

# Justpeace

## PAX CHRISTI

International Catholic Movement for Peace

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### Becoming Prophets of a Just Peace

In a little courtyard to one side of St Mary Major's basilica in Rome is a stone cross, perhaps 10 feet high. Nothing unusual about that, perhaps, until you look more closely. The vertical arm of the cross is in the form of an old cannon. The story is that when King Henri IV of France decided to return to the Catholic Church in 1593, the Pope of the time was less than gracious, setting up an inscription to commemorate his 'absolution' from his errant ways. The King felt insulted, so a French prelate retaliated by manufacturing this most military of crosses. Beneath it he too wrote an inscription, the motto of the first Christian Emperor, Constantine: *'In this sign I have my victory.'* The ambiguity was deliberate: If the cross doesn't work, there is always the gun.

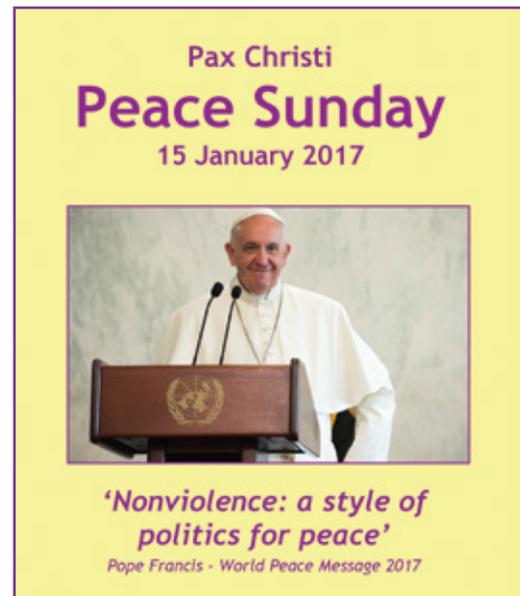
#### In which sign do we have our victory?

That ambiguity has hung over the Church for the last 1700 years and it challenges us in a new way today. Firstly, because of the sheer power of modern weapons, which no longer lob small lumps of rock across a few hundred yards, but can carry the destruction of whole cities in one warhead a quarter of the way around the world in minutes. Secondly, because of the number of armed conflicts played out in these first decades of the Third Millennium. Pope Francis has called it *'A Third World War in instalments'*. Think Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Afghanistan, Libya, South Sudan, the Ukraine...

Alarm at this proliferation of violence has provoked the Holy Father to call, in his message for *World Peace Day* (celebrated in England and Wales on Sunday, January 15th, 2017), for a *new style of politics* aimed at building peace and for new way of conducting international relations - with *Nonviolence* as its central tenet. It ought to be obvious that violence cannot heal the wounds caused by violence, and that crushing our opponents by military might will never bring true reconciliation. Yet we seem to have difficulty in grasping that truth. Our theologians and ethicists have laudably devoted their energies to assessing when warfare is not legitimate (when other means of conflict resolution have not been exhausted; when those who declare war do not have the authority to do so; when the immunity of non-combatants is not safeguarded; when the evil caused is not balanced by achievement of a far greater good; when there is no prospect of success, etc). But that has left us with the illusion that there *could* be a *just* war, an *okay* war; even a *good* or *necessary* or *holy* war, a war which does God's will.

#### War No More

God is love. That is the fundamental Gospel message. And Jesus demonstrably refused to hate his enemies, to retaliate or to seek their destruction. For 300 years nearly all Christians took these two truths for granted, until Constantine lifted the Church out of persecution



and set it on the road to power. And then the cross gradually took on the shape of a weapon in many people's eyes - believers and unbelievers alike.

Today the Church is no longer needed by secular power as a prop. That frees us to articulate a different vision; no longer as guardians of a *'Just War'* but as prophets of a *'Just Peace'*. That requires, firstly, our own conversion of heart - letting our basic responses be refashioned by Christ. Next it means reaching beyond the rhetoric of conflict to try to hear the real hopes and fears of our opponents and to identify what we have in common. Then initiatives to promote dialogue must follow, together with measures which can 'de-escalate' tensions and resolve disputes, learning both from recent conflict resolution processes and from our own Christian tradition of peacemaking. And through all of this must run an effort to articulate a vision of the sort of people we want to be and the sort of world we wish to create: how can we make it easier to live together in harmony?

The vision is a radical one. It really does constitute a new style of politics, as Pope Francis has said. The transformation won't be easy. But it's the only path which offers hope to our divided world. Fortunately, we don't need to make that journey alone. There are many others already committed to this new way, in organisations such as the international Catholic Peace Movement, *Pax Christi*, groups which have already developed training and techniques for those who dare to believe that another way is possible besides preparation for war. But our greatest resource is the message and example of Jesus, calling us to love our enemies and to walk the way of peace together. In that sign we have our victory.

by Fr Rob Esdaile, Parish Priest of Our Lady of Lourdes, Thames Ditton, Surrey

## Prepare for Pax Christi - Peace Sunday 15 January 2017

We rely on our members and supporters to help make Peace Sunday happen in parishes. There is still plenty of time to order resources and organise something, no matter how small. **Please ask that a collection be taken for the work of Pax Christi.** Some approaches to help you offered here.

- Offer to speak at Mass. Tell people why YOU are a member of Pax Christi and what it means to you. Say something about Pax Christi's faithful history of promoting the World Peace Day message in this country. Use the Peace Sunday resource booklet to speak about the theme, giving examples of nonviolence in action. Invite people to support Pax Christi's on-going work in peace education and campaigning by becoming a member.
- Draw upon the *Courageous nonviolence of Jesus* and the *Stories of Peacemaking* resources. Try to link with local examples of peacemakers or good news stories of problem solving through negotiation or dialogue.
- If you want to give more time to the theme, arrange a peace-hour or vigil on Peace Sunday or during the following week. Resources in the Peace Sunday booklet provide core elements for times of reflection. This is

also a time when local/national peace-people can be celebrated and traditional peacemaking models shared.

- Take key extracts from the message (on our website from mid-December) and reproduce them in parish newsletters or magazines or enlarge them and display in your church or community centre. You could also use some of the *Stories of Peacemaking* from the booklet.
- Create a peace corner for the month of January with books, news stories, the *Appeal for Nonviolence*, peace prayers that people can borrow/take away. Each week, highlight one extract from the World Peace Day message.
- Use the Peace Sunday theme as a spring-board for taking the theme into the life of your parish/community for the whole year. You could share Pax Christi resources with your Confirmation programme. You could reflect more deeply on the Pope's message during Lent.
- One very easy action you can take is to ask your parish to endorse the *Appeal to the Catholic Church to Recommit to Gospel Nonviolence* (you can also endorse this in your own name) <http://tinyurl.com/jc6znm7>

The resources mentioned here, and lots more, can be downloaded from the Peace Sunday webpage.

## The 'jungle' is finished but the work goes on

*The Maria Skobtsova House, a house of hospitality in the Catholic Worker tradition, opened in February 2016 to support migrants and refugees in Calais. We reproduce extracts of reflections on the experiences of the clearance from Bro Johannes who works at the house.*

Often people ask me how I feel now the jungle has gone, the answer is my heart is saddened on the way it all happened, the people I worked with for months have forcibly been moved, a community I belonged to is now no longer. So, all our volunteers, our partners and many others feel sad and angry.

I am worried about Amanuel who is 16 and trying to go to his sister in the UK. He is now in the centre of the South of France not knowing what follows. I am worried about Mohammed, an isolated young Sudanese man with serious mental health issues. He lost control of his life after losing his young wife travelling through the Libyan Desert. I am worried for Titi, one of the Eritrean women who came praying at our house and called our volunteers, crying that she didn't know where the coach was taking her and she had already been on the bus for more than 12 hours. She ended up somewhere near the Spanish border. After everything they have been through, that is how we treat them.

In the last months so many people passed through our house, so many volunteers and students joined us and we had the privilege of being part of so many people's lives, learned from their cultures, customs and language. The jungle of Calais was a place of destitution and problems, pain and violence but also of community, hospitality and friendship. It was one of the few places in the world I knew where Afghans, Sudanese, Ethiopians, Eritrean, Muslims and Christians lived together and formed community and faced all the challenges this posed.

No one should live in a jungle; no one should live in that kind of destitution but it ended so abruptly and without respect for the refugees and migrants. For several nights



*The Orthodox Church was destroyed on 28 October*

100 minors ended up sleeping on the street in the jungle because there was not enough place foreseen in the shelters for minors... Now we are getting phone calls from people who have our numbers, to say where they have arrived. From Marseilles, Vienna, Toulouse, Strasbourg to Langres.

Refugees and migrants have been coming to Calais since 1998, since the war in Kosovo. Refugees have lived in squatted houses, huts in bushes. As long as Calais is the geographical and logistical connection between France and the UK, refugees and migrants will come to Calais. Hopefully our work will continue to serve the most vulnerable of God's children here in Calais. In the weeks ahead there will be new arrivals of refugees and migrants - now we need to find them. Groups such as ours and Secours Catholique, Medicin du Monde and others will keep working in the area. We still need your prayer and support.

More here <https://www.facebook.com/MariaSkobtsova/>

## Beautiful Resistance in Palestine

In October my sister Elizabeth and I went on a 10-day cooking tour of Palestine. The trip was called 'A Taste of Palestine'. We were offered this opportunity by a family friend. Having been to the Holy Land many times herself, she decided last year that she wanted others to see and experience what she had. She did this so that we and the others she sponsored, and will sponsor in the future, could also come home inspired to tell their story of their experience in Palestine.

So, I will try and sum up what I learnt from one of my most life-changing experiences in these 500 words!

What sticks in my head, on reflection, is an observation my sister made after a few days. "This is a land of contrasts". After this, everywhere I looked in 'The Holy Land' (even this title seemed to contrast with what we were experiencing) was filled with them. In a children's playground waiting to have a BBQ picnic, just next to the 8-metre tall separation wall. 'Refugee Camps' that have been there for five decades, fully built up with youth centres, markets, all the trappings of a small town. Football pitches with kids playing, being staked out by soldiers waiting to question them. Drinking local craft ale in the 'dry' city of Nablus. I was surprised by all these contradictions and by the full and well-rounded lives people were creating for themselves under while living under occupation. At the Alrowad Youth Centre, they call this 'Beautiful Resistance'.

'A Taste of Palestine' is a clear example of 'Beautiful Resistance'. We travelled throughout the West Bank cooking with families, eating in restaurants, and sharing food and conversations at Community Centres and Community Organisations. The unique nature of this trip was how much of an insight it gave into people's lives. Cooking with families, sitting in their homes for a full afternoon, their stories of living under occupation came out naturally. As a result of cooking and eating with people we made real connections with them and continued friendships.

I am still learning from my new Palestinian friends on a daily basis. I now get regular updates on news and information from Palestine in real time. I can see live videos of the Israeli Defence Force occupying Sebastia. I can see a rave in Ramallah that is defying curfew laws



Emma and Elizabeth Atherton in Palestine

imposed, and I can see live performances of traditional 'Dabka' in Aida Refugee Camp, in the Alrowad youth centre, in Bethlehem.

The very act of us going on the cooking tour gives hope and encouragement, to know that they are not forgotten in the international community. I asked all the young people I met what they wanted to do in the future. More often than not, they said they wanted to do some form of education and stay in Palestine to work for the future of their country. It is imperative for the future of Palestine that they keep their young people. The more we can show our solidarity the better for these young people.

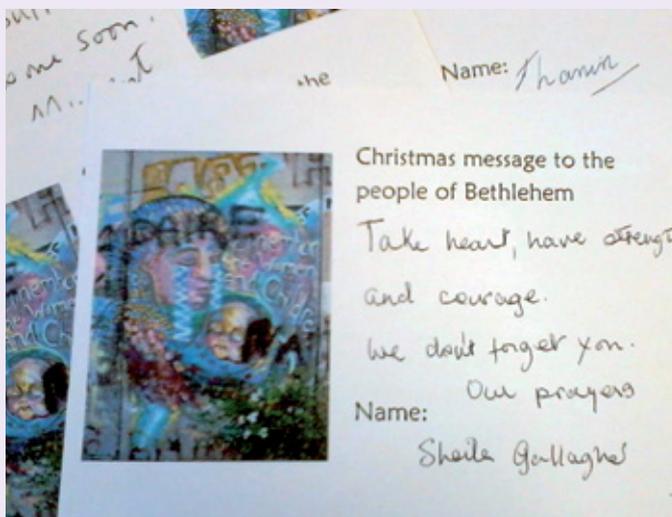
Palestine is a beautiful country, with delicious food, and with a strong, welcoming and steadfastly passionate population. Visiting a country on a cooking tour, tells you many things about its history, culture, economy, and its politics. To recognise, share and celebrate culture is to show solidarity and respect for a country. This is what 'A Taste of Palestine' is about, and this is one way we can all share in 'Beautiful Resistance'.

Emma Atherton, Executive Committee member.

More about Taste for Palestine here:

[www.amostrust.org/amos-travel/a-taste-of-palestine/](http://www.amostrust.org/amos-travel/a-taste-of-palestine/)

## Remembering Palestine this Christmas



Christmas messages from 2015

As in previous years, we encourage members and supporters to remember the people of Palestine as we prepare for Christmas. We can show our solidarity through prayer, through practical support such as the purchase of Palestinian goods and through remembering communities in Gaza and the West Bank.

**Prayer resources:** Kairos Palestine have produced Advent and Christmas reflections that focus on children and how the occupation touches their lives.

**Send a message to communities in Palestine.** This is an opportunity for individuals, families or parishes to show support to communities. You can download sheets for messages. They should be returned to Pax Christi and we will ensure they reach Palestine.

Both can be found here:

[paxchristi.org.uk/remember-palestine-at-christmas/](http://paxchristi.org.uk/remember-palestine-at-christmas/)

**Plant a tree.** Through Zaytoun you can purchase the gift of five trees for £20.00. The recipient will receive a certificate of planting. A wonderful 'gift for life'. [www.zaytoun.org/plant\\_a\\_tree.html](http://www.zaytoun.org/plant_a_tree.html)

## Diary

### 15 January (Sun) National

Pax Christi - Peace Sunday. A day when parishes in England and Wales are invited to promote the World Peace Message and support Pax Christi. Resources here [www.paxchristi.org.uk/news-and-events/peace-sunday/](http://www.paxchristi.org.uk/news-and-events/peace-sunday/)

### 15 January (Sun) Liverpool

J&P Liverpool Annual Memorial Lecture. LACE Conference Centre, Liverpool L17 1AA. Speaker Rev Raj Patta, Lutheran theologian.

### 22 January (Sun) National

Homeless Sunday resources from [www.housingjustice.org.uk](http://www.housingjustice.org.uk)

### 8 March (Wed) International

International Women's Day. Celebrate women peacemakers, use the Pax Christi postcard produced for the day!

### 8 March (Wed) National

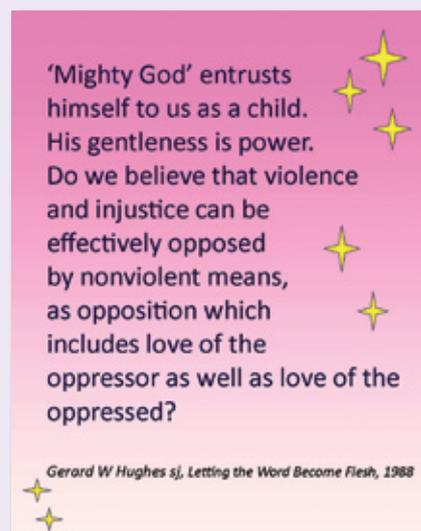
Annual Ash Wednesday witness against nuclear war preparations London and other places. More to come.

### 30 March (Thu) Liverpool

Pax Christi Liverpool public meeting on Palestine with returned Ecumenical Accompanier. Venue TBC. Contact [janharper1@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:janharper1@yahoo.co.uk)

If you are organising a local event don't forget to let Pax Christi know in time to advertise it, and send a report/photo for the Members' News section of the website.

If you would like free or sale-or-return resources for events, stalls, meetings please let us know. We would be delighted to provide them.



## Office report

**Standing Orders.** In recent years we have moved our reserve and other transactions to Unity Trust Bank - a bank identified with embracing the philosophy of the common good. Over the years Pax Christi and our sister agency PAX Netherlands has been challenging RBS (one of our banks) regarding its financial links with weapons producing companies.\* After careful consideration the Finance committee of Pax Christi recommended that we move all our standing orders from RBS to Unity to further minimise our relationship with RBS. These are the standing orders set up by our members to pay for their membership or donation. In October 2016 we initiated this change and we are pleased to inform you the change has been very smooth. We see the responsibility to keep you informed but there is no action that you will need to take. If you have questions please call our administrator Fausta Valentine on 0208 203 4884 or email [admin@paxchristi.org.uk](mailto:admin@paxchristi.org.uk)

\*More about this and other investment related research at [www.dontbankonthebomb.com/](http://www.dontbankonthebomb.com/)

**Out and about with Pax Christi: Matt Jeziorski:** November, INSET - St Mary's Primary, Morecambe, Northampton Diocesan Deputy Headteachers' Conference, Market Harborough, Newman College, Preston, St Dominic's Sixth Form College, Harrow-on-the-Hill.

**Pat Gaffney:** November Balfour Project study day, London, Meeting Archbishop Malcolm McMahon, Liverpool, NJPN

Network Day, Southwark, December: Rome meetings, Catholic Nonviolence Initiative.

**If you would like a Pax Christi speaker for your group, community, parish please contact the office.**

**New A level resource:** We have published our first lesson for the new A-Level Religious Studies course. The Christian Contribution to Issues of War and Peace has been produced jointly with Quakers in Britain and is the first of three lessons that we are preparing. This together with our GCSE RE materials and all our peace education resources can be found on our website: [www.paxchristi.org.uk/peace-education/](http://www.paxchristi.org.uk/peace-education/)

**On-line membership and donations:** A reminder that you can make donations to Pax Christi at any time via our website.

Request from The Tablet: Please take part in this special market research project. Its purpose is to achieve an increased understanding of how The Tablet is perceived by members of Pax Christi. You can find the survey here: [https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/tablet\\_PaxChristiUK](https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/tablet_PaxChristiUK)



**Follow Pax Christi on twitter:**

<https://twitter.com/paxchristiuk> and <http://www.twitter.com/PaxChristiYouth>

## Keep peace alive. Remember Pax Christi when making or updating your will

Please send me information on

Membership  Publications  Legacy

I enclose a donation of £ ..... to support your work

Name: .....

Address: .....

.....

Tel: .....

Return to Pax Christi, St Joseph's, Watford Way, Hendon, London, NW4 4TY  
Tel: 020 8203 4884 email: [info@paxchristi.org.uk](mailto:info@paxchristi.org.uk) [www.paxchristi.org.uk](http://www.paxchristi.org.uk)

## Pax Christi – Our Values

Pax Christi members live by the biblically inspired values of **Peace, Reconciliation, Nonviolence.**

These values are supported by the witness of peacemakers down the ages and the experience of the Pax Christi community.

Pax Christi is rooted in Catholic Christianity but is open to all who are in sympathy with its values and work.

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