



DISARMING *Pax Christi* TIMES

The Journal of Pax Christi Australia

Vol 47 No. 4

December 2022

TO ALL WHO CARE ABOUT HUMANITY'S AND THE PLANET'S FUTURE

Humanity has reached a tipping point. It is time for governments, international institutions and people everywhere to take stock and act with renewed urgency. The Ukraine crisis is inflicting death, injury, displacement and destruction, exacerbating a global food crisis, driving Europe into recession, and creating shock waves across the world economy.

The Taiwan conflict is threatening to escalate into outright war that would devastate Taiwan and turn East Asia into a powder keg.

More troubling still is the toxic relationship between the United States and China on the one hand and Russia on the other. Here lies the key to both conflicts.

What we are seeing is the culmination of decades of mismanagement of global security. The United States has been unwilling to accept, let alone adapt to the rise of China and the re-emergence of Russia. It remains unwilling to break with outdated notions of global dominance - a legacy of the Cold War and the triumphalism that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union.

A global power shift is taking place. The West-centric world in which first Europe and then the United States held sway is giving way to a multi-centric, multi-civilisational world in which other centres of power and influence are demanding to be heard.

Failure to accept this new reality

spells immense danger. A new cold war is now in full swing which can at any moment mutate into a hot war. In the words of UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, "humanity is one misunderstanding, one miscalculation away from nuclear annihilation".

Even if nuclear apocalypse is averted, discord between nuclear armed states inhibits co-operative problem-solving, the provision of global public goods and an effective and independent UN system.

Or rise to the challenge we need a coherent, sustained and multifaceted response by governments and international institutions, sustained and driven by and ever watchful and engaged civil society. Several steps suggest themselves, some immediate, others longer term.

The first steps must be to aim to end to conflict in Ukraine and defuse the tensions over Taiwan. More substantial efforts are needed to foster a framework of co-operative co-existence between the United States, Russia and China - an essential building block for peace across both Europe and Asia.

To this end, we believe the UN Secretary-General or a group of middle powers - ideally the two acting in concert - could set in train a multi-pronged initiative aimed at securing an effective and durable ceasefire in Ukraine and the relaxation of tensions over Tai-

wan.

In the case of Ukraine, the aim must be to secure the cessation of all combat by Russian and Ukrainian forces and separatist groups based in the Donbas region. This would be a ceasefire monitored by a United Nations team reporting regularly and directly to the UN Secretary-General.

A ceasefire, however, is unlikely to hold for long without a durable settlement of the Ukraine- Russian conflict. This will in turn depend on bringing to an end the cynical use of the Ukraine war by great powers intent on pursuing their geopolitical ambitions. Only then will it be possible to achieve:

- the phased withdrawal of Russian military forces;
- an end to the delivery of lethal military aid to Ukraine;
- a constitutionally enshrined policy of neutrality for Ukraine;
- the resolution of jurisdictional

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DISARMING TIMES

A quarterly journal of Pax Christi Australia. It aims to provide members and interested peacemakers with peace news and views both local and international. We endeavour in each edition to reflect the three-fold emphasis of Pax Christi which engages members in study, Non-violent action and prayer for peace, justice, human rights, development and inter-faith and inter-civilisation dialogue.

PAX CHRISTI AUSTRALIA

is an Australia-wide

Christian Peace Movement, affiliated with Pax Christi International.

Human rights, justice and integrity of creation are central to its work.

We take a stand against militarism, nuclear weapons and the arms race.

As an ecumenical Christian movement

Pax Christi fosters the spiritual and scriptural dimensions of peace-making.

www.paxchristi.org.au

Disarming Times is compiled by
Harry Kerr,
with the help of Pax Christi members throughout
Australia

Pax Christi Victoria

13 P.O.Box 31, CARLTON SOUTH, Vic 3053

Tel: 03 9077 6464

03 9379 3889

email: ahmkerr@hotmail.com

Pax Christi New South Wales

P.O. Box A 681 Sydney Sth 1235,

Tel: 02 9550 3845 or 0411 450 953

Fax: 02 9519 8471

email: mjscjust@smartchat.net.au

Pax Christi Queensland

PO Box 1262

Toowoomba QLD 4350

Tel: 0428 130 895

Email: dtutty@twb.catholic.org.au

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Disarming Times is printed by **Minuteman Press Abbotsford**, 424 Johnston Street Abbotsford, 3067 abbotsford@minutemanpress.com.au, phone 03 9415 6618

Issues notably Crimea and the Donbas region, coupled with a process aimed at healing regional, ethnic and religious animosities within Ukraine.

• All prisoners of war, refugees, and civilians in captivity to be returned to their respective countries and all their rights respected as provided by the Geneva Conventions.

These arrangements will need to be complemented by a wider agreement involving other interested parties, with a view to securing: an adequately funded international program to address the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine; international guarantees to safeguard Ukraine's independence, neutrality and territorial integrity; and the removal of all sanctions placed against Russia and the restoration of normal trade relations.

In the case of the Taiwan conflict, the first step must be to defuse the current level of tension. To this end, the international community should reaffirm the principles set out in the Shanghai communiqué of 1972, notably the 'one China' principle which now commands widespread international support. In line with this principle, the international community must use all means at its disposal to dissuade Taiwan from making any unilateral declaration of independence. The UN Secretary-General in tandem with ASEAN is well placed to spearhead such a course of action. These relatively short-term initiatives must pave the way for a series of inter-linked consultations, culminating in an international conference, whose primary purpose would be to frame a new global security architecture, sustained by appropriate reforms in global governance and designed to:

1. Stop the march to nuclear oblivion, and set in motion an ambitious program for nuclear disarmament, beginning with a series of arms control and disarmament agreements and leading within a specified timeframe to universal membership of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons;
2. Reflect the reality of a multi-centric, multi-civilisational world

which respects the independence and legitimate rights of all sovereign nations, and in which no actor seeks to exercise imperial or hegemonic ambitions.

3. Enshrine the principles of common, cooperative and comprehensive security, and translate these into effective regional arrangements, especially in Europe and the Asia-Pacific region;

4. Initiate a series of measures that can reverse the militarisation of the international system, including limitations on the reach and scope of military alliances and overseas deployments of military forces, as well as a progressive reduction of national military budgets, thereby redirecting resources to areas of pressing social, economic and environmental need;

5. Set in motion the far-reaching reform of international institutions, especially the UN system, so that they can more effectively mount the necessarily cooperative response to existential threats, notably climate change, biodiversity loss, and present and future pandemics.

None of this will happen without a massive global awakening of human wisdom and energy. Important as governments and international institutions are, the initiative for a coherent response to the challenges we face lies largely with the people, with civil society.

Leadership of various kinds is needed. Which is why this message is also addressed to intellectuals, artists, scientists, journalists, religious leaders, advocates and other engaged citizens. Equally, we have in mind groups working on the rights of indigenous peoples, aid and development, conflict resolution, civil liberties and human rights, violence against women, refugees and asylum seekers, climate change and other threats to our environment, public health (not least Covid), justice for the poor and marginalised, and ethnic, religious and cultural diversity. **ALL** are adversely affected by great power

None of this will happen without a massive global awakening of human wisdom and energy. Important as governments and international institutions are, the initiative for a coherent response to the challenges we face lies largely with the people, with civil society. Leadership of various kinds is needed. Which is why this message is also addressed to intellectuals, artists, scientists, journalists, religious leaders, advocates and other engaged citizens. Equally, we have in mind groups working on the rights of indigenous peoples, aid and development, conflict resolution, civil

liberties and human rights, violence against women, refugees and asylum seekers, climate change and other threats to our environment, public health (not least Covid), justice for the poor and marginalised, and ethnic, religious and cultural diversity. ALL are adversely affected by great power confrontation, oppressive security laws, rising military budgets and destructive military activities, not to mention the prospect of nuclear catastrophe. ALL have a crucial part to play. Trade unions, professional networks (in education, law, medicine, nursing, media, communications), farmer organisations, religious bodies, human-centred think tanks and

research centres have also much to contribute to the conversation for a habitable future.

Richard Falk, *Emeritus Professor of International Law, Princeton University; Chair of Global Law, Queen Mary University, London*

Joseph Camilleri, *Professor Emeritus, La Trobe University, Melbourne; Fellow, Academy of the Social Sciences, Melbourne, Chair, Conversations at the Crossroads*

Chandra Muzaffar, *Former Professor of Global Studies, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang; President, international Movement for a Just World.*

CHARTING OUR OWN COURSE

Questioning Australia's Involvement in US-led Wars and the Australia–United States alliance

Harry Kerr

Findings of the Independent and Peaceful Australia Network (IPAN) People's Inquiry: What are the costs and consequences of Australia's involvement in US-led wars and the Australia-US alliance? What are the alternatives?

To quote from the introduction: *The Inquiry is a response to growing concerns amongst IPAN member organisations and individual members, civil society and others in the broader community relating to the lack of transparency in political decision-making in Australia. This opacity leads to decisions about Australia's involvement in international agreements, military operations, and even decisions about going to war with a foreign power being made out of sight of the public. There was also widespread concern about the lack of focus on, and resources for, diplomatic rather than military solutions.*

The primary aim of the Inquiry is: **to build public dialogue and pressure for change to develop a truly independent foreign policy for Australia.** This is a profound challenge to every group and individual who is concerned for "the things that make for peace."

Between November 2020 and September 2021 283 submissions were received from peace organisations, faith communities including Pax Christi Australia, civil society groups and from many individuals.

The many perspectives are brought together under eight headings:

- Impact on First Peoples: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives,
- Military and Defence
- Foreign Policy
- Political Including Democratic Rights
- Unions and Workers' Rights
- Environment and Climate Change
- Social and Community
- Economic

Some common themes emerge: Some common themes emerge: Through its alliance with the United States Australia is on the way to becoming a highly militarised society. This is felt across out political, economic and cultural life of Australia. It has involved Australia in conflicts and potential conflicts which as in the case of Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan end in disaster. These conflicts are costly for Australia not just financially but in terms of the long term physical and psychological damage to ADF personnel and their families. The alliance is often defended as necessary for Australia's security. In fact the alliance does not oblige the United States to defend Australia in

the event of attack by another nation. It is likely to make Australia less secure by locking us into the United States sphere of influence and therefore making us more likely to be attacked if the United States goes to war. The danger is increased by the fact that we host US troops and communication facilities which are vital to the US capability to wage war, particularly nuclear war.

The AUKUS agreement, which was entered into without any consultation with the Australian parliament of people promises greater "interoperability" between Australian and US forces. This implies that the ADF will purchase military equipment and technology and be dependent on the US for repairs and maintenance. This dependence will be greatly increased by the purchase of nuclear submarines which will turn Australia into one large base and aircraft carrier for US dominance in the Asia Pacific region.

This greatly reduces Australia's ability to develop its own network of relationships in the region. It identifies Australia as part of what many in the region would see as the US threat and compromises our ability to create

alliances of peace and mutual interdependence. The growing costs of this militarisation divert scarce resources from the real threats to our security; the housing crisis, the health and aged care crisis, the environmental and bio-security crisis, the energy crisis and the pandemic at home and the support of development and peace building in our less well resourced neighbours in our region.

These are some of the issues investigated in the report. However it does not avoid the "Elephant in the Room" question. Why does Australia do this to itself? The Pax Christi submission is quoted in the report: Australia, as we know it, was founded on war and violence. The British Empire invaded and seized the land and fought wars with the First Nations peoples. They were driven from the land; their way of life was undermined and their spirituality was destroyed. They were marginalised and neglected as being less than fully human. The foundations of the Commonwealth of Australia are both physical and spiritual violence. Australians live in fear that



what they stole violently could be taken from them violently. Professor Joe Camilleri OAM points to five foundational myths that, to one degree or another, continue to drive Australian mindsets, institutions and policies. These myths are (1) the centrality of 'whiteness' to Australian identity; (2) dependence on an imperial power for protection; (3) loyalty to a great and powerful friend; (4) fear of Asia; and (5) a predilection to fight 'sooner rather than later' and 'there rather than here'. According to Camilleri: *Only by shedding their attachment to the five myths will Australians be able to break free from the shackles of military alignment with the United States, move towards reconciliation*

with the First Nations of this land, and constructively engage with Asian and Pacific cultures and societies.

At the heart of all this is a fundamental question: *Why did Australia choose and continue to choose this dependence.* We are a country who has never worked out who we are and we therefore live in fear of enemies real and imagined, without and within. We do not believe we have an identity which distinguishes us from the Anglo American world, never mind the rest of the world. We do not know how to contribute to that world except through the surrogacy of great and powerful friends.

This is a very superficial introduction to a remarkable report. Please read it and think about it. Let's give ourselves to the task of **building public dialogue and pressure for change to develop a truly independent foreign policy for Australia.**

To access the report online or in hardcopy (\$3.50) please go to <https://ipan.org.au/read-or-order-the-report-of-peoples-inquiry/>

FROM JUST WAR TO JUST PEACE

Brian Johnstone

In the Catholic tradition, some early spiritual leaders taught that a Christian should not serve in the Roman army, or engage in torture, or capital punishment. However, an absolute rejection of these practices was not upheld in the tradition. In the 4th century, Christian leaders, in particular Saint Augustine, developed a set of criteria according to which war could be justified. This was the origin of what we now call the just war framework. This was further developed by Saint Thomas Aquinas in the 13th century.

In the contemporary Catholic tradition the just war doctrine has been challenged.

Pope Francis questions the doctrine in *Fratelli Tutti*. (n. 258). The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* speaks of the possibility of legitimate defence by means of military force, which involves demonstrat-

ing that certain "rigorous conditions of moral legitimacy have been met." Pope Francis questions whether the conditions can be met. However, he does not categorically reject the just war framework. Nor does he condemn war absolutely. In this article "framework" will mean, in the first place, a narrative or story. Jesus lived and taught non-violence. His followers strive to follow him. The Christian story tells us how Jesus overcomes violence. He does this by rising from death to new life. To understand what his overcoming death means, we have to understand the violence that caused his death. The Jewish court condemned him. The Roman governor condemned him to death by crucifixion. That was the death of a slave. He was condemned by the Roman official of the state. His death was what we call "capital

punishment." The Roman soldiers scourged him; that was a method of torture. Jesus died and rose again to new life. The central argument of this article is that by raising Jesus, God overcomes and condemns the practices that reduce a person to slavery. God overcomes and condemns the practices that we call "capital punishment." God overcomes and condemns the practice of torture. There remains the question: what about war?

We can begin with the Christian story. A test for the adequacy of an interpretation of the story will be whether it guides Christians in overcoming violence and death.

The story of creation is the story of the giving of a gift; the gift of life by God to humankind. This is a gift of love given by God. But a later chapter of our story tells how

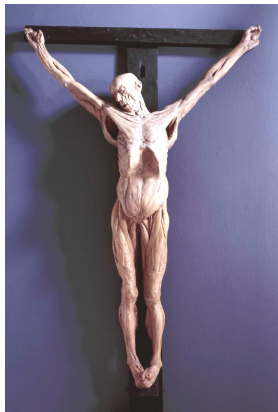
how something went badly wrong. Humans broke their relationship with God. This led to a break in the relations of persons to other persons. Those relationships were distorted by envy and hatred. These lead to violence, to murder and eventually to war.

The non-violence initiative proposes that we begin with spirituality. "Spirituality" here, will mean the adoption of a vision of life which is displayed by narratives or stories. The vision of life that the Christian tradition provides is focused by the stories of the death of Jesus and his resurrection. The version of spirituality that will be followed here will be a spirituality of resurrection.

The main argument of this essay will be that the narratives of the resurrection deny the ideological justification of violence as in torture, slavery, and capital punishment. These are already rejected by Christian traditions and by the Catholic tradition in particular. Our project aims at the rejection of the just war doctrine. It will be argued that the doctrine represents an ideological justification of war. It must therefore be rejected. An outline of the argument follows.

In the New Testament the story of violence reaches a climax; Jesus, the Son of God himself, becomes a victim. The violence of sinful humanity causes Jesus' suffering and death. But God intervenes to engage with the violence and to heal the suffering that the violence causes. The story again becomes complex. We begin with the Gospel of Mark. Scripture scholars find in Mark a basic tension between the belief in the power and willingness of God to eliminate human suffering and the persecution suffering and death of God's beloved son and those who follow him. The Christian narrative focuses on the will of God to overcome suffering and the causes of Jesus suffering. The fundamental problem is how to bring the two together.

How can we believe that God wills to overcome all human suffering, while at the same time believe that God in some way wills the suffering of Jesus? This article suggests the following answer.



We do not know the inner secrets of God's will. We know by faith that God intervenes in history, not normally directly, but through the free, faith

inspired actions of believers. What is needed then, is an account of those actions and the faith that guides them. God overcomes the suffering and death of Jesus by raising him from suffering and death to a risen life.

Suffering and death do not have in themselves a positive, instrumental role here. The suffering and death of Jesus is not somehow instrumental in the process of our salvation. The positive role is provided by the love and devotion with which Jesus undergoes the suffering and injustice, (St. Thomas Aquinas.) The same love moves and is expressed in the act of God raising Jesus and in the act of Jesus in rising from suffering and death.

The raising of Jesus by God is the absolute divine rejection and condemnation of the actions that brought about the suffering and death of Jesus. This is the verdict of the new justice; the justice of the resurrection. This new justice guides and moves those who believe in the resurrection to reject all practices of violence. The new justice condemns war and moves those who embrace it to reject war and to act to overcome it. Pax Christi members believe they are moved by God to work to overcome human suffering. They do so specifically by working to eliminate war as a cause of human suffering.

The high priest Caiaphas is reported to have said: "You do not understand that it is better for you to have one man die for people, than to have the whole nation destroyed" (John 11.50). Caiaphas' statement could be read as utilitarian, realist politics. But it has been interpreted in the Christian story as having a further transcendent

meaning. Caiaphas of course was not conscious of this further meaning. Caiaphas' plan seemed to work. Pilate was convinced that Jesus posed a threat to Roman power. He invoked the standard Roman response to a threat to Roman power. This was to eliminate the person or persons who were thought to pose the threat. Pilate may have been reluctant, as Scripture suggests. But he went ahead; the Roman system was set in motion.

The tactic was to annihilate the source of the threat to Roman power. The instrument was crucifixion. The victim was condemned to die the death of a slave, a nobody in the Roman ideology. The victim was terribly tortured by scourging almost to the point of death. The victim was mocked. He was deprived of all social standing. He was to be eliminated from social memory. But the torture was not intended to cause death. Death was to be caused by the crucifixion, the most dishonourable death. He was nailed to a cross. He was left to die in agony. In the plan of Caiaphas' and the Romans that should have been end of story. It was not. Jesus should have been utterly eliminated. He was not. , Jesus is raised by God and rises as a personal action. He overcomes the power of Rome. Christians understand this to mean that Christ overcomes not only Roman power but all human power that becomes an ideologically justified agent of violence.

The death and resurrection of Jesus not only manifested the dynamism which produces human violence. It establishes a source of power by which that violence is overcome. The source of that power is the power of God in raising Jesus and the personal power of Jesus himself in rising from the dead. The story of God's intervention, the continuing intervention of the person of the risen Jesus and the interventions of those who believe in him is conveyed and continued in what Catholic believers call the tradition of the Church.

There is however, a serious difficulty that needs to be answered. It

It would seem that the interventions of God, by which Jesus was raised from the dead, imply the categorical rejection of all the forms of violence that were imposed on Jesus: torture, slavery and capital punishment. But there has been a hold-up in the development of tradition.

In the Catholic understanding, "tradition" is a technical, theological term. In the Catholic view, that tradition is not merely a collection of doctrines and practises. The tradition must have, in principle, an inner cohesion. It is a goal-oriented process. If elements are found that impede or distort the cohesion and development, those elements must be identified and removed from the tradition. Some of those have already been suggested.

However, if we reflect on how the Catholic tradition actually unfolded, we encounter a problem. Capital punishment was not removed from the Catholic tradition for centuries. Pope Francis condemned it in 2020. Torture was justified in the Catholic tradition for centuries. It was not

definitively and formally rejected until the 2nd Vatican Council.

Slavery was accepted and justified within the Catholic tradition. It was not definitively rejected until the same Council condemned it. Capital punishment was accepted and justified in the Catholic tradition. It was rejected by Pope Francis in 2022.

War was justified in the Catholic tradition by the "just war" doctrine.

These assumptions were justified and supported by theories that we call "ideologies." An ideology is a doctrine that is constructed to preserve the power and authority of its proponents. To evaluate the "just war" doctrine in terms of the Catholic tradition we need, first of all, to challenge it in relation to the story of the resurrection. This article has argued that the story of the resurrection refutes ideologies, in particular the ideologies that claim to justify making war on others.

The next step will be appeal to love and justice. Love is the virtue that moves and guides us to love others and to give gifts to those we love.

The virtue of justice moves and guides us to acquire the gifts that we choose to give. A mother or father is moved by love for a child. She or he is moved by love to give a gift to the child for Christmas. She is moved by justice to work to earn the amount of money that is needed to purchase the gift. She is moved by justice to cooperate with others to promote the laws that are needed to protect what she has earned so that she can purchase the gift.

Justice moves and guides us to support the laws that protect those we love from violent attack. Justice moves and guides us to support the international law that forbids aggression against communities and states.

The argument of this essay is that the just war doctrine can no longer guide us to fulfil the requirements of faith in the resurrection, nor of love and justice. It should be replaced.

Fr. Brian Johnstone is a retired Catholic Theologian. He has taught in Rome, the US and in Australia

THE POWER OF FORGIVENESS: COLUM MCCANN'S BOOK 'APEIROGON'

[Marc Rastoin, SJ](#)

For decades now the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been in the news and on our minds. It is certainly not the most harrowing conflict that humanity has known since the end of the Second World War, nor is it the most deadly or atrocious. Nevertheless, countless pages of geopolitical reflection and narrative have been written about it. Meanwhile, it has evolved, year after year, as national identities, as well as narratives built around conflicts, keep changing over time.

To underline only the most evident aspect of this conflict, the religious dimension was hardly present in either the first Zionist movement or the Palestinian nationalist organizations of the 1960s or 1970s. And now an Irish author, Colum McCann, has written a book that approaches it from an original perspective and looks at the conflict in depth.^[1] The book has an enigmatic title,

Apeirogon, a term that indicates a geometric figure with an infinite number of sides. It is neither a novel nor a work of fiction, neither a work of history nor an academic essay; it does not claim to offer solutions or explanations. It claims nothing: this is its strength.

Two wounded fathers

What, then, is the intent of this book? The author spent months meeting two men at length. One is Bassam Aramin, a Palestinian; the other is Rami Elhanan, an Israeli. What do they have in common? Something very simple and at the same time very painful: both of them have lost a daughter because of "others." Rami and his wife had a 13-year-old daughter, Smadar, who was killed in a suicide attack in Jerusalem. Ten years later, Bassam and his wife also lost a much-loved daughter, Abir: the rubber bullet from an Israeli soldier struck her in

the back of her head and took her life.

Two intelligent, happy girls, full of life, the joy of their families. How to live on after these events? How not to give in to the desire for deadly revenge? Or to an endless despair while the conflict continues and it seems there is no glimpse of a solution to stop other children from suffering the same fate year after year? McCann listened to these two men and their families. With extreme sensitivity and an incredibly precise choice of words, he gives universal resonance to their pain and their lives. The two fathers became friends by collaborating in an association that brings together the parents of the victims of the violence of this conflict, the Parents Circle. McCann has made up neither their meeting nor their words. He was struck by their story and wanted, with their consent, to make it into a

"novel." It is a novel, because he himself added elements, reconstructed or imagined certain thoughts, but with a keen desire to remain faithful to their voices.

There was nothing to predispose Rami and Bassam to enter this path. Bassam is a Palestinian fighter who spent a long time in an Israeli prison. He wanted to learn, to discover the truth of the Shoah, the history of the Israeli people, the law. He does not resign himself to the occupation. On the other hand, Rami lived like many Israelis, not thinking at all, or only rarely, about the Palestinians, as if they were very far away. The drama that affected them both men – and still affects them – challenged them in their deepest convictions about their people and themselves.

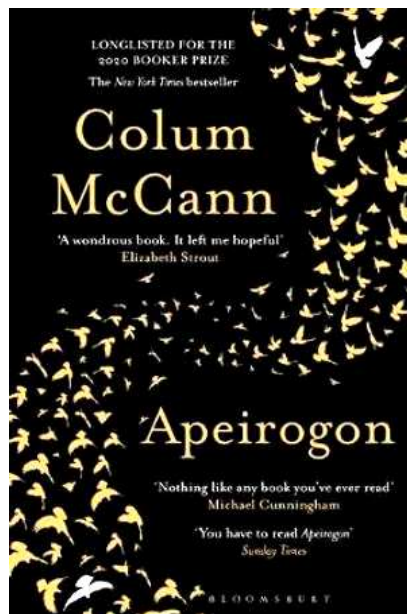
In a certain sense Bassam and Rami are small and anonymous, but they refuse to do nothing, to let the unjust deaths of their beloved daughters be forgotten. They think that starting to talk, to share their pain, to try to understand the other with deep empathy is the only possible way, the only way to peace. "Bassam and Rami gradually came to understand that they would use the force of their grief as a weapon."^[2] They have become a new type of activist, risking the misunderstanding and rejection of their respective communities.

Talking for a living

Almost imperceptibly, this book makes us penetrate the mindset of Israelis and Palestinians, and it recounts many admirable and honest anecdotes. For Bassam the root of all evil is the reality of the Occupation, with its sequel of humiliations:

Ibrahim Tuqan – My Homeland

My homeland
My homeland
Glory and beauty
Sublimity and prettiness
Are in your hills
Life and deliverance
Pleasure and hope
Are in your atmosphere
Will I see you?
Safe and comfortable
Sound and honored



"For him everything still came back round to the Occupation. It was a common enemy. It was destroying both sides. He didn't hate Jews, he said, he didn't hate Israel. What he hated was being occupied, the humiliation of it, the strangulation, the daily degradation, the abasement."^[3]

Rami became aware of this: "You see, I was forty-seven, forty-eight years old at that time, and I had to learn to admit it was the first time in my life, to that point – I can say this now, I could never even think it then – it was the first time that I'd met Palestinians as human beings."^[4] The frankness of both fathers is impressive.

The structure of the book is quite original, although it has become more frequent in modern literature, as the narrative is not linear, but makes frequent use of flashbacks. The paragraphs are numbered, and their length varies from one or two

lines to several pages.

Our only reservation concerns certain inclusions that the author has inserted here and there and that mention characters or events that have nothing to do with the story of Bassam and Rami. For example, he gives us the last menu of the meal that President Mitterrand wanted to eat before his death. It is difficult to understand what positive contribution this brings to the story. But this is a minor criticism, since it is the inner journey of these two men that illuminates the work.

What perhaps most strikes a Christian reader is to see to what extent the thoughts of these two men deeply align with the Gospel insights into the scope of speech and forgiveness. "It will not be over until we talk."^[5] Without the term being mentioned, there is sometimes a hint of the Beatitudes. For example, when Rami says, "We had to learn to use the force of our humanity. To be violently nonviolent. To bow our heads to the things we need to tell one another. That is not soft, that's not weak, on the contrary, it's human."^[6] No reader can come away indifferent from such a book, from this encounter with two men that we come to have the impression of knowing well. For this reason, a tribute must be paid to Colum McCann.

Apeirogon, is available for \$17.50 from www.booktopia.com.au or \$19.99 from Dymock's or from local libraries

[Marc Rastoin, SJ](#) is a Professor at the Pontifical Biblical Institute of Rome. He writes for *La Civiltà Cattolica* !

Will I see you?
In your eminence
Reaching the stars
My homeland
My homeland
The youth will not get tired
Their goal is your independence
The sword and the pen
Are our symbols
Not talking nor quarreling
Our glory and covenant
And a duty to fulfill it
Shake us
Our honor

Is an honorable cause
A raised flag
O, your beauty
In your eminence
Victorious over your enemies
My homeland
My homeland

Ibrahim Tuqan is a Palestinian poet. Born and raised to a prominent governing family in Nablus in 1905, his works are believed to have influenced generations and echoed the very silenced Palestinian voices at the turn of the 20th century.

PAX CHRISTI INTERNATIONAL STATEMENT FOR 2022 INTERNATIONAL DAY OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE.

As Israel ushers in a dangerous religious administration, belligerent Defense Force (IDF), are enemy of the holy city of Jerusalem. The Palestinian people needed the community more than now.



In less than a year, the world has witnessed the inexcusable killing of journalist Shireen Abu Akleh by an IDF sharpshooter, an alarming rate of arrests, detention, and mistreatment of Palestinian minors, an exponential increase in the killing of Palestinians, the ongoing devastation of house demolitions and the relentless confiscation of Palestinian land and expansion of illegal settlements.

Yet, Israel remains unaccountable for its blatant disregard of UN resolutions and international and human rights law. It is unabashed in its silencing of civil society. A newly elected Knesset member has called highly respected human rights organizations an "existential threat" while the new Prime Minister agrees to retroactively legalize settlements and outposts. The future is bleak for the beleaguered Palestinian people.

And so, the question becomes - with whom will the international community stand? Solidarity must be more than a word; it must be visible, not on one day, but every day. Solidarity must demand change. Let this occasion finally be the moment when our statements of solidarity transform into purposeful action on behalf of the Palestinian people.

Greet Vanaerschot Secretary General

NEW GENERAL SECRETARY FOR PAX CHRISTI INTERNATIONAL

Pax Christi International, the global Catholic movement for peace and nonviolence, is pleased to announce that Martha Inés Romero has been appointed secretary general as of 1 January 2023.

Based in Colombia, Martha Inés has served Pax Christi International for over 15 years, including a term in the international board. She is currently the regional coordinator for Latin America and the Caribbean. She will continue in this role as she also takes up her duties as Secretary General.

Martha Inés describes herself as a "humble life-long learner," and brings a rich depth of experience working throughout the Americas and with global partners. She studied conflict transformation at the Kroc Institute for Peace (USA) and was a member of the Catholic Peacebuilding Network. She has contributed to the transformation of Catholic teaching through promoting a culture of peace, nonviolence, and reconciliation, first with Catholic Relief Services, contributing to the Caritas International's network, and

then with Pax Christi International, through participation in synodal processes and the Laudato Si' Action Platform.



She is both ecumenically and interfaith minded and works with partners across the civil society for dialogue and cooperation within communities across Latin America and the Caribbean. Her previous experience is in the aid sector, where she held international roles at OXFAM Great Britain and CRS.

"I am humbled by the opportunity to lead Pax Christi International in this challenging time," said Romero. "I look forward to listening and learning from our dedicated members and partners worldwide. The diversity in our movement is our

main strength, one that we can draw on as we transform communities through justice, peace, and nonviolence."

Pax Christi International copresidents Bishop Marc Stenger and Sr Wamuyu Wachira also expressed their appreciation for Martha Inés "I admire the great ability of Martha Inés to mobilize and unite for the sake of human rights, justice, peace, and the preservation of Creation. She's a tireless worker, seizing every opportunity for dialogue and connection throughout Latin America and now around the world," "We thank Martha Inés for generously accepting this call to serve," remarked Wachira. She continued, quoting Psalm 18, "May the Lord continue to be your rock, your fortress, in whom you will continue to find joy and hope, take refuge in situations of challenges, the Lord who will always be your shield and stronghold."

Martha Inés Romero will replace outgoing Secretary General Greet Vanaerschot, who retires after 40 years of service to Pax Christi.

FATHER PETER DESMOND MAHER OAM

Claude Mostowik

Father Peter Maher died peacefully on Tuesday, November 8, 2022. Peter left family and friends who loved him deeply. The priest who delivered the homily at Peter's funeral invited all in the congregation to just spend a short time to look into the eyes of Peter's photo on the cover of the Mass booklet. It was a very moving moment.

We could easily list the many organisations that Peter was part of but that would not adequately cover his presence in them because they were always about people – God's beloved people. The people he ministered to became special in his world. His ministry took him among women and men who were discriminated against, shunned, and excluded by the church and society. His humble, always welcoming, and gentle presence touched people and showed them, whoever they were, that their lives can be filled with compassion and meaning that also inspired them to also pass on that compassion to others. His nonviolent advocacy for all in the various communities he came among also left him on the edges from some sections of the official church.

Peter was a long-time member of Pax Christi and when parish priest at Newtown hosted Pax Christi meetings in the presbytery for several years. He was a man of peace and courage in welcoming Catholic Acceptance (for Gay Catholics) to use the church every week for many years to have their Eucharist. He made Acceptance a ministry of his parish in which many parishioners



shared. It is important to note that he had a wonderful relationship with the Indonesian Catholic community who also used the premises for their weekly Eucharist. It was not long after he retired, this community was moved on.

Until recently, Peter was editor of *The Swag*, the National Council of Priests quarterly magazine. He Co-chaired Rainbow Catholics Inter-Agency for Ministry, Australia. He chaired Rachel's Vineyard Retreat Ministries, Sydney. He had been a chaplain at the University of Technology (UTS) where he was able to host a number of forums for Pax Christi New South Wales on treatment of refugees and asylum seekers after the 2001 Tampa saga. He was recipient of a UTS Human Rights Award in 2008 and the Ally Award Celebrating and Supporting

Sexual Diversity and Identity and the Alumni Community Award in 2015. In 2015 he was awarded an OAM.

Peter was always concerned that the Church in Australia engage in a deep listening, a competent dialogue and a compassionate and just course of action where the experience of people normally excluded or silenced are listened to. As with the Syro-Phoenician woman who became Jesus' teacher, these outsiders, irrespective of age diversity, gender, spirituality, training, sexuality, marital status, and different abilities, informed the journey of the Church. His concern was that each one of us can fulfil our God-given giftedness without prejudice. His belief was that we need people alive and awake to the forgotten, silenced, hurt, alone, discriminated against and afraid. He felt that we need people who can articulate the joy and pain of human vulnerability and be more awake to the reality of those around us and less blind to the injustice and inequality.

Having known Peter for nearly 30 years, there is a deep sense of loss but also a deep sense of gratitude to God for his presence through Peter. Those present at his funeral, members of Acceptance, LGBTIQ+ people, Indigenous people and women who had found themselves in various forms of distress - who were touched and cared for by him – will miss him but know that they have been 'touched by an angel.'

Fr Claude Mostowik MSC is President of Pax Christi Australia

PAX CHRISTI VICTORIA

Invites you to join our

**Environmental Theology Study group on Pope Francis' Encyclical
LAUDATO SI**

4th Wednesday of each month

At the Brigidine Ministry Centre 52 Beaconsfield Parade Albert Park Victoria

12.30-3 pm.

BYO lunch

Contact Geoff Lacey 9489 4784; 8344 0674 (Uni) glacey@unimelb.edu.au

SUBMISSION TO JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE INQUIRY INTO INTERNATIONAL ARMED CONFLICT DECISION MAKING

Catriona Devlin

I write this submission on behalf of Pax Christi Australia, which is a branch of the international Christian peace movement, Pax Christi International. I wish to submit the following points for your serious consideration:

1. Any engagement of Australian defence personnel can have unforeseen and unpredictable consequences for the people of Australia, for the economic well-being of the nation, for our international relations and in the longer term, for the deployed personnel and their families.
2. It is essential therefore, that any decision about military engagement of any kind, be taken only by the elected representatives of the people, in the formal assembly of our Parliament.
3. In order that our elected representatives have the ability make an

informed decision about such a serious matter, and that there is greater transparency, the Government must provide the following:

- Clear reasons for the proposed engagement
- The aims and goals of such engagement: how these will be achieved and with a time-frame provided
- A listing of all the resources and personnel required
- An estimate of the financial costs involved : how these will be met and subsequent implications for the Australian economy
- A listing of any obligations Australia has under any particular alliance with other countries
- A prediction of the circumstances under which Australia will withdraw from the proposed engagement
- Any advice provided by The First

Nations' Voice to Parliament

4. Because the decision to go to war should be made by the whole Parliament rather than by an executive group, there should be free vote of members, not along Party lines. Any decision about Australia going to war should require a vote of 75% of Members present, with voting in both the House of Representatives and the Senate.

5. It is Pax Christi Victoria's firm belief that the Australian Defence Forces should train and prepare for deployment as part of International peace-keeping Forces and that a large proportion of our Defence budget would be better spent in this way.

Sister Catriona Devlin is a member of Pax Christi Australia national Council and a Brigidine sister.

PALESTINE KAIROS CONFERENCE

Greetings from the Holy Land One hundred-eighty persons from around the world and throughout Palestine met on November 18th, 2022 during the annual International Kairos Palestine Conference. We send you our Christmas greetings, a report from the conference, and our invitation for you to recommit to helping us reach a just and lasting peace in the Holy Land. The situation we face is becoming ever grimmer. We know darkness that Isaiah wrote about. We know, too, the light that has shined on us and the world. It's reflected in your support. This season, more than ever, we covet your prayers, your advocacy and actions. In his word to 2022 conference participants last month, Patriarch Michel Sabbah spoke of the church's resistance to occupation which, as he said, has become a resistance to both occupation and the reality of apartheid. Our challenge, he said, is threefold. First, to have a unity of

hearts and respect for one another as Christians, resisting the temptation to division, power and corruption. Second, to acknowledge the failures in ourselves, the divisions between us which is pillar of Israel's occupation. Third, to choose our way of resistance - either by violence or through nonviolence. In this Christmas Alert, we encourage you to join us in this difficult work of humility, faith and solidarity. As we celebrate God's incarnation in the child born here in Bethlehem, join us in the holy work of seeing the "human being" in yourself and in the enemy, and calling the "other" through creative resistance to see his or her own humanity, and the image of God in every human being. We are Grateful for your support in the costly work of establishing justice.

Kairos Palestine, the most extensive Palestinian Christian ecumenical non-violent movement, is based on

Kairos Palestine document: A Moment of Truth, launched in 2009, affirming that the Palestinian Christians are part and parcel of the Palestinian nation, calling for peace to end all suffering in the Holy Land by labouring for justice, hope and love, embraced by the Christian community, signed by all historically recognized Palestinian Christian organizations, and endorsed by the Heads of Churches in Jerusalem. Email: kairos@kairospalestine.ps • www.kairospalestine.ps Hope within us means first and foremost our faith in God and secondly our expectation, despite everything, for a better future. Thirdly, it means not chasing after illusions. We realize that release is not close at hand. Hope is the capacity to see God in the midst of trouble, and to be co-workers with the Holy Spirit who is dwelling in us. From this vision derives the strength to be steadfast, remain firm and work to change the

reality in which we find ourselves.
Kairos Palestine 3.2

From Mary's Prayer of Resistance:
...the mighty one has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. We remember that when the Creator of the Universe chose to enter our world and share life as we know it, Bethlehem and the whole of Palestine was shaped by a cruel occupation and the political manipulations of leaders both secular and religious. Palestinians suffer through many of those first century realities. Still, our faith sustains us, our hope is strong, and our love is deep. History bears witness to Mary's prayer. Throughout the centuries, again and again we have seen how eventually the proud have been brought low and those over whom they exercised their power have been set free. Anticipating the day when the God's commonwealth is established in all of its fullness—and celebrating its presence now—the Christmas lights on Manger Square are brightly shining. Couples hold hands as Palestinian neighbours—Christians and Muslims—and pilgrims to the Holy Land crowd the city's streets. Hotels and guest houses are full. Clergy lead Advent services and prepare for our Christmas Eve celebration watched around the globe. And as they seek to make a living and care for their families, shopkeepers and vendors make the most of the season after the devastating years of COVID. Join us in prayer and song as we give thanks that in the world's dark streets there shineth still the Everlasting Light.

Participants in Kairos Palestine's recent International Conference heard from local and global speakers who shed light on the practices of Israeli apartheid, the shrinking of the civil and political space in Palestinian society, and the role of the Church in resisting the occupation and apartheid as a means to achieve

justice for the Palestinian people. We share the following Conference Statement, calling your attention to the many requests for action in the statement's Invitation to all churches, people of all faiths and those of good will. The struggle continues. The resistance deepens. The global consensus is clear. Join the growing movement. "Choose life. So that all may live." A Declaration to the World From The International Conference of Kairos Palestine: "The People, the Church & Resisting the Occupation" Beit Sahour, November 18 & 19, 2022 *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.* When Jesus drew on these words from the Prophet Isaiah, they were met with resentment and anger. This message echoes down through the centuries waiting for the faithful to receive and embody this message, and to join the movement for liberation and wholeness. We members of Kairos Palestine, and Global Kairos for Justice, the worldwide coalition of concerned Christians from diverse churches and church-related organizations as well as other faiths-based and secular organizations, have gathered in Beit Sahour, Palestine, together with leaders of Palestinian civil society and other international advocates to pray, to discern, to receive and now to share a declaration of sumud (resilience) and hope from the Holy Land.

Reading signs of the times Our steadfast hope and demand for justice rise up in the face of the following.

- The situation on the ground in Palestine/Israel continues to worsen, as documented in the recent reports of Al Haq, Badeel, B'Tselem, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and the UN's Special Rapporteur citing Israel's apartheid laws, policies and practices. There is a growing global condemnation of the State of Israel's apartheid regime, its war crimes and crimes against humanity.

• Israel's 2018 Nation State Law turned apartheid de facto into apartheid de jure, codifying discrimination against Palestinians in Israel; their strong Palestinian identity. • The hypocrisy of double standards is increasingly revealed in the international community's selectively leveling criticism and applying sanctions against countries who break the law and abuse human right conventions.

- In the midst of regional and global economic, social and military crises and environmental degradation, there is a shift in the world's attention away from the struggles for freedom and the rights of God's creation in many contexts, working against support for the cause of freedom in Palestine and around the globe.
- The newly forming Israeli government is poised to further widen existing injustices by welcoming openly racist cabinet members, deepening its settlement enterprise, and changing the face of its justice system, reflecting a global phenomenon. • Settler violence increases with impunity.
- Palestinian homes and lands are increasingly annexed, forcing displacement of Palestinian families.
- The fifteen-year, devastating blockade and bombardment of Gaza has been normalized and forgotten by the international community; Gazans' sumud continues to inspire us and justice loving people around the world;
- The international community's expressions of concern are contradicted by its continued pattern of financial, diplomatic and military support of Israel, making it complicit in the crimes of Israel.
- The heresy of Christian Zionism—is on the rise in the Christian community. In addition, some churches and ecumenical bodies are enabling the oppression of Palestinians by choosing to remain silent—opting for neutrality, preferring their own convenience over costly solidarity, hiding behind old paradigms of shallow diplomacy and selective interfaith relations. In still other communions, there are official statements accompanied by little action.

NOTICE BOARD

**NEW SOUTH WALES
Pax Christi Meetings**

We normally meet on the First Monday of each month at 6.00pm for shared meal that members bring and the meeting follows at 6.30 pm.

**Contact: Claude Mostowik
(02) 9550 3845 or 0411 450 953**
The venue: 209A Edgeware Road, Enmore.

QUEENSLAND

**Pax Christi Meetings
Pax Christi Queensland**

Contact:
Pam Nair (Secretary): 07 3711 3273 pamnair@hotmail.com

Pax Christi Victoria
Will hold a
Planning Day for 2023
Sunday January 22 2023 10-3
At Kildara Centre, 41 Stanhope St.,
MALVERN 2023

**Pax Christi National Council
Meets on Zoom for national
issues**
Contact:

**02 9550 3845
0411 450 953**

MURNONG GALLERY

St Oswald's Anglican Church, 100 High Street, Glen Iris
HOURS 11 -4 Friday to Sunday, or by appointment.

ENQUIRIES Glenn Loughrey **0418 911 714**

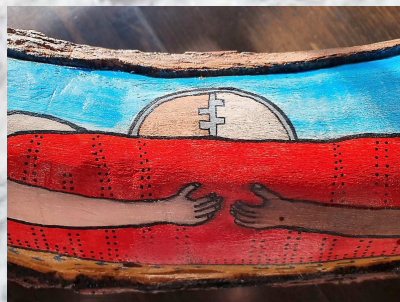
Exhibition 3pm on the 27 November 2022 until 30 January 2023

VISIONS OF HOPE

This piece is inspired by the Uluru Statement.

It has the coming together of two sides, but not quite reaching to touch.
Here is a gap full of hope.

There are tracks of Emu and Kangaroo moving toward each other at the middle ground. They are also moving to support the



The ropes attached are there to lift this weight is too great to lift.

It will require at people to lift this sibility, to close the gap and transform the Hope to reality.

spirits of past elders down from the sky hopeful action.

to the 15kgs of log hopeful ideal. The for only one person

least two or more dream, this respon-

Billiga (Pilliga Forest) - WATER IS LIFE!

Santos is drilling into the Billiga (Pilliga Forest) in Gomeri Country, straight through the Great Artesian Basin, the single largest freshwater reservoir on this continent. This will contaminate the Basin's unmatched quality of water irreversibly, compromising our source of life and our country's food bowl in Narrabri. Time to fight for water. Our lives depend on it. The future of this continent depends on it. Water is life ...

Program will involve Gomeri guest speakers who have been leading the charge against Santos, scientists and engineers who have given their expert opinion against Coal Seam Gas/Fracking, music, as well, Q & A and action to stop all mining activities on the Great Artesian Basin.

This is a result oriented action based event.

**December 17, 2022 at 3:00pm - 5pm Pitt Street Uniting Church 264
Pitt St Sydney, 2208** Tickets \$11.20
Book at: www.trybooking.com/CEGBU

I/We wish to apply for or renew membership of the International Christian Peace Movement - Pax Christi Australia.

(Membership is from January to December)

(Please tick box if you wish to receive your copy of **Disarming Times** by e-mail)

New South Wales Members please return your membership application/renewal to PO Box A 681 Sydney South 1235 NSW

All others: please return your membership application/ renewal to 13 Mascoma St, Strathmore, Vic 3041 . Direct transfer to Pax Christi Victoria Inc **BSB 063-161 Account number 00900935**

Please Advise Terry Byrne t.byrne15@optusnet.com.au

Name..... Address.....

.....P'code.....Phone.....

Email..... Mobile.....

ENCLOSED \$..... (Single \$35; Low income \$20; Family \$45)