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Veg4Lent 2003

Welcome to Veg4Lent Newsletter No. 2

1st May 2003

Chairperson: Don Gwillim --- General Secretary: Antony Neesham
Secretary (U.S.A.): Sue Grisham

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Dr Stephen Kaufman: CVA co-chair - Nathan Braun: CVA President / Founder.

Veg4Lent U.K.

Foresta, Pines Road
Liphook, GU30 7PL
Chairman@veg4lent.org

**An ecumenical non-profit organisation dedicated
to the promotion of a Vegetarian Diet for Lent as
contemporary adaptation of an ancient tradition.**

Veg4Lent U.S.A.

2624 Ridgeland Avenue
Waukegan, IL 60085
Sue@jimgrisham.com



**Christian Vegetarian
Association.**
Official Sponsor for
Veg4Lent



IVU Member

The Veg4Lent 2003 Initiative is now over, so a big thank you to all our supporters for the donations we received and the significant amount of time and money they spent sending letters to the churches in their area. Would you please send me a brief report giving the approximate number & type of letters sent (initial letter or letter to the churches) and the area and denominations covered. I know that you are all probably appalled by the lack of response but please remember, unlike the Bishops letter below, the letter to the clergy does not request a response from the clergy, only a request to display our flyer on their notice board. This approach is intended to encourage their congregation to reply rather than the clergy. So any response will be slow and, if like Veg4Lent 2002, enquiries will be received throughout the year. However, please inform the Veg4Lent team of any response you do receive and forward your thoughts and suggestions for Veg4Lent 2004, good or bad, we can learn from both. In the mean time, we have produced this newsletter which is devoted to our letter to the Anglican and Roman Catholic Bishops, our replies and the ensuring press coverage. I believe that the press now see Veg4Lent as a David, fighting the Goliath of Christianity's indifference to the suffering of God's creation. Please hold firm to the belief that an initiative that proclaims God's love, compassion and mercy, must eventually win the day and bring God's blessings on all who take part.

Please also consider sending a personal letter to your own Bishop (ref: my letter on page 6), your letter would ensure that the issue is kept alive over the following months. You could for instance, express how surprised or appalled you are at their apparent indifference to a Christian initiative that proclaims a non-violent lifestyle. A lifestyle which would dramatically reduce the amount of suffering mankind inflicts on, not only himself but the rest of God's creation. An initiative that encourages what we pray for every Sunday; God's peaceable kingdom here on Earth.

Veg4Lent's initial letter to the Bishops dated 12th February 2003

Your Grace,

We would appreciate your thoughts on the emergence of vegetarian advocacy within today's Christian community. There are five concerns which we've raised in the interest of enhancing understanding through honest discourse:

- 1) Do you believe that vegetarian campaigns can contain important spiritual truths which may, in time, become assimilated within a more widespread Christian approach to life?
- 2) Would you empathise with any perceived disparity between a wealth of acquired Christian insights and their often arbitrary practical limitations? For example: "Conscience is the aboriginal vicar of Christ" - Cardinal Newman.. *
- 3) Is there not a long-term Biblical imperative, to lead God's faithful towards a more merciful, peaceable and, yet, practicable future?
- 4) Ethical and compassionate awareness are continually progressing within any healthy society. Would you accept that "heartless" religious attitudes and dogma may serve to damage Christian witness?
- 5) Would you consider endorsing this year's Vegetarian Lent 2003 initiative?

We look forward to whatever reflections you may wish to graciously share upon what is, after all, an essentially grave moral issue.

Yours in Christ,

* Jeremiah foretold a time when the will of God would be written on every human heart.

Variation of same insight "Conscience - the quite voice of God within man".

"The natural law is nothing other than the light of understanding placed in us by God: through it we know what we must do and what we must avoid" - St. Thomas Aquinas.

"Thou shalt not kill does not apply to murder of one's own kind only but to all living beings, and this commandment was inscribed in the human breast long before it was proclaimed from Sinai". - Leo Tolstoy

How did your Diocese respond?

Positive thoughtful Response.

*
Negative Response

No Asterisk
No Response

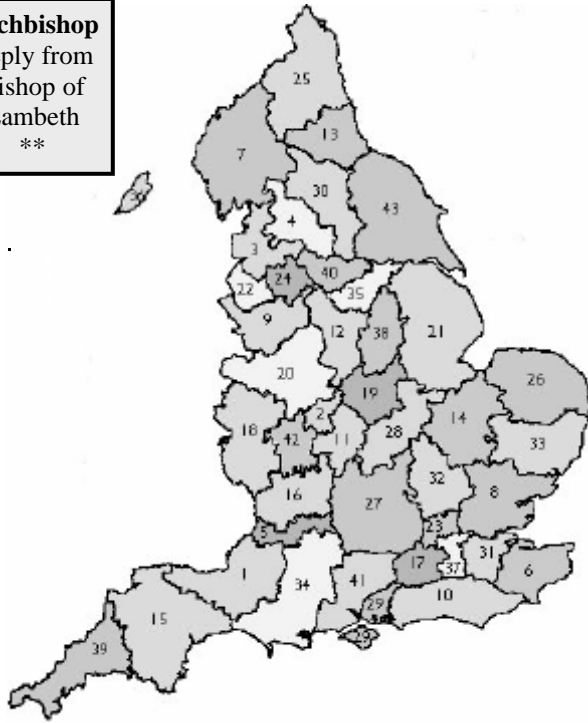
**
Kind but uncommitted

Anglican Diocese

Response - 33%

Archbishop
Reply from Bishop of Lambeth
**

- 1. Bath & Wells
- 2. Birmingham **
- 3. Blackburn (Burnley) **
- 4. Bradford *
- 5. Bristol
- 6. Canterbury (see Archbishop)
- 7. Carlisle **
- 8. Chelmsford (Bradwell) ***
- 9. Chester ***
- 10. Chichester
- 11. Coventry
- 12. Derby
- 13. Durham
- 14. Ely, Europe
- 15. Exeter
- 16. Gloucester
- 17. Guildford
- 18. Hereford ***
- 19. Leicester
- 20. Lichfield
- 21. Lincoln
- 22. Liverpool

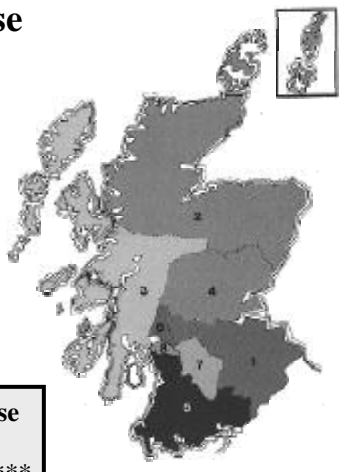


- 23. London ***
- 24. Manchester
- 25. Newcastle
- 26. Norwich ***
- 27. Oxford ***
- 28. Peterborough
- 29. Portsmouth
- 30. Ripon & Leeds ***
- 31. Rochester
- 32. St. Albans
- 33. St Edmundsbury & Ipswich ***
- 34. Salisbury
- 35. Sheffield
- 36. Sodor & Man
- 37. Southwark
- 38. Southwell ***
- 39. Truro
- 40. Wakefield **
- 41. Winchester
- 42. Worcester
- 43. York **

Roman Catholic Diocese

Response - 33%

ArchBishops House
Westminster
Private Secretary. ***
Vicar General ***



- Arundel & Brighton
- Birmingham
- Brentwood
- Cardiff
- Clifton
- East Anglia
- Hallam
- Hexham & Newcastle *
- Lancaster
- Leeds **
- Liverpool *
- Menevia
- Middlesbrough
- Northampton
- Nottingham
- Plymouth
- Portsmouth **
- Salford ***
- Shrewsbury
- Southwark **
- Westminster **
- Wrexham

- 1. Archdiocese of St. Andrews and Edinburgh. ***
- 2. Diocese of Aberdeen.
- 3. Diocese of Argyll and the Isles.
- 4. Diocese of Dunkeld.
- 5. Diocese of Galloway.
- 6. Archdiocese of Glasgow. ***
- 7. Diocese of Motherwell.
- 8. Diocese of Paisley.

Anglican Letters

From Lambeth Palace

The Archbishop of Canterbury has asked me to write to thank you for your recent letter to him.

Williams recognises your very natural wish for an individual personal response to your questions, but he simply is unable to reply personally to all of the considerable number of letters he receives every day. Also, he hopes that you will understand that he must address the sorts of issues you raise in a way and at a time of his own choosing. I am confident that you will hear Dr Williams speak unequivocally on a whole range of issues during his time as Archbishop.

In these circumstances he does not feel able to give answers to the questions you ask on an immediate and individual basis.

Rt Revd Richard Llewelin

The Archbishop of York

Thank you for your letter of 12 February.

While I have considerable sympathy with those who are vegetarians within the Christian community, I would not wish to endorse the Vegetarian Lent 2003 initiative.

Most Revd & Rt Hon David Hope

Bishop of Birmingham

Thank you for your letter of the 12th February. I have to say that I am quite puzzled by your letter, particularly the questions. I have many questions about your questions, if you see what I mean. For example, I am puzzled by what you mean by the phrase 'Conscience is the aboriginal vicar of Christ'. I would also like to challenge your assertion that ethical and compassionate awareness are continually progressing within any healthy society.

As to endorsing this year's Vegetarian Lent 2003 initiative, I have already written to the clergy of the Diocese to use this Lent as a time of prayerful reflection on our Diocesan Initiative *Called to a New Kingdom*. To endorse another initiative at this stage would be very unhelpful.

However, I wish your initiative success. As for my own Lenten observance, I will heed the Lord's command not to make a public show of it.

Rt Revd Dr John Sentamu

Bishop of Burnley (Blackburn)

Thank you for your letter of the 12th February.

I am not a vegetarian, though respect those who are, and really feel that I cannot support your initiative given my own stand.

Rt Revd John W. Goddard

Bishop of Bradford

Thank you for your letter about a vegetarian diet for lent.

As I am not a vegetarian it would be hypocritical of me to support your initiative.

Rt Revd David C James

Bishop of Carlisle

Thank you for your letter regarding the emergence of vegetarian advocacy within today's Christian community. A vegetarian diet is a choice individuals, among them Christians, quite legitimately make to their benefit. I am, however, not convinced from scripture that to be a vegetarian is a moral imperative.

Right Revd Graham Dow

Bishop of Bradwell (Chelmsford)

Thank you very much indeed for writing to me on 12th February regarding your campaign for a vegetarian diet for Lent.

For a couple of years of my own life our own family here were vegetarian for a number of reasons, not least because of the expense of meat products. However, we are now meat eaters once again although we could not say that we eat a great deal of meat.

At Lent I think it is helpful to reduce one's diet if, like the majority of the British population, we are actually eating more than is good for the human body.

However, I would want to leave it up to each and every individual to decide how they might wish to do that during the Lenten period, but I am nevertheless grateful to you for bringing to the attention of Christians the option for a balanced vegetarian diet if they believe that that would be of help to others and to themselves.

Rt Revd Dr Laurie Green

Bishop of Chester

Thank you for your letter. I hope you will understand if I do not provide a full reply to the serious and complex issues to which you refer.

I am unconvinced by vegetarian campaigns, although I have deep misgivings about some aspects of modern animal rearing. I am willing to and where possible actually do, pay a premium price for meat from freely reared animals. I keep a few hens, in a fully free-range situation, as a personal protest against some modern farming practices. Equally, I understand the pressures which farmers are under, and not least the milk farmers of Cheshire.

Your question concerning Lent is important. I do regret the passing of a formal period of restraint, fasting and penitence in the approach to Easter. But how would this best be recovered? A vegetarian commitment for Lent would need to be looked at alongside other options.

Rt Revd Peter Forster

Bishop of Hereford

Thank you for your letter of the 12th February.

I do not believe that vegetarianism is “an essentially grave moral issue”. I believe that it is a matter on which opinions differ, and I respect those, who are vegetarians. One of our sons is, and has been from an early age, out of strong convictions. But I do not believe that there is any necessary link between vegetarianism and the Christian faith.

I believe strongly that animals kept for food need to be well treated, without any distress at the time of slaughter. I know that this can be done very well indeed, and that good husbandry and good abattoir practice are entirely compatible with animals being part of God’s creation.

You will gather that I am not able to endorse the Vegetarian Lent 2003 initiative.

Rt Revd John Oliver

Bishop of London

Thank you for your letter about Lent. I enclose a recent article on the subject.

I do believe that as we seek to make a Christian response to the unsustainable contemporary project of growth without limit, with no end in view beyond the process itself, the reinvigoration of the Christian Lenten practice is very desirable. I am personally altering my practice this Lent beginning with Sexagesima Sunday, and would prefer to make any public statements when my personal practice conforms to what I have understood of the Church’s tradition in this matter.

With all good wishes and thanks for our partnership in the Gospel.

Rt Revd Richard Chartres

Bishop of Norwich

Thank you for your letter last month.

I fully understand why some vegetarians do not eat meat out of moral conviction, and I regard it as one of many moral choices which are compatible with Christianity but not demanded by Christian faith. It’s the use of the term “advocacy” in your letter which concerns me since that term seems increasingly used to denote the moral choice or lifestyle which the advocate considers markedly superior to any other. Gradually that sort of advocacy moves from commending a particular moral choice to imposing it upon others. That’s where my difficulty would lie on this issue.

This comes with all good wishes.

Rt Revd Graham James

Bishop of Oxford (In response to a letter from Ann Priestner)

Thank you for your note and enclosures. The issue is certainly one seriously worth considering.

Rt Revd Richard Harries

Bishop of Ripon & Leeds

Thank you for your Letter. I believe that there can be advantages for us all in adopting particular diets at particular points in our lives and Lent is one opportunity to do this. There is, however, a danger in confusing the adoption of a personal discipline for a short time with tackling a ‘Grave Moral Issue’. I have listened hard to the arguments of vegetarians and vegans and believe that the emphasis on care for God’s creation is an important one. However, I am not convinced that the vegetarian way is the only legitimate way forward for Christians. Most of your questions are very difficult to answer sensibly and are much more appropriate as discussion topics than questions demanding a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer. Clearly for example the answer to questions 3 and 4 is yes but the implications of those answers are complex. I fear I simply do not understand what ‘Conscience is the aboriginal vicar of Christ’ can mean.

I hope that Christian vegetarians will continue to make their views known clearly within the Church so that this particular perspective on the Christian gospel is properly heard. However, I do not myself believe that the New Testament commends a vegetarian way of life though neither does it exclude it.

Rt Revd John R Packer

Bishop of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich

Thank you for your letter of 12th February. The veg4lent initiative has captured a lot of interest and I know there are a number of people in this diocese who want to explore it further.

I have found it very difficult to respond to your five questions because four of them contain so many assumptions and overtones that simple answers are impossible. I don’t mean this to be a judgement on your intentions but the questions are obviously not free-standing.

In the light of that, I do not feel able to endorse this year’s Vegetarian Lent 2003 initiative.

Rt Revd Richard Lewis

Bishop of Southwell

Thank you for your letter to the Bishop of Southwell of 12th February 2003.

The Bishop is away from his office at the moment and has asked me to reply on his behalf. The matters you raise are important for the way we live together in society and I know the Bishop would want me to assure you that he supports the continuing debate on the ethical implications of living upto our Christian vocation to set an example in the world.

Ven. Canon Robin Turner - Chaplain

Bishop of Wakefield

Thank you for your letter to the Bishop of Wakefield asking for his thoughts on the emergence of vegetarian advocacy within today’s Christian community.

The Rt Revd Nigel McCulloch has recently left Wakefield to become Bishop of Manchester, and we are not expecting the newly appointed Bishop of Wakefield to take up his post until well into the summer. Therefore, I am sorry that we are unable to assist you.

Revd Mark Beach - Chaplain

Roman Catholic Letters

Archbishop's House

The Cardinal thanks you for your letter and has asked me to make a reply on his behalf. He is sorry that he would not be sufficiently well acquainted with the practice of vegetarianism to make a significant contribution to your discussions.

One comment that might usefully be made would be in answer to your third question. Christianity - drawing from the Biblical Scriptures as a source of Revelation - would always seek mercy and peace, because these are central themes in the life of Jesus Christ and his teaching. However, the idealism and perfection to which we are invited in Christ is inevitably flawed by the weakness of human nature. It is for each Christian to seek to become more like Christ in their individual journey of faith and in their communal response to the Gospel message.

Mgr John Arnold - Vicar general

Archbishop's House

The Cardinal has asked me to thank you for your letter of 12 February and for sending him details of "a vegetarian diet for Lent". I am sure that you will understand if I do not answer all the questions that you raise but please rest assured that the Cardinal is sympathetic to all vegetarians.

It is perhaps worth me pointing out that the Christian tradition for Lent is one of prayer, fasting and alms-giving and that fasting is never done just for its own sake, but in order to put the individual in touch with those many millions of people throughout the world who have no food.

Once again, thank you for writing to the Cardinal.

Revd Mark O'Toole - Private Secretary

Archbishop's House

Thank you for your letter of 12 February. I am sorry that it has taken some time to respond.

I was interested to read the five concerns that you raise in your letter. It is always good to hear of the different ways in which people are preparing to observe the season of Lent. I hope this holy season will be a fruitful time for all of us as we try to deepen our faith in Christ, and our commitment to His Gospel.

Rt Revd Bernard Longley - Auxiliary Bishop of Westminster

Bishop of Hexham & Newcastle

Thank you for your letter asking for my thoughts on the emergence of the vegetarian advocacy within today's Christian community. Among the many important concerns that are current, I think it has no place. I regard vegetarianism as a personal fad which people should be free to follow if they wish, but they should not impose their views on anybody else.

Rt Revd Ambrose Griffiths

Bishop Of Leeds

I am writing to acknowledge your letter of 12 February about promoting a vegetarian diet for Lent. I shall certainly reflect on the questions contained in your letter although I must be honest in indicating that, while I gladly support individual vegetarians, I would not promote vegetarianism all round

Rt Revd David Konstant

Bishop of Liverpool

Bishop Malone acknowledges receipt of your letter.

Rt Revd Vincent Malone

Bishop of Portsmouth

Thank you very much for your letter of 12th February 2003 about vegetarian advocacy.

I think the choice about vegetarianism is very much up to the individual and I would not wish to impose my views, one way or the other, on anybody who wants to move in this way.

Rt Revd Crispian Hollis

Bishop of Salford

I wish to acknowledge your letter of the 12th February.

The concept of fasting and mortification during Lent is part of the Christian tradition. I would not wish to blur the issue by linking that concept with a "campaign". There is a risk of campaigns high-jacking moral concepts and the focus ends solely on the ends of the campaign, rather than the invitation to grow in the image and likeness of God, which is the moral end. So, while I wish you well, I do not wish to endorse the VEG4LENT Campaign.

Rt Revd Terence J Brain

Auxiliary Bishop of Southwark

Thank you for your letter. I regret I don't have time to respond to all your points but I hope to reflect on them

Rt Revd John Hine.

Archbishop of St Andrews and Edinburgh

I wish to acknowledge your letter to me dated 12 February 2003.

I note your concerns and will share them with some of my advisers on such issues.

I am not in a position to endorse a vegetarian Lent initiative — but wish you every blessing.

Most Revd Keith Patrick

Archbishop of Glasgow

Without wishing to respond in detail to each of your questions, let me say that I readily defend the right of vegetarians to choose for themselves a diet which avoids meat and meat products, and admire, for their underlying motive, their so doing. It is not, however, a choice I make for myself, nor for others when I act as host. I have to confess I see no imperative in acting otherwise nor any virtue were I to do so, unless prompted by conscience. I do not therefore consider that I can appropriately endorse this year's Vegetarian Lent 2003 initiative. On the other hand, as I stated above, I defend your right to take it and would, were you my guests, make appropriate accommodation to meet your diet.

Most Revd Mario Conti

A selection of our replies written by John Michael Gilheany

John Ryan



'But not, of course,
archbishops and cardinals'

© Catholic Herald 7.3.03

To the Archbishops House

Our thanks are due to your two assistants, Rev'd Mark O'Toole and Mgr. John Arnold, in conveying your appreciated sympathy towards our concerns. Indeed, Mgr. Arnold provided the most considered reply of any, to one of the main issues raised by our survey.

Please find enclosed a summary of our impressions based on the episcopal response as a whole.

May I also assure you of my prayers for God's grace, embrace and fortitude, in your present adversity.

With respect and good wishes, in Christ.

To the Archbishop of Glasgow

Thank you very much for your thoughts and magnanimity, in response to our survey of 12th February.

We appreciate the goodwill and sense of hospitality conveyed within your letter. Indeed, a vegetarian host will usually make considerable culinary efforts, to ensure a satisfying, nutritious and fulfilling meal, without compromise to taste or variety. Any one of us would certainly "go the extra mile", were you a guest.

Thanks once again for allocating your time to our concerns. Hopefully the enclosed circular will be of further interest and consideration.

With respect and good wishes, in Christ.

To the Bishop of Salford

Thank you very much for acknowledging our survey of 12th February and the considerations which you conveyed.

Please find enclosed a summary of our impressions based on the Episcopal response as a whole. The main concern of your letter, in relation to Lent being "a time to grow in the image and likeness of God" -which would presumably entail a more benevolent stature- has indeed been considered and addressed.

I would also agree with your point, in that the term "campaign" can have undue connotations, and for that reason I prefer to convey "Veg4Lent" as an initiative, endeavour, concept or simply, an idea.

Our thanks once again for taking the time to share your reflections. With respect and good wishes, in Christ.

To the Bishop of Hexham & Newcastle

Thank you for your letter in reply to our survey of 12th February.

I should inform you that the notion of vegetarianism as a "personal fad", stood isolated both in its lack of contemporary depth and basic regard for the integrity of creation.

I can only pray for those who, having read of your views, may adopt a more callous attitude, towards animal exploitation and abuse. I pray for the animals who will suffer for the sake of such folly and I pray for you.

The increase in moral generosity within our church is a response to Our Lord's grace and presence in today's world.

The enclosed circular based on the Episcopal response to our letter, as a whole, may or may not broaden your understanding.

Yours Sincerely in Christ,

My personal letter to the Bishop of Portsmouth who failed to respond.

As a member of St Mary's church (Bramshott and Liphook), I am writing to register my surprise and disappointment at your failure to reply to our letter dated 12 February 2003, in which Veg4Lent requested your thoughts on the emergence of a vegetarian advocacy within today's Christian community.

Considering that our Diocese, only last year, spent a considerable amount of time and money, hosting a conference which encouraged our care for the environment. I was expecting at least a recognition of the practical benefits of a vegetarian diet, in preserving rather than destroying God's creation. Confirming that, by making Jesus Lord of our lives, we should follow His example and consider, where ever possible, adjusting our lifestyle to reflect His mercy and compassion. To be a blessing, rather than a curse, to the rest of God's creation.

Removing meat from our diet does not involve extra time or money and should not therefore, detract us from other grave issues within the world. We hope & pray that Veg4Lent will only invoke a genuine desire to show our love for God, by being good stewards and caring for all that He has made.

I therefore respectfully ask you to read the enclosed ecumenical letter and to reconsider whether the truth it proclaims is important enough to merit a response.

St Gargyle's



Simon had given up chocolate
for Lent

© Church Times 11.4.03

Ecumenical (circular) letter

re: An open ecumenical response to Episcopal correspondence, in reply to our letter of 12th February 2003.

The following address is an accompaniment to individual letters to the Church leaders, who kindly engaged or acknowledged our earlier concerns. It is however being sent to all Bishops within the U.K. as well as the Church press.

A range of sentiments have been received and, unfortunately, withheld, yet hopefully a clearer understanding of each others views and feelings will have emerged. For example, a particular misgiving expressed in several of your letters was encapsulated as: "...the danger of confusing the adoption of a personal discipline for a short time with tackling a 'grave moral issue' ". We have taken note of this important concern and intend to embrace the spirit of Lenten restraint itself, in effectively conveying the concept of a vegetarian Lent. In most cases, our "contemporary adaption of an ancient tradition" was accepted as an essentially valid and benign endeavour. Indeed, there is nothing to inhibit spiritual atonement, reflection and growth, in considering the lives of animals, spared, during a fast. It is necessary that we convey both our regard and gratitude for the blessings, sympathies and expressions of goodwill which were conferred, as well as our acute disappointment, in relation to three notable areas of the Episcopal response as a whole:

1) Less than a third of Church hierarchy approached, were prepared to embrace genuine misgivings, as to the role of our religion, in 850 million animal killings each year, in this country.

2) An almost entirely evasive response to the five genuine, if unpalatable, considerations which were conveyed.

3) Naturally, the apparent lack of receptivity towards vegetarianism, as a means of enhancing a Christian presence, in today's I injured world.

In fact, this arguable stagnation of conscience, is most pertinently contrasted in the light of unfettered and unfolding, Church teaching itself:

"Its own task (the Church) is to "read the signs of the times" and uncover the spiritual and moral issues that lie at the root of the challenges of our time."

"The Call of Creation" - Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales, 2002.

"It is the logic of our present argument that solidarity must, in a genuine sense, extend to nature itself, as we live in ways that are consistent with its God-given laws."

ibid.

"As 'co-creators' then, our acts should reflect God's own love for creation."

ibid.

It is obviously our contention, that authentic love and wholesale slaughter are ethically exclusive.

"The divine spirit is sacramentally present in creation, which is therefore to be treated with reverence, respect and gratitude."

"Human beings are both co-partners with the rest of creation and living bridges between heaven and earth, with responsibility to make personal and corporate sacrifices for the good of all creation."

"That this relationship may be informed by the principles of justice and the integrity of every living being; so that self-centred greed is overcome."

ibid.

"Resolution 1.8: Creation", Lambeth Conference, 1998.

There are incidentally, none of us involved in this endeavour, who derive any form of satisfaction, from a moral prescriptivism, which may at times be unavoidable. It should be understood that our realisations stem from a knowledge of the devastating effects a meat eating diet has on the rest of God's creation. As Christians, we are responsible for demonstrating God's love in a fallen world and caring for His creation. We therefore believe that a vegetarian diet will epitomise these ideals by:

1. Demonstrating our love for God: When we place our care of creation before our worldly desire for meat, we demonstrate our love for God and all that He created.

2. Stopping Violence towards God's creatures: All creatures were created to glorify God. Yet no age has inflicted upon animals such massive punishments with such wanton disregard.

3. Feeding the Hungry: 20 vegetarians can be fed on the same amount of land needed to feed one carnivore. If 10% of Christians became vegetarian world hunger could be eliminated.

4. Protecting the Environment: Our desire for meat significantly contributes towards many environmental problems; including water depletion, soil erosion, pollution, deforestation, species extinction.

5. The preservation of peace: The desire for meat amongst wealthy nations can generate poverty and instability overseas, which often perpetuates war.

6. Respect for our bodies: Our health suffers because God created us as plant eaters. Our fingers, teeth and entire digestive system are designed for plant-based nourishment. However, improvement in our health should be considered the reward, rather than the reason, for adopting a vegetarian diet.

Without making a claim that vegetarianism will banish the world's ills' it is imperative that meat eating Christians become aware of these facts. God's people must realise that they are unwittingly supporting one of the most pernicious industries humanity has ever devised. Vegetarianism is not just a fad but an eschatological means by which we can bring a part of God's new creation, the peaceful kingdom, into today's world. To embrace, rather than oppose, what we pray for each day "your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven".

Thank you again, for your time and interest.

May God guide and sustain each of you in your daily duties and challenges.

2003 Press Statement.

In the course of promoting this years "Veg4Lent" initiative, an exploratory dialogue has been undertaken with the Church hierarchy of the U.K.

Please find enclosed copies of (Catholic) correspondence received to date, a standard letter to clergy & flyer, as well as a chart of the Catholic Dioceses which will have received them.

Veg4Lent 2003 is a concept aimed primarily towards the average member of the laity, as an introduction to theologically based vegetarianism. Indeed, the Penitential Season is an ideal time to reflect, on the countless innocent lives, which are so often sacrificed to temporal habit. It is not our aim, however, to vilify fellow Christians, in the course of manifesting concern for those condemned to the slaughterhouse. It is also likely that few of the clergy, mailed, will have afforded their parishioners an opportunity to appraise the insights conveyed through the flyer, for themselves. The "Veg4Lent" campaign is nevertheless a very simple idea, which will hopefully recur in other ways, with each year.

As you will find, the majority of Episcopal responses were respectful and kindly, if somewhat evasive and non-supportive. Any increase in mutual respect and awareness will, at least, entail a relatively positive result, at this point in time.

As a Catholic member of our admittedly small team, you may wish to clarify the above or enclosed with me on: [07967 879067](tel:07967879067).

We need to bring home to people that all cruel behaviour, whoever or whatever the victims, is the expression of a deep evil flaw in human nature, and that all who oppose and fight it, in whatever form, are crusading against a curse that could destroy us all.

The Rt Rev John Austin Baker

Article in the Catholic Herald dated 7th March 2003

Bishops reject no meat for Lent campaign.

No appetite for vegetarian initiative, reports **Christina White**

AN OPTIMISTIC "Vege for Lent" campaign has drawn little Episcopal support from the bishops of the United Kingdom, revealing themselves to be a predominantly meat-eating set.

Veg4Lent 2003, is sponsored by the Christian Vegetarian Society and was aimed at the laity as an introduction to theologically based vegetarianism.

Its flyer, distributed this year to parishes in the Birmingham, Shrewsbury and Hallam dioceses, argues that we can "live healthier and more spiritually consistent lives, in forsaking an acquired taste for meat". Veg4Lent asked parish priests to display the flyer on church notice boards but efforts to gain the formal backing of Catholic bishops fell largely on stony ground.

The campaigners wrote to various Catholic bishops with the question: "Do you believe that vegetarian campaigns can contain important truths, which may in time become assimilated within a wider Christian approach to life?"

The bishops offered their blessings but declined to endorse the campaign.

Archbishop Mario Conti of Glasgow said he readily defended the right of vegetarians to avoid meat and he admired "their underlying motive, their so doing", but he would not back Veg4Lent. He did say, however, that "were you my guests", he would make "appropriate accommodation to meet your diet".

Bishop Ambrose Griffiths OSB of Hexham and Newcastle was rather more direct. "Among the many important concerns that are current, I think it has no place," wrote the bishop. "I regard vegetarianism as a personal fad which people should be free to follow if they wish, but should not impose their views on anybody else."

Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor, who last weekend told Catholics that they should not be gloomy about Lent, said he was "sympathetic" to vegetarians. Writing on the Cardinal's behalf, Mgr John Arnold said he was "sorry that he would not be sufficiently well acquainted with the practice of vegetarianism to make a significant contribution to your discussions".

John Gilheany, a member of the Veg4Lent team described the responses as "respectful and kindly, if somewhat evasive and non-supportive", "I think they did as well as they can in the circumstances". It's a long term process we're not looking for instant success. It was just an exploratory exercise to establish some understanding."

Mr. Gilheany said the response from parishes had been zero. "We don't know what to make of that - maybe the flyers went straight in the bin or maybe it has encouraged further reflection."

A pastoral letter from the cardinal, read out at Masses last Sunday, reiterated the Pope's call to make a special effort to pray for peace throughout the Lenten season.

The cardinal called on Catholics to view Lent not as a season of gloom, but as a joyful season and a time of renewal. He said it was a time for new beginnings "when we are urged to deepen our faith and turn again in earnest to Christ".

"In the next 40 days we have the chance to turn again towards the love that cannot be bettered, that love which is infinitely more powerful than our sin — for it is the very compassion and the love of God," he said.

The creatures man uses and, so often abuses, are voiceless and helpless. We are not. We have pens with which to write to politicians and retailers, voices with which to speak out, shopping choices which can have a major impact..., organisations to join, even, on appropriate occasions, banners to carry."

The Rt Rev Richard Llewellyn, Bishop at Lambeth

Article in The Tablet - Notebook - 8th March 2003

Food for thought

LENT is the perfect time for Christians to give up meat, according to a group which calls itself Veg4Lent. It wrote to the Catholic bishops to ask whether they agreed and posed a list of questions.

About a third of the bishops in Britain have so far replied, and as might be expected, they are in the main courteous but non-committal.

Archbishop Mario Conti of Glasgow, for instance, says he defends the right of vegetarians to avoid meat, but sees no need to do so himself or for others when he acts as host.

Were you my guests, (I would) make appropriate accommodation to meet your diet", he writes thoughtfully.

A rather more blunt response comes from Bishop Ambrose Griffiths OSB of Hexham and Newcastle.

"Among the many important concerns that are current, I think it has no place. I regard vegetarianism as a personal fad which people should be free to follow if they wish, but they should not impose their views on anybody else", he wrote.

A Catholic on the Veg4Lent team, John Gilheany, told us he doubted whether any dioceses or parishes had adopted their initiative. "That is not entirely surprising in this line of campaigning", he said.

Article in the C of E Newspaper - 11th April 2003

Give up meat for Lent - Don't be ridiculous

Number: 5661 Date: Apr 10,

It may be Lent, a time of abstinence and self-sacrifice, but if there is one thing that Church of England bishops appear unable to give up, it's meat.

The days of gorging on pheasants may be long gone, but bishops are still not willing to go for a whole month without their steak and chips, a vegetarian campaigning group has discovered. Every bishop was sent a letter from the Christian group, called Veg4Lent, asking them to endorse the campaign for not eating meat in Lent, but not one was able to give it their backing.

The group suggest that Lent "provides an ideal opportunity to reflect on the countless innocent lives sacrificed to satiate meat consumption", and asked the bishops to consider that vegetarianism can become "assimilated within a more widespread Christian approach to life".

Whether on grounds of theology or taste, the bishops seem less than convinced by the vegetarian argument. "I do not believe that vegetarianism is 'an essentially grave moral issue'. I believe that it is a matter on which opinions differ, and I respect those who are vegetarians," said the Bishop of Hereford, the Rt Rev John Oliver, whose own son does not eat meat. He added that he does not believe that there is any necessary link between vegetarianism and the Christian faith.

This was a view shared by many, including the Bishops of Carlisle, Norwich, Ripon and Leeds. The Bishop of Bradford, the Rt Rev David James, a keen lover of curries, didn't think twice about turning the idea down: "As I am not a vegetarian it would be hypocritical of me to support your initiative," he said.

The Rev Prof Andrew Linzey, a Patron of the group, said that he was unsurprised that the bishops would not give up meat for Lent. "They are not there on this issue. They don't care for creation. If you look for any response on cruelty and indulgence, the bishops aren't there. They don't lead on issues of creation concern."

The Bishop of Hereford said that he believed that good husbandry and good abattoir practice are entirely compatible with animals being part of God's creation. However, the Bishop of Chester, the Rt Rev Peter Forster said that had deep misgivings about modern animal rearing, and said that he keeps a few hens in a fully free-range situation as a personal protest. "I am willing to, and where possible actually do, pay a premium price for meat from freely reared animals."

Article in the Church Times - 11th April 2003

Veggies fed up for Lent

by Rachel Harden

CHURCH OF ENGLAND bishops have declined an invitation to give up meat for Lent.

Veg4Lent, a campaign sponsored by the Christian Vegetarian Association, asked nearly 60 bishops to support its Vegetarian Lent initiative. The bishops, a quarter of whom replied, were also asked to comment on five specific related concerns.

The Archbishop of York, Dr David Hope, said he "would not wish to endorse" the initiative, though he said he had "considerable sympathy" with Christian vegetarians.

The Bishop of Birmingham, Dr John Sentamu, was among several bishops who queried the meaning of parts of the letter. "For my own Lenten observance, I will heed the Lord's command not to make a public show of it."

The Bishop of Hereford, the Rt Revd John Oliver, said: "I do not believe vegetarianism is an essentially grave moral issue."

The Bishop of London, the Rt Revd Richard Chartres, replied: "I do believe that as we seek to make a Christian response to the unsustainable contemporary project of growth without limit, with no end in view beyond the process itself, the reinvigoration of the Christian Lenten practice is very desirable."

In an open letter, Don Gwillim, a Veg4Lent spokesman, said that less than a third had been "prepared to embrace genuine misgivings, as to the role of our religion, in 850 million animal killings each year, in this country".

A Response to Articles in the Roman Catholic Press

Dear Veg4Lent,

I was delighted to read of your efforts to promote a Vegetarian Lent in the Tablet for March 8th. I was shocked at Bishop Griffiths response and I enclose a copy of my letter to him. I hope many others will have written to him in a like vein.

May I say that I invite our people every Lent to give up meat for Lent and not just for Ash Wednesday. We are fortunate to have not a few people in our parish community who have taken on Vegetarianism and I like to think that the fact that their parish priest has been a Vegetarian for so long has made some people think twice and come to a like mind.

I would like to know more about your group and I hope this gets to you courtesy of the Tablet.

Yours very sincerely,

Derek Reeve, parish priest,

Derek Reeve's letter to Bishop Griffiths:

Dear Bishop Griffiths,

I was saddened, as must have been many of your people, to read your comments quoted in the Tablet Notebook for March 8th, concerning Vegetarianism.

That you should dismiss so lightly and almost frivolously, something which for many people is a very strongly held conviction, seems to me no way for a Pastor to be speaking.

Vegetarianism is for many of us, one of the ways in which we seek to follow Jesus. It is most certainly not a fad and I write as someone who has been a vegetarian for nearly forty years. It springs from our deeply held conviction that Jesus would have us show compassion to all creatures, great or small.

I am amazed that you can say that respect for the creation has no place 'among the many important 'concerns that are current'. Vegetarianism is one practical way of showing concern for the environment and for our fellow creatures since we know that meat-eating is a drain on the world's resources and often depends upon vile practices like battery farming.

I would not try to convince since, like George Fox, I would say 'Eat meat as long as you can' but I pray that you may come to the moment as many of us have when we can do so no longer. Did not saint Benedict mention something of this in his Rule? And we have so much to learn from other world faiths, especially Buddhism, with regard to compassion for all creatures. Some monastics from other faiths shame us with their strict observance of this practice.

I am sorry to have written at such length but I would only ask you to consider publishing an apology to the many people in your diocese and further a field who would have found your remarks both insulting and distressing.

Further letter from Derek Reeve:

Thank you for sending me so much information about Veg4Lent. I am not surprised at the sort of reactions you had from our bishops. I have been a Vegetarian for the past thirty five years or more and am still treated as an oddity among my fellow priests who do think of vegetarianism as a somewhat annoying quirk of mine. I find it very difficult to behave with the compassion that is required since I feel quite a lot of anger when I meet so little understanding of animal suffering amongst those who are to lead others to follow Jesus. I am convinced that eating sentient creatures does brutalise us and makes us less sensitive to the real torture our habits so often inflict on them. For me, to refrain from killing sentient creatures, as I wrote to Bishop Griffiths, is very much at the heart of my trying to follow Jesus and the fact that he eat meat and fish is in no way an argument in favour of doing so. He was a man of his time and no one suggests that we should imitate him in other details of his personal life — circumcision etc.

Sorry, this was not meant to be a diatribe and I really wanted to say 'thank you' and to offer any support I can to your group.

Every good wish for a cruelty-free Holy Week and Easter.

Email received from: Simon Barrow -General Secretary

Churches' Commission on Mission, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland.

In spite (or perhaps because of) the fact that you seem to have received short shrift from many bishops, I thought I'd write to say that I think your initiative is excellent. Indeed I'd be happy to be a sponsor. I have been a vegetarian for over 16 years, and I find it distressing that so many Christians are dismissive, ignorant, or almost proudly insensitive on these important questions.

A letter to the Catholic Herald from Debbie Jones - Editor of The Ark. Catholic Study Circle for Animal Welfare.

"VEGGY FOR LENT"

Sir, Why, I wonder, was Bishop Ambrose Griffiths quite so aggressive in his attack on vegetarianism ("Bishops reject no meat for Lent campaign", March 7)? In the same issue he is reported as challenging his people to engage in evangelisation and to "set new priorities" etc. in the quest for younger people. Does he not realise that very many young people are vegetarian on animal welfare grounds and look for similar compassion and commitment from the Church and her leaders?

And really, Mgr Arnold, there is no great mystique to it - you just don't eat meat. What's so scary about this ancient Christian Lenten practice?"

A further selection of published correspondence will follow, once fully collated.

Lent statements by the Pope and New England Bishops

Extract from L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO

11-12 March 2003.

Pope's comments at General Audience on Ash Wednesday 2003.

Christians are called to live and spread a style of generosity in every realm of life, thus promoting the genuine pursuit of the common good of society.

Fast signifies internal purification, readiness to obey the will of God

2. In keeping with the ancient tradition of the Church, **today all the faithful are bound to abstain from eating meat**, and all, with the sole exception of those who are justifiably prevented for reasons of health or age, must fast. Fasting has great value in the life of Christians. It is a spiritual need, in order to relate better to God. In fact, the external aspects of fasting, though important, do not convey the full measure of the practice. Joined to the practice should be a sincere desire for inner purification, readiness to obey the divine will and thoughtful solidarity with our brothers and sisters, especially the very poor.

There is also a close link between fasting and prayer. Prayer means listening to God; fasting favours this openness of heart.

Social order built on pursuit of common good

4. I also wanted to repropose the pressing invitation to conversion, penance and solidarity in the *Message for Lent*, published a few days ago, whose theme is the beautiful sentence from the Acts of the Apostles: "*It is more blessed to give than to receive*" (cf. 20,35).

A close look shows that it is only by being converted to this logic that it is possible to build a social order which is not based on a precarious balance of conflicting interests, but by a just and solidary pursuit of the common good. **Christians, in the manner of leaven, are called to live and spread a style of generosity in every realm of life, thus promoting genuine moral and civil social progress.** On this topic I wrote: "*Giving not only from our abundance, but sacrificing something more in order to give to the needy, fosters that self-denial which is essential to authentic Christian living*" (*Message for Lent*, n. 4; ORE, 12 February 2003, p. 6).

N.B. Bold type added by Editor.

In an outspoken essay, the famous 20th century Dean Inge, of St Paul's, wrote that we've enslaved the rest of the animal creation and have treated our distant cousins in fur and feather so badly that, beyond doubt, if they were able to formulate a religion, they would depict the devil in human form.

Episcopal Bishops in New England Issue First Pastoral Letter on the Environment dated 27th February 2003

Extract from: TO SERVE CHRIST IN ALL CREATION

Scripture and tradition remind us that the whole earth is filled with the glory of God. Here in our beloved New England we perceive that glory in wild forests and open fields, in clear lakes and rocky seashores, in mountains, dunes, and rolling hills. With Martin Luther, we know that "God writes the Gospel, not in the Bible alone, but also on trees, and the flowers and the clouds and stars." With Thomas Aquinas, we affirm that "Revelation comes in two volumes - the Bible and nature." The world is God's creation, and God delights in it ("God saw everything that [God] had made, and indeed, it was very good," Genesis 1:31; "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows [God's] handiwork," Psalm 19:1). The land and the rivers, the air and the sea belong to God, not to human beings ("The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it," Psalm 24:1). We are part of the created order, not separate from it, and our first calling by God is to be the caretakers of creation (Genesis 2:4b-8, 15). Reckless destruction of nature is a sign of estrangement from God. ("There is . . . no knowledge of God in the land . . . Therefore the land mourns, and all who live in it languish; together with the wild animals and the birds of the air, even the fish of the sea are perishing," Hosea 4:1b, 3; "Hurt not the earth, neither the sea nor the trees," Revelation 7:3).....

Just as God's salvation encompasses all creation, so too does Jesus call us to love our neighbour as ourselves. Who is our neighbour? When Jesus was asked that question, he responded with the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37). Today, the natural world is under assault, forests are being stripped and oceans plundered, natural resources are being exhausted and entire species killed. Today, the world is being stripped, beaten, and left half dead. Is it not possible to recognize all creation as our "neighbour"?.....

Complete letter obtainable from Veg4Lent, on request.

Faith and Works

Last year at Easter, one Orthodox priest said that Satan believes in God to, but He doesn't do God's will. Therefore he was thrown out of Heaven.
Mat 7:21 *Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.*

A Lenten Reflection from the Church Times – 11th April 2003

Undone By a pork pie.

JUST BEFORE midnight I ate a pork pie. God forgive us our deliberate sins. It was at a service station. It had been a long day. As my Lenten penance this week I had given up meat. Things had been going well. I was enjoying more fruit and vegetables, and saving money. But now, dog tired and 50 miles from home, I needed pig flesh to keep me awake at the wheel, to save my life.

Eating meat can get very personal. That pork pie may well have once been one of those little piglets that lived on the high ground overlooking the Thames near my home. On one side of the dust track were the boars with their harem, each sow taking turns to cool herself in the water trough while waiting her turn to be covered. On the other side of the path, separated by a simple fence, were the boats' progeny with their mothers. The tiny piglets scampered round their corrugated homes, rushing back for a family feed from their mother's generous rows of teats. All this porcine life and high society is now gone. The land is empty; the flint, freshly ploughed, speckles the field as it lies in wait for the next cycle of procreation, recreation, ham and bacon.

On a working farm the animals are born to die. A farmer's wife said she always hoped to be away when the factory lorry came to collect the calves for slaughter. She had fed some of them from a bottle. Each animal had been attended to with care; the farmer had treated their ailments when he could, and had called in the vet when he could not. Now they needed to be turned into cash, so that the family could live and the rest of the farm animals could be fed and housed. The end, when it comes, should come quickly. But if the animals are forced to wait for hour after hour near the slaughter bays, they can smell the blood and the fear. On such occasions, they are forced to endure entirely unnecessary suffering, and it is inexcusable. Farmers grow angry at this callous treatment of the stock they have so carefully reared. It is caused, they say, by mismanagement and greed.

If slaughter takes place abroad, it can still cause anger. Shipping lorry loads of cattle or sheep to the Continent stopped for a time in the mid 1990s, but it had been restored for over three months when I was asked to stand in for the Bishop of Dover and say some prayers down at the dockside to mark the 100th day of exports. Protesters strewed a hundred purple carnations into the wake of the boat that was taking the lorry loads of live animals to France or Italy. The crew looked on, bemused.

After our protest, I told the animal-rights campaigner beside me that I had a few sheep. What should I do with them? "Keep them alive pets," she said. Only once did I take any to the butcher, choosing two from a trailer load of four that I was shifting from one field to another. Down the ramp they came, to be penned into the butcher's pen and killed very soon after that. The other two that remained always knew what I had done, and from that moment they feared me. No matter that I had been present at their birth in the paddock next the chaplaincy, nor that I had fed them by hand, cleared their parasites, given them names. As far as they were concerned, the good shepherd does not kill his sheep.

Final Thoughts.

Although the majority of Bishops are prepared to approve and support individual vegetarian Christians, they do not see vegetarianism as a Christian imperative. The Bishops' failure to grasp our vision of how vegetarianism could give Christians a golden opportunity to: a) identify themselves with God's peaceable kingdom; b) be instrumental in reducing violence and suffering in this fallen world; c) to lead the world, through their witness, towards a loving, merciful, sustainable future, will be difficult for us to understand.

However, if we are going to introduce a veg-consciousness within the church, we must try to understand their refusal to acknowledge the benefits of a vegetarian diet. My own family took many years to appreciate that eating the flesh of other creatures, cruelly raised and killed, was not compatible with our love for animals and our faith in a loving, non-violent God.

Veg4Lent only wants to bring a vegetarian awareness into the Christian community, we do not condemn meat eaters. We ask them to consider a vegetarian diet, based on a sound knowledge of the devastating effects meat eating has on those who suffer in this world. What is the point of praying for and looking forward to, God's peaceable kingdom, if we are not prepared to embrace its virtues ourselves.

Please do not be discouraged by the lack of support we have received from the Bishops, many Christian advocates of non-violence have suffered bitter disappointment at the opposition they received from their church. There were times when Martin Luther King felt completely unsupported by the church. In his writings he expresses his deep disappointment that it should have been church leaders who chose to criticise him. He expected their support, rather than their objections, he wrote:

"It [the church] will forfeit the loyalty of millions, and be dismissed as an irrelevant social club with no meaning for the 20th century. Every day I meet young people whose disappointment with the Church has turned into outright disgust.

"Perhaps I have once again been too optimistic. Is organised religion too inextricably bound to the status quo to save our nation and our world?"

Martin Luther King's refusal to be diverted from his mission of non-violence, by a critical church, and his faith in an all loving, non-violent God, finally led to a peaceful solution to the problem of racial inequality. Likewise, I believe, our determination to follow a non-violent lifestyle will one day result in a better world, a world in which Christians truly reflect the image of God.

We can wholeheartedly agree with a previous bishop of Manchester's sentiments, which he expressed within the House of Lords in 1975: "My Lords, I once heard it said - and the saying has haunted me ever since — that if animals believed in the devil he would look remarkably like a human being".

Please remember, before I can assess the full effect of Veg4Lent 2003 and write our next newsletter, I need a response from you. So start writing down the replies and reactions you have received from your own initiative that can teach, encourage, inspire and bless us all.