



NJPN Comment

Peacemaking with Pax Christi

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Pax Christi International was due to hold a World Assembly in Hiroshima, Japan, just about now. It is one of the many events to be rescheduled for next year. We planned to mark the 75th anniversary of the foundation of our international movement for peace, rooted in the Catholic Church.

Hiroshima was our meeting place because in August it will also be 75 years since the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I sometimes wonder how it must have felt to Martha Dortel-Claudot, who founded Pax Christi in the spring of 1945, when the atomic bombing happened a few months later. How far away must reconciliation and a just peace have seemed.

The work of peace cannot be put on hold during a worldwide crisis. How wonderful to hear UN Secretary-General António Guterres' call for a global ceasefire, endorsed by Pope Francis and many others! Perhaps some understand for the first time the connection between how public money is spent and how human beings fare. Perhaps some understand at last the irony of selling and using weapons to destroy lives on the one hand, while on the other hand working so hard to save them.

What can followers of Jesus offer at this time? There has been much reflection already. Christians are among those calling for a shift in our spending priorities towards the things that truly make us safer: healthcare, sustainable growth and development, nonviolent approaches to conflict. This must be a shift not just for this summer, or this crisis, but for always.

We must encourage each other to acknowledge the serious inequalities in our communities but also to lift our eyes above our own lives to those of all children of God, and all of God's creation. It is easy to be overwhelmed by the global extent of need and of suffering – but we are not asked to each save the world. St Oscar Romero told us: “We are workers not master builders; we are prophets of a future not our own”.

As prophets, having worked so hard to save lives, we must not accept the endless violence of military intervention, armed conflict, war, environmental destruction and the pursuit of money above people. Speaking for peace, demanding nonviolent approaches to conflict, justice, and investment in things that build communities – these are also ways to save lives. Jesus came that we might have life to the full. We are called to help make that happen.

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