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**Feature**

# The plight of the homeless remains a stain on our nation's conscience

**Cathy Corcoran**

Those of you who take the bus or train to work will know of *Metro*, the free newspaper available for the morning commute.

Last week, the London issue reported the disgust of a school girl who, having bought a sandwich for a homeless young man outside a café, was told by the barista that she 'was better off saving her money and letting nature take its course'.

Disgusting yes, but I was not all that surprised. While the vast majority of children are instinctively generous and compassionate, there are some grown-ups who appear to be exactly the opposite, firmly believing, for example, that everyone who is homeless has brought it upon themselves or that it's some kind of bizarre lifestyle choice.

I believe that, at best, many of the people who think like that do so because it's easier for them. It gives them an excuse not to care, not to find out the facts. At worse, they think that anyone who is not like them is some kind of sub-human who doesn't deserve the same respect and the same life chances.

At the Cardinal Hume Centre, we believe that everyone should be



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treated with dignity and respect. As our founder said: 'Each person matters, no human life is redundant'. Our success in helping individuals and families turn their lives around stems from the warm welcome we provide, along with our non-judgemental ethos.

Churches and church-based communities in particular also undertake fantastic work for and with people who are homeless or who are facing homelessness. And Housing Justice, which brings us all together to mark Homeless Sunday on 28th January, is a star in that firmament.

Alongside the reaching out, though, there has to be a more sustained debate about the causes of homelessness and a programme of effective action to address them in a concerted and intelligent way. Homeless Sunday gives us the opportunity to take a stand on the is-

sue. Because the very fact of anyone being homeless in our country – one of the richest in the world – is quite simply a scandal and a stain on the nation's conscience.

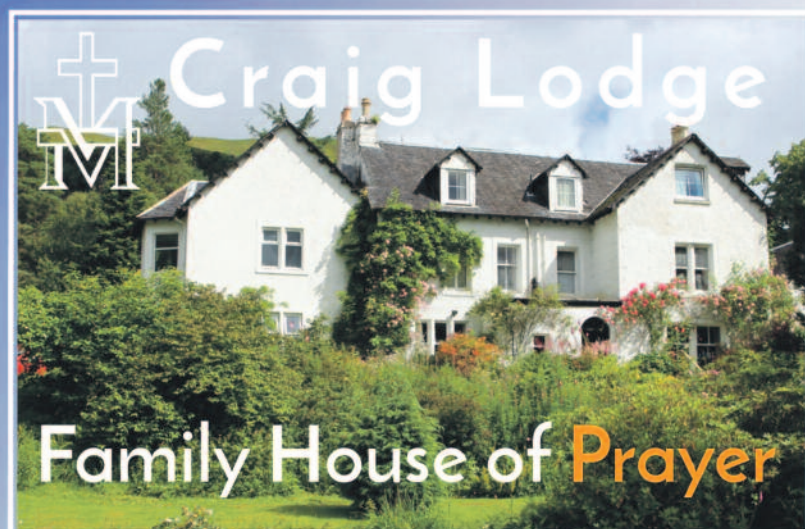
Thankfully there is an increased interest in the situation, and homelessness and its impact are rising fairly rapidly up the political agenda. Sadly, this is stimulated in part by the visible rise in the numbers of people who are homeless in the UK – a 132 per cent increase in rough sleeping alone since 2010 – and partly by the back story to the Grenfell Tower tragedy.

Homelessness can be prevented, as complex as the problem is. And I know that, with the right support, even those facing apparently insurmountable difficulties can, over time, begin to look towards a brighter future.

We should never give up on anyone. Ever.

Joining in local activities for Homeless Sunday on 28th January is one excellent way of showing just how much we care.

**Cathy Corcoran is CEO of the Cardinal Hume Centre. The Centre works with homeless young people, badly housed families and others in need.**



## Forthcoming Events

- 9th-11th February - Young Teens P7-S1
  - 23rd -25th February - Mid Teens S2-S4
  - 16th-18th March - Family Weekend Retreat
  - 29th March – 1st April - Easter Triduum - For 18-30s
  - 9th – 13th April - Family Week Retreat
  - 20th -22nd April - Inner Healing - Canon Fraser & Living Water
  - 23rd -28th April - St Conan's Pilgrim Way – join us on a guided walking pilgrimage to Iona
  - 27th – 29th April – Ros Powell - Life in the Spirit
  - 4th – 6th May - Family Weekend Retreat
  - 11th – 13th May – Fr Scott Brossart SOLT, Our Lady & the Trinity
  - 18th – 20th May - Pentecost Praise
  - 1st – 3rd June, Come & Adore Him, Corpus Christi - Eucharistic Weekend
  - 7th – 10th June – Summer Youth Camp
  - 15th -17th June - Family Weekend Retreat
  - 22nd – 23rd June – Healing Weekend Canon Fraser & Craig Lodge Community
  - 6th – 8th July – Holy Spirit & Healing Weekend - Fr Antoine Coelho & Max Ford
  - 22nd – 23rd June – Healing Weekend Canon Fraser & Craig Lodge Community
  - 9th – 13th July - Family Week
  - 20th – 22nd July - Gary Stephens, Becoming Warriors for the Gospel
- Full details a: [www.craiglodge.org](http://www.craiglodge.org)

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Jesus went up into the hills to pray