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The Institute for Social Justice was launched in 2020 to underpin York St John University's mission to 'stand up for social justice.' It does so through developing collaborative research and practice that seeks to address some of the inequalities and injustices facing society today.

In 2021 the Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, became patron of the Institute for Social Justice. This patronage recognises our shared values and objectives as we work together to combat inequalities and actively strive for ever greater social justice. As part of his patronage, the Archbishop will deliver an annual lecture of which this is the first.

## **Enough is enough**

A few years ago, enjoying the precious gift of the sabbatical that all stipendiary clergy in the Church of England are offered every 10 years, I walked a large section of the Camino Del Norte in Northern Spain from Santander to Santiago. It took about a month.

The guide books and websites that I consulted before setting off, advised me to keep my rucksack down to 9 kg if at all possible – implying that I probably wouldn't manage this, but it was something to aim for.

As I set off, I weighed my rucksack. It came in at just over 9kg. I was pleased with myself. I was travelling light.

However, after a few days on the road not only was that 9 kg feeling heavier and heavier, I realised I had too much stuff with me. So, for instance, I took three pairs of socks, and three pairs of knickers, and three shirts. I only needed two. Wash one, wear one. Wash one, wear one.

This was an astonishing revelation: what I actually needed was so little; and to spend a month with everything I needed carried on my back, plus the sobering discovery that even though my possessions were now so few, I still carried things I didn't require, was an education in need and an education in desire.

It is these things that I want to reflect upon in this lecture. What is the relationship between need and desire and what shapes these things? How can we find a way of being satisfied with what we need, and not wanting more all the time; and at the same time educate our desires and motivations so that they do not always need to find satisfaction in acquiring more. Especially at the expense of others, or, as we shall begin to explore, at an unacceptable cost to the planet itself. What might an economy based around these ideas look like? And how can the Christian story enable us to go beyond sustainability, drawing on concepts of the common good, self-sacrifice, and the joy of entering into and sharing God's abundance?

On my long walk across northern Spain, I also began to enter more profoundly into the meaning of that petition I say each day in the Lord's Prayer, but never really consider its implications: Give us today our daily bread.

That is the other focus of this lecture. What might our world look like if it was ordered around the provision of daily bread for everyone, and how might I learn to stop expecting more than my share? Or put it another way: what does enough look like?

And I know I have too much – more than my share – because I inhabit a world where there is still so much poverty and where we can even see that poverty on our own streets, those living without a home being only the visible tip of a chilling iceberg of need, inequality, disappointment and despair. So, for the first time in ages we have seen the gap between rich and poor increasing. Even before coronavirus, the Resolution Foundation think-tank said the wealth gap had opened up between 2016 and 2018: the top 10% of the population's wealth increased by 11% whereas the bottom 10%'s increased by just 3%. Regional variations are even more stark. Household wealth in the south-east is more than twice as high as the north-east. Child poverty is also on the rise. The Children's Society reckon that four million children live in poverty. That's a third of all children living in the UK, the equivalent of nine children in an average classroom. No wonder foodbanks have become such a feature of contemporary Britain.

Therefore, to introduce the concept of enough is to begin to take what the Church has sometimes called a preferential option for the poor, making sure that every decision we make is judged by its impact on the poor. It requires us to speak of the common good, which is, as Pope Francis describes it in his recent book *Let Us Dream*, 'the good we all share in, the good of the people as a whole, as well as the good we hold in common that should be for all.' He goes on: "For me it's clear: we must redesign the economy so they can offer every person access to a dignified existence while protecting and regenerating the natural world."

The worldwide Covid pandemic has not created these challenges, but it has revealed them in startling clarity. Poorer communities have suffered disproportionately. However, it has also revealed an interconnectedness. It may be easier for wealthier people and richer nations to shield themselves from Covid, but we also know that the pandemic will never be dealt with anywhere until it is dealt with everywhere. When we fail to share the vaccine, new strains of the virus mutate in poorer parts of the world and then return to us, defying the very vaccines we have accumulated for ourselves. Building walls doesn't create the securities they promise, only isolation and fear. Paradoxically, knocking them down does.

We need, therefore, economic systems and ethical frameworks that demonstrate solidarity with each other as one humanity inhabiting one world and therefore bound together by bonds of reciprocity.

However, current neoliberal political and economic thinking nearly always excludes any meaningful debate about the common good. People themselves are reduced in value, becoming only employees or consumers. The market decides. And with minimal government controls.

But left to their own devices, markets generate and perpetuate vast inequalities, not to mention unchecked ecological damage. The objective is

growth, and, it seems, only growth. Other ethical considerations, not least the dignity of work as a good in itself rather than a means of production and profit, are ignored. At other points in history other incentives have motivated work and contributed to a public spirited common good. It was St Benedict, for instance, the father of Western monasticism, whose famous phrase ora et labora – to pray and work – saw a dignity in work as an end in itself. Like prayer. But now there is only one incentive: financial growth and accumulation of financial wealth. In fact, it requires it. You'd be a fool to work for nothing. Or to look for other incentives (like a three month sabbatical). All this leaves many behind, especially in the developing world, but even in our own inner cities and outer estates. But it also narrows our own moral perspective. Everything is paid for, everything has a price. But as Pope Francis puts it: "The free market is anything but free for huge numbers of people, above all for the poor, who end up with little or no choice in practice... solidarity (with the poor) is not sharing the crumbs from the table, but to make space at the table for everyone." Moreover, our wealth and our excess – our growth - is provided by the labour of others, often poorly paid migrant workers. We have plenty. They have hardly anything.

Which brings me back to the concept of enough. What we have is 'more than enough' and an economic system built upon maintaining our market driven need to want more than enough.

Advertising endlessly massages our desires. Sophisticated algorithms mine our data and Amazon, Google and Facebook tell us what we need and how to buy it cheaply. So we say, we need this holiday. Or we need a new pair of jeans, or a third, fourth fifth outfit, or we need a new car. What we mean is we want, but we have so blurred the lines between need and desire that we no longer even notice it exists. And any drop in spending is reported as tragedy. Because our whole system depends on it. New approaches and new measures are urgently needed.

Sometimes we think that the problem is greed. This is certainly part of it. But it is also about what we have come to accept as the norm, and with it the price that's paid by the planet itself made by so many millions of our sisters and brothers.

The problem is also systemic, shaped by an acceptance of a certain market philosophies.

In his book What money can't buy, the moral limits of markets, Michael J Sandal charts the expansion of markets, and of market values into spheres of life where they don't belong. This is something even more alarming than greed: market values crowding out non-market moral norms and therefore corrupting the way we live our lives. He cites an alarming number of examples from the proliferation of for-profit schools, hospitals and even prisons; to the outsourcing of war to private military contractors; the eclipse of public police forces by private security firms; pharmaceutical companies aggressive marketing of prescription drugs to consumers in rich countries; the outsourcing of pregnancy to surrogate mothers in the developing world; to the buying and selling, by companies and countries, of the right to pollute.

This isn't just greed. Markets leave a mark. By putting a price on everything, by deciding that everything can be bought and sold, we decide "at

least implicitly, that it is appropriate to treat them as commodities... We have drifted from having a market economy to being a market society.”

Whereas a market economy is a valuable and effective tool for organising productive activity, a market society is a way of life in which market values – the idea that everything can be bought or sold and with it the commodification of everything – seeps into every aspect of life. It also turns citizens into consumers, eroding public goods as goods in themselves. Everything has a price. Even things – like blood and friendship – that are priceless.

To say that we need to discover what enough looks like, is also to say we have had enough of this commodification of life and the ethical damage it has done, and want to reset the compass.

In order to do this, we might look at the very word economy itself as a place to begin.

In my recent book, *Dear England* I explored the meaning of the word economy. It comes from two Greek words: *oikos*, meaning household, and *nomos*, meaning law. So the literal meaning is ‘the law of the household.’ Furthermore, *nomos* is from another Greek word, *nemein*, meaning to distribute, indicating that law and justice have something to do with fair distribution.

A good economy is meant to be like a well-run household. And though most of us do not claim a great understanding of economics (and I sometimes think that economists and the politicians they advise would prefer to keep it that way) we do know what a well-run household should be like. Everyone is treated equally and fairly. In a family – a household – it would be unthinkable that at the dinner table some were fed while others went hungry.

This approach to life – and economics – is sometimes called distributive justice. It is a theme that runs through the Bible, especially the Old Testament prophets who rage against the people of Israel saying that what God wants is not their worship and their festivals, but justice, a justice that can only come when we recognize that we inhabit this planet together with mutual responsibility to one another and to the land itself.

We don’t always think about justice this way. Often we just think of it as retribution. God’s vision is bigger and more positive.

Arising from its Jewish roots, the Christian tradition has always believed that to be just, as God is just, means to distribute everything fairly. When the people of Israel were liberated from slavery in Egypt, God fed them with manna from heaven. Everyone had enough. But no one had more than enough. And, because they had been slaves themselves, the good stewardship of the household of God’s earth extended to others, especially those who were strangers, aliens and outcasts. The Jewish faith developed a beautiful and complex system of Sabbath rest and jubilee whereby every year a portion of the harvest was left for the “poor and for the alien,” and every seventh year the land itself should rest “so that the poor of your people may eat.” And every fiftieth year, that is after ‘seven times seven’ years, there was a kind of super-Sabbath for the land where not only did the land rest, but debts were cancelled and the land returned to its original owners. The reason? “The land is mine,” says God,

“with me you are but aliens and tenants.”

This suggests a model of stewardship, not ownership, for our ordering of the world. God requires us to share what we have with those who are in need, not just because the people of Israel had been slaves themselves, but because all of us, the whole human household, are aliens and tenants.

We do not own the land. We must treat it fairly, preserve its fertility, and share its goodness. Sabbath rest, it turns out, is not just a useful reminder that mindfulness is good for us (and has been around for quite a while!) but a political act: an injunction to good and just stewardship of the world where rest and equitable distribution follow the pattern that God initiates in the creation itself and which mirrors the reciprocity and generosity that exists within the Godhead. And where work is for the common good, not just individual gain.

Therefore, the measure for enough is the measure of the needs of the poor and the needs of the planet, not the imagined or manufactured needs of a market economy society.

Therefore, from a Christian perspective, in all areas of life fair distribution – everyone having enough - and the good stewardship that allows the earth itself to breathe and rest and maintain its fertile goodness, should be the yardstick: fair distribution of food; fair distribution of security; fair distribution of land, education, access to health, opportunity, even access to the means of justice itself.

Just as a good household looks after and works for the benefit of all its members and would not consider doing otherwise, and would happily make the sacrifices that are necessary to ensure that the weakest and most vulnerable are not left out, so should a good society. Our first responsibility should be that everyone has enough. This will necessarily mean, some of us having less. But it won't mean creating less wealth. On the contrary we need more, and more people invested in its just and sustainable development. We will make different things. But we will also need a different set of values to ensure its equitable distribution.

Paradoxically, this is also an area where the poor themselves may lead us. Both in this country and around the world, I have always been humbled and amazed by the sacrifices I see some of the poorest people make on behalf of one another and in the service of a greater good. Often the wealthier you are, the more insulated your life becomes, leaving you less able to see a different way of living, nor even notice the harm your isolation is doing, not least to yourself. I have had the privilege of receiving hospitality from unimaginably poor nomadic people in northern Kenya living through a second year of drought. I have seen shanty town congregations giving generously to charity in ways that would deeply shame our own priorities. I have known outer estate parishes in this country giving more generously than leafy suburbs.

In sub-Saharan Africa and in Pacific island communities, whose bishops and people I have met, their more inter-dependent ways of living with each other and with the land is threatened by a climate crisis that they have had little part in creating, yet it is the climate crisis, even more than

Covid, that may be the way that we will rethink and re-imagine a different kind of economic life where we say 'enough' to some of our current models and begin to work out what living with enough looks like and what its implications will be.

So we all know, and have known for many years, that we must find a carbon neutral way of inhabiting this planet. Progress towards this vital and elementary goal is shockingly slow. We continue to do the things we know are causing the problem, hoping that new technology will advance quickly enough to offset our moral, political and economic shortcomings.

Technology may save us. But it may not. In the meantime, we must take other measures. Politically, there seems to me to only be three obvious approaches. Legislation, taxation or 'let the market decide'. We seem to have chosen this last option. Only not chosen, so much as allowed all our other choices about how we order society to dictate this one as well, vainly believing that market forces will always deliver the best results.

So we haven't legislated as rigorously as we could have done to limit carbon emissions.

We haven't even put much of a price on pollution by taxing it.

We have, instead – this is just one example - let a moral obligation – the need for the developed world to take a lead in radically reducing carbon emissions – to be outsourced to the poorer, developing world by enabling rich countries to buy the right to pollute from others. It is called carbon offsets. Not only does this fail to really tackle the problem, it is ethically destructive, And, as Sandal puts it, undermines “the spirit of shared sacrifice that may be necessary to create a global environmental ethic.”

He uses the simple example of whether it is okay for a tourist to lob a beer can into the Grand Canyon. Of course it isn't. It is unnecessary. It damages the environment. But now, rather than prevent the tourist from doing this, or even requiring him to go and pick it up, the discarded beer can is offset by paying for someone else to pick up litter in the Himalayas.

Introducing the concept of enough: both that we've had enough of a certain way of doing things and that we must learn to live with enough now, and therefore actually change our behaviour and curb our carbon guzzling habits, means cultivating habits of restraint and a culture of shared sacrifice. A global market in the right to pollute undermines this at every turn. They are the modern day equivalent of indulgences, the payments sinners paid in the mediaeval church to offset their sinfulness. They didn't work then, and right now they only obscure the challenge facing us and let us off the hook of our moral responsibilities to each other and to the planet.

The new ethic that we need is described by Jonathan Porritt as “an evolved, intelligent and elegant form of capitalism that puts the Earth at its very centre (as our one and only world) and ensures that all people are its beneficiaries.” He defines sustainable development as “a dynamic process which enables all people to realize their potential and to improve their quality of life in ways which simultaneously protect and enhance

the Earth's life-support systems".

This is a good place to start, but for me, the Christian story enables us to go a bit further, because it speaks about the whole cosmos as a character in the story of creation and redemption, not a backdrop or a stage set. Citing no less a figure than Thomas Aquinas as an example, Amintore Fanfani (1908-99) wrote that in the Middle Ages economic ethics were dominated by the idea of justice and by the principle of being content with one's status. Excessive wealth was condemned. Each should see wealth "adequate" to one's needs, without ambitiously seeking an excess. We may have some things to say about medieval attitudes to status. But what was thought about wealth, labour and economics may be very relevant to today's challenge.

It stemmed from a Christian worldview. We don't live on the world, but in the world. We are part of the creation, but also its steward. We are children of God, and charged by God to work for - another petition in the Lord's Prayer - God's rule in earth as in heaven. We therefore should never either just use or just ignore the world. It is to be cherished, responded to, cared for and loved. It belongs to all of us. Its good ordering and well-being is tied up with our own.

To live with enough, requires us to consider the common good as well as our own good. It requires us to think globally and locally. It puts fair distribution at the heart of economic thinking. It recognises the moral limits of our prevailing free market philosophies, recognising that even in a society with no unjust differences of wealth and power there are still some things that money shouldn't be able to buy – like each other – and some things that simply cannot be bought, like love or friendship, and many, many things that are corrupted by being given a price. As Sandal says, "Market choices are not free choices if some people are desperately poor or lack the ability to bargain on free terms." Why else would some people sell their kidneys? Or even their children.

Thinking about enough, helps us to begin to reimagine what our world could be.

But there are, of course, limits. Another major theme in Christianity is abundance. 5,000 people are fed, and the disciples gather up 12 baskets of leftovers. The fishermen haul in a catch that is so astonishingly large their nets start breaking. An already inebriated assembly of wedding guests are given the very last thing they actually need, a ridiculously large supply of additional alcohol – and not just any old plonk, but 180 gallons of the very finest vintage!

How do we fit this abundance into a concept of living with enough? And even though I didn't need that third pair of socks and third shirt, there were other things I carried in my rucksack that were hugely precious, that added to the weight, but I would have hung onto, I think, even if my last pair of socks proved too much to carry: like the photograph of those I love that travelled with me; or the holding cross that I gripped tightly through the darker and more difficult parts of the journey; or even the bar of chocolate that I didn't really need, though could justify as a good



source for the necessary replenishing of energy, but which actually felt like a little luxury and therefore kept me going in ways which were not just about the efficient delivery of calories. And that's before I get onto the very lovely, but unnecessary, beers I drank each evening.

Perhaps we need another concept from the Christian tradition to place alongside the concept of enough, that is the interrelationship between the feast and the fast.

Not only does our society fail to acknowledge the common good and distribute things fairly as in a well-run household, we tolerate and knowingly enable certain parts of society to live with excess while others do not have enough. The wealth does not trickle down. Well, not much. This is where walls do work. They create a dam that keeps wealth in.

For some parts of the world and for some people in it, it is always feast. For others it is always fast. It is in the rebalancing of this that we will discover not only a fair and equitable way of inhabiting the world, but also a joyful one. Feasting and fasting should, again, become the pattern for everyone.

With this we will recover and enjoy other disciplines that we have lost: things like, saving; mending; making; re-cycling. Second-hand really is pre-loved.

Enough is not miserable. I will have my share. But it will be more lovely because what I used to have just for myself is now shared with others.

Mark Powley, argues that Christianity outlasted and outshone the Roman Empire partly because of its resistance of the dominant system. This was embodied by an image of “a shepherd carrying the weak rather than a soldier crushing them.” We need a similar resistance movement against unchecked consumerism today and the monopolies that drive them.

We might also discover that the disciplines of the fast, whereby the planet itself is given a breather, and those excesses that we no longer permit ourselves to have each day enables a more equitable sharing of resources across the world, make the feast even more enjoyable.

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