



Pax Christi Aotearoa-New Zealand

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Kia tau te rangimarie ki a tātou katoa Working for peace for all everywhere

Restoring a Broken Promise

Pax Christi Aotearoa-New Zealand, a national section of Pax Christi International, the Catholic Peace Movement, joins the many organisations, groups and individuals who have shared their condolences with the victims of the tragic events in Christchurch, with their families and the wider Muslim communities in New Zealand and worldwide. Such an attack on people practising in peace the faith in which they believe must be a warning to all of us that there are undercurrents of intolerance and hatred running under the surface of our society. These must be addressed if we are to live in the peace which brought those victims to our society, the peace to which we all aspire.

This tragic occasion is also a time for us to raise serious questions about the foundations of our society, especially where diversity of belief, of ethnicity and of culture is questioned or attacked.

We support the Government's intentions regarding the availability of firearms, especially the kind of automatic weapons which were used in this attack. It is time to ask if the latter have any authentic place in our society; they certainly don't seem to be appropriate to the hunting, target-shooting and recreational use which could justify other forms of firearm, but they do play a critical role in the kind of massacre which has afflicted the Muslim communities in Christchurch. Promises to investigate the efficacy of our gun laws must be fulfilled now.

Questions have also been asked about the focus of our security agencies. Should they be more concerned about signs of instability among local groups exhibiting high levels of racial, religious or cultural intolerance, seemingly behind the motivation for this week's tragedy? Did security agencies and police fail to identify signs of instability in the apparent perpetrators of the Christchurch massacres? Do we have other similar disaffected people or groups who might find the support that the agents in this week's event found to enable them to carry through their evil plans? Are we an easy target for international terrorism?

It is also important that we hear the call of those educationalists seeking a stronger emphasis at all levels on a more authentic and complete teaching of the history of our biculturally-founded nation. A clear awareness of the realities of our history can provide a firm step in the direction of necessary reconciliation of our peoples. It is also essential that incoming migrants are assisted to a similarly clear historical awareness so they can understand the reasons for tensions that exist in our country as well as the steps that have been taken to heal historical injustices.

There are many aspects of life in New Zealand that need examination and remedy but we certainly have a need to address the growing development of an Us/Them mentality which extends across the comparative wealth, gender, cultural, employment and political fields, to name a few. One of the key values of the foundational Maori culture of our nation is Whanaungatanga, the inter-relationship of all things. It suggests that there is no Us/Them but only Us, that we are all in this life together, that when the bell tolls, it tolls for you and for me, for whenua (land) and moana (sea), for all things, living and dead.

We are all victims of the Christchurch massacre. It is our dead we bury and our damaged young men and women we need to heal, so as to give them a sense of belonging and of sharing the same journey as everyone and of being the peace we all need if we are to enjoy fullness of life.

As we pray in our mosques and churches and homes for the victims of the Christchurch massacre, for the peace of the dead and the living, may we also pray that we can turn our minds, hearts and hands to the task of addressing its causes. In this way, the land of Aotearoa may become in truth a land of peace, aroha and justice for all for which so many long.

Kia okioki rātou i runga i te rangimarie. May they rest in peace

Kevin McBride
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