

## Reflection: Witness to the Truth

Considering the theme of this reflection, 'What women bring to work for peace and justice', I turned first to the New Testament for what might be called founding stories of the witness of women to Jesus, who by his life, death and resurrection opened to all a Kingdom of Justice, Love and Peace. Mary's 'Be it done unto me according to thy word' begins the story, which ends with the women not only present but ready, even at this extreme moment, to offer practical help. '...standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.' (John 19:25). When Joseph of Arimathea took the body of Jesus down from the cross and laid it in a tomb, 'The women who had come with him from Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb and how his body was laid. Then they returned, and prepared spices and ointments. On the sabbath day they rested according to the commandment. But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared.' (Luke 23:55 - 24:1). Women were the first witnesses of the resurrection, and the first entrusted with passing on the Good News that in Jesus the Kingdom of Justice, Love and Peace had appeared on earth. The women in these Gospel stories were in the first place true to their nature as mothers, bringing to birth and nurturing life, showing themselves able to stay with chaos and stress, to surmount the seemingly insurmountable.

Their commitment finds an echo in the lives of the many women who in their different ways have brought peace and justice to the world - I think, for instance, of the four North American women who lived out the option for the poor in El Salvador to its terrible end in December 1980: Jean Donovan, Maura Clarke, Ita Ford and Dorothy Kazel. These brave women stayed on in El Salvador long after it was safe for them to be there - because their hearts were touched by what they saw. They thought of leaving, others advised

them to leave, but their commitment to the people overcame their fear. Christian commitment is not the result of an intellectual decision - this would have been to leave El Salvador, to stay alive so as to be able to work longer for more people. But their hearts were touched...Jean Donovan wrote to a friend: 'Several times I have decided to leave El Salvador. I almost could, except for the children, the poor bruised victims of adult lunacy. Who would care for them? Whose heart would be so staunch as to favour the reasonable thing in a sea of their tears and helplessness? Not mine, dear friend, not mine.' And Maura Clarke: 'My fear of death is being challenged constantly as children, lovely young girls, old people, are being shot and cut up with machetes and bodies thrown by the road and people prohibited from burying them. ... I want to stay on now. I believe this is right.' Fidelity to the choice they made cost them their lives.

But in the last analysis it is the hidden justice-restoring, peace-bringing daily fidelity of the many 'ordinary people' that makes a difference. George Eliot at the end of 'Middlemarch' (1871), speaking of Dorothea, notes: "Certainly those determining acts of her life were not ideally beautiful. They were the mixed result of a young and noble impulse struggling amidst the conditions of an imperfect social state, in which great feelings will often take the aspect of error, and great faith the aspect of illusion. ... But the effect of her being on those around her was incalculably diffusive: for the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts, and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs."

Sr Pamela Hussey SHCJ, co-author of *A Culture of Peace: women, faith and reconciliation with Marigold Best, CIIR (Progressio), 2005*

## Office Report

### Calling members in the London area.

Have you ever considered volunteering at the office? For a few hours or a day a month? We always have a variety of tasks that need doing... photo-copying, keeping press cuttings, mailings, some basic computer work, and always welcome extra support. We offer shared lunch with team, travel costs and friendly environment! If you are interested contact Fausta. 020 8203 4884

### Last Call for Peace Challenge 2009

This is the annual competition for young people aged 15-18, or school year 10 and above, who are invited to enter in teams of 4 by making a short film on the theme of conflict and violence. Entries need to be at the Pax Christi office by 31st January 2009. More information and an entry form can be downloaded from the Peace Education pages of the website or contact Hilary in the office.

### Keep peace alive. Remember Pax Christi when making or up-dating your will

Please send me information on

Membership  Publications  Legacy

I enclose a donation of £\_\_\_\_\_ to support your work

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel: \_\_\_\_\_

Return to Pax Christi, St Joseph's, Watford Way, Hendon, London, NW4 4TY  
Tel: 020 8203 4884 email: info@paxchristi.org.uk www.paxchristi.org.uk

### Pax Christi ICON of Peace

This beautiful ICON, measuring 162 x 93cm was a huge success in schools, parishes, cathedrals and at Diocesan gatherings when we brought it to the UK in 2004/5. We want to make it available again this year and would like to know if there is interest among our members? You can view the ICON on our website and we have the resource pack Reconciliation the heart of peace to accompany and support its use. Would you be interested in hosting and using the ICON? Let us know.

### Annual General Meeting

This will be in London on 16th May - please put the date in your Diary now. More details to follow

### Pax Christi - Our Values

Pax Christi members live by the biblically inspired values of **Peace, Reconciliation, Nonviolence.**

These values are supported by the witness of peacemakers down the ages and the experience of the Pax Christi community. Pax Christi is rooted in Catholic Christianity but is open to all who are in sympathy with its values and work.

Pax Christi, St Joseph's, Watford Way, Hendon, London, NW4 4TY  
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# Justpeace

## PAX CHRISTI

International Catholic Movement for Peace

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### Women Peacemakers

In this issue we focus on the role of women as peacemakers - drawing on the experiences of Pax Christi women friends and highlighting some of the organisations that promote and encourage women peacemakers.

Often when I ask people think of peacemakers, it is usually of the names of men that are remembered, Gandhi, Martin Luther King and so on. When I ask how many women have been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize since it was established in 1901 they are surprised to discover it is only 12! Not that we are looking to create any kind of hierarchy when it comes to peacemaking, rather, we seek to acknowledge the approaches, the depth and the breadth of women as peacemakers. Some of the terms used in these pieces - *bridge-builder, visionary, another language, fidelity, nurturing spirit, stay with chaos* - give us a glimpse of what this means. So, think of women you know and acknowledge and celebrate their peacemaking using our new postcards for International Women's Day on March 8th.

Pat Gaffney

### From the Philippines - closer to the dream of peace

There is a painful irony in my country. The Philippine population is 85% Christian (mainly Catholic), but as a people we have not yet fully responded to Christ's invitation and call to peace. Hence, as we begin the New Year it is a good time to renew our hope and our commitment to work harder for peace.

As in many other countries, all forms of violence are present in the Philippines. We have direct violence, both at micro and macro levels. Reports of violence against women average twenty cases everyday. This would include beating, rape, sexual harassment and other forms of physical abuse. Considering that not all cases are reported, the number may be actually higher. There are also ongoing armed conflicts in the country. One is between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the other is between the GRP and the Communist Party of the Philippines - New People's Army (CPP-NPA). The GRP and MILF broke their ceasefire agreement last August 2008 and are currently fighting in Mindanao (in Southern Philippines) with internally displaced people numbering more than 500,000. The economic and social dislocation of communities have been severe and, as in other countries with armed conflicts, the greater number of those affected and suffering are women and children.

There are, of course, other forms of violence present in the country such as structural violence e.g. the wide gap between the rich and poor; socio-cultural violence (e.g. a deeply-rooted prejudice against Muslims and other minorities); and ecological violence (e.g. mining and its deleterious effects).



Katalee Sikharangkura from Thailand and Loreta Castro, Philippines at Pax Christi Assembly, 2007

I would like to focus on the armed conflicts and the response of our women peacemakers in the Philippines. It has to be acknowledged that the peace movement in the Philippines is almost equally gender-mixed. However, it is heartening that the majority of those taking leadership roles in the peace movement are women, including young women. In the many conflict-affected areas, the women of the communities have taken the lead in calling for the cessation of hostilities and have called for the establishment of "peace zones". This is very understandable given the fact that women are among the first to be negatively affected and violated when there is war. It is also heartening to mention here that many important peace initiatives and campaigns that have been launched in the Philippines are led or coordinated by women. To name a few examples: Bantay Ceasefire (Ceasefire Watch), Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict - Philippines, United Religions Initiative - Philippines, Philippine Action Network on Small Arms, Philippine Campaign against Cluster Munitions, and Peace Education Network. The women leaders of the last three are also active members of Pax Christi Pilipinas.

There are many challenges for women peacemakers in the Philippines. But our women's courage, nurturing spirit and persistence will, hopefully, lead us closer to our dream of peace.

Loreta Castro, Director, Centre for Peace Education, Miriam College, Philippines and Executive Committee member, Pax Christi International

## Peacemaking Resources

**Women in Black** - website [www.womeninblack.org.uk](http://www.womeninblack.org.uk)

This website gives the history and purpose of Women in Black and usefully lists all the groups around the world - a good spread for the UK as well as offering excellent guidance on how to organise a vigil. The site allows WiB groups to list their vigils and initiatives. Here is an account of her involvement in WiB from Pax Christi member, Ann Hemsley.

*One of the most significant activities I engage in for peace is to vigil with (Cambridge) Women in Black. WiB itself began, significantly, in 1988 after the first Palestinian intifada when a small group of Israeli and Palestinian women stood regularly at a major street corner dressed in black and holding signs saying 'Stop the Occupation.' Our group began in early 2002 when an attack on Iraq by the US and UK looked horribly inevitable. We vigiled weekly for over a year, dressed in black, remaining silent holding placards committing ourselves to being opposed to war, militarism and violence. We continue to vigil, though now monthly, in the market place holding our placards and. By our silence we represent no physical threat yet I believe some feel the strength of our message because, maybe, of our vulnerability. As I stand with my co-workers wearing black signifying mourning at the deaths of all who die in wars and violence, I feel I am there as a wife and a mother, a sister and a friend and as a woman, a daughter of Eve. I feel vulnerable yet empowered, and one with all who work and pray for justice and peace.*

**Coalition of Women for Peace** (Israel-Palestine) - website [www.coalitionofwomen.org](http://www.coalitionofwomen.org)

Founded in 2000, after the second intifada, this group brings together 10 groups all working together to bring an end to occupation and to encourage full involvement of women in peace negotiations. Their website has information on all 10 organisations, articles on the current situation and a good photo gallery. See statement above



## Statement by Israeli Women's Organizations on Gaza Crisis

We women's organizations from a broad spectrum of political views demand an end to the bombing and other tools of death, and call for the immediate start of deliberations to talk peace and not make war. The dance of death and destruction must come to an end.

We demand that war no longer be an option, nor violence a strategy, nor killing an alternative. The society we want is one in which every individual can lead a life of security - personal, economic, and social.

It is clear that the highest price is paid by women and others from the periphery - geographic, economic, ethnic, social, and cultural - who now, as always, are excluded from the public eye and dominant discourse.

The time for women is now.

We demand that words and actions be conducted in another language.

### Groups issuing the statement include:

*Bat Shalom, Coalition of Women for Peace, Economic Empowerment for Women, Feminist Activist Group - Jerusalem, Feminist Activist Group - Tel Aviv, International Women's Commission: Israeli Branch, Itach: Women Lawyers for Social Justice, TANDI - Movement of Democratic Women for Israel.*

4 January 2009

# Bridge builders, visionaries and activists

**1000 Women for Peace** - website [www.1000peacewomen.org](http://www.1000peacewomen.org)  
In 2005 an historic nomination was made to the Nobel Peace Committee of 1000 women from one hundred and fifty countries working in a variety of ways for peace. This included a number of Pax Christi women from around the world. Their website offers background to the project and profiles of all the women. They have also produced an exhibition of 1000 photographs of the nominees which could be used in museums, libraries, civic venues to promote peacemaking. In addition they have produced a book *1000 Peacewomen Across the Globe* which is available via their website or from PeaceWomen Across the Globe, Maulbeerstrasse 14 3011 Berne, Switzerland at £17.00 plus postage

**Peacemakers who Changed the World** by Valerie Flessati and Pat Gaffney. Contains the stories of 10 peacemakers, five of them women, including Wamuyu Teresia Wachire. It explores their approaches to peacemaking and the issues they address. Worksheets and activities are offered. Available from Pax Christi for £10.00 plus postage. (Profiles of these peacemakers can also be found on the Peace People page of our website [www.paxchristi.org.uk](http://www.paxchristi.org.uk))

**Dorothy Day and the Permanent Revolution** by Eileen Egan  
Offers an introduction to the life and work of the co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement, Dorothy Day. Includes material on her anti-Vietnam work and her role in influencing the sections dealing with war and peace in The Church in the Modern World document of the second Vatican Council. Available from Pax Christi for £2.50 plus postage

As an African woman of this century, I think peacemaking is an exigent task. This mission becomes even more challenging for a religious woman who finds herself in a structurally, socially, culturally, politically and religiously male and patriarchal context. My passion for peacemaking has been influenced by my family, nurtured in the school and developed in the praxis of religious life in the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Loreto Sisters). Through the inspiration of our foundress, that great Yorkshire woman, Mary Ward (1585-1645), I have come to a realisation of the challenges that face women religious in peacemaking.

I have been mainly engaged in the education of young people, especially girls. Through this I have come to grips with what it means to be an authentic peacemaker. Theoretical schools of thought on peacemaking, be it structural or psycho-cultural, support the immeasurable importance of moulding the 'world vision of young people' to be agents of positive change. Such an education is holistic and nurtures the gifts of each person. It challenges cultural myths that demonise other ethnic communities, perpetuate harmful practices and patriarchal systems, mute young people's voices and legitimise all kinds of violence especially against girls and women. Therefore, if the woman religious has fully to utilise her potential for peacemaking these structures must be addressed.

## An African view - the role of women religious in peacemaking

In contemporary society a woman religious has multiple roles in peacemaking. Society looks up to her as a liberator, leaven, sign and beacon of hope in its hopelessness. She is not only called to be a role model but challenged to be a bridge-builder, a visionary who not only sees the world with 'new eyes' but stands up to be counted. In addition, challenging popular beliefs and cultures that are not life giving, in her 'motherhood' she is called to create the world anew.

Wamuyu Teresia Wachira (IBVM) has been a teacher and head of secondary school in Kenya.



## Diary

### 4 February (Wed)

#### London

Models of Nonviolent Peacemaking will look at Peter Benenson, founder of Amnesty International, and present-day peacemakers promoting empowerment for change. 6.30-8.30 pm at St Ethelburga's, 78 Bishopsgate, EC2N 4AG

### 11 February (Wed)

#### London

Models of Nonviolent Peacemaking session on Accompaniment and Solidarity: peacemakers from present-day Israel and Palestine and from Nazi Germany. 6.30-8.30 pm at St Ethelburga's, 78 Bishopsgate, EC2N 4AG

### 15 February (Sun)

#### London

'Women Mystics in Different Traditions'. Dr Ursula King will lead this session in a series on religious mysticism. 2.30 - 4.15 pm at Sion Centre for Dialogue and Encounter, 34 Chepstow Villas, W11 Details: 020 7313 8286 email: [sioncde@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:sioncde@yahoo.co.uk)

### 18 February (Wed)

#### London

Models of Nonviolent Peacemaking will look at peacemakers who have practised conscientious objection and non-participation. 6.30-8.30 pm at St Ethelburga's, 78 Bishopsgate, EC2N 4AG

### 25 February (Wed)

#### London/National

Annual Ash Wednesday liturgy of repentance and resistance at the Ministry of Defence. Contact office for details and for liturgy ideas for local actions.

### Lent 2009

If you are looking for good materials for a Lent discussion group think about "Let Justice Roll Down", a programme from Church Action on Poverty, endorsed by various denominations and the National Justice and Peace Network. Free resources can be found at [www.justchurch.info](http://www.justchurch.info) or requested from Church Action on Poverty 0161 236 9321

### 28 February (Sat)

#### Oxford

"Building alliance for joint action against war". One day conference organised by Network of Oxford Women for Justice and Peace. 11 am - 4.30 pm North Oxford Community Centre, Diamond Place off Banbury Road, Summertown. Details: M Stanton, 1, Charles Ponsonby House, Osberton Road, Oxford OX2 7PQ - [www.nowpeace.org.uk](http://www.nowpeace.org.uk)

### 7 March (Sat)

#### London

Lenten Day of Reflection 'Call to transformation' including a biblical perspective with Mark Dowd of Operation Noah. 10 - 4 pm - bring some food to share. Sion Centre for Dialogue and Encounter, 34 Chepstow Villas, W11 Details: 020 7313 8286 email: [sioncde@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:sioncde@yahoo.co.uk)

### 15 March (Sun)

#### London

'Mysticism in the Buddhist Tradition' - speaker: Ven. B Seelawimala (London Buddhist Vihara). Part of series on religious mysticism. 2.30 - 4.15 pm at Sion Centre for Dialogue and Encounter, 34 Chepstow Villas, W11 Details: 020 7313 8286 email: [sioncde@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:sioncde@yahoo.co.uk)

### 28 March (Sat)

#### Edinburgh

A day of reflection for those involved in peace and justice work. Facilitated by Pat Gaffney of Pax Christi. For details contact Fr Chris Boles sj, 0131 477 5795

### 29 July - 6 August

#### Warwickshire

Pilgrims of St Francis International pilgrimage walk from Stratford-upon-Avon to Coventry Cathedral. 200 people from at least 7 countries are expected and newcomers welcome. Involves carrying rucksack and sleeping in church halls. Details: Gill Myall 0121 443 5198 or email [gillmyall@hotmail.com](mailto:gillmyall@hotmail.com). [www.cdsf.org](http://www.cdsf.org)