruddas emphasised the importance of CARJ's work over the next few years. "Politicians appear to be withdrawing from the central issues of distributional and racial justice; more beholden to powerful media and corporate elites. At the same time the 'shopping and celebrity' culture empties out our conception of humanity to one built around the consumption of more and more things; of self obsession and narcissism," said Mr Cruddas. "It is within the

church that we find this conception of modernity being challenged. Here we find a different approach to self realisation and humanity; one that pivots around a fundamental belief in equality. CARJ has played a leading role in developing and sustaining this position for a quarter of a century. Long may it continue. We are entering more austere times. The work of CARJ is even more vital than ever."

Church of England vicar of Holy Trinity Dalston and chaplain to the Queen **Reverend Rose Hudson Wilkin** called for the creation of a sense of belonging toward those coming from outside to new communities in this country. "You cannot get belonging if you are not welcomed. The Church must lead the way in giving a good welcome," said Reverend Hudson-Wilkin, who emphasised the need to make space. "If others are to feel a sense of belonging we must make space in the community," said Reverend Hudson-Wilkin, who called for those in communities to come forward and take responsibility. "We must reflect on the Changing Face of Britain rejoicingly not grudgingly – all of us are made in the image of God. We are our brother's keeper so must strive for real community cohesion," said Reverend Rose.

A new annual St Martin de Porres medal was introduced to be awarded on an annual basis. The first five recipients were CARJ's first president Bishop Howard Tripp, the first chair Tony Lobo, Yogi Sutton, former chair and now vice-chair Haynes Baptiste and trustee Richard Zipfel.

Khola Hasan a Muslim working on interfaith dialogue told how the Muslim community feel under attack today. "Muslims make up 3 per cent of the population yet make up 10 per cent of the prison population," said Khola Hasan, who recalled the rise of Islamophobia over recent years. "The whole community is being demonised." She recalled how on the recent Question Time programme with BNP leader Nick Griffin the panellists had been quick to pick up racist and homophobic comments but not his attacks on Islam. Khola said that the tabloid media had a lot to answer for in terms of misrepresenting Muslims. "Muslims are portrayed as very violent and extreme," said Khola Hasan. "Faith communities do an amazing amount of charitable work and Muslims are at the forefront of that but it does not make the news."

Addressing the final session of the day with young people writer **Bonnie Greer** recalled her recent experiences as a member of the Question Time panel with Nick Griffin. She described the BNP leader as "nothing but hot air and mirrors." Ms Greer expressed her hope that they young people would "not be reluctant to tackle ignorance."

Drawn from articles by **Paul Donovan** in the Catholic Times and the Universe.