



**PAX
CHRISTI**

International Catholic Movement for Peace

HOT TOPICS

Monthly bulletin for secondary teachers and youth leaders focussing on topical peace issues

Speaking out

Jan 2008

The 27 January each year is Holocaust Memorial Day, the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz by Soviet troops on 27 January 1945. Holocaust Memorial day hopes to commemorate the Holocaust or Shoah, the murder by the Nazis and their agents of six million Jews and millions of Gypsies, Slavs, Russian POWs, the physically and mentally disabled, homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses and other people belonging to minority groups, to acknowledge the repeated occurrences of genocide around the world since 1945 and to renew the commitment of British people to combat racism, antisemitism, and xenophobia, and to work for an inclusive, caring and open society.

"Neither the Holocaust nor any other genocide would have been possible without whole societies being told that certain groups of people were alien, dangerous, contemptible or not fully human. It is not difficult in our own society to find dehumanising language, stereotyped images and hostile attitudes expressed against those who are 'different', in order to dismiss them as alien and unwanted. These must be seen as attempts to wipe out the image of God in the dignity of his children. Holocaust Memorial Day asks of us that we fight against any tendency, from any source, to deny or demean the humanity of any person. It is also a chance to affirm the blessings which diversity can bring to our society". (from Christian liturgical material for Holocaust Memorial Day 2007 HMDT and CCJ)

First they came

First they came for the communists,
and I did not speak out because I was not a communist.
Then they came for the socialists,
and I did not speak out because I was not a socialist.
Then they came for the trade unionists,
and I did not speak out because I was not a trade unionist.
Then they came for the Jews,
and I did not speak out because I was not a Jew.
Then they came for me,
and there was no one left to speak out for me.
(*Pastor Martin Niemoeller, victim of the Nazis.*)
Why do people not speak out?

The Church cannot remain silent before injustice. To remain silent is to be an accomplice.
Oscar Romero

We must take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented. Sometimes we must interfere. When human lives are endangered, when human dignity is in jeopardy, national borders and sensitivities become irrelevant. Whenever men and women are persecuted because of their race, religion or political views, that place must – at that moment – become the centre of the universe. *Elie Wiesel, writer and thinker, survivor of the Holocaust.*

Story - The Hiding Place

(Corrie Ten Boom's true story of a Christian family who hid Jews during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands)
[One evening an intern from the hospital brought us a Jewish mother with her newly born baby. The baby's crying presented an extra risk.] And the very next morning into the shop walked the perfect solution. He was a clergyman friend of ours, pastor in a small town outside of Haarlem, and his home was set back from the street in a large wooded park. "Good morning, Pastor," I said, the pieces of the puzzle falling together in my mind. "Can we help you?" I looked at the watch he had brought in for repair. It required a very hard-to-find part. "But for you, Pastor, we will do our very best. And now I have something I want to confess." The pastor's eyes clouded. "Confess?" I drew him out the back door of the shop and up the stairs to the dining room. "I confess that I too am searching for something." The pastor's face was now wrinkled with a frown. "Would you be willing to take a Jewish mother and baby into your home? They will almost certainly be arrested otherwise." Colour drained from the man's face. He took a step back from me. "Miss ten Boom! I do hope you're not involved with any of this illegal concealment and undercover business. It's just not safe! Think of your father! And you sister – she's never been strong!" On impulse I told the pastor to wait and ran upstairs. [I] asked the mother's permission to borrow the infant: the little thing weighed hardly anything in my arms. Back in the dining room I pulled back the coverlet from the baby's face. There was a long silence. The man bent forward, his hand in spite of himself reaching for the tiny fist curled round the blanket. For a moment I saw compassion and fear struggle in his face. Then he straightened. "No. Definitely not. We could lose our lives for that Jewish child!" Unseen by either of us, Father had appeared in the doorway. "Give the child to me, Corrie," he said. Father held the baby close, his white beard brushing its cheek, looking into its little face with eyes as innocent as the baby's own. At last he looked up at the pastor. "You say we could lose our lives for this child. I would consider that the greatest honour that could come to my family."
The pastor turned sharply on his heels and walked out of the room.
Corrie Ten Boom (1971) *The Hiding Place*, pub Hodder and Stoughton

Prayer

"Oh when will we ever learn that you intended us for
Shalom, for wholeness, for peace,
For fellowship, for togetherness, for brotherhood,
For sisterhood, for family?
When will we ever learn that you created us
As your children
As members of one family
Your family
The human family –
Created us for linking arms
To express our common humanity."

Desmond Tutu

Discussion questions

What was life like for young people? Find out from letters, diaries and journals.
Why do you think people did not speak out?
What made some people speak out, often risking their lives?
What do we need to speak out about today?
Is it ever right to take sides? Where do we need to take sides in the world today?

Recommended resources and actions ideas

The Holocaust

<http://www.hmd.org.uk/who/teacher/> lots of excellent resources including 2008 powerpoint, assemblies, lesson plans, letters and stories from survivors of the holocaust.

<http://www.paxchristi.org.uk/PeacePeople/Gertrud%20Luckner.pdf>
Part of Pax Christi's Peace People series, 2 page biography of Gertrude Luckner.

Darfur, Sudan

http://www.cafod.org.uk/watch_listen/sudan -short powerpoint about Darfur

http://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/darfur/files/darfur_intro_stories_oxfam_taking_action.pdf Ideas for teaching about Darfur
http://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/darfur/files/get_globally_thinking_about_actions.pdf action planning resource

Rwanda

http://www.cafod.org.uk/where_we_work/africa/rwanda/rwanda_home_journey

http://www.cafod.org.uk/watch_listen/africa_in_focus/rwanda - video history of Rwanda

<http://www.cafod.org.uk/var/storage/original/application/phpPdH9CB.pdf> - liturgy in solidarity with Rwanda