

PAX CHRISTI AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

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



THIS MONTH'S NEWS

**BISHOP PIERRE
MARIE THÉAS - A MAN OF
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A SEEKER OF LIBERATION
THROUGH PRAYER.**

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COURAGE, PRAYER & RECONCILIATION ...THE BIRTH OF PAX CHRISTI

by Bridget Crisp rsm

Kia ora koutou katoa

During this season of Lent, we reflect on the very beginnings of the Pax Christi Movement. The seeds of prayer and reconciliation played a very important role in the forming of a movement.

I decided to dedicate this issue to the founding of Pax Christi for two reasons. The first; the actions of prayer and reconciliation are important during this season, in our preparation for the resurrection of Christ, which we celebrate on Easter Sunday. The second reason is that at the time I was getting to know the beginnings of Pax Christi, it was also the time of the graphic media images coming out of Syria, like the destruction of the city of Aleppo. For many of us, we are blessed to be living away from such destruction, tragedy and anguish. We cannot imagine what the local people were going through and how they survived against all odds. It is these thoughts that I kept in the forefront while reading about Bishop Théas and Marthe Dortel Claudot. I invite you to do the same – so that you can realise that they did something truly extraordinary.



BISHOP PIERRE MARIE THÉAS – A MAN OF COURAGE.

"...I declare that all people Aryan or non-Aryan are brothers and sisters created by the same God. All people of whichever race or religion are entitled to respect by individuals and governments." The words from the pastoral letter 'About Respect for the Human Person' (30 August 1942) that the Bishop of Montauban, Pierre Marie Théas wrote and ensured was lectured on in all parishes of his Diocese.

"Human Dignity, Compassion and a supporter of reconciliation are words to describe Bishop Théas."

Bishop Théas consistently denounced the Nazi regime and actions during the occupation of France from 1941 until the end of the war in 1945. He was particularly vocal and critical of the deportations of Jewish people and encouraged the faithful to hide and protect Jewish citizens.

Human dignity, compassion and a supporter of reconciliation are words to describe Bishop Théas' conviction and action.

Pierre Marie Theas became a firm believer that to have any peace at all – we must pray for and forgive all people who do us wrong – in this case Germany. This became clearer to Bishop Théas when he was thrown into a concentration camp towards the end of the war. During that time, he preached to his fellow prisoners Jesus' 'Sermon on the Mount'. Many prisoners struggled to release their anger and hatred but for Bishop Théas, he found it to be a truly liberation moment.

Source: "The story of the very beginning of Pax Chrsiti" - Pax Christi International.

MARTHE DORTEL CLAUDOT: A SEEKER OF LIBERATION THROUGH PRAYER

Marthe grew up in the region Alsace- Lorraine which historically straddles the area between France and Germany. Originally a territory of Germany, today is a part of France. Marthe was conversant in both French and German, and was well studied in literature, Latin and Greek. When war broke out, Marthe along with her husband and step-children moved to Southern France. The family assisted in hiding Jewish families and Marthe's husband Auguste Dortel joined the resistance in 1942.

It was from her private journals, found by her step-son after her death, that the character and determination of Marthe was revealed.

Marthe was asked in November 1944 to pray for German priests and later in December for the German people. For Marthe initially, these invitations to pray provoked an inner resistance. In January 1945, Marthe Dortel Claudot came to write that *"when praying she clearly felt she must pray and make other people pray in order that the Germans may be healed from the moral and spiritual disaster caused by twelve years of Nazi-rule."*

Marthe, with the support of her parish priest, began a small prayer group that began with two, to pray for Germany and she wrote *"Without his support and his approval I would never have dared consider the inspiration I received as the will of God. I could not have faced the problems and dangers of the atmosphere and situation of that time: an unfinished war, prisoners and deported who did not return, all kinds of restrictions, lack of freedom, the hate of the occupier...I was obedient to God, and that was it."*



"...I would never have dared to consider the inspiration I received as the will of God. I could not have faced the problems and dangers of the atmosphere and the situation at that time..."
Marthe Dortel Claudot

Source: "The story of the very beginning of Pax Christi" - Pax Christi International.

A MEETING ... AND THE BIRTH OF THE PAX CHRISTI MOVEMENT

On the 11th of March 1945, Marthe along with her husband and uncle were granted a personal meeting with the Bishop Pierre Marie Théas. Marthe proposed, to the Bishop, a plan of prayer for Germany and following approval from Cardinal Saliège, in Toulouse, a movement was started.

On the 13th March 1945, Bishop Théas became president and Marthe Secretary General for a movement authorized to start a crusade of prayer for Germany. Bishop Théas believed that Marthe had been called by the Holy Spirit to help start this initiative. On that same evening, the 13th March, Marthe's uncle proposed that the movement be called Pax Christi. "...Pax Christi originated from the melting together of two spiritual experiences of forgiveness and reconciliation, at one side Pierre Marie Théas, on the other side Marthe Dortel Claudot. In the simplicity of the meeting on 11 and 13 March 1945 both experiences came together and resulted in one single project. Originally Pax Christi was an authentic spiritual enterprise under the sign of the reconciling love of Jesus for the German nation and for all people."



GOING FORWARD: PAX CHRISTI TODAY

The Pax Christi Movement continues to evolve. Pax Christi has a presence in many parts of the world. The focus has shifted to peace and justice throughout the world. Focus at this time is on nuclear disarmament, human rights and justice and reconciliation. The above is the dedicated icon for Pax Christi International, made in the monastery of St John in the Desert, near Jerusalem. It is displayed at the International Secretariat in Brussels, Belgium.

Lent 2018

Each week during Lent, Pax Christi International post on their website a Lenten Reflection from the 'Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns'. Check out this year's reflections that have a non-violence emphasis.

<http://www.paxchristi.net/news/lent-livenonviolence-lent-2018-these-reflections-and-resources>



Photo: R Sutton.

Reflection

Rebecca Sutton, Pax Christi member has generously contributed to this month's newsletter. The following is inspired by the phrase attributed to Venerable Suzanne Aubert "Let us together", the theme for this year's Caritas NZ Lenten Appeal.

The Journey.

A long and windy path
converged in an evergreen haven.
I was sad that my path had
disappeared,
as I thought about this new road
ahead.

This new road has a claim on me.
This well-trodden path
filled with bumpy gravel,
and darkly lit branches.

However, this new road is not an
easy path to travel.
There are no comfortable
attractions,
or easy diversions.
I have to think and feel, and take
action along the way.

In the years beyond,
I will remember the road's twists and
turns,
and how my world changed with it.
Yet what I remember the most is,
we journey together and that made
the world of difference.

R. Sutton.

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.

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

Your support is greatly appreciated.

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Promotor/Manager of Pax Christi Aotearoa NZ.

Diary Dates

- March 13 Pax Christi movement begins in 1945.
- March 22 World Water Day.
- March 30 Good Friday.
- April 1 Easter Sunday

A State of Emergency declared in Sri Lanka

On Tuesday 6 March, the President of Sri Lanka declared a state of emergency. Buddhist-Muslim tension has been increasing and there has been a number of anti-Muslim attacks within the country.

Fr. Nandana Manatunga of the Human Rights and Media Resource Centre, Sri Lanka (a Pax Christi affiliate organisation) asks that we keep Sri Lanka in our prayers at this time and that peaceful resolutions can be found.

Next Month's newsletter will look at the theme for Earth Day (April 22nd). The theme for 2018 is ending plastic pollution. Any contributions to the newsletter are welcome. Please email paxnz@xtra.co.nz.