



Enhancing the study and practice of Catholic peacebuilding ▪ December 20, 2016

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Christmas Message from Catholic Peacebuilding Network

The Hope of Advent and the Peace of Christ be with you. We at CPN are grateful for all of those who work tirelessly to advance the reign of the Prince of Peace. This Advent we pray for their efforts, and pledge ourselves to the hope of another year of the

expansion of justice, reconciliation, and peace for all God's children. And we remember those words of Isaiah so central to this season:

For every boot that tramped in battle,
Every cloak rolled in blood,
Will be burned as fuel for fire.

For a child is born to us, a son is given to us;
Upon his shoulder, dominion rests.
They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero,
Father-Forever, Prince of Peace.

A blessed Christmas and New Year from the Catholic Peacebuilding Network.

Developments in Catholic Peacebuilding

Burundi: Bishops concerned about slow progress of reconciliation efforts

On the occasion of the closing of the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy, the Bishops of the Catholic Church of Burundi published a pastoral letter, which expresses concern for the slow progress of the national reconciliation process. "At the opening of the Jubilee Year," wrote the Bishops, "we had hoped that this Year would be for Burundians an opportunity of reconciliation, so that contenders would sit down, and would tell the truth in a frank dialogue that would allow us to solve the Country's problems, so Burundians can live in peace and security." Today, however, "there are still so many brothers and sisters who are refugees outside the Country," and those who have remained in the country "are wary of each other, and they are afraid to speak the truth out loud..." Click [here](#) to read the Bishops' letter (in French and in Kirundi).

Colombia: Awareness campaign for peace

The National Conciliation Commission of the Episcopal Conference of Colombia (CEC) has launched a campaign, "Education for Peace", to encourage discussions on forgiveness, reconciliation and peace. The campaign calls the faithful to recognize the parallels between Jesus' royalty, which was associated with service and mercy, and what the Colombian people are being asked to do for the goal of peace – forgive and be merciful. Click [here](#) to watch a video about the campaign and click [here](#) to read the CEC's statement (in Spanish) about the campaign.

Colombia: Church speaks out against hydroelectric project in El Quimbo

Msgr. Fabio Duque Jaramillo, Bishop of Garzón, is concerned with the city of Garzón's hydroelectric project, El Quimbo, which is associated with injustice and human rights violations. "There are many things about this project that are ambiguous," Bishop Jaramillo said at a recent public hearing, "[and] I'm surprised a work that is being presented as the pride of the motherland has devastated the environment, biodiversity, ecosystems, permanently denying the possibility of prolonging life, at a time when the whole world has become aware of the damage we do to our 'common home' with certain megaprojects." Click [here](#) to read more (in Spanish).

Democratic Republic of Congo: Political tensions rise despite Church attempts at intervention

In October, the National Congolese Episcopal Conference (CENCO) took part in a process of national dialogue, which produced an agreement between President Joseph Kabila and the opposition party, "Le Rassemblement", regarding a date for the presidential and parliamentary elections, though that agreement has since broken down. Kabila's government has cited logistical reasons for delaying a presidential vote until 2018 and opposition groups are finding it unacceptable that Kabila will remain in office until then despite his term ending December 19, leading to violence and unrest in the country. Click [here](#) for the latest on the situation as of this mailing.

In addition, click [here](#) to read CENCO's statement about its involvement in the process, and [here](#) for their latest statement on the political situation. Also click [here](#) to read more about CENCO's interventions. To see the full text of Pope Francis's Angelus address from December 18th, in which he appealed for peace in DRC, [click here](#).

Myanmar: Cardinal Bo makes appeal for peace

On November 15, Cardinal Charles Bo of Yangon (Myanmar) published an appeal to political and military leaders for peace. The appeal asks the country's leaders "to seek the path of reconciliation and make peace the common religion of all our people" and "to explore a consensual politics of conflict resolution." Cardinal Bo echoed this appeal in his keynote speech for a conference entitled, "Myanmar's Resource Wealth: Toward People-Centered National Savings, Benefit Sharing and Social Protection." In his keynote address, Cardinal Bo said the path toward peace will require individuals "to demand justices from the three C's: Cronies, Companies and the countries that are nearby," as well as to commit to communal natural resource management. [Click here](#) to read the full text of the appeal and click [here](#) to read the full text of Cardinal Bo's keynote speech.

Sri Lanka: Church supports steps toward reconciliation

Msgr. Harold Anthony Perera, bishop of the diocese of Kurunegala and president of the National Commission of Justice, Peace and Human Development, told Fides the Catholic Church in Sri Lanka supports the “steps of reconciliation” initiated by President Sirisena in light of continued recrimination efforts by both sides. Bishop Perera said the reconciliation measures adopted by the government represent a “right path”, although “it is a process that takes time to bear fruit, and long-term results.” Click [here](#) to read more.

Resources

Pope Francis issues message for World Day of Peace

The Vatican issued Pope Francis’ message for the World Day of Peace coming on January 1, 2017. In the message, the pope calls for the creation of a “politics of nonviolence,” saying, “On this occasion, I would like to reflect on nonviolence as a style of politics for peace.” Click [here](#) to read the pope’s full message. And click [here](#) to read commentary on the message by Fr. Drew Christiansen in America magazine, including analysis of how the message connects to the work of the CPN, [and here](#) to see a resource page on the message by Pax Christi International’s Catholic Nonviolence Initiative.

Cardinal Turkson’s interview on *Laudato Si’* and COP 21 to COP 22

During his intervention on November 9 at a colloquium organized by UNESCO, the Holy See Mission and the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace on the theme “The Earth Our Common Home: Challenges and Hope!” Cardinal Turkson expressed hope that the “wisdom” of *Laudato Si’* would be understood both in an ecological and social sense. Click [here](#) to read the full text of his intervention. Click here to read [part I](#) and [part II](#) of ZENIT’s interview with the Cardinal on the occasion of the colloquium.

Bishop Dowling’s talk on nonviolence and peacemaking

South African Bishop and Co-president of Pax Christi International Kevin Dowling recently delivered a talk in Durban entitled “Nonviolence and peacemaking: Lessons from Oscar Romero, Denis Hurley and Pope Francis”. In his talk, Bishop Dowling explores the themes of solidarity and Christian witness, as well as the life examples of historical peacemakers. He encourages the faithful to move toward “more conscious and committed involvement in the struggle for justice” and commit “to active nonviolence and just peacemaking.” Click [here](#) to read the full text of his talk.

Announcements

The Catholic University of South Sudan hosts conference in recognition of the Jubilee Year of Mercy

On November 28-30, the Catholic University of South Sudan (CUofSS), with its Institute of Applied Research and Community Outreach (IARCO), hosted a conference in recognition of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy called by Pope Francis. The conference, entitled "Mercy: Discussions on Forgiveness and Compassion in a Context of Conflict and Division," engaged scholars, students, religious and civic leaders, and humanitarian activists on how to interpret and apply the religiously and secularly interpreted themes of mercy, forgiveness, and compassion within the political and social life of South Sudan. CPN steering committee member Fr. Bill Headley, of the Kroc School of Peace Studies at the University of San Diego, delivered the keynote address for the conference. Click [here](#) to read more about the conference. Find the IARCO on [Facebook](#) for more information on their work and programs.

Christmas message from the Holy Trinity Peace Village in Kuron, South Sudan

Bishop Emeritus of the Diocese of Torit, Paride Taban Abraham Kenyi, has written a Christmas message wishing the faithful a merry Christmas and prosperous new year. Bishop Kenyi reminds his readers, "Prayers are the most powerful human weapons, not guns and chemical weapons." Click [here](#) to read his Christmas message.

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The Catholic Peacebuilding Network (CPN) is a voluntary network of practitioners, academics, clergy and laity from around the world which seeks to enhance the study and practice of Catholic peacebuilding, especially at the local level. The CPN aims to deepen bonds of solidarity among Catholic peacebuilders, share and analyze "best practices," expand the peacebuilding capacity of the Church in areas of conflict, and encourage the further development of a theology of a just peace. While it is a Catholic network, the CPN believes that authentic and effective Catholic peacebuilding involves dialogue and collaboration with those of other religious traditions and all those committed to building a more just and peaceful world.

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