**Fair-trade goods – why??**

“Big business doesn’t care much about the little people, it cares about its profits. It tries to squeeze as low a price as it can get for its raw materials and as high a price as it can get from its consumers.”

(Ruth Coffey, “Why fair-trade matters”, 2018)

Let’s start with a few common questions …

1. Why should anyone buy an Easter egg for £4.50 when a similar-sized one can be had for under £2?

2. Why would anyone pay £7 for a t-shirt when you can get 3 for £5?

3. Why pay twice the price for fair-trade ground coffee than the lower price in the local store?

Similar questions include

“Why are there so many collapsed or burning sweat-shop factories in south-east Asia?”

“Why do some cocoa farmers achieve yields a third of those they had only a few years ago?”

“Why do so many children in developing countries suffer from water-borne diseases?”

These questions are connected through the fair-trade movement, which aims to treat third world suppliers better by offering them better terms to provide their products. “Better terms” include not just a higher price (the fair-trade premium) but also a guarantee relating to future transactions. For fair traders, the bottom line is not the only criterion … but can, for example, include protecting the environment and enhancing local living standards.

Fair-trade goods cost more because they come through a trade route which adds those things to the grower’s side of the deal and helps crop sustainability. It reflects one aspects of Christianity; Christianity has been summarised as “suffering, sacrifice and salvation”. This fair-trade stuff is the “sacrifice” bit, whereby we in the relatively rich west can care for our neighbours in developing nations.

“Neighbours” include not only those in the next continent but also those in the next century … which is why fair trade adds a little to the income of communities in developing countries so that they can have a clean water supply, a clinic within reasonable reach, a school – things we take for granted (and, perhaps, therefore don’t value as we should). These things cost money; fair-trade is a way of providing that without it looking like “charity”.

All those things tell us that it’s worth looking for the fair-trade logo in your favourite supermarket, whether it’s for bananas, coffee or whatever – you’ll be helping someone you’ll never meet and who won’t know to whom they could say “thank you!”. At the same time, you get a quality product, evidence the comment from Daniel, 7, on his Real Easter Egg; “it’s the best chocolate I’ve ever tasted!”

It’s also worth looking out for fair-trade goods on sale through our own Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation Group, as we try to follow the Holy Father’s lead in “Laudato Si’ ”. We will be offering Easter eggs and similar fair-trade goods later this spring; please support us supporting them – watch this space!

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For the JPIC Group