

**PRESS RELEASE**

6<sup>th</sup> June 2011

**'Being Untouchable'**

Photography exhibition on India's Dalits opens at St Paul's Cathedral



*Kamlesh, a Dalit child forced into a roadside pile of burning rubbish by a higher caste resident scandalised that she should be on a path reserved for the higher castes. Photograph by Marcus Perkins for CSW.*

'Being Untouchable' at St Paul's Cathedral

Private View: Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> June 6-7.30pm

Exhibition Dates: Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> June – Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> July

St Paul's Cathedral welcomes a rare and intimate series of portraits of the lives of Indian Dalits in a photography exhibition by Marcus Perkins, for Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW).

India's Dalits (previously known as "untouchables") are a people whose history reverberates with oppression, exploitation and injustice. *Being Untouchable* is a moving collection of images which exposes the present-day impact of these centuries of oppression, and explores how although "untouchability" was abolished by India's Constitution, it continues to be practised today.

Three Meditative Eucharists will be held on Sundays during the exhibition. These will explore the theme of untouchability and focus on the Dalits of India, the untouchable within our own society, and ultimately the untouchable within ourselves.

The Reverend Canon Mark Oakley, Treasurer of St Paul's Cathedral, said:

*"Marcus Perkins' photographs are haunted by the beauty and pain of what is being observed. The colour of India – those wonderful fabrics, textures and smells – is skilfully captured but is shadowed by the darkness of reality for these men, women and children deemed to be unworthy of human touch. We are thrown back on ourselves as we look. What can we do? What happened to these people? What do we consider untouchable in*

our own culture and day? It is only right that such vital questions are explored in reflective acts of worship in the cathedral making this more than an exhibition. It is an invitation to see life through a different lens.”

Photographer Marcus Perkins said:

“Although almost every aspect of life in India has been covered by photography exhibitions, very few have paid systematic attention to casteism. Many outside India either don’t know about caste, or assume it is dying out as a result of India’s economic boom. That is not the case, and we have sought here to illustrate the lives of a few, who typify both the extreme and the everyday suffering that millions of Dalits face. This exhibition is a tribute to them.”

David Griffiths, South Asia Team Leader at CSW said:

“Being Untouchable is both a hand of warm friendship to Dalits, and a cry of protest about their suffering. Developed in partnership with Dalit community leaders, who allowed us to share in the privilege of solidarity with their people, it is a plea to let Dalits tell their own story, express their own aspirations and forge their own future. St Paul’s Cathedral is one of London’s most iconic institutions, and by highlighting the lives of a people once called ‘untouchable’ and often treated little differently today, it is amplifying the key message that being untouchable has no place in our world.”

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**For more information or to RSVP to the private view on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> June please contact Hannah Talbot, Press and Communications Officer, St Paul’s Cathedral on 020 7246 8321 or email [Hannah@stpaulscathedral.org.uk](mailto:Hannah@stpaulscathedral.org.uk)**

Note to editors:

### **Listings Information**

*‘Being Untouchable: an exhibition of photography by Marcus Perkins for CSW’*

Date: Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> June – Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> July 2011

Venue: St Paul’s Cathedral

Time: 8.30am – 4pm

Tickets: Normal admission charges apply

*‘Meditative Eucharist: Untouchable in the UK’*

Preacher: Sonia Barron, Adviser to the Archbishops’ Council

Date: Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> June

Venue: St Paul’s Cathedral

Time: 6pm

Entry is free and all are welcome

*‘Meditative Eucharist: The Dalits of India’*

Preacher: The Revd Dr Margaret Kalaiselvi, Tamilnadu Theological Seminary

Date: Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> June

Venue: St Paul’s Cathedral

Time: 6pm

Entry is free and all are welcome

*‘Meditative Eucharist: The Untouchable Within’*

Preacher: The Revd Canon Mark Oakley, Treasurer, St Paul’s Cathedral

Date: Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> July

Venue: St Paul’s Cathedral

Time: 6pm

Entry is free and all are welcome

### **St Paul’s Cathedral**

St Paul’s is the cathedral church of the diocese of London, which it has served for over 1,400 years. The

current building has become a potent symbol of the life of a nation and is one of the world's most beautiful buildings. Designed by Sir Christopher Wren in the late seventeenth century, its stones have absorbed the hopes, fears, sorrows and joys of generations and stand as an enduring symbol of our communion with those gone before and those still to come. Each year nearly two million people flock to the cathedral for services, concerts, debates, educational events, performing arts and sightseeing. All are most welcome.

### **Marcus Perkins**

Since 1992, Marcus Perkins has worked in over 90 countries covering humanitarian, corporate and commercial assignments. Experience, flexibility, and a natural ability to engage the people and the communities he photographs, has earned him his clients' confidence to represent them positively anywhere in the world. Best known for his work documenting humanitarian and human rights issues, Marcus remains deeply committed to communicating the heart of a story through the power of the still image.

### **Christian Solidarity Worldwide**

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) is an organisation working for religious freedom through advocacy for human rights, in the pursuit of justice. Working in partnership with local organisations and individuals in around 25 countries worldwide, CSW conducts research, advocacy, public campaigns and capacity-building work. In some areas, CSW also raises the profile of broader human rights and justice issues beyond freedom of religion. *Being Untouchable* was exhibited in October 2010 as part of CSW's *Inclusive India* campaign, and is now on loan to St Paul's Cathedral.

Find out more about CSW at [www.csw.org.uk](http://www.csw.org.uk)