

Justpeace

PAX CHRISTI

International Catholic Movement for Peace

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Military Chaplains: Time for some fresh thinking

In this Justpeace we offer reflections on the role of Military Chaplains - an issue that has long been on Pax Christi's agenda, both here and internationally. We hope that these articles will stimulate you in your own reflections and we welcome your comments and ideas as to how we might progress the discussion within the Church.

In September 2011, Sir William Gage published his report into the death, in the summer of 2003, of Baha Mousa. Mr Mousa was an Iraqi civilian in the custody of British troops. The Gage report contained some sharp criticisms of many involved in the affair, including medical staff and the Roman Catholic chaplain attached to the unit. The Inquiry concluded that the chaplain had not handled the situation properly, by failing to recognise what was happening, and therefore making no complaint to his superiors.

There was a substantial correspondence in *The Tablet* at the time about the issues raised by these events, including observations from a retired senior officer with direct knowledge of the army's ways of discouraging whistleblowers. The chaplain in question, however, was far from senior. He was newly-recruited, on his first deployment, and had found himself caught up in the most controversial military episode of recent British history.

The matter was also raised by a member of the Archdiocese of Birmingham, coincidentally a member of the Pax Christi Executive, in response to the revelation that the chaplain (who had left the army well before 2011) was serving as a parish priest in that area. In this approach, it was made very clear from the outset that the chief concern was with the recruitment, training and deployment of chaplains, and was not in any way aimed at the person involved in the Baha Mousa case. It was an attempt to examine what lessons could be learned from these events, before the dust settled and could be swept back under the carpet. After an exchange of letters, the issue was passed to the Bishop of the Forces, and members of our Executive Committee arranged to see the Bishop.

There was little meeting of minds, although communications were maintained by letter from time to time over the following eighteen months. A copy of the Bishopric's Diocesan Directory was requested, but has not been provided. Attempts have been made to contact serving or retired chaplains, but with little success. Parallels with other types of chaplaincy have been studied, but these only take us so far. Research into the work of military chaplains (for example by the Cardiff Centre for Chaplaincy Studies) are in their infancy.

This is not the first time attempts have been made to encourage fresh thinking about how, and why, the Church should relate to the armed forces. The fact that so little progress has been made in this area demonstrates the difficulty and sensitivity of the issues, to the point where it is easier, but, in the opinion of Pax Christi, no longer safer, to ignore the questions altogether.



Some of the Pax Christi team with our President, Archbishop Malcolm McMahon, at our AGM.

Pax Christi's commitment to nonviolence obviously predisposes it to raise questions about the difficulties of supplying chaplains to the armed forces. It will be assumed that we are approaching this question with a hidden agenda. So let us be clear. We do not feel that the current arrangements under which chaplains serve the Forces are all that they should be. There are specific institutional and organisational pressures on the chaplaincy service which hinder its ability to be true to the Gospel.

We live in a time when public opinion about the role and use of the armed forces are highly contested. It is clear to us that the military is keenly aware of this, and we wish to promote some parallel thinking on the part of the Church about the nature of the chaplaincy service within the armed forces.

We have come to believe that the most important issues concern the recruitment, training and deployment of chaplains, and that this should include a more rigorous examination of the tensions which are bound to exist between the culture of the military and the demands of the Gospel. We are concerned that the Church appears to play little part in the preparation of candidates for military chaplaincy. We also believe that there should be stricter limits to the length of service chaplains can offer, with much stronger support for in-service needs, and closer links with the sending dioceses, including arrangements for return to normal parish life. We do not believe it should be a lifelong career option. We would prefer this rethink to include the other Christian denominations which supply chaplains to the armed forces, but we do not think its progress should be delayed unduly by this consideration.

*Paul McGowan,
Pax Christi Executive Member*

Military Chaplaincy - its place in the life of the Church

Armed Conflict between nations is one of the greatest blights on society. The fact that armed conflict comes about is - and always has been - a tragedy. The teaching of the Church is clear on this matter, describing war as an 'ancient bondage'¹ and urging all to pray and work for freedom from war for all peoples.

Recent history has seen repeated occasions when the successors of Peter have spoken out against war. The efforts of Pope Benedict XVI and Pope St. Pius X prior to and during the First World War spring to mind in this year when we commemorate the loss of life and devastation of that conflict. Pope St. John Paul II spoke often of the horrors of war in the context of the conflicts in Bosnia and the Middle East. Pope Francis, in the most recent times, has spoken out against the struggles in Syria. Armed conflict is to be avoided at all costs and, as the Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us, "all citizens and all governments are obliged to work for the avoidance of war."²

The *Magisterium* of the Church also recognises that right of governments to lawful defence. This is enunciated in the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes* on the Church in the Modern World:

"As long as the danger of war persists and there is no international authority with the necessary competence and power, governments cannot be denied the right of lawful self-defence, once all peace efforts have failed."³

The *Magisterium* recognises and proposes the conditions for legitimate defence by military force, rooted in the Just War Tradition⁴ and supports the right of public authorities to "impose on citizens the obligations necessary for national defence"⁵.

The position and responsibilities of those who serve in the Armed Forces are recognised and expressed in the clearest of terms in *Gaudium et spes*:

"Those who are sworn to serve their country in the armed forces are servants of the security and freedom of nations. If they carry out their duty honourably, they truly contribute to the common good of the nations and the maintenance of peace."⁶

This description of the role of the Armed Services is a call to the highest traditions of military service and would be recognised by those who serve in the Armed Services of the United Kingdom. It is expressed in the 'core values' that are instilled in all who serve during their period of training and the value of service of others lies at the heart of that model of service.

Chaplaincy in the Armed Services

The Church responds to the needs of those who serve in the Armed Forces through the establishment of developed means of provision of pastoral care. In former times, Military Vicariates were established and, in 1986, these Vicariates were raised to the status of Military Ordinariates through the Apostolic Constitution *Spirituali Militum Curae* of Pope St. John Paul II. This Apostolic Constitution begins with the words:

"The Church has always desired to provide with praiseworthy concern, and in a manner suited to the various needs, for the spiritual care of military people."⁷

There is a recognition throughout the document that the military community holds a particular place in society and has particular pastoral needs, stemming from the demands placed upon military personnel and their families. The document speaks of the 'role of service' - of '*diakonia*'⁸ - carried out by the personnel of the armed forces. The use of the word *diakonia* in this document is an eloquent testimony to the task carried out by the Military at the service of peace.

The key change brought about by this Apostolic Constitution lay in the decision to make Military Ordinariates comparable to dioceses.⁹ This is further recognition of the importance of the military community and of the Church's desire to provide the fullest possible pastoral provision for personnel and their families. The presence of the Military Ordinatee leads to the Military Chaplain holding a very particular place in the life of the Church.

All those coming forward for ordination bring with them the depth of formation that is a feature of Catholic priesthood. This, together with the experience of priestly life in the Diocese of incardination, are key elements that the chaplain brings to his service to the military community. Opportunities for ongoing formation continue throughout military service, ensuring that the chaplain's ministry is effective and grounded in the Gospel message and an effective life of prayer.

This life of prayer is vital, given the circumstances in which chaplains are called to serve, and is often nourished and deeply Incarnational as a result of the experiences of operations.

Wherever people are to be found, the Gospel message must be carried. This is the commission given to the Disciples, in the Lord's command to baptize all nations.¹⁰

The task of the Military Ordinatee is to ensure "the spiritual and pastoral care of those attached to the Armed Forces of Great Britain"¹¹ - to ensure that the encounter with the person of Christ, with the love that exists in the Blessed Trinity, is a reality for them. Our chaplains carry out this mission at home and abroad and, when required, in the most difficult of circumstances, bringing hope into situations that seem devoid of hope, bringing love where love is so sorely needed, and enabling personnel and their families to grow in faith. They are priests who are, in the words of the Second Vatican Council, "at the service of peace."¹²

**Rt. Rev. Richard Moth,
Bishop of the Forces**

References

¹ CCC 2307 (GS 8154).

² CCC 2308.

³ GS 7954.

⁴ CCC 2309.

⁵ CCC 2310.

⁶ GS 7955.

⁷ SMC, Introduction.

⁸ SMC, Introduction.

⁹ SMC, 151.

¹⁰ Mt. 28:19.

¹¹ Statutes of the Military Ordinatee of Great Britain, I.

¹² GS 7955.

Military Chaplains - today and tomorrow? from Pax Christi Italy

The issue of military chaplains is not new to Pax Christi Italy. Back in November 1997, a study session entitled 'Military Chaplains Today And Tomorrow' was held at 'House For Peace' Casa per la Pace in Florence. On that occasion some lawyers, a military chaplain, and a couple of Pax Christi members took the floor.

A statement issued at the end of the session said: "We would like to stress the urgent need to encourage nonviolence and peace with strong determination and dedication. The commitment to nonviolence and peace should be undertaken both by the churchmen serving in the Armed Forces and by the whole Italian Church."

Many years have gone by since then, but our commitment to dialogue still remains. In Italy, the Military Bishopric is not linked to a specific geographical area, but it includes all churchmen who serve within the Armed Forces. There is also a seminary which around 200 military chaplains attend. All of them are enlisted members of military staff and their salaries are paid by the Defence Ministry. In Pax Christi Italy's opinion the issue is that military chaplains are organically integrated within the armed forces ranking system.

In 2006, father Fabio Corazzina, then coordinator of Pax Christi Italy wrote: "We are running the risk of "enlisting" the Gospel as well. We are running the risk of enlisting the Gospel with the purpose of looking at the history from the side of the strongest and not from the side of the victims, who are mainly civilians. The Gospel has been enlisted to legitimise and bless violence and death. How is it possible to put together military ways and Beatitudes? And what about a Christian soldier who carries weapons and is aware of the fact that he could be forced to use them? How can we keep silent about preventive war theory? If we look at the situation in Iraq and Afghanistan, we should wonder: is it really possible to combine humanitarianism and militarism? We should keep on raising this kind of question - especially now that compulsory military service has been abolished, now that our army has become a professional one, now that Italian soldiers are involved in conflicts in different parts of the world, now that more and more lethal weapon systems are being developed and used."

Pax Christi Italy has been trying to draw attention to and stimulate debate on this issue, especially within the Church, which should be 'in' the world but not 'of' the world. The Italian Constitution claims: "Italy rejects war (...)" (Art. 11). It is about thinking of and examining the present situation in order to understand it and to find new paths. These new paths should be true to the spirit of the Gospel and the dignity of every human being.

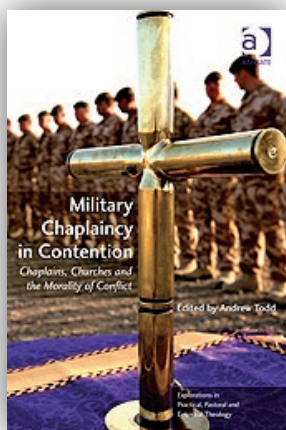


Church among the military

Bishop Tonino Bello, former President of Pax Christi Italy used to say: "Signs of power don't suit the Church. Actually, what the Church really needs is the power of signs." The Church has the duty to bring, and to witness to the Gospel among the soldiers as well, but it should never forget to echo this prophetic and non-negotiable statement: "Put your sword back in its place, for all who draw the sword will die by the sword." (Gospel of Matthew 26:52). This statement, which has often been laughed at and rejected, could become a seed of hope for everyone pursuing justice without violence, and peace without personal profit.

Father Renato Sacco, Coordinator Pax Christi Italy.
(Translated by Cristiana Calabrese, board member Pax Christi International.)

Resources on military chaplaincy



Military Chaplaincy in Contention - Chaplains, Churches and the Morality of Conflict: Edited by Andrew Todd, Cardiff Centre for Chaplaincy Studies. Published by Ashgate, 2013. Price: £17.99.

Mosaico di Pace, November 2013 issue of Pax Christi Italy's periodical. *Priests, Fathers and Generals. Military Chaplains. Yesterday, today and tomorrow. Enlisted to announce the Gospel?*
<http://www.mosaicodipace.it/mosaico/i/3582.html>

Chaplains in the RAF: A Study in Role Tension, Gordon Zahn, 1969

Manchester University Press. Still available from AbeBook, Price £15.00. <http://www.abebooks.co.uk/> Professor Zahn undertook this work while a Research Fellow at Manchester University. This book explores 'crunch' issues such as the killing or torture of prisoners, the treatment of COs, worship of the national flag and much more.

MTh Chaplaincy Studies at Cardiff University. More here <http://courses.cardiff.ac.uk/>

Bishopric of the Armed Forces
<http://www.rcbishopricforces.org.uk/>

Diary

24 June, Friends House, London

Inspiring a New Generation of Activists Peace Education Network workshop, led by James Trewby, the Columban Justice and Peace Education Worker, who explores this question from a fresh perspective. More details and booking see <http://peace-education.org.uk/>

24 June, Edinburgh

Bishop Kevin Dowling (a co-president of Pax Christi International) on *The Joy of the Gospel Then and Now: From Archbishop Denis Hurley to Pope Francis* at the Lauriston Jesuit Centre Lauriston Street, Edinburgh at 7.30 pm. Meeting co-sponsored by Denis Hurley Fund and SCIAF (Scottish International Aid Fund).

25 June, Birmingham

Bishop Kevin Dowling as above. Mass in St Chad's Cathedral followed by talk in the Grimshaw Room at 7pm.

28 June: Peace Walk through London

To commemorate peace making between 1914 and 2014. Pax Christi with J&P Commissions of Westminster, Southwark, Brentwood. Meet 10am Tavistock Square ends with prayer/reflection 3.30pm Tibetan Peace Garden, Lambeth. RSVP to Davina@diocesofbrentwood.org

14 July, London

A Pax Christi seminar, *What peace-making message can Christians contribute to remembrance and commemorations of the First World War*. With speakers, Fr Rob Esdaile and Rev Richard Carter and an opportunity for sharing and discussion. 3.30-6.30pm, The Centre, St Aloysius Church, 20 Phoenix Road, Euston NW1 1TA.

18-20 July, Swanwick

Called to life in all its fullness: theme for National Justice & Peace Conference. Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire. Booking essential via NJPN 020 7901 4864 or admin@justice-and-peace.org.uk

23 July, Eastbourne

What did we learn from the FWW: the challenge to peacemakers with speaker Pat Gaffney. Organised by Newman Circle, open to all 7pm. Christ the King parish hall, Princes Road Eastbourne, East Sussex BN23, UK.

26 July - 2 August, Bradwell, Essex

Embracing a Diverse Community. A week of interactive sessions, building confidence and exploring ideas of how to break down barriers as we live out our faith in a plural and changing

world. Facilitated by Grassroots team from Luton and hosted by the Othona Community. More here www.othona-bradwell.org.uk or bradwell@othona.org

4 August, National

A call for silent vigils in city/town centres between 12-2pm with the message 'War No More - War Never Again' to mark the anniversary of start of First World War. There will be a silent vigil at this time at St Martin-in-the-Fields, Trafalgar Square WC2.

6 & 9 August, London

Annual Pax Christi stall/vigil for Hiroshima and Nagasaki outside Westminster Cathedral. 6 August, 10am-5pm with prayers at 11.30am and 3pm. 9 August 10am-1.30pm with prayers at 11.30am. If you would like to help on either day please contact the office 020 8203 4884.

9 August, London

Franz Jägerstätter annual memorial service. 6pm in the Sacred Heart Chapel of Ease, Horseferry Avenue, Victoria, London SW1P 2EF (walking distance from Westminster Cathedral). Followed by annual Nagasaki Day interfaith peace walk to Battersea Peace Pagoda.

News from the office

Promoting Pax Christi and our resources: Two successful stalls were held in May, we are already looking forward to some future events and opportunities to share materials this summer. On 17 May we had a stall set up at the Arundel and Brighton Justice & Peace Assembly which focused on Israel-Palestine. The day was well attended and a wide range of materials were given out. On the same day Southwark Diocesan J&P held their 2014 Spring Assembly. Looking ahead we are booked to have a stall at the Buckfast *Clear Voices* theology festival which will run over the weekend of June 27-29, as will the *Bright Lights* youth festival in Aylesford that same weekend. Another great opportunity for us to run a stall and promote our work is the National J&P Conference in July. Several other stalls are waiting to be confirmed in the year ahead.

We would like to sincerely thank all those members who have helped with setting up and running the stalls. If you feel you would like to help in running a stall then please don't hesitate to get in touch at with me, Peter Hickey, orders@paxchristi.org.uk or 020 8203 4884.

Peace Sunday: Total donations to date amount to £88,680. 59 new parishes sent donations this year, and out of these 14 are from Hexham & Newcastle Diocese and 7 are from Salford Diocese. A special thank-you to all our members who have taken personal interest and marked Peace Sunday in their own parish.

The date for Peace Sunday 2015 is 18 January. Book the date in your parish diary now.

Out and about with Pax Christi: Matt has been/will be in: Cambridge University Catholic Chaplaincy; All Hallow's, Macclesfield; Trinity Catholic School, Leamington Spa; St Simon Stock, Maidstone; Prenton High School for Girls, Wirral; Birchwood High, Warrington. Pat has been/will be in Sarajevo, participating in

workshops and Pax Christi meetings at the Peace Festival; Heythrop College, London; St Michael's School, Watford; the London Peace Walk; and workshops at the NJPN Conference.

Pax Christi at Greenbelt: See more about Greenbelt at <http://www.greenbelt.org.uk/> We are beginning our preparations to take part this year with the theme, *Travelling Light*. It is taking place near Kettering on the August Bank holiday weekend. We are looking for volunteers to be part of our team. A great opportunity for people aged 18-30(ish) to get more involved in the work of Pax Christi. Pat Gaffney is on the programme offering a talk on peacemakers from the First World War. Contact Matt for more information, education@paxchristi.org.uk

Annual General Meeting: This was a great success with about 80 people attending, enjoying the generous hospitality of Pax Christi Liverpool and the Catholic Chaplaincy. Full report on our website. Three new members were elected to our Executive Committee: Chris Cole, Holly Ball and Helen Gilbert. Fulsome thanks were offered to those standing down for all their support and encouragement: John Dowbekin, Michael Mitchell and Sr Christine Charlwood.

A request: Pax Christi member Veronica Whitty is writing a book about the single, practising Catholic woman. She would like contributions from each age group from teenage to 80s and 90s. Contributions to be anonymous. Deadline is end of 2014. veronicawhitty@hotmail.com / T: 0191 263 0920.



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Return to Pax Christi, St Joseph's, Watford Way, Hendon, London, NW4 4TY
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Pax Christi – Our Values

Pax Christi members live by the biblically inspired values of
Peace, Reconciliation, Nonviolence.

These values are supported by the witness of peacemakers down the ages and the experience of the Pax Christi community.

Pax Christi is rooted in Catholic Christianity but is open to all who are in sympathy with its values and work.

Pax Christi, St Joseph's, Watford Way, Hendon, London, NW4 4TY

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