

church action for Tax justice

US Congress Catholic Chaplain sacked for praying for Tax Justice - then reinstated!

It was announced last month that Father Patrick Conroy, the Roman Catholic Chaplain to the US House of Representatives, had been forced from office. This was said to be due to his prayer on the eve of last November's debate on Trump's new tax laws, when he said:-

'May all members be mindful that the institutions and structures of our great nation guarantee the opportunities that have allowed some to achieve great success while others continue to struggle. May their efforts these days guarantee that there are not winners and losers under new tax laws, but benefits balanced and shared by all Americans.'

He was eventually asked to resign by Republican Speaker Paul Ryan who was 'unhappy with the prayer.' He did so, ending 7 years of service, although his sacking was resisted by the Democrat Leader Nancy Pelosi. He had announced his final date as May 24th but then decided to withdraw his letter of resignation, which was accepted by Speaker Ryan and he now remains in post.

Other church leaders, including Revd Jim Wallis of the Sojourners' Community, also protested against the new tax laws, and were arrested and ejected from one of the Senate buildings for reading out loud what the Bible said about economic justice.

Revd David Haslam, Chair of Church Action for Tax Justice (CAT) said, 'Father Conroy is another of our heroes, like whistle-blowers such as Antoine Deltour, Raphael Halet, Rudolf Elmer and Hervé Falciani, as well as those unnamed leakers of the Panama and the Paradise Papers. Thank God for those who stand up for Tax Justice, each one takes us a step nearer creating a fair and equitable tax system. Father Conway prayed truth to power, we trust he will now continue to do so.'

The next event for CAT, which was launched by former Archbishop Rowan Williams on 17th April, is a showing of the film, 'Spider's Web' at Westminster Central Hall on Monday June 4th at 6.30 pm. This takes place on the eve of the first 'Fair Tax Fortnight' lasting from June 9th to 24th. Supporters are being encouraged to name June 17th as 'Tax Justice Sunday' and use worship materials available on the CAT website. Campaigners for Tax Justice recently received a boost when the Hodge-Mitchell amendment to the Government's Anti-Money Laundering Bill was passed, requiring British overseas territories to produce public registers of the trusts and foundations in which wealthy companies and individuals hide their money.

Further information www.catj.org.uk www.fairtaxmark.net
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