Introduction to the Bible Course

My name is Paul McCartin. I am a Catholic priest from Australia. I belong to a small missionary society called the Missionary Society of St. Columban, better known as the Columban Fathers or just the Columbans.  Most Columban missionaries work in impoverished countries like Pakistan and Peru, and every day they see those people's struggle with poverty. Columbans realize that many of the causes of poverty lie in the richer countries whose political and economic policies harm impoverished countries. Columbans also know that much of the wealth of the richer countries derived from exploitation of poor countries. The people who form the policies that harm the poor countries are our politicians, bureaucrats and business people. That is, our parents, our brothers, our sisters, our children and our friends. So we understand that we ourselves are responsible for the suffering of poor people. This is why Columbans have taken the 'preferential option for the poor.' That is, when we form policies and make important decisions, we consider the effect on poor people. Well, that's the theory, anyway. Presently, I am the Ecology, Justice and Peace coordinator for the Columbans in Japan.

In 1998, Columbans here decided to participate in Jubilee 2000, the campaign to cancel the illegitimate debts of the world's most impoverished countries, and helped establish Jubilee 2000 Japan.  In 2000, we took up the problem of patenting life, i.e., the patenting of genes from microorganisms, plants, animals and humans, and in 2003 joined the 'No Patents On Life Campaign'. Another of our priority issues is global warming/climate change.

  There was a McCartin among St Patrick's disciples, so the McCartins have probably been Christian for 1,500 years. Having studied at Catholic primary and secondary schools, I thought I knew Christianity. I even won the Religion Prize in school. But after entering the seminary I received quite a shock when I realized I knew very little about Christianity.  In the parishes where I have worked, many parishioners know little about Jesus and Catholic tradition, and their faith is largely a private matter, with scarcely any interest in social issues. They do not know that everything is connected to everything else. (Is it that missionaries do not instruct parishioners very well?) In short, faith and life are, for many Catholics, unrelated to each other.  An extreme example is the pilot of the plane that bombed Nagasaki. A Catholic, he killed many Catholics, including three whole congregations of nuns. Jesus' central teachings are "Love one another" and "Love your enemies," but the pilot disregarded these teachings and committed a massacre.   John Lennon sang for these people:

 Imagine there's no heaven;

it's easy if you try:

no hell below us,

above us only sky.

Imagine all the people

living for today.

So I am preaching to combine faith with life, and religion with society, holding Bible classes in various places.