Office News

Farewell to Matt
Sadly, we said ‘goodbye’ to Matt Jeziorcki who has been our Peace Education Worker for nine years. Matt will take up a post in the Liverpool Archdiocese. We wish him well and we thank him for all he has brought to Pax Christi. Reflecting on his time with Pax Christi Matt writes: “I arrived at Pax Christi as a Catholic youth worker for whom peace was not a particular priority. In youth work, much like the Church, it is one theme among many vying for attention. I leave, nine years later, going to a new job that seems to mean that I have accidentally retired from youth work and, at the same time, I leave as someone who cannot imagine his Christian life without a commitment to peace – and particularly peace education – that has been nurtured here. Quite a transformation!”

Recruiting for a Director
With Pat retiring next year, we have begun the process of recruiting a Director for Pax Christi for February 2019. The person will be responsible for developing, implementing and coordinating the work of Pax Christi and taking forward its strategic plan to 2022 and beyond.

The post holder will be a committed Catholic. Are you an effective communicator across diverse audiences, with deep knowledge and understanding of Christian peacemaking? Can you think creatively and strategically and make clear decisions? Do you work well in a team, enabling others to make the best of themselves? Do you have budget and line management experience? Do you have an ability to respond to national and international demands of peacemaking? This could be the job for you. More details and full application process here: http://paxchristi.org.uk/about-us/work-for-us

Update on Khan al Ahmar
We have been responding to the demolition order for the Bedouin village of Khan al Ahmar. Our friends the Comboni Sisters have strong links with the village through the kindergarten and heath-care work and members of Pax Christi visited the village in 2016. In early August the sisters told us that the Supreme Court had suspended the demolition until 15 August – thanks to petitions from the Bedouin community and international pressure. People live in hope that this will bear positive fruit for the community – but also for other Bedouin communities in zone C which are threatened because there will be a domino effect if this demolition goes ahead.

The Israelis have prepared a site and school between Palestinian villages but near to a rubbish dump and very restricted, especially because the Bedouin, who are a pastoral people, will not be able to bring their animals there. Check here for up-dates and actions you can take: paxchristi.org.uk/2018/07/15/resources-and-action-for-khan-al-ahmar/

Please send me information on

Membership [ ] Resources [ ] Legacy [ ]

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

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Another time and place: Eucharistic Congress 1976

Forty-two years ago this summer, a Eucharistic Congress was held in Philadelphia in the United States. One of the speakers at that Congress was Dorothy Day, the founder of the Catholic Worker movement, a woman with a passion for pacifism, social justice and active commitment to the poor. Dorothy was also a traditional and pious Catholic. Often in her writings, she reflects on sitting in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament and the love of the sacraments. She attended Mass daily.

In 2012 Robert Elsberg described how these approaches converged: “Her witness was rooted in the deepest understanding of incarnation, the belief that God had entered into our history and our human experience, with all its joys and sufferings. God was truly present in the Eucharist - but also in the poor and in all victims of violence”.

The invitation to address the Congress came late in Dorothy’s life. She was 78, her relationship with the hierarchy had been critical, and they kept her at arm’s length. Nor was she the writer of the invitation: “if you live long enough, you are treated as a venerable survivor”. Two of her biographers, William Miller and Jim Forest, were speaking at this gathering. Her opening included the comment, “It is almost easier to stand before a judge than to stand before you”.

We offer these thoughts on the Eucharist for reflection and discussion

“When Jesus said the bread and body were broken, he knew what he was talking about, but he gave thanks. He released the power of the Lord of Life. We come to the table for nourishment. We are fed here. Here is where our life becomes a banquet.

“Neither does our faith say to militarization: to spending money on weapons and military equipment rather than on education, health and social welfare: on training all our men how to use weapons to kill rather than to train them to dialogue and sort out problems peacefully.”

Michael Riordan SSC, Columban Missionary

Professing our faith in the reality in which we live

I was brought up to think of the Eucharist as a very sacred moment. The church in which Mass would be celebrated could not be used for any secular function: but was reserved as a place of prayer.

A number of years ago I was appointed as parish priest on Jeju island on which a navy base was being built. The site of this hospital (the base is now operational). It was decided by the diocese for the parishes to take turns offering Mass in the woman with another time as a peacemaker. A tent was erected on the side of the road opposite the entrance to the building site of the base and the Eucharistic celebration was moved over to the parking lot. Peace activists at the entrance to the site were trying to block the construction traffic going in and coming out. So there were often confrontations beside the tent where the Eucharist was being celebrated and at times trucks would roar into the base with little or no real thought being given to the people of Jeju. "We are fed here. Here is where our life becomes a banquet"

Pat Gaffney, General Secretary

High Hiroshima Day 1976

Sadly, because of ill-health, this was to be her last public speaking engagement. The theme for her address was Women and the Eucharist and she drew on her life, the conviction and experience of the bread-lines, houses of hospitality, being a mother. “My conversion began many years ago,” she said, “at a time when Dorothy Day was beginning to speak in my heart of the love of God… everything spoke to me of a Creator who satisfied all our hunger, a friend and an ally. And I am trying to say with action, ‘Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven…’ this work of ours (the Catholic Worker) toward a new heaven and a new earth shows a correlation between the material and the spiritual, and, of course, recognizes the primacy of spirit. A friend and a colleague, wrote in an essay that Dorothy could never understand how Christians could come from the table to Lynch the bodies of the human family in violence and war.

As Dorothy was addressing the Congress, Mass was being celebrated for the armed forces at the city’s Cathedral. The irony of this was not lost on Dorothy. “It is a fearful thought, that unless we do penance, we will perish. Our Creator gave us life, and the Eucharist to sustain our life. But we have given the world instruments of inconceivable magnitude,” she said. “Today we are celebrating—how strange such a word—a Mass for the military, the ‘armed forces’. No one in charge of the Eucharistic Congress had remembered what August 6 (the anniversary of Hiroshima) means in the minds of all who are dedicated to the work of peace. Why a Mass for the military on some other day?” she inquired. “I plead that we will regard that military Mass, and other Masses, as an act of penance, begging God to forgive us.”

Hiroshima Day 1976

“Perhaps we need more time to understand the Eucharist: the Church, the Eucharist is being reenacted and they are as real today as they were then.”

When Jesus said “Do this in memory of me” I believe that he was not just asking us to perform the ritual but to actually offer ourselves for humanity. We need to develop a new understanding of this sacrament. The following day Jesus performed a Eucharist this time on the Cross was not a quiet celebration in a comfortable setting but rather in the right in the centre of the social, economic and political life of the people. Jesus was condemned by some, cursed by others, pitied by some and ignored by many who were noisily going about their daily lives.

Receiving communion is not a reward for being worthy Catholics but is a nourishment to help us to put our faith into practice when we leave the church. “Neither does our faith say to militarization: to spending money on weapons and military equipment rather than on education, health and social welfare: on training all our men how to use weapons to kill rather than to train them to dialogue and sort out problems peacefully.”

Michael Riordan SSC, Columban Missionary

http://www.abolishwar.org.uk

Michael Riordan celebrating Eucharist

one would have to stop the ritual for a few minutes until things quietened down.

Some of my parishioners questioned me about the suitability of celebrating in such circumstances. I knew that there were some priests who did not approve: they felt that in some way we were being disrespectful to the Eucharistic celebration. Their questions resonated with questions that were within myself. I had to try and answer these questions not only for the parishioners but mainly for myself.

Looking at the Gospels the first Eucharist was led by Jesus on the night before he died. Then Jesus celebrated the ritual he left for his disciples within the context of the Passover meal: a commemoration of a liberation from slavery. I believe that Catholics that we are not just remembering the actions of a past event that Jesus carried out but are reenacting them and they are as real today as they were then.”

“Perhaps we need more time to understand the Eucharist: the Church, the Eucharist is being reenacted and they are as real today as they were then.”

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