

# PAX CHRISTI AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

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

This month's news...

Language, love, laïcité  
& violence.

by Peter Cullinane

Joint interfaith  
statement on the entry  
into force of the treaty  
on the prohibition of  
nuclear weapons,

Reflection by Sr. Teresa  
Wamūyū Wachira  
(IBVM) on Pope  
Francis 54th World Day  
of Peace message.

2020 Pax Christi  
International Peace  
Award: The Pacific  
Climate Warriors



Tēnā koutou katoa

When we welcomed in 2021, many people hoped that the year ahead would be bright, full of hope with an actual end to the pandemic that had caused (and still is causing) so much pain and death in 2020. The events of January 6th in Washington DC, of the storming of the US Capitol and of people intent to do physical harm to their elected officials shook the world – it seemed hope and goodwill had vanished.

The message Pope Francis released for the celebration of the 54th World Day of Peace on January 1st has as its title “*A culture of care as a path to peace*”. Within this message Francis talks about the qualities and values that lead to a culture of care becoming a reality and that these values are our compass: “...this will enable us to esteem the value and dignity of every person, to act together in solidarity for the common good and to bring relief to those suffering from poverty disease, slavery, armed conflicts, and discrimination. I ask everyone to take this compass in hand and to become a prophetic witness of the culture of care, working to overcome the many social inequalities.” (7, para. 1)

We all need to work hard to bring about a culture of care for one another. Like peace, it is not passive. To achieve care, we have to work at caring for one another.

Poet Amanda Gorman shared with the world her poem for the inauguration of Joe Biden as President of the United States of America. In the first two lines of the poem “*The Hill we Climb*” she speaks:

*“When day comes we ask ourselves,  
Where can we find light in this never-ending shade?”*

The last three lines, Amanda finishes:

*For there is always light  
If only we’re brave enough to see it.  
If only we’re brave enough to be it.*

May we step with more confidence into 2021, with our compass, constantly seeking the light and being the light of care and peace for others.

Happy reading.

Bridget Crisp rsm

# Language, love, laïcité and violence.

by Peter Cullinane

I write in support of Imam Gamal Foude's comments on the need for love and respect in combatting violence. With all due respect to French leaders, I think they could start by reviewing the implications of laïcité. At this time, they have much to say about "Islamic terrorism". Worse, some of the language they are using is the language of warfare and of terrorism itself. Obviously, there can be no justification for what was done in Nice. But in wanting to explain the causes of such violence they are looking no further than Islam.

In a recent BBC Hardtalk programme, Stephen Sackur interviewed French professor of sociology and political advisor, Dominique Schnapper, who explained what she called the French form of secularism, which she assured us is superior to what we find in Britain and USA. Most of us accept separation of Church and State, including agencies of the State, and rightly. But laïcité goes further by including "the public sphere" with the State. Consequently, religion is mainly for the private sphere. According to the Professor, curtailing the scope of religion in the public sphere gives people freedom!!

I suggest, on the contrary, that the State and the public forum are not the same; the public forum belongs to the people, to society. It is where minds meet to be enriched by each other; it is where proper integration takes place. Relegating religion and cultural diversity to the private sphere prevents integration! In fact, it is a recipe for creating ghettos! I would have thought this was obvious, though she did mention that she would not expect the English to understand!

I suggest that institutions dedicated to health care, social welfare and education, though administered by the State, are also not agencies of the State: they too belong to society, to the people, and therefore should be allowed to reflect society, including its pluralism, and not have to avoid or banish religious or cultural expressions. (Perhaps they should be called "State-run" institutions, not "State institutions".)

The professor points out that the French understanding of secularism is a "product" of the French revolution and its rejection of previous forms of authoritarianism (of aristocracy and Church). She is right. But that makes it a form of push-back, and a product of negative experience. It needs to move beyond its origins, and become positive. But that requires dialogue at every level, which is what laïcité inhibits!

She is surely justified in allowing criticism of other people's views, including religious views, and she is right to say that criticising people's views is not necessarily insulting the people who hold them. But somewhere there is a line between critique and mockery? It seems to me mere sophistry to say that mocking what is sacred to other people is not disrespecting those people.

Pope Francis' latest encyclical letter (especially chapter 6) is spot on where he talks of the crucial role of dialogue and need for greater respect and kindness within cultures and within politics. It is within a culture of genuine respect for others, kindness and dialogue, that we instinctively know the difference between critique and mockery, between fair comment and incitement, between free speech and hate speech... Schnapper is genuinely concerned that some kind of aberration seems to have taken place within Islam. But might she also need to ask whether there is some kind of aberration within the French form of secularism?

*Peter Cullinane is Bishop Emeritus of the Diocese of Palmerston North. Bishop Peter is currently the Co-President of Pax Christi Aotearoa New Zealand. This article was published in CathNews New Zealand on Monday 9th November 2020. We have permission of the author to reprint this in our Newsletter.*

# Joint Interfaith Statement on the Entry into Force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. 22 January 2021.

*Pax Christi Aotearoa New Zealand has signed the following global interfaith statement:*

As a wide coalition of faith-based communities from around the world, we speak with one voice to reject the existential threat to humanity that nuclear weapons pose. We wholeheartedly welcome the entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), the first international treaty to comprehensively ban nuclear weapons. The Treaty addresses the disproportionate impact of nuclear weapons on women and indigenous peoples and the importance of victim assistance and healing environmental harms in a groundbreaking way. We congratulate, celebrate and appreciate the countries that have ratified and signed this important Treaty, as well as all who have worked for nuclear disarmament and abolition for many decades.

As people of faith, we believe that the possession, development and threat to use nuclear weapons is immoral. There are no safe hands for these weapons. The accidental or deliberate detonation of a nuclear weapon would cause severe, long-lasting and far-reaching harm on all aspects of our lives and our environment throughout the world. Further, these technologies are part of structures and systems that bring about great suffering and destruction. We commit, therefore, to the ethical and strategic necessity of working together for economic and social justice, right relationship with the Earth, and accountability and restoration where there is violence and harm. We rejoice at the possibilities of a new world that this Treaty ushers in. At a time when the world desperately needs fresh hope, the TPNW inspires us to continue to work to fully eliminate the threat of nuclear weapons, and to create conditions for peace, justice, and well-being.

We recognize the legacy of the global hibakusha, survivors whose courage and perseverance serve as our inspiration, guidance, and moral foundation in the quest for a world free from nuclear weapons. This quest will continue until all nuclear weapons are eliminated from our planet. We invite everyone, especially those in communities of faith, to join us in this work for peace, justice, and respect for life—against which nuclear weapons stand in complete opposition—in ways that are meaningful and authentic to your traditions and how you are inspired to participate. We urge all States to join the growing community of States which have rejected nuclear weapons and to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, or work toward that end by joining the First Meeting of the States Parties planned to take place this year.

At this historic moment, we must act decisively to strengthen the power of the TPNW upon its entry into force, and to work for peace, cooperation, and common security.





**POPE FRANCIS' 54th WORLD DAY OF PEACE MESSAGE - 1 JANUARY 2021**

*"A CULTURE OF CARE AS A PATH TO PEACE"*

**Reflection by Sr Teresia Wamũyũ Wachira (IBVM)  
Co-President of Pax Christi International**

Blessings, joy and peace, to you all this New Year 2021.

As we usher this New Year, we are aware of the uniqueness of 2020. Bishop Marc Stenger and I (co-presidents), Greet Vanaerschot and the team at the International Secretariat in Brussels, thank each one of you for your support in different ways, your commitment and service to the vulnerable among your families and neighbourhoods. We express our gratitude for your courage, care and compassion as you went about your lives and service despite the different forms of loss due to the Covid-19 pandemic. We feel with those of you who have lost loved ones, jobs and even property, as you try to cope with this 'new normal'. Equally, we express our gratitude to those in caring professions that have left all to "lay down their lives" for their brothers and sisters during this pandemic. Though we do not know what the future will bring, we are hopeful and live in faith that the Creator God who has walked humbly and lovingly with us will continue to protect us, our families, communities and our global world in the New Year 2021 and beyond.

I share this reflection on Pope Francis' 54<sup>th</sup> World Day of Peace message and invite each one of you to journey with me in internalizing and acting creatively on this profound message. The message is full of grace-filled, life-giving insights and hope and is challenging as well. It calls us to go beyond the Covid-19 reality, to the year 2021 and beyond.

In his earlier reflections on the World Days of Peace, and in the two Encyclicals '*Laudato Si'*' and '*Fratelli Tutti'*', Pope Francis intertwines love and care of the environment and of humanity (called to be each other's keeper). In his 2021 World Day of Peace message '**A culture of care as a path to peace**', the Pope echoes this when he invites us once more to commit ourselves to care and compassion, by promoting each person's dignity, being in solidarity with the poor and vulnerable and working towards the common good and concern for the protection of creation. This has been an ongoing invitation for all of us due to the Covid-19 pandemic and climate change reality. Similarly, this global experience has kept us focused on the fact that we are all interconnected irrespective of our gender, creed, race, different affiliations, socio-economic and political status.

Furthermore, the Pope calls us to live and work for what really matters that is "*the value and dignity of every person, ... solidarity for the common good, and ... relief to those suffering from poverty, disease, slavery, armed conflicts, and discrimination.*" Pope Francis further challenges us to "*become a prophetic witness of a culture of care, working to overcome the many existing social inequalities*" and cautions that this "*can only come about through a widespread and meaningful involvement on*



*the part of women, in the family and in every social, political and institutional sphere.*" This is food for thought for all of us as we usher in the New Year 2021.

The initial questions we may need to ask ourselves are: What will be different in 2021 in the way we engage with each other (women and men, youth and children), our communities, our neighbours, and the global world? What do we need to do to open our hearts, our homes and our borders to the "vulnerable" that reach out to us each day, challenging us to act in response to their cry of vulnerability? How can our hearts be converted and our ways of thinking changed, in order to work for true peace in solidarity with one another and our Mother earth?

Caring for each other goes beyond words and reflections. It is about adopting a 'new culture' that calls us beyond ourselves towards selfless love as Mother Teresa of Calcutta articulated it "loving until it hurts". Jesus' own life and mission was characterised by love, care, compassion, respect for each one's dignity; a love that led to the self-emptying on the cross. Through Jesus' example we learn to be our sister and brother's keeper, to be the 'Good Samaritan' (Luke 10:34-35) who binds and heals the wounds of those suffering from different vulnerabilities and who binds and heals the wounds of our Mother Earth, devastated by lack of care.

Pope Francis also invites us to think creatively and act on the vast amounts of resources that are spent to fund weaponry, especially nuclear weapons, and other weaponry such explosives, artillery and small arms causing loss of lives, widespread displacements and curtailment of different freedoms. He calls for these resources to be used to ensure the safety of individuals, the promotion of peace and integral human development, the fight against poverty, and the provision of health care. He calls on the creation of a "global fund" that would be utilised to eliminate hunger and contribute to the development of the poorest countries. Furthermore, he reminds us that the promotion of a culture of care calls for a process of education.

As we engage in a theological reflection on these profound calls from Pope Francis, let us embrace his call to take the compass in hand and "become a prophetic witness of the culture of care". In order to do this, it is important to recap his insights and concerns, contained in both his Encyclicals and World Day of Peace messages, that we have referred to earlier in this reflection, where he has invited us to respect and protect both the human persons and environment, thus setting the compass in the right direction. He reminds us that we are called to articulate and exemplify what it is to care by following in Jesus' own footsteps (Lk 10:37). Jesus fulfilled the mission for which he was sent, to redeem all human persons; he healed the broken hearted, gave sight to the blind, set prisoners free and proclaimed God's year of favour to all (Luke: 4:18). He therefore taught us what it is to care and to act nonviolently. Yet, as reminded by Pope Francis, there is a tendency today for humanity to adopt a '*culture of indifference, waste and confrontation*' and equally engage in a culture of violence; such a culture only brings destruction and death of God's creation.

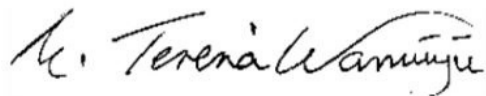
Pope Francis has a special message for all peacemakers, thus for us too, members of Pax Christi International, that we are called to "become prophetic witnesses of a culture of care". The invitation for all of us in 2021 is to renew our commitment once more to advocate, defend and promote the fundamental human rights of each person, heal the broken hearted, restore sight to those who suffer different forms of blindness and injustices, to set prisoners free from the different chains of exclusion, lukewarmness, insecurity, racism, xenophobia, and to responsibly 'till' and be custodians of our Mother Earth. We also encompass Pope Francis' call to speak and act against kingdoms of

weapons of mass destruction and all forms of arms and artillery (in this we draw special attention to small arms and light weapons) which are weapons of choice fueling the intractable conflicts in especially the Africa continent. In our following of the nonviolent Jesus, we are called and missioned to challenge structures and actions that are violent and not compatible with 'a culture of care' and thus cannot be a 'path to peace'. As Pope Francis succinctly points out, *'peace and violence cannot dwell together'*.

In conclusion, inspired and guided by the Holy Spirit we move in hope to serve and ignite the world anew this New Year 2021. May we continue to nurture 'a culture of care as a path to peace' in our homes, communities and the environment. Invoking Mary, Mother of God and our "Our Lady, Star of the Sea and Mother of Hope", we ask her to protect and journey with us as we strive to become prophetic witnesses of "a culture of care".

May 2021 be a time of blessings, family bonding, healing and care for each other. May the peace of Emmanuel-God-With-Us bring renewed hope for you, your families and friends.

*"Jesus came that all may have life and have it more abundantly." (John: 10:10)*

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sr. Teresia Wamũyũ". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sr Teresia Wamũyũ Wachira (IBVM)  
Co-President of Pax Christi International



# 2020 Pax Christi International Peace Award

## The Pacific Climate Warriors.

On the 10th of December 2020, Pax Christi Aotearoa New Zealand hosted a special event on behalf of Pax Christi International – The Pax Christi International Peace Prize 2020.

Due to COVID-19 sweeping the globe and causing closures everywhere including the Pax Christi International Assembly in Hiroshima, a new venue had to be found. The recipients of the 2020 Peace Prize were the Pacific Climate Warriors and the representative of the Pacific Climate Warriors is New Zealand Based – we were asked to host the event that would also be livestreamed around the world.

The ceremony brought in a completely unique Pacific and Māori flavour, beginning with conch call by Leilani Endemann, supported by her Aunt, Sr Paula Anamani rsm and waiata (song).

Mary Gafaomalietoa Sapati Moeono-kolio accepted the award on behalf of the Pacific Climate Warriors. Many of the NZ based Pacific Climate Warriors came with her in support, including Mary's family who are also heavily involved in the work.

The Pacific Climate Warriors received the 2020 Pax Christi Peace Award because of their work in raising awareness of the impact of Climate Change. As Mary said in her acceptance speech for the award, Pacific Climate Warriors do not use violence to raise awareness instead “deploy our culture -wisdom of our elders and the tenacity of the young people in activism.”

In the Pacific climate change is real,” We are the human faces of climate change; real people, real issues.”

Pax Christi Aotearoa New Zealand was thrilled to host the award on behalf of Pax Christi International and we support Pacific Climate Warriors in the work they do and continue to do to bring home the reality of Climate Change impact on communities who live by the sea.



Above: Leilani Endemann, Sr Paula Anamani, and Rangi Davis (Co-Patron of Pax Christi Aotearoa) welcome the Pacific Climate Warriors.

Right: Mary Gafaomalietoa Sapati Moeono-Kolio receives the Pax Christi International Peace Prize from Auxiliary Bishop Michael Gielen and Pax Christi NZ Chair (Auckland) Helen Doherty.

Photo credits: Del Abacede on behalf of Pax Christi Aotearoa New Zealand.







## Reflection around Waitangi Day

# Indigenous Rights in Aotearoa and the Amazon

Two-part Zoom study based on  
 Querida Amazonia (Pope Francis) & Listening to the People of the Land:  
 Christianity, Colonisation and the Path to Redemption (Susan Healy, Ed.)

Pax Christi Aotearoa New Zealand invites you  
 to join this study and discussion  
**Tuesdays 9 February and 16 February 2021**  
**7.30 – 9 pm**  
 Facilitator: Susan Healy

Susan has drawn up a short document with quotes that show parallels between what has and is happening in the Amazon, Aotearoa New Zealand and other parts of the world – with regard to colonisation and its present-day effects and challenges. Participants will be given a section to read before each Zoom meeting and invited to share their thoughts and questions. The emphasis will be on reading, listening and learning from one another.

Please enrol by Thursday 4th February 2021 by emailing Pax Christi Aotearoa New Zealand at [paxchristiaotearoa@gmail.com](mailto:paxchristiaotearoa@gmail.com)

On enrolment you will be sent the zoom link and the reading for the first meeting.

Enquiries to Bridget Crisp rsm, Promoter/Manager Pax Christi Aotearoa  
 Phone 021 729944

*Pax Christi is an international faith-based Peace organisation. This study/reflection is the first in a series to be offered by Pax Christi Aotearoa over the 2021 year. All are welcome. There is no charge for participation.*



## DIARY DATES

- Feb 6th Waitangi Day.
- Feb 8th Day of Prayer & Awareness against Human Trafficking.
- March 5th World Day of Prayer
- March 13th Pax Christi Movement begins in 1945.
- March 22nd World Water 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 [paxchristiaotearoa@gmail.com](mailto:paxchristiaotearoa@gmail.com) 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.

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

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