

PAX CHRISTI AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

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



This month's news...

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'No te Parau Tia, No te Parau mau, No te Tia Maraa, e Tu, e Tu!!
*For Justice, for Truth and for Independence, Wake Up, Stand Up!

by Kevin McBride

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Tēnā koutou katoa

This edition of the Pax Christi Aotearoa newsletter has an emphasis on remembering. Two events in particular: the first is the anniversary of the terrorist attack of two mosques in Christchurch that killed 51 people and injured many more people. People who expected peace, people in prayer. The second event to remember occurred 66 years ago when Marshall Islanders faced the beginning of years of nuclear testing and subsequently radiation sickness, as well as reef destruction, at the hands of the United States. As we remember these events, we also acknowledge and observe the Lenten Season. Recently, social media has been sharing the words of Pope Francis about fasting, that he shared with the world in 2017:

Fast from hurting words and say kind words

Fast from sadness and be filled with gratitude.

Fast from anger and be filled with patience.

Fast from pessimism and be filled with hope.

Fast from worries and have trust in God

Fast from complaints and contemplate simplicity.

Fast from pressures and be prayerful

Fast from bitterness and fill your hearts with joy.

Fast from selfishness and be compassionate to others.

Fast from grudges and be reconciled

Fast from words and be silent so you can listen.

These words are lessons for all of us globally – from political leaders and dictators to families and individuals young and old. What would happen if we all followed this... 'Imagine all the people living for today' (John Lennon)?

All the Blessings of Peace this Lenten Season...

Bridget Crisp rsm

Lent 2020: Being a 'woke' consumer.

by Bridget Crisp rsm

The theme for Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand's 2020 Lenten Appeal is based on the phrase "Renewed by the Spirit", which is taken from Pope Francis' 'Gaudete et Exultate' (*Rejoice and Exult*), released in 2018. The phrase is contained within the following paragraph: "May you come to realise what the word is, the message of Jesus that God wants to speak to the world by your life. Let yourself be transformed. Let yourself be renewed by the Spirit, so that this can happen, lest you fail in your precious mission. The Lord will bring it to fulfilment despite your mistakes and missteps, provided that you do not abandon the path of love but remain ever open to his supernatural grace, which purifies and enlightens." (paragraph 24)

The readings for the First Sunday of Lent focus on temptation. In this current climate, I would like to focus on consumerism, in relation to temptation and the impact our consumer choices can have in wider hidden circles.

Marketing is becoming more sophisticated in targeting consumers. With many people using the world wide web (www) to explore ideas, issues and gaining information, companies are developing algorithms that record who and what people are looking at and then sending specific attractive advertisements into pop-up boxes that appear over days or months of items that might be of interest. The purpose is to finally tempt you to purchase that item thereby taking the bite of that apple.

We are challenged however to pause and think before we buy. Do we truly need that desirable item? Will it replace something else or will it add to all 'stuff' I/we already have? The item we are replacing – can it be recycled, or will it add to the growing rubbish pile of other unwanted accumulated 'stuff' of humanity? What about the product we purchase as well as the item to be replaced – do we know the story in the manufacturing process? Were human rights adhered to in the resource processing? Or, was it human exploitation? How about water use? How much water was used in the manufacture?

What about waste? Primarily we need to be 'woke' * consumers – aware of the social and racial injustice that may or may not be involved with the manufacture of a product.

Being 'woke' helps us in transformation thus allowing ourselves to be renewed by the Spirit. During this season of Lent, and beyond, I invite you to consider this, particularly when you shop either in physical premises or online.

40 Days 40 Items Lenten Challenge

Each day of Lent remove one item that you do not use or wear anymore and place it in a bag.

At the end of Lent donate these items to a charity shop or homeless shelter.

#40Days40Items

**Woke - a political term of African American origin referring to a perceived awareness of issues concerning social justice and racial justice*

A Reflection on Pope Francis' "Querida Amazonia" (Beloved Amazon)

by Kevin McBride

I was asked recently to be part of a presentation relating to the future use of a large area of land. Such areas have frequently been given over in the past to monocultural plantation in quick-growing forest species which will produce a quick cash yield in the form of exportable logs or wood-pulp which can be used for paper or further processing into building material. But there are also downsides to such use in the form of long-term depletion of soils and increased risk of flood damage, as I witnessed a couple of years ago in devastating fires in central Portugal and Nelson NZ, and had viewed in damaging floods from forested land into Tolaga Bay, East Coast NZ, where our family had camped before the forests were developed. The presentation I attended set out proposals for a more varied form of use named as "agroforestry". It is focused on combining forestry with more varied forms of land development and rotation which protects the land from depletion and allows for renewal of soil and water resources and opportunities for a variety of employment and lifestyle. It has more about it in the nature of collaboration with the land, the whenua, than the exploitation which underpins some forms of use. This is not surprising in that the promoters of the proposal have based it on a peaceful relationship between land and people, Tangata and Whenua, in line with fundamental principles of Maori spirituality. It was interesting then, to read a copy of Pope Francis' recently-published Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation "*Querida Amazonia*" (*Beloved Amazon*) and to find there a strong affinity for the spiritual relationship between land and people exhibited by the indigenous people of the region. It also presents a strong distaste for "colonising interests that ... have expelled or marginalised the indigenous peoples" driving them into the outskirts of cities and too frequently into "the

worst forms of enslavement, subjection and poverty". As people of a region which has experienced extensive exploitative colonisation and ongoing neo-colonisation, we can see enough of the effects past and ongoing, to pay close attention to any remedies and counter-movements which Pope Francis may suggest in his exhortation.

One of these is "social dialogue" which involves a process of "hohourongo", or listening so that there can be no misconceptions as to how inequality and injustice have affected the victims, and indeed, the beneficiaries of colonisation. Another is "caring for roots", an awareness and understanding of our history and the causes of present injustices and inequalities relating to both people and land. "Intercultural encounter", "ecological education", "inculturation", "the strength and gift of women" are among other topics of discussion in this document which has much to say to countries affected by colonisation. Although primarily focussed on the Amazon region, this exhortation has also much to say to all who are affected by or benefit from colonisation and the overall prevalence in this world of "its spiritual emptiness, its complacent selfishness, its consumerist and self-destructive individualism." The document invites us "in a true spirit of dialogue [to] grow in our ability to grasp the significance of what others say and do ... to be frank and open about our beliefs ... to discuss, seek points of contact and above all, to work and struggle together for the good of [all]."

It sits comfortably with Pax Christi's overall mission: "working for peace for all everywhere."



Photo by Yong Chuan Tan on Unsplash

The Source of the Coronavirus Pandemic is Us

by Kevin McBride

In a convincing article circulated by in his “Announcements”, February 2020, Pax Christi Australia member, Dale Hess shares a startling piece by Sonia Shah, a science journalist and publisher of several books and articles. In it, she puts the blame for COVID-19, the virus spread threatening to become a pandemic, squarely on human beings.

Specifically, she blames habitat loss, particularly in the world’s remaining jungle wilderness areas, for the transfer of relatively harmless microbes present in one form or another in the bodies of wild animals into deadly pathogens when brought into contact with vulnerable human beings. A more specific cause of this transfer lies in colonial-era-style deforestation which is carried on today in the world’s few remaining indigenous-forested regions. There, animals which may have had little or no contact with each other in their natural habitat are brought through the illicit wildlife trade into close contact with each other and with other species. This allows microbes to jump from one to another turning into deadly pathogens. She cites the SARS epidemic, Avian flu and probably today’s COVID-19 as the probable result of such transfers.

Factory farms packed with captive chickens, American cattle feed-lots and such-like are prime breeding-grounds for these pathogens enabling them to spill over into human populations and creating the panic which is accompanying the current crisis. Sonia Shah traces the beginning of this process to the Neolithic era “when we first cleared wildlife habitat to make way for crops and yoked wild

animals into servitude ... Belgian colonists in the Congo built the railroads and cities that allowed lentivirus [which has evolved in turn into HIV] in local macaques (old world monkey) population to perfect its adaptations to the human body; British colonists in Bangladesh cut down the wetlands to build rice farms, exposing human beings to water-borne bacteria ... These pandemics plague us to this day”.

On the positive side, she says that we do have some options. We can protect wildlife habitat to lessen the chances of microbe cross-over; we can hunt down and “squelch” animal microbes which show signs of adapting to the human body; we can support programmes which pinpoint potentially-dangerous viruses. One such programme, USAID’s Predict, was ended by the Trump administration in October last in favour of liberating other programmes which accelerate habitat destruction in favour of mining and other extractive industries. The same administration has proposed cutting funds to the World Health Organisation by 53%.

Shah concludes her article by saying that “there is no real mystery about the animal source of pandemics. It’s not some spiky scaled pangolin (scaly anteater) or furry flying bat. It’s a population of warm-blooded primates. The true animal source is us.”

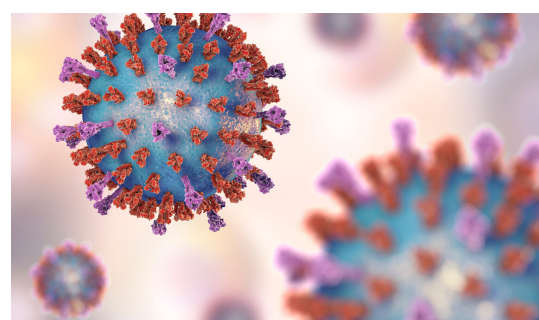


Photo: Canva.com

“Nuclear Justice” Marshall Islands Remembering the Past & Fighting for a Future.

by Bridget Crisp rsm

On March 1st, Marshall Islanders remembered the events that happened on that day in 1954. The US Government detonated the largest nuclear device (known as Castle Bravo) over the Bikini Atoll, in the Marshall Islands. This hydrogen bomb exposed thousands of people downwind to the effects of radioactive fallout. Castle Bravo would be the first test of many by the US Government under the operation known as ‘Operation Castle’.

The day is known as National Nuclear Remembrance Day. It is a day of national observance, where the victims and survivors of the nuclear tests are remembered and honoured. As well as flying the flag at half mast, the Marshall Islands Government also participated in a ‘March for Justice’.

Currently the Marshall Islands Government is in preliminary talks with the United States for a new agreement between the two nations. Their current compact expires in two years. Compensation for loss of land, healthcare, livelihoods and lifestyles is an ongoing issue since nuclear testing began in the Marshall Islands 66 years ago. Their relationship with the United States has also been tense as it was revealed, last year, that the US withheld information on the nuclear waste left behind, when Marshall Islands gained their independence. The concrete dome covering the nuclear test

site has been shown to have cracks, another concern for the Marshall Islanders.

As part of the commemoration on March 1st, the Marshall Islands High School Essay Competition winner was revealed. The following is from the winner of this year’s competition:

"They had the choice to test those bombs, we didn't. They had the choice to be truthful about the consequences that awaited us, we didn't. They had the choice not to endanger innocent lives, we didn't. They had the choice to help protect our oceans and environment, we didn't. At the end of the day, nuclear justice means righting what was wronged."

Rosie Ammontha, Marshall Islands High School,
Majuro, Marshall Islands.

Sources: rnz.co.nz ; pncguam.com



“No te parau tia, no te parau mau, no te tiamaraa, e tu, e tu!”

For justice, for truth and for independence, wake up, stand up!

by Kevin McBride

Sunday 1 March 2020 passed me by and probably for most of us was not marked as Nuclear-free and Independent Pacific Day. It was also the 66th anniversary of the detonation of the nuclear bomb “Bravo” on Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands. The US Navy didn’t send ships to evacuate the people of Rongelap, only 100 miles from the epicentre, until three days after the explosion and it now seems apparent that they, and other Pacific peoples within range of more than 300 similar nuclear bomb tests carried out by the US, France and Britain “were used as human guinea pigs in an obscene pursuit of nuclear weapons supremacy” (Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific Day, Peace Movement Aotearoa 2 March 2020).

For so many of us, including those like me who should know better, this tragic day and its consequences for the indigenous peoples of the region, goes unmarked and illustrates once more an “arrogant colonial mindset” inherited from our forebears and carried on in so many ways which make the Pacific still “neither nuclear free nor independent” (op cit).

“Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific Day is a day to think of the many faces of colonisation – physical, cultural, spiritual, economic, nuclear, military – past and present; the ongoing issues of independence, self-determination and

sovereignty here in Aotearoa New Zealand and the other colonised and occupied countries of the Pacific...” (op cit)

It is a time to remember the courage and suffering of those who have resisted colonisation in its various forms since the 15th century and to find ways to support those who continue the struggle and seek ways to take back control of their lives from others who continue to exploit them. Above all, it is time for those of us who are the beneficiaries of this same colonisation to find ways to undo its disastrous effects, to address our own privileges and to share in justice the richness of the region with the descendants of its original peoples.

Only in this way will the seas, the lands and the peoples of the region flourish and become a sign of the fullness of life for all which our selfish world so badly needs.

[Thanks are due to Peace Movement Aotearoa for the challenging article in their March 2020 publication which reminded us in Pax Christi of this significant day.]



Image: dailymail.co.uk

Christchurch Terror Attack

March 15th ...

One year on.

by Bridget Crisp rsm.

New Zealand experienced a horrific terror attack on March 15, 2019, where 51 people were killed and many more injured while praying at two mosques in Christchurch. Following that darkest day, New Zealanders have shown to the world our compassion, our grief and our response to not name the gunman as well as updating our current gun laws in the hope that such an event will not happen again.

What have we as a nation learnt since then? Are we a more compassionate and caring society to all who call NZ home? Or, are we the same as before – ignoring racism with xenophobia, and prejudice happening before our eyes? Presently, I will say, we are both. Our eyes were opened on that day. We were challenged by those who have experienced racism and xenophobia of the constant harassment they go through while bystanders do nothing.

The cases being reported to the police on hate speech have increased since March 15th, precisely because we have become more aware. Instead of being blind and oblivious, we are more observant. In some cases, throughout the year, bystanders have intervened and have stood up to the bullies, challenging them. With the increase of cases being reported and many in society being more observant and talking about it, we need to acknowledge that New Zealand still has a problem.

NZ film director Taika Waititi has been blunt in

calling out our racist NZ society. NZ media has also been complicit in racism. Not that long ago, the media were challenged when they described another NZ film director Renae Maihi as a Māori film director because of her anti-hate challenge of Sir Bob Jones that ended up in the courts and in the paper. When Taika Waititi won international film awards, they did not label him a Māori film director but a New Zealand director.

Currently the Coronavirus (Covid-19) sweeping the world has exposed more problems of racism – there has been a spate of anti-Chinese hate behaviour in our cities as the virus sweeps the world and a few cases come into NZ. This has shown us that lessons have not been learnt.

What is needed? More education certainly. The introduction of a more comprehensive New Zealand history into schools that highlights colonisation will help. However, conversations that are deep, honest and raw need to continue also if we are to change attitudes for the better. Pax Christi Aotearoa New Zealand is seeking ways to initiate such conversations to enable this to happen.



Image: B Crisp

Pax Christi is on the Move!

The Pax Christi Aotearoa New Zealand National Office will be moving mid-March to new premises. After a long and collaborative relationship with 'The Peace Place', founded originally by the Dominican Friars in central Auckland; Pax Christi will be moving to offices within *Te Unga Waka Marae*, 1 Clyde Street Epsom. This will mark the beginning of new collaborative partnerships with Tangata Whenua as we move forward into the future.

Our contact phone numbers remain the same. We will keep you informed as to where mail can be sent. In the meantime, contact Pax Christi via email for any communication until postal details are confirmed.

DIARY DATES

March 13	Pax Christi Movement begins in 1945.
March 22	World Water Day.
April 10	Good Friday
April 12	Easter Sunday
April 22	Earth Day
April 29	UN Day of Remembrance of all Victims of Chemical Warfare
May 1	May Day (Workers 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

Pax Christi relies on volunteers & donations to enable the work to continue.

To make an online donation our a/c name and number is: Pax Christi Aotearoa New Zealand 03-01730353-867-00
Please contact us for a receipt.
Your support is greatly appreciated.

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