



Praying for Syria, Remembering Iraq

by Rosemarie Pace

On the 16th of February this year, Pax Christi International issued a Call for Acts of Solidarity and Days of Prayer and Fasting for Syria between the dates of March 15th and 20th, the fifth anniversary of Syrian civilian-initiated nonviolent demonstrations for basic freedoms and rights in their homeland. The Call provided these grim statistics:

In the five years since, more than 250,000 people have been killed, more than 13.5 million people inside Syria are in need of emergency relief and 6.5 million civilians are internally displaced, including hundreds of thousands in besieged cities, deprived of food and basic services. Moreover, more than 4.6 million Syrian refugees have fled to neighbouring countries and the wider region.

The Call added: "The conflict in Syria has also worsened the situation of the Palestinian refugees in Syria and Iraqi refugees living in the region.

And so, Pax Christi Metro New York organized a prayer service for the morning of Saturday, March 19th, coincident with the regrettable 13th anniversary of the war in Iraq. A small group of us gathered at the entrance to Bryant Park and prayed, reflected on scripture, sang, and listened to testimonies from three people who have had direct experience in the region. We drew scripture from the Book of Lamentations, the Psalms, and the Gospel of Luke. We sang a most moving response from *Singing the Spirit Home* by Eric Bogle, originally written about apartheid in South Africa:

Courage, people, you do not walk alone.
We shall walk with you and sing your spirit home.

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Pondering Iraq and Syria

by Gabe Huck

We were seven years living in Damascus, 2005 to 2012. We thought the movie of our adventure (and anyone under 60 won't understand this) should be called "Ma and Pa Kettle Visit the Fertile Crescent." The prequel of course would be "Ma and Pa Kettle See the Sanctions" about our four journeys with Voices in the Wilderness to Baghdad and Basra before 2003.

Two lines of a poem by W.S. Merwin have helped me think about the 13 years of sanctions on Iraq, about Syria and beyond:

...the wars are bigger now than ever
greed has reached numbers that you
would not
believe

Bigger, but also different. So we saw in those Voices visits to Iraq, and in trying after Shock and Awe in 2003 to figure what reparations might look like from Americans to Iraqis. We went to Damascus for seven years and started Iraqi Student Project (iraqistudentproject.org) and involved many helpers there and in the US in finding undergraduate education for young Iraqis. Syria had simply opened its borders to Iraqis as they had in 1948 to Palestinians fleeing Zionist terror. And others before. And now what? Half the 2010 population of Syria are refugees, four million outside Syria and the others living somewhere else.

We were in Damascus a year after nonviolent protests (still the "Arab Spring") began in Syria in March 2011. The violent response of the regime in its intensity came as a surprise to many Syrians and as always fostered the formation of violent opposition which soon eclipsed the ongoing nonviolence.

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We concluded with the hopeful song by Dan Schutte, S.J., “A Time Will Come for Singing.” But most poignant of all were the words of Gabe Huck and Theresa Kubasa and of Sr. Rosemarie Milazzo, MM. You can read Gabe and Theresa’s story in the accompanying article. Sr. Rosemarie’s story is below.

Sr. Rosemarie is a member of Christian Peacemaker Teams working with Syrian refugees in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. She read an excerpt of an article, “The Tears of Refugees,” that she wrote for *Maryknoll Magazine’s* March/April 2016 issue. In the article she focuses on the children. Story after story tears at your heart, but she concludes with an “uplifting” experience “working with Syrian refugee children in an art and peace project.” This is what she read to us at our service:

...inviting them to share their dreams, we asked them, “What does peace look like for you?”

Here are some of the responses we received: “Peace is what it was like before the war,” one child said. Another added, “Peace looks like me sitting with my family.” For another, “Peace looks like safety with no police knocks,” while another said, “Peace looks like kind words” and another responded, “Peace looks like riding a bike free and unafraid.”

She concludes: “I hope and pray that the children will soon ride bikes free and unafraid and that they will see ‘what it was like before the war.’ They are already holding hands as they continue to be together in this new home.”

With our simple prayer service, we, too, stretched out our hearts and hands to both our Syrian and Iraqi brothers and sisters. And then with our feet, we joined the vigil and procession around the block, in front of the New York Public Library, to commemorate the catastrophic war in Iraq. There we stood in silent witness to the 1.3 million casualties of war, the legacy of endless war, the destruction of Iraqi infrastructure, and the deterioration of the U.S. into economic and political chaos. We broke the silence to the creative parodies of the “Raging Grannies and Their Daughters,” and we processed to the Times Square Armed Forces Recruiting Station where we again stood in silent witness with some bearing such

signs as “Love restores our humanity,” “Love has no borders,” and “Racism destroys our humanity.”

It was a full day in which we hope we raised some awareness, aroused some consciences, and stimulated some action to end the conflicts and build a more peaceful world.



PCMNY joins others in vigil in front of the Public Library on Fifth Avenue to commemorate the 13th anniversary of the war in Iraq.

(pondering, from page 1...)

Early in 2012, Kofi Annan came to Syria for the UN and was able to hear from the various sides. When he called for a major conference that would involve the regime, the Free Syria Army, and the regional powers and of course the US and Russia, the U.S. said it would not participate unless Bashar al-Assad had first left office. Soon after that, Annan resigned. Why did our US government do that? We deal regularly with bigger killers and tyrants than al-Assad.

When we consider Syria, little considered for so long, what do we know? Even of Iraq where the US has been trying for 30 years through many administrations to have its way, what do we know? We are armed to the teeth, we are into cyber weapons and drones, we have ways to gather everybody’s secrets including yours and mine, and we’ll surely be willing to do what must be done to be the last surviving bunch of folks on earth should all those pessimistic scientists be right. The poet Merwin had it right.

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(pondering, from page 2...)

None of us quite knows what to do though more and more we sense that we have a responsibility beyond pity for the latest refugees. Most of us need to read. I'm serious. If we are realizing that gathering food for the hungry and asylum for the refugees is necessary but endless, if we are beginning to understand the enabling aspect of such deeds, and if then we ask why these people are hungry and these children are being washed up on some shore, then put away the distracting gadgets and figure out how we'll pursue understanding. If we don't, who will?

Ponder what's happening – climate warming, or what the 1% did and will do, or guns or prisons, or slavery, or absolute ability to listen in, to pick off, to manipulate markets and elections. Won't we despair? Some do. Some go back to choosing to ease the pain of victims rather than ask why there is so much pain.

But because they seem so ineffectual, scholars and activists are there, doing the research, the films, the poems borne of the world's sorrow, the thinking and telling to help us understand. Take sanctions like those that destroyed both lives and cultures in Iraq from 1990 until Shock and Awe in 2003. How were they doing that? Why? Books by Hans von Sponeck and Joy Gordon will tell us a lot. Take Palestine: Between Christian Zionists and Catholics who vaguely think they'll betray the dialogue with Jews, who among them is reading the work of scholars and activists, Palestinians and Israelis? What is BDS all about and why? And beyond that is something more scary, but dull: Jeff Halper talks about it in *War Against the People*."

ISIS did a big favor for the real bad guys: They gave us good old-fashioned evil in beheading their captives for all to see, chasing Christians and Yazidies out of Mosul. Send in the bombers. This is better than Saddam! I think we should weep not for those Christians and Yazidies or those who lost their heads but for ourselves. We have one luxury we should seize: time to read, obligation to read. Not anything, but those many academics and activists who continue to take on stories we need to hear and some of them get published on the websites and blogs and in the *New York Review of Books*. Read and talk to others and figure out what to do. (For book suggestions, see below.)

Suggested Reading from Gabe Huck



IRAQ

Antoon, Sinan. *The Corpse Washer*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013. Roy Scranton wrote in *Kenyon Review: The Corpse Washer* is a powerful and important novel of the Iraq War, and a necessary counterpoint to American stories focused almost exclusively on the suffering and trauma of Iraq's occupiers. Historians and politicians will continue to argue over which lives "count," while the bodies pile higher and higher. Sinan Antoon's *The Corpse Washer* offers a moving literary elegy not only for the numberless Iraqi dead, but also for those who remain to bury them. It must be read.

Gordon, Joy. *Invisible War: The United States and the Iraq Sanctions*. Boston: Harvard University Press, 2012.

SYRIA

Patrick Cockburn. *The Jihadis Return: ISIS and the New Sunni Uprising*. New York: OR

Charles Glass. *Syria Burning: ISIS and the Death of the Arab Spring*. New York: OR Books, 2015.

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Kerux No. 111

2016 Spring

"Kerux" is the Greek word meaning "herald". As the name of our newsletter, it reminds us that we are to be heralds of God's nonviolent love. We welcome letters, articles and reviews.

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Reading, from page 3...)

Gabe Huck and Theresa Kubasa. *Never Can I Write of Damascus: When Syria Became Our Home*. Charlottesville, VA: Just World Books (soon to be released). We tell the story of our seven years (until 2012) in Syria and of the Iraqi Student Project. For more information: JustWorldBooks.com

PALESTINE

Pappé, Ilan. *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*. Oxford, England: Oneworld, 2006. Pappé is an Israeli historian determined to tell the truth about 1948, the year that most of the Arab population of Palestine, Muslims and Christians, were forced to leave their homes and land.

Naim Stifan Ateek. *Palestinian Christian Cry for Reconciliation*, Orbis Books, 2008. Discusses the role of Christian Palestinians in the larger struggle, also covers the Kairos Palestine document (the foundation for the “Call to Action: U.S. Response to the Kairos Palestine Document”).

Zionism Unsettled: A Congregational Study Guide. Organized as an eight-session reading and discussion guide, this book was prepared by the Presbyterian Church USA and is at last a way for church members to discuss and learn about the origins of Zionism in the various Christian communities. DVD included with more material. Excellent. Published by Israel/Palestine Mission Network of the Presbyterian Church

MIDDLE EAST

Cleveland, William, and Martin Bunton. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. Boulder CO: Westview Press, 2013. A very readable introduction now in its fifth edition..

Schimmel, Annemarie. *Islam: An Introduction*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992. This is the work of a scholar who grew up in Germany and earned her first doctorate there at age 19. She taught Islamic studies at Harvard for 25 years. This small book is the best and most readable introduction we know to Islam.

Gabe Huck is the former director of Liturgy Training Publications, author of several books and founder, with Theresa Kubasa, of Iraqi Student Project.

Nonviolence and Just Peace: Contributing to the Catholic Understanding of and Commitment to Nonviolence

by Rosemarie Pace

From April 11th to the 13th, approximately 80 experts in global nonviolence gathered for a landmark conference at the Vatican to promote “a new framework that is consistent with Gospel nonviolence.” This new framework rejects Just War Theory and encourages a new encyclical on nonviolence reflective of the teachings of all our popes since St. John XXIII.

The conference was sponsored by Pax Christi International and the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. It was affirmed by Pope Francis in a message in which he refers to the thoughts of this meeting as “a needed and positive contribution.” He adds: “In this vein, we recall that the only explicit condemnation issued by the Second Vatican Council was against war.”

The outcome of the conference was *An Appeal to the Catholic Church to Re-Commit to the Centrality of Gospel Nonviolence*. It states in part: “The Time has come for our Church to be a living witness and to invest far greater human and financial resources in promoting a spirituality and practice of active nonviolence and in forming and training our Catholic communities in effective nonviolent practices.”

The Appeal grounds itself in Jesus’s call to nonviolence and unconditional love even in the midst of the violence of his own time and place. It notes that Jesus’s nonviolence was neither passive nor weak. It proposes replacing Just War Theory with “a Just Peace approach based on Gospel nonviolence.” The authors of the Appeal continue: “A Just Peace approach offers a vision and an ethic to build peace as well as to prevent, defuse, and to heal the damage of violent conflict. This ethic includes a commitment to human dignity and thriving relationships, with specific criteria, virtues, and practices to guide our actions. We recognize that peace requires justice and justice requires peacemaking.” Ultimately, the Appeal presents six explicit calls on the Church “to invoke, pray over, teach and take decisive action.”

To read the full Appeal, go to: <http://tinyurl.com/hw79xaz>. To read Pope Francis’s message to the conference, visit <http://tinyurl.com/hsvrsec>. You can also read Joshua J. McElwee’s article on the conference in NCR at <http://tinyurl.com/zma7dqt>.

Pax Christi International Co-President Receives Public Peace Prize

Sometimes we in Pax Christi may feel a bit unknown and alone in a world that is much more inclined to recognize political leaders, military generals, celebrity entertainers, and star athletes, but let it be known that on the world stage of peacemakers, Pax Christi is both known and respected. This past January, this became particularly true when Pax Christi International's Co-President, Marie Dennis, was awarded the Public Peace Prize. The announcement stated in part:

Marie Dennis is the laureate who received the greatest number of supporting gestures overall, from a largely international audience.... Marie Dennis, of the United States, is a respected icon of peace and reconciliation movements on an international scale. Her implication in a number of endeavours reuniting a compassionate vision, the art of negotiation and spiritual wisdom and her contribution to intercultural and interreligious dialogues are indispensable to world peace. A large number of her project partners and people who have witnessed her work from several countries have expressed their support and admiration to this laureate of the 2016 Public Peace Prize as GLOBAL PEACE and RECONCILIATION INTERNATIONALLY REPUTED PEACEMAKER.

PCMNY congratulates Marie and thanks her for all her work for peace, especially in collaboration with us here in New York!

Paul Thomas, Maloof Family Young Peacebuilder

Each Spring, PCMNY holds a Peacemaker Award Reception to honor those who help make this world a more peaceful place as inspired by their faith. For the past few years, we have been particularly pleased to include among our honorees high school students who are engaged in peacebuilding. This year's Maloof Family Young Peacebuilder is Paul Thomas from St. Raymond High School for Boys in the Bronx. We are proud to publish Paul's winning essay

A Gift of Peace has been given in honor of:

Charlie Abbate Varna bas Gnana-pragasam
Larry Brandlein Frances Brophy
Lynn Duerr Vincent Fattibene

Sr. Thomasmari Gore Rosanne Johnson,
Bryn Kelly Christopher Linstrom
Timothy Lynch Sr. Jan McNabb

Rosalie Mullady, Catherine O'Regan
Ernest Perry Harry Piscak
Mario Santamaria
Gloria Tavana



Anna Marie Verbil
Daver Yukl
Joan Yukl

Please remember them

about his peacebuilding efforts here. We hope you agree that Paul is a very worthy and promising Peacebuilder.

Paul writes:

Mother Teresa says, "Peace...begin[s] at home." I learned from an early age that life can be a cruel teacher. Growing up in Harlem, I was surrounded by oppression, violence, and apathy. In our homes, in our communities, we are presented with the choice to create peace or division. I'm grateful for the opportunity to reflect back upon my efforts to create peace. Pax Christi Metro New York envisions humanity living by eight value statements. I reflect here on times I've chosen to help build the community in three of those ways.

One of the Pax Christi values is "Solidarity with the most vulnerable in society." In the 7th grade I was asked to go to Washington D.C for The March for Life. This trip made me realize that, despite the fact that I was only 12 years old, I could still make a difference. As I marched with thousands of people through D.C., I felt sadness for the millions of lives lost, but joy and happiness in that I was working towards providing a voice for the unborn. Since 7th grade, I have gone annually to The March for Life.

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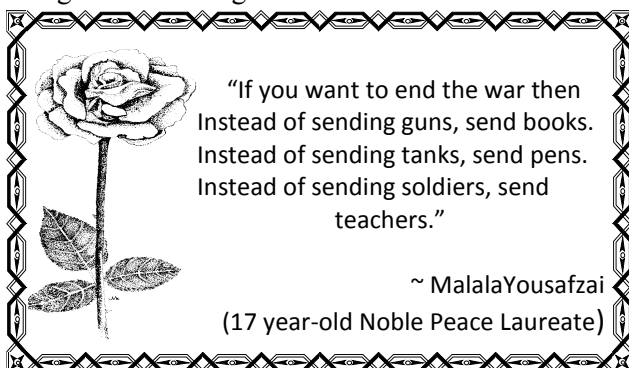
(Paul Thomas, from page 5...)

Each Monday, I spend time after school volunteering at New York Presbyterian Hospital. I volunteered originally to get exposure to the medical field because that's the career I hope to pursue. Although this was my initial motivation, I found God changing my reasoning to volunteer. I have met patients who simply need someone to tell them that they could defeat their sickness, if they continue to fight and keep a positive attitude.

Another Pax Christi value is "Prayer, active love, and nonviolence as a force for change." I lived out this value through my service trip this past summer. In Clintwood, Virginia we helped rebuild houses for people who lack the financial means to do so themselves.

Lastly, the Pax Christi value of "The benefits of a diverse community" is lived out on many Saturday mornings. I spend the morning at St. Anthony's Soup Kitchen. Here, I serve the hungry and spend time talking with them. I met a man named Melvin and he comes weekly for a warm meal. Melvin is a homeless man and a great singer who has not given up his dream of flying to "Hollywood," as he would call it, to make hit songs. I see God in Melvin. He comes with a frown on his face and all I have to say is, "Mel, let me hear something," and he smiles then starts singing his life away. Although Melvin and I are different in many ways, our different backgrounds give us the opportunity to appreciate and learn from one another .

Despite all of the changes I help make in the community, I am still faced with the reality of life in Harlem. Each day, I try to foster peace in my community. As I learn more about the Pax Christi movement, I find that my life's choices often reflect the goals of this organization.



Interning with Pax Christi Metro New York: Enjoyable, Informative, and Inspiring

by Nia Adams

My name is Nia Adams and I am an undergraduate student from Hofstra University studying history and religion. As part of my studies I have had the opportunity to intern at Pax Christi Metro New York and have been doing so since January of this year. My experiences here have been nothing less than enjoyable.

In the process of my internship I have learned a great deal about human rights and nonviolence advocacy. I have also been privy to the sense of community Pax Christi Metro New York offers and am honored to be an intern here. My conversations with Dr. Rosemarie Pace have been vastly informative as well as inspiring. During my time here I have worked towards publicizing PCMNY to broader audiences, specifically youth communities, and have done so in such forms as creating flyers and business cards that we have distributed around the local area as well as at my own campus's Catholic Ministry office.

In addition, with my strategic planning and marketing techniques, I have been assisting in office media by creating the picture slideshow for PCMNY's Peacemaker Awards Ceremony to take place this May. In this process I have had the opportunity to explore photographs and documentation of the incredible events PCMNY has done in the past and see the faces of some of the participants. As a historian this has been enjoyable to me because I find richness in records of past events. There is great significance in recognizing the work people have collectively done towards goodness and it is not unappreciated. Along with this particular type of work, I assist in the day-to-day assignments associated with such an amazing organization.

I commend Dr. Pace on her ability to do so with the resources available to her. Throughout my time here I have had the chance to meet some volunteers and other PCMNY contributors, all of whom have been pleasant. This is the first internship I have done and I am fortunate to have had Pax Christi Metro New York as my experience. I thank them for allowing me the opportunity and hope for them to continue their work towards peace matters globally.

Announcements:

Peacemakers Awards Reception: Help us celebrate our 2016 Peacemakers on Sunday, May 15th, in Casserly Hall, St. Joseph's Greenwich Village Church from 3 to 6 PM. We'll be honoring Orlando and Phyllis Rodriguez of September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows; Sr. Evelyn Lamoureux, D.W., Peace and Community Activist in Nassau and Queens Counties; and Fr. Francis Gargani, PCMNY Board Member extraordinaire. We'll also be honoring Maloof Family Young Peacebuilders Paul Thomas, St. Raymond High School for Boys, the Bronx; Caroline Bandigan, Bishop Loughlin Memorial High School, Brooklyn; and Jillian Eberlein, Notre Dame Academy H.S., Staten Island. Come for the fun, the food, and the festivities. Contact PCMNY to register now, or register at <http://www.nycharities.org/events/EventLevels.aspx?ETID=8977>.

40-Day Fast for Christian Nonviolence: Pax Christi Metro New York joins others around the country in an annual fast for Christian Nonviolence. This fast is an opportunity to remember, repent, and resolve to transform our culture of violence, whether the violence of the street or the violence of war, drones, and nuclear weapons proliferation. It begins July 1st and ends on August 9th, the tragic triple anniversaries of the executions of St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein), Jewish convert to Catholicism and holocaust victim; Blessed Franz Jaegerstaetter, martyr for refusing to serve in Hitler's army; and the atomic bombing of Nagasaki, Japan, the largest Christian community in Japan. PCMNY frames it with [prayers made available for you to pray alone or in community](#). Please sign up to fast with us by contacting the PCMNY office.

Hiroshima/Nagasaki Memorial: Each year PCMNY offers this commemorative event to mourn and repent for the horrific loss of life caused by the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August, 1945 and to advocate for the abolition of nuclear weapons today. Now, we can add Fukushima to the list of Japanese cities devastated by nuclear tragedy. The Memorial consists of a presentation with discussion and concludes with a silent procession and public vigil. This year's commemoration will take place on Sunday, August 7th, 2:30-4:30 PM in Casserly Hall, St. Joseph's Greenwich Village

Church. More details to come at our Events page.

Summer Picnic: PCMNY's annual pot-luck picnic in Central Park, in view of the majestic Metropolitan Museum of Art, has become a refreshing tradition that brings together members and friends in a spirit of invaluable camaraderie. A delicious assortment of foods and great conversation are the order of the day. Relax with us on Saturday, August 20th at 1 PM.

Fall Assembly: Pax Christi Metro New York's annual Fall Assembly offers an opportunity for reflection on PCMNY's very identity as a peace community. We pray together, share our stories, and lend each other support. We also host a noteworthy speaker. This year Kevin Ahern, Director of Peace Studies at Manhattan College, will be that speaker. His title/theme is: *Responding to the Spirit: Pope Francis and The Future of the Catholic Peace Movement*. Hold Saturday, October 22nd, and look for further details later this year.

Annual Appeal: If you haven't already done so, please reflect on the many reasons you value PCMNY and respond as generously as possible to the 2015-2016 Annual Appeal. If you did respond, THANK YOU!

Other Ways to Support Your Pax Christi Region:

Support us by searching the Internet with GoodSearch.com (powered by Yahoo) or shopping online with GoodShop.com. Just indicate Pax Christi Metro New York as your charity. You can also turn your online shopping and searching into much-needed donations at:

www.iGive.com/PaxChristiMetroNewYork and <http://smile.amazon.com/ch/13-3424349>.

"Gifts of Peace": Donate to PCMNY in honor of those you love, whether they're celebrating a special holiday or a birthday, are in need of encouragement, or mourning a loss. Cards are available from the PCMNY office for a recommended donation of \$5 each.

Pennies for Peace: On your own or with others, collect pennies throughout the year. Convert them to dollars and send them to PCMNY as a year-end gift.

Upcoming Events

- May 5th: Board Meeting, St. Joseph's Parish House, 6:30 PM
May 15th: Peacemaker Awards Reception, Casserly Hall, St. Joseph's Church, 3:00-6:00 PM
July 1st-
Aug. 9th: 40-Day Fast for Christian Nonviolence
Aug. 1st: *Kerux* Deadline
Aug. 7th: Hiroshima/Nagasaki Memorial, Casserly Hall, St. Joseph's Church, 2:30-4:30 PM
Aug. 20th: Picnic, Central Park, 1:00 PM
Sept. 7th: Fall Assembly Mailing, PCMNY office
Sept. 8th: Board Meeting, St. Joseph's Parish House, 6:30 PM
Sept. TBA: UN International Peace Day, details to come
Oct. 22nd: Fall Assembly, Manhattan College, 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Contact the office for updated information on all events:
info@nypaxchristi.org, 212-420-0250, or www.nypaxchristi.org.
Also visit us on Facebook.

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