Blessed are the Peacemakers—celebration and thanks

A Pax Christi delegation took part in the recent Vatican Conference on nuclear disarmament where Pope Francis condemned the threat and possession of nuclear weapons (more in Bruce Kent’s article). Another speaker, Bishop Robert McElroy from San Diego said, The Church must be a voice in the world constantly pointing humanity toward the path of nonviolence and the logic of peace... The Church HAS a voice for peace which we celebrate here: peacemakers challenging extractive industries, advocating for refugees fleeing violence, creating new legal frameworks to prohibit weapons and promoting peace education and more. Pax Christi and YOU our members and supporters strengthen this voice each day.

Each year Pax Christi International (PCI) is invited to make recommendations for the Peace Award, funded by the Cardinal Bernardus Alfrink Peace Fund, which honours contemporary individuals and organisations who make a stand for peace, justice and nonviolence in different parts of the world.

2017 is the 29th anniversary of the Award, first given in 1988 to Margarida Maria Alves, President of the Farmworkers Union in Brazil, who in 1983 gave her life in the struggle for the rights of poor rural workers.

This year PCI Board Members, staff and invited guests, gathered at the Istituto Maria SS. Bambina, in Rome, to recognise ZODEVITE, the Movimiento Indígena del Pueblo Creyente Zoque en Defensa de la Vida y la Tierra (the Indigenous Movement of the Zoque Believing People in Defense of Life and the Earth), based in Chiapas, Mexico.

ZODEVITE is part of a wider movement, MOVEDITE, composed of indigenous groups, that in recent years has waged a nonviolent campaign to stop fracking, oil exploitation and mining business in southern Mexico. Members follow the principles identified in Laudato Si’ in caring for Mother Earth, and are inspired by Bishop Don Samuel Ruiz, who mediated an agreement in the 1990s between the EZLN (the Zapatista resistance movement) and the Mexican government.

The Award was accepted by Ms. Mikeas Sánchez Gómez, a poet and activist whose beautiful words can be read, in Spanish, in the link below. In welcoming her, Bishop Kevin Dowling, Co-President of PCI said, “The peace activists and the indigenous movement of Zodevite can be an inspiration to many around the world, because in so many places the poor and the weak, and the vulnerable earth are oppressed by the policies and practices of the powerful ones who own and operate the extractives industries and what goes with them.” Mikeas and Zodevite are indeed an inspiration to all who work for justice.


Ann Farr, member of PCI Board

Celebrating Young People Awards 2017

Ella Holliday from St Bede’s Catholic High School, Lytham has received the Jimmy Mizen Award for peace and solidarity for her work as a Young Peace Journalist, a PCI project. She undertook training with PCI then interviewed Mohammad, a 22-year-old refugee from Aleppo, Syria. Ella is also a school Anti-Bullying Ambassador and proposed to her School Governors that the school become a Pax Christi School.

Find out more about the Celebrating Young People Awards a project that honours the achievements of young people who make our communities and our world a better place. Start thinking now of possible peace nominees for 2018. www.millionminutes.org/awards/
Something remarkable happened at the UN on 7th July 2017. 122 countries voted for what has become a nuclear weapon abolition treaty. The Vatican was almost the first. Didn’t the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1968 mean nuclear weapon abolition? So it should have been - had there been any of the ‘good faith’ called for in Article VI of that treaty.

But good faith has been sadly lacking. The nuclear weapon states were meant to be negotiating abolition but that has never been on their agenda. True, warhead numbers have gone down, but so what? A quarter of the present numbers would be enough to destroy civilisation as we now know it.

So the treaty is a really hopeful and historic occurrence, and the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to ICAN, the campaign that brought it about, is something for us all to celebrate. The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons has been a truly collaborative effort by peace organisations large and small, Pax Christi amongst them. Congratulations to everyone who has taken part.

Urgent pressure must now focus on our own Government which, before the last election, got a parliamentary vote for yet another generation of nuclear weapons. This is a move which, unless opposed by a Corbyn government, will keep Britain nuclear-armed well into the 2050s.

The opposition of our Church to nuclear weapons is increasing by the day. Back in 2006 our own bishops were very direct: ‘Our judgement is that by decommissioning its nuclear weapons now the UK has a unique opportunity to offer the international community an approach to security and legitimate self-defence without the unconscionable threat of nuclear destruction’.

Now, in a statement of 10 November 2017, Pope Francis has made it even more plain:

‘Nor can we fail to be genuinely concerned by the catastrophic humanitarian and environmental effects of any employment of nuclear devices. If we also take into account the risk of an accidental detonation as a result of error of any kind, the threat of their use as well as their very possession is to be firmly condemned.’

**Action:** ICAN receive the Award on 10 December. We ask churches and communities to offer prayers of thanksgiving and encouragement for the work that is being achieved towards the total abolition of nuclear weapons.

We also invite members to write to their local Bishop urging that our Bishops’ Conference engage with our Government in promoting the message of Pope Francis.

Britain is well placed to be the first nuclear-armed country to sign up to the new abolition treaty. Our nuclear weapons are not independent. We have to borrow from the United States the missiles on which to put our warheads. They are symbols of national vanity no more. Can’t we find better and more compassionate projects on which to spend £200 billion plus?

*Bruce Kent, Vice President*

Jasmin Nario Galace and Loreta Castro from Pax Christi Philippines have been invited by ICAN to attend the Award Ceremony in Oslo for their work at the UN and in the Philippines on civil society advocacy and campaigning for the Nuclear Weapon Ban Treaty.

**Peace Sunday, 14 January 2018**

**The theme is**

*Migrants and Refugees—seekers of peace.*

With this mailing you receive a copy of the liturgy booklet, a letter from our President Archbishop Malcolm McMahon and an order form. These, and other resources, have been sent to every parish in England and Wales.

We need YOU to make Peace Sunday happen and to be the Pax Christi voice in your parish. Peace Sunday is a major opportunity for fundraising for Pax Christi. Additional resources can be ordered via the order form or on-line from our Peace Sunday shop [www.paxchristi.org.uk/product-category/peace-sunday-2017/](http://www.paxchristi.org.uk/product-category/peace-sunday-2017/).