

Justpeace

PAX CHRISTI

International Catholic Movement for Peace

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Peacemaking and the Year of Faith

Fr Rob Esdaile's article below clearly sets out the ways in which peacemaking can be clearly woven into the Year of Faith and what better way to start this than by ensuring that Peace Sunday is celebrated in our parish. This is an important way in which the message of peace and the work of Pax Christi can be shared and supported by parishes. In this mailing we include the booklet, new leaflet and prayer card, produced to support the day. Please, please consider what you can do in your parish on 20 January or on another Sunday. All parishes have now received a Peace Sunday pack so do approach your own and offer to help, speak, give out leaflets or envelopes. The theme '*Blessed are the Peacemakers*' is so positive and opens itself to lots of work all through the year - see the timeline in the booklet.

Blessed are the Peacemakers - World Peace Day 2013

Pope Benedict has asked the Catholic community to live 2013 as a '*Year of Faith*', inviting us "*rediscover a taste for feeding ourselves on the Word of God,*"¹ in the face of the many competing voices and values of our day and age. Of course, we always stand in need of renewal. But there is a particular reason for holding such a *Year of Faith* right now, for the Second Vatican Council began its work of renewing the Church fifty years ago. It's time, says the Pope, to rediscover the teaching of that great gathering.

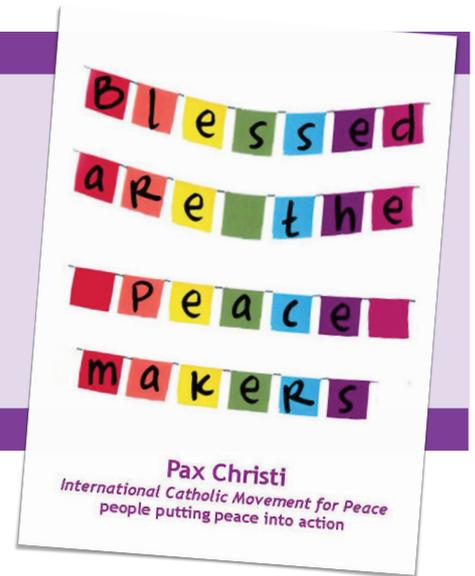
The theme of this year's *Peace Sunday* (January 20th, 2013), "*Blessed are the Peacemakers,*" certainly fits very well with the aim of the Year of Faith. It's taken from the seventh of the nine Beatitudes (Mt 5.9) with which Matthew begins Jesus' public ministry. It's a key text of Scripture. But what does it mean for us today? To understand the Beatitudes properly, it's important to see that they aren't *instructions*. Rather, they are *descriptions of how 'Kingdom People' are*: poor in spirit, compassionate, gentle, thirsty for righteous, merciful, pure in heart, peace-making ... oh and (uncomfortably) persecuted and spoken ill of. Seeking the Kingdom gets them into trouble. But signs of the Kingdom of God happen if (and only if) people dare to live that way.

Vatican II and peace

If we ask what Vatican Two has to say about peacemaking, the first thing to note is a trust in humanity. Those who gathered in Rome in 1962-5 had lived through the horrors of World War Two, while the shadow of the Cold War hung heavily over countries East and West. Yet, despite this, they remained convinced that God's Love is capable of renewing all things and that God's Will is a universal peace in which *all* are called to share.²

From this flow two further insights: the conviction that Christians are called to work for reconciliation (firstly, between the Churches, but then of the human community wherever there is conflict); and the urgent call to read "*the signs of the times*"³ - to interpret the events of our day and age, so that we can see where the Holy Spirit is touching people's hearts, opening up pathways towards peace. We Catholic Christians may not simply say that we're 'not interested' in current affairs, because we believe that each person is our brother or sister and that the dignity of all matters.

At the end of Vatican II the Council Fathers turned to the urgent task of '*Fostering Peace and Establishing a Community of Nations*'.⁴ Peace, we are reminded, "*is more than the absence of war*" and cannot be based on a balance of terror. It is a task that needs to be worked at constantly, a search for the Common Good, grounded in love and justice. In contrast, modern warfare cannot be regarded as an acceptable way of resolving conflict. Vatican II condemns both the targeting of Weapons of Mass Destruction (notably nuclear missiles) on civilian populations and



the wasting on the arms race of vast sums which could be used to help the poor. And the Bishops insist that *all* must work for disarmament and the end to the arms-race.

Re-reading this teaching after nearly half a century, perhaps the most striking thing is how relevant it remains and how widely the Church's teaching on warfare is ignored, not least in the supposedly 'Christian' West. So, once again, we are being called to conversion. Perhaps part of our own contribution to the Year of Faith could be undertaking to study Vatican II's teaching on peace-making and then asking: *What can I do to work for peace, in the spirit of the Council?* Certainly, we cannot do much alone. We need others to work alongside. And that is where the Catholic Peace Movement, *Pax Christi*, comes in - linking people who are committed to the work of making peace, providing resources, and fostering prayer and reflection regarding the meaning of the Gospel of Peace.

Fr Rob Esdaile

¹ Pope Benedict XVI, Apostolic Letter *Porta Fidei* For the Indiction of the Year of Faith, n.2

² See Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, n.13 (end)

³ Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution On The Church In The Modern World, *Gaudium Et Spes*, n.4

⁴ *Gaudium Et Spes*, Chapter 5, nn.77-90



A new **General Secretary** began work in Brussels in September, José Henriquez, from El Salvador. José has been actively engaged with the international peace movement since he coordinated the first Pax Christi Latin America and Caribbean Consultation in 2007. He brings to Pax Christi International a deep personal commitment to peace and social justice.

For many years, José has worked on diverse initiatives with a focus on social justice, peace and human rights. He has accompanied communities experiencing structural violence, and has been deeply inspired by their courageous struggle for the realization of their rights. Education on social justice issues to young people in particular, has also been an endeavour close to his heart. As executive director of the Fundación Marista, José was part of the Latin American Marist solidarity network. He also served as chair of the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Commission of the Guatemalan Conference of Women and Men Religious (CONFREGUA).

We look forward to welcoming José to the UK in 2013. Meanwhile Marie Dennis, our international co-president will be with us from 18 - 23 March 2013 for Romero Week, speaking in Nottingham, Wrexham, Birmingham, Oxford and London.

Pax Christi International 2012 Peace Prize. This year the prize is awarded to Archbishop Dr. John Onaiyekan for his consistent and tireless efforts in advocating for justice, peace, inter-religious dialogue and action. His work in Nigeria and other African countries, as the Catholic Archbishop of Abuja, the Co-Chair for the African Council of Religious Leaders-Religions for Peace and former Co-Chair of the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC) have made a great contribution to peace. Pax Christi International makes an annual peace award to a contemporary figure who is working against violence and injustice.

Resources

Plant an olive tree: Alternative Gift. Olive Aid is a project that Pax Christi knows. They help to challenge the injustices suffered by Palestinians by replanting olive groves and providing families with a sustainable income from olives and olive based products. Their Fund also helps to offer scholarships to students at Bethlehem University. One tree costs £25.00. find out more at www.oliveaid.com or write to **OliveAid**, 72 Beaumont Road, Purley, Surrey, CR8 2EG.

Moonwise Calendar 2013 is in full colour with beautiful illustrations by Pax Christi member, Maggie Organ. They explore the relationship between human beings and the planet. Maggie says that the illustrations grew out of reading Fr Thomas Berry's book *The Great Work - Our way into the future* and doing her own research. Maggie hopes that the images will help people to really connect with the issues. The calendar is available for £13.50 from www.moonwise.co.uk

Wall Museum Bethlehem

Our women partners at the SUMUD house in Bethlehem have created a Wall Museum of their stories and experiences of life under occupation. Some of these might be used for display/discussion for Advent and Christmas. You can find them here... just add Wall Museum Bethlehem <https://theexhibitionlist.wordpress.com>

Bethlehem Pack

This is an on-line resource produced by Amos Trust with readings, reflections and statements for Advent and Christmas. Can be downloaded from their website www.amostrust.org



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

Diary

10 December (Mon) London

Pax Christi Annual Advent Peace Service. 7.30 St Aloysius Church, Phoenix Road, Euston NW1. Followed by alternative Christmas Market.

11-13 January, Swanwick

Christian Aware Annual Conference: Peace, Justice & Reconciliation at Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick. Speakers and workshops on the theme. Details from www.christiansaware.co.uk or 01773 526000

20 January 2013. (Sun)

National Peace Sunday. Materials available on Pax Christi website www.paxchristi.org.uk

26 January - 4 February

National Poverty and homeless action week. Project of Church Action on Poverty, Housing Justice and Scottish Churches Housing Action. Materials available here www.actionweek.org.uk

13 February (Wed) London

Ash Wednesday annual gathering of repentance and resistance to nuclear war preparations at the Ministry of Defence, London. More information in New Year.

1-4 March, Manchester

Seeds of Liberation. Student Christian Movement Conference on global perspectives; global faith and global action, in partnership with Pax Christi, CAFOD, Christian Aid, Progressio and CAP at Manchester University. www.movement.org.uk/seedsofliberation

11 May (Sat) London

Pax Christi Annual General Meeting. Speaker Professor Tina Beattie.