



NJPN Comment

Help others see kingdom of God

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Photo: © Mati

Warwick



There's a Ladybird book out there which shows a picture of the infant Pope John Paul II sitting on his mother's knee. When I first saw it, years ago, I reflected that she did not know then that her little boy, Karol, would be Pope one day.

For myself, I have travelled unexpectedly from tiny baby to director of Pax Christi UK in only, er, 51, years. How did that happen? Well, I attended Catholic schools then stumbled into a degree in theology (along with maths, long story). I got married, taught in Catholic primary schools, raised three lovely boys. I got sick, got better, retrained in speech and language therapy, and worked up quite rapidly to an NHS management role. Hmm. Those things don't explain much.

Rather, I have travelled knowing in my gut that Jesus is calling us to uphold each other's dignity, to care about those who are dispossessed, disenfranchised, disregarded, dehumanised, to love our enemies, to welcome the stranger, to put down the weapons we grip so tightly in our frightened little hands. With Jesus, I am building the kingdom of God. We all are, right? My gut tells me that there is no place for violence or threats in God's kingdom. It is not a fortress. There are no walls to keep 'them' out. We are building a wide-open place of justice and dignity and beauty and peace.

I have not travelled alone. I have learned and re-learned how to build the Kingdom of God from prayer, reflection and Bible study, but mainly from interacting with others. Working with my parish Justice and Peace group has been important but so have other encounters. People of goodwill have given me so much encouragement that I overshoot my own expectations of where I might land.

Now I am bringing with me all those who have shaped me – and in spirit I am working with all who went before me to make Pax Christi an effective Christian movement of 'people putting peace into action' in Jesus' name. Together, Catholic people of peace will overshoot the expectations of those who cannot quite see the shape of the Kingdom of God yet. Peace can happen. Non-violence works. Conflicts can be resolved without killing. People who want peace are everywhere. Alleluia!

More at paxchristi.org.uk.

NJPN Annual Conference

'Forgotten People, Forgotten Places' 26-28 July. For tickets, see www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/conference/

www.thecatholicuniverse.com