

PAX CHRISTI AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

KIA TAU TE RANGIMARIE KI A TAATOU KATOA / WORKING FOR PEACE FOR ALL EVERYWHERE



This month's news...

Pope Francis 53rd World Day of Peace Message: A Reflection.

by Bridget Crisp rsm

Moving Forward with a focus on where we have been

by Kevin McBride

What are the Implications of Acknowledgement of Country?

by David Tutty

Tēnā koutou katoa

This new decade has not started auspiciously. Bush fires, much larger than anyone has seen, is creating havoc for all life in Australia. Firefighters are exhausted, life (human and non-human) has been lost.

On the other side of the world, 'remote assassination' by America of an Iranian general on Iraqi soil has flared up anger in the Middle East. Tit for tat missile strikes have occurred with a commercial airliner carrying 176 lives, being tragically lost because of it.

This beginning of the year gives a sense of foreboding - our world is changing fast; technology is changing fast. Can we keep up? Peace is needed more than ever if we are all to survive the multiple challenges facing the world today.

2020 marks 75 years since Pax Christi emerged from the aftermath of World War II. Dialogue, reconciliation and building relationships with a common desire on all sides for war not to happen again. It is a milestone Pax Christi will be celebrating. At the same time one can easily ask the question - has the World learnt anything from past actions?

Happy New Year is not so happy – praying and actively pursuing peace is what is needed now.

Bridget Crisp rsm

Pope Francis 53rd World Day of Peace message: A reflection.

by Bridget Crisp rsm

On the 8th of December, the Vatican released Pope Francis' message for the Celebration of the 53rd World Day of Peace (1st January 2020). The title of his message is '*Peace as a Journey of Hope: Dialogue, Reconciliation and Ecological Conversion*'.

I have been reflecting on Pope Francis' message numerous times since it's release. With recent events in the Middle East and the continued catastrophe of raging bush fires engulfing Australia, I now believe that this message has points within that need to be implemented and achieved urgently if we are to survive the coming decade.

Towards the beginning of the peace day message, Francis writes '*...our world is paradoxically marked by "a perverse dichotomy that tries to defend and ensure stability and peace through a false sense of security sustained by a mentality of fear and mistrust, one that ends up poisoning relationships between peoples and obstructing any form of dialogue.*' (para 5). To have any form of peace, be it on a personal, communal, national or international level requires a relationship of respect of other and a trust in the process. This can be difficult when other elements come in that threaten the relationship. In a nutshell, when someone deliberately spreads misinformation, to satisfy some private agenda. Take for example the Australian bush fires – many firefighters have responded publicly, and in frustration, to the attempts to put the blame of the fires on the political ideas of one party – namely the Green Party in preventing burn back, tree felling etc. As the firefighters now publicly state – it is not the case, the Greens have always been supportive in the measures needed in forest hazard management. The problem has been the weather, which has made doing such tasks more dangerous. In other words, climate change. Two words that continue to be a sore point amongst the political elite in Australia.

A similar narrative may also explain the situation in the Middle East. The deliberate use of misinformation to increase tension, fear and mistrust that compounds year after year creating a 'them and us' attitude and leading the entire region into ongoing war and conflict. One must ask the question is there anyone alive in the region who remembers living without the fear of bombs and missiles going off. There are generations of people who have known no such peace.

This leads me to the questions Pope Francis has posed for all of us to reflect on:

- How, then do we undertake a journey of peace and mutual respect?
- How do we break the unhealthy mentality of threats and fear?
- How do we break the current dynamic of distrust?

We are moving into a new year and a new decade. What will the future hold and where will our journey take us? The questions that Pope Francis has posed for us in his World Day of Peace message are both our challenge and our starting points, both personally and professionally. The peace process, as Francis goes on to say, requires commitment. Are we up for the challenge?

As we ponder this, and make plans for the year ahead...I leave you with this final Francis statement: '*The desire for peace lies deep within the human heart, and we should not resign ourselves to seeking anything less than this.*' (para 8)

So, why is this not happening?

The 53rd World Day of Peace Message can be downloaded from the Vatican website:

http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco_20191208_messaggio-53giornatamondiale-pace2020.html.

The Co-Presidents of Pax Christi International have also reflected on the Pope's Peace Day Message. This can be downloaded from the Pax Christi International website: <https://paxchristi.net/2019/12/30/reflection-by-the-co-presidents-of-pax-christi-international-on-pope-francis-53rd-world-day-of-peace-message-1-january-2020/>

Moving Forward with our focus on where we have been.

by Kevin McBride

At the 2019 Annual General Meeting of Pax Christi Aotearoa New Zealand a pleasing number of gathered members looked back at our 25 plus years of existence (we were formally established in 1993) and then tried to set some directions for our future work.

The past covered an impressive range of actions beginning with Bougainville, where our personal links with New Zealand missionary orders brought submissions and actions on behalf of indigenous peoples seeking self-determination, and extending to later activities in East Timor and West Papua. Although the former, now Timor Leste, has reached a level of independence, the latter people are still engaged in an on-going and frequently violent struggle to be recognised as an independent and sovereign people. And as the inheritors of our own colonial past, it is difficult for us to be too-“holier than thou” in trying to address such issues.

But we can feel proud of what we have been able to achieve. The graduation as Master of Arts from Waikato University last year of Veronica Kanem is one case in point. She came here several years ago with the help of SKP, the Justice and Peace Commission equivalent in West Papua to learn to use English as a means of developing her ability to work internationally. Pax Christi was her umbrella group here and our members gave her lodging and support. Now she has been able to use her local knowledge of the role of Papuan women in the market place to gain qualifications to enable her to advocate for her people at home and abroad.

We can also recall with pride, our relationship with Fr Neles Tebay, a diocesan priest in Jayapura, who partly through our working with him, was able to gain a seat on the Pax Christi International Executive Board. There he could foster a greater understanding of the difficulties faced by his people in their struggle to survive the violent colonisation at the hands of the Indonesian

military and somehow “out of sight” of all but a handful of small island nations among Pacific governments. Unfortunately, Fr Neles died during the past year; his passing will be mourned but his cause cannot be forgotten.

At the local level, we can also take some pride in our work to facilitate the development of a stronger presence of Katorika Maori in the Catholic Diocese of Auckland. The Bicultural Committee of the Justice and Peace Commission of the Auckland Diocese happens at the moment to consist essentially of Pax Christi members, so in the spirit of Pax Christi’s essentially being a networking movement, we can at least, claim a level of satisfaction, if not credit, for the success of a series of hui which led to the appointment of a Vicar for Maori and the creation of a Hui a Iwi to support him.

There were other reflections on our work over the past 25 years presented at the gathering, but also an awareness that some of the issues we had worked on needed perhaps a renewal of attention and energy. One of these would be the ongoing tragedy of Palestine, which was very much a part of our agenda under the early presidency of David Wakim. Through David’s own commitment to justice for all and his and our personal experience of the situation there, once with his guidance, and an ongoing presence of international Pax Christi members people on the ground, we have no excuse for holding back in our condemnation of the compliance of powerful Western nations in the crushing of a sovereign people in their homeland. This is one issue on which we have to ‘lift our game.’

As our annual meeting moved into the afternoon session, we broke into study groups to consider our future activities. An overall theme was the development of just and peaceful relationships in our country. We resolved to encourage and support the movement to improve the study of history through the education department but also to support this at local group and parish levels. This should include study of the methods

Moving Forward with our focus on where we have been cont.

and effects of colonisation and exposure of ways in which it continues today. Special attention should be devoted to the many migrant peoples who are settling in New Zealand with little or no level of knowledge of our history, in some cases seeing Maori as just another migrant people rather than the indigenous of the land, with all the rights which go with that status.

Our focus on just and sustainable relationships should include a study of Maori spirituality which through concepts like *Whanaungatanga* (relationships with all that exists) and *Utu* (balance and reciprocity) and *Manaakitanga* (duty of care) involves the deepest concepts of morality and our daily interaction with all that is.

These are great challenges, but if we are serious about peace and peace-making, we must find ways as a movement for peace to face the challenge of implementing them wherever we can in the relationships which make up our personal, community and international life.



A Peace Prayer for 2020

Creator God

As this new decade begins, I ask humbly for peace...

Peace between nations

Peace between communities and faith groups

Peace within families

Peace with one another.

Enable us to see the dignity of other...

...the common origin we all share.

Enable our political leaders to pause...

to make peaceful choices that cease all violence amongst nations.

to allow time and space for humanitarian aid to reach the most vulnerable.

to create opportunities that allow our most vulnerable to grow up in love, peace and harmony.

Allow all of humanity to have an ecological conversion of heart...

to respect and appreciate the Earth and all its resources,

providing peace and serenity rather than death and destruction.

Creator God

As this new decade begins, I ask humbly for peace....

So that Love can grow.

Amen.

*Bridget Crisp
January 2020*

What are the implications of Acknowledgement of Country?

by David Tutty

In my short time in Toowoomba, I have been present at many meetings, gatherings and church services that have begun with an Acknowledgement of Country. I have been grateful to hear these acknowledgements of the local First Peoples by those who are not indigenous to this particular place. I have even been called on to lead acknowledgements myself.

These acknowledgements have varied considerably. They have varied in the naming of the local indigenous mob(s), in how their deep spiritual connection to the land is specifically highlighted, in whether they are named as guardians or Traditional Owners, and in whether it is acknowledged that the land was never ceded and that there was never a treaty signed. Alongside this, almost all acknowledgements I have heard, or seen written, talk about offering respects to the local Aboriginal elders, past, present and emerging.

Acknowledging Country is so common that I have come to wonder if people see it as just a formality that they do or whether there is something substantial about it. In hoping that it is done with good heart and with a commitment to deepen awareness and actions, I would like to explore some of the implications of these acknowledgements. To do this, I would like to put the Acknowledgement of Country in a bigger historical, cultural, and spiritual context.

Yet as a white New Zealander, I am very aware I have much to learn. So, in order to begin this process, I sought conversations with Joshua Waters, a Gamilaraay man who works as Indigenous Support for the Toowoomba Catholic Education Office and is a current member of the Toowoomba Catholic Diocese's Social Justice Commission, and Melanie Waters, a member of the Kamilaroi/Gomeroi Nation, who lectures in Indigenous Studies at the University of Southern Queensland. I am grateful for their generous heart and constructive challenge.

My most basic starting point is to name that this acknowledgement ritual arises from the millennia old Welcome to Country. First Nation peoples of this land would welcome visitors in peace and would dance and sing to name their relationship with the land and to invite the visitors to follow their lead in how to be on that land. It was a ritual about sharing histories and connections and inviting the visitors to follow the local laws and customs so that the land and the people of the land are respected.

My second thought is that in our modern Acknowledgement of Country we are acknowledging that the land on which we meet was occupied, cared for and effectively managed prior to 1788 by people who have since been displaced from that role. Acknowledgement of Country is an acknowledgement that the land on which we stand belonged to someone else and that they no longer have the control over the land and resources that they did in the past.

Of course, the word 'belonged' is only part of the story. Indigenous spirituality names that they did not own the land as is understood in Western property law, but that the land owned them. Practically, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples occupied and had control over their own Country but this control was understood in terms of using the land and resources for their own immediate needs alongside a responsibility to care for and protect their Country. Their creation stories, their dreaming, their dances and songs, and their part in the song-lines grounded them in their specific Country and named their identity, culture and sense of spirit in terms of being guardians of the land. To my mind then, acknowledgement of Country both names local First Peoples as the guardians of the land and as its Traditional Owners.

Once this is named then we have to ask: If we now own the land and we acknowledge there were Traditional Owners, what was the process of dispossession? How did colonisers gain control over so much of this continent's land?

What are the implications of Acknowledgement of Country? cont.

To put it in the most simplest of terms, people who had controlled and cared for Country for millennia experienced invasion. We usually use the words 'settlers' or 'colonisers' to name those who arrived but from the perspective of the First Peoples already here those whitefellas who came were invaders. Blinded by the belief that Australia was 'Terra Nullius' – land not owned by anyone, the British Empire sort to solve some its own problems by sending convicts, soldiers, government agents and later settlers. The various Aboriginal groups that occupied and managed the areas where the British first settled were not consulted and did not agree. Unlike New Zealand, no treaty was signed.

The reality of invasion does need to be focused on. Governor Macquarie, in 1816, gave orders to his soldiers that all Aborigines encountered would be made prisoners of war and if they resisted they would be shot and hung on a tree as a deterrent to others. Massacres of Aboriginal people to clear the land were common. Professor Lyndall Ryan and her co-workers at the University of Newcastle in New South Wales name over three hundred massacre sites in their research with much more work to be done. What Professor Ryan also does is record the few accounts of massacres of colonists. Resistance did exist. Aboriginal peoples did resist colonial invasion. The most local story is of Multugerrah and his warriors at the Battle of One Tree Hill in 1843.

Of course, there are also stories of Aboriginal care of early explorers. One example is John King, the only one to survive the disastrous Burke and Wills expedition from Melbourne to the Gulf of Carpentaria. King survived because of the great compassion and kindness of local Aboriginal people. Failure occurred when Burke and others had little respect for Aboriginal people, ignored the advice they were given and did not reciprocate in trade or in care for Country. John King did seek Aboriginal assistance and they responded out of

their deep cultural sense to help those from outside.

So what does all this mean then for acknowledgement of Country today?

A key word in almost all acknowledgements of Country is respect. We pay our respects to elders ... What does respect mean in this context? How do we actually pay our respects and what does it look like in concrete reality?

To my mind respect in this context begins with a willingness to listen to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices and to take them seriously. Yes, there are a huge variety of voices, as like any group of people there is a diversity of experiences and opinion. But the more we listen to these voices the more we will hear common themes and issues being raised. These voices are often drowned out by the dominant Australian politics and media so a commitment to listen also means a deliberate choice to place ourselves in a space where these voices are spoken.

One key recent collective voice is the Uluru Statement from the Heart. After a long journey of local consultative meetings all around Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander delegates – First Nation peoples – gathered in 2017 for a National Constitutional Convention. The delegates talked of their basis of ownership, of sovereignty, and that it was never ceded. They asked for substantive and structural reform so that their ownership, their sovereignty, can again be realised. They are not asking those who have come since 1788 to leave. But they are asking for a constitutionally mandated voice, a process of truth telling of the history of invasion and its impact on them as First Nation peoples, and a treaty making process that respects that sovereignty was never ceded.

Alongside this listening, those whose families have come since 1788 need to learn a new way of being in this land. This new way needs to be grounded in respect for First Nation peoples and for all that is Country. It is possible for whitefellas and other recent migrants to learn how to be honourable partners with those whose roots go back 60,000 years and more. Honourable partnership is possible if the

What are the implications of Acknowledgement of Country ? cont.

if the ongoing domination, prejudice and racism is challenged, faced and let go. The Uluru Statement from the Heart can help us as the delegates call for a 'coming together after a struggle', a 'Makarrata'. In their graciousness those who have been made powerless still offer hospitality, dialogue and a future of hope.

Acknowledgement of Country is a vital step in a journey of listening, new learning and new beginnings in this land. Please be deliberate when you make an acknowledgement and please see it as an important step for a new future.

D Tutty

David Tutty has long been a member of Pax Christi Aotearoa New Zealand. David now resides in Australia and is employed by the Toowoomba Catholic Diocese as Executive Officer for the Catholic Social Justice Commission. David has kindly allowed this article to be reproduced in our newsletter. (Originally published in 'Living Justly', Toowoomba Catholic Social Justice Commission, 17 Dec 2019).

DIARY DATES

Jan 18 -25 Week of Prayer for Unity among Christians.

Jan 27th Day of Memory of Victims of the Holocaust.

Feb 6th Waitangi Day

PAX CHRISTI AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

Pax Christi is an independent Catholic social justice organisation . We work hard to address issues of peace and justice at a local, regional and global level.

If you want to know more about Pax Christi, to join meetings, or to set up group meetings in your area, please contact paxnz@xtra.co.nz or ring 09 377 5541 / 021 729944

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Editor: B Crisp rsm Promoter/Manager Pax Christi Aotearoa New Zealand

Newsletter template: canva.com

Image on front page & Pg 4: istock.com/857856892