



Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual up-building. **Rom 14:19**

The message of peace is not about a negotiated settlement but rather the conviction that the unity brought by the Spirit can harmonize every diversity. It overcomes every conflict by creating new and promising synthesis.

Pope Francis Evangelii Gaudium, par 230

As missionary disciples of Jesus, we are called to heal, reconcile, build bridges, and create mutual understanding through prophetic dialogue. Our commitment to interculturality, inter-faith dialogue, and solidarity with marginalized people and the exploited earth are ways we participate in God's mission, calling us forward into communion with our triune God. Our proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus challenges us to build communities of peace.

Missionary Society of St. Columban, General Assembly 2012

Peace and Demilitarization

Columbans have a history and tradition of living and ministering in countries where the violence of racism and war, military dictatorships, economic and environmental injustice is prevalent. This experience motivates us to work with others to change attitudes, actions and structures that are opposed to peace, justice and racial harmony. We choose to promote a culture of peace and nonviolence that reflects an inner well-being, just social and economic structures, active non-violence in the face of oppression, and a cosmic Christ-like peace that fosters a sense of inter-connectedness and solidarity with all living things and with the Earth.

UNESCO¹ defines the culture of peace and non-violence as 'a commitment to peace-building, mediation, conflict prevention and resolution, peace education, education for non-violence, tolerance, acceptance, mutual respect, intercultural and interfaith dialogue and reconciliation'. We are inspired by this vision and attempt to live it out in our missionary lives.

Columban Concerns

The Violence of Poverty

In *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis writes about the economic system as one of the major problems facing the world. He says, "*No to an economy of exclusion and inequality*," criticizing the trickle-down theory which leaves the excluded still waiting (pars 53-55).

Poverty is a form of violence against the dignity of the human person. It restricts the possibilities for total human development. Economic prosperity for some has meant more and deeper poverty for many. We see the faces, especially women and children, of this unfair distribution in those who lack access to proper housing, education, healthcare, and meaningful employment. We see in a particular way the economic push factors which create conditions of violence for victims of human trafficking and migrants and their families.

¹ United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization - www3.unesco.org/iycp/uk/uk_sum_cp.htm



Pope Francis' 2015 World Day for Peace Message describes the slave labor of trafficked persons and migrants as tragic saying, "the growing scourge of human's exploitation by people gravely damages the life of communion and our calling to forge interpersonal relations marked by respect, justice and love"².

Violence toward the Natural World

Destroying the Earth tears at the fabric of peace. Violence done to the Earth itself is a part of war whether through habitat destruction or extraction of the Earth's resources for materials to produce weapons and technology used in war. For example, we see how extraction of natural materials in places like Chile, Peru and the Amazon are used for military purposes in Asia such as the construction of the U.S.-backed military base on Jeju Island, South Korea. The construction of this military base has its own negative impacts on the environment such as destruction of sea-life and water contamination.

Increasingly countries and communities are in conflict as a result of competing for access to natural resources. The global demand for fossil fuels is a good example of how military policies are driven by access to natural resources³. Diminished access to basic human rights like clean water, viable food sources, and suitable living conditions, and reduced access to land because of large-scale mining, are all conditions that exacerbate the vulnerability of countless communities around the world. The environmentally driven conflicts often cross boundaries of ethnic and religious divide which can lead to even more intense violence and war.

The Rise of Religious Fundamentalism and Extremism

In recent years extremist groups such as Al Qaida, Taliban, so-called ISIL, Boko Haram and al-Shabab are on the rise. These groups are underpinned by an extreme ideology which they describe as Islamic, a claim that must be rejected as this ideology could not be further from what true Islam is. We see how an ideology of extremism, combined with economic resources, geopolitical tensions, internal Muslim sectarian strife and misguided Western intervention all contribute to realities of death, suffering, and fear.

Columban experience in places like Pakistan, Mindanao, Philippines, and others reveals that our Muslim sisters and brothers are committed to peace and reject violence of all kind, especially violence in the name of religion. Through dialogue with religious leaders of other faith traditions, academic study, and collaborative projects such as peace, reconciliation, and environmental initiatives, we learn of their commitment to justice, peace, and care for creation.

Respecting the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Columbans around the world work with Indigenous Peoples such as Mapuche in Chile, Kachin in Myanmar, Maori in New Zealand, Parkari Kholis in Pakistan, Subanen in the Philippines and Atayal in Taiwan. We see the vulnerability these communities and others face as their culture, land, and faith traditions are threatened by non-traditional lifestyles and practices. We believe that all people's land

² Pope Francis, 2015 Message for World Day for Peace, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco_20141208_messaggio-xlvi-giornata-mondiale-pace-2015.html

³ For more information about Columban environmental concerns including statements on Climate Change, Extractive Industries and Water visit: www.Columban.org.hk



and culture are holy ground and therefore we strive to build relationships of mutual respect and cooperation.

Growing Militarism

Militarism is promoted as necessary for defense, security and most nation states regard war as an acceptable tool of foreign policy. However our experience and history shows that military might has not brought peace and cannot make up for corrupt and unjust structures and governments. Our lived experience in many countries which have endured violent military coups and dictatorships affirms that these regimes, while promoted as arbiters of peace and security in their countries, actually create division, oppression, and a culture of violence.

We see that war is both a military and economic venture. The expansion of military presence around the world and the arms industry erodes at the culture of peace which Columbans work to cultivate. Billions of dollars are spent on the research and development of more deadly and sophisticated ways of killing people and destroying the environment, even moving into space. Economic realities contribute to and promote a culture of militarism from which many people benefit directly or indirectly.

Nuclear Arms, Drones, and Fully Automated Weapons

2015 marks the 70th anniversary of the nuclear bomb attacks in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan. For most of those seventy years, Columban missionaries have served in Japan and other parts of the world where nuclear weapons policy and possession have threatened global peace and stability. As members of Pax Christi International, we join their call to outlaw nuclear weapons and the numbers of existing nuclear weapons should be reduced to zero.⁴

The use of depleted uranium in weapons contaminates the air, water, soil and the human body. We need to collaborate with others to abolish, not only nuclear weapons, but all weapons that contain uranium in any form.

Similarly, in modern high-tech warfare, drones and fully automated weapons are increasingly used for destruction, reconnaissance and surveillance. The US and UK in particular, two countries where Columbans serve, have military policies and practices which increasingly rely on drones and fully automated weapons. For example, it is estimated that the US has launched hundreds of drone strikes on Pakistan killing between 3,000-4,000 people since 2004⁵. Of particular concern, due to the nature of their implementation, is the potential for these weapons to injure and kill innocent civilians and their communities. Columbans joined with other religious leaders around the world as Pax Christi International members calling for all governments to participate in the international debate on the issue, and to work towards a ban on the development, production and use of fully autonomous weapons.⁶

⁴ Pax Christi International statement on Nuclear Disarmament, 2013. <http://www.paxchristi.net/our-work/disarmament-and-demilitarisation>

⁵ Amnesty International, "Will I Be Next – US Drone Strikes in Pakistan" <http://www.amnestyusa.org/research/reports/will-i-be-next-us-drone-strikes-in-pakistan> . 2013.

⁶ Pax Christi International Declaration in Support to Ban Fully Autonomous Weapons, 2014. <http://www.paxchristi.net/news/religious-leaders-urge-ban-fully-autonomous-weapons/4447#sthash.goTzawZ1.dpbs>



Torture and Enforced Disappearances

According to the Catholic Church, “International juridical instruments concerning human rights correctly indicate a prohibition against torture as a principle which cannot be contravened under any circumstances.”⁷ Unfortunately Columbans have seen the impacts of the practice and policy of torture which we see as one of the most deeply violating acts of one human being against another. We reject any kind of torture under any circumstances and believe that ending the practice of torture of any kind is essential to building a world of peace.

We oppose the cruel practice of enforced disappearances and support the efforts of families who seek to know the truth about the fate of their loved ones who have been detained and disappeared by military dictatorships in countries where Columbans have served, especially in Latin America and the Philippines.

Columban Response

Inter-religious and Ecumenical Dialogue

Dialogue is one of the crucial ingredients in attempting to bring about peace in our time, as theologian Hans Kung’s quote reminds us, “There will be no peace among the nations without peace among the religions and there will be no peace among the religions without dialogue among the religions.”⁸ Only working together to dispel misunderstandings and build harmony can bring about lasting peace. For example, Columbans in Mindanao, Philippines work with interfaith groups as a crucial part of the peace process in very difficult situations.

Advocacy for change

We are committed to working for structural change as part of an integrated strategy for addressing the root causes of violence, economic and environmental injustice. We see the structural causes and systematic impact that policies of war, free trade, environmental over-consumption have on communities and the natural world. Columban mission centers in countries like Australia, Chile, Ireland, Korea, New Zealand, Peru, Philippines, Taiwan, UK, and US are all involved in challenging local and national governments which promote policies that create economic, social, and environmental violence.

Practicing Nonviolence

Throughout Columban history, there are instances of Columbans who have been imprisoned, kidnapped, expelled, under military and government surveillance, and killed as a result of our commitment to non-violence and work with marginalized communities. The violence that Columbans have experienced as a result of our work with communities which are vulnerable has only deepened our commitment to active non-violence. We recognize that the violence we experience is limited compared to the violence we see inflicted on communities where we serve and by governments where we live.

A Columban definition of active non-violence has been described this way, “Nonviolence is based on the inviolability of the human person. It calls for a life of action; assertive imaginative, systematic, reemptive action. This action is aimed at uprooting injustice and eventually bringing about reconciliation.”⁹

⁷ Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, par 404.

⁸ Kung, Hans. *Global Responsibility: In Search of a New World Ethic*.

⁹ Fr Naill O’Brien, SSC. *Island of Tears, Island of Hope*. Pp 92-93.



Another way Columbans practice nonviolence is in our relationship with the natural world. We strive to live simply as an expression of our care and respect for creation.¹⁰ We support local communities by assisting in education and mobilization activity, and connecting with our international community via advocacy and other solidarity efforts.

Faith Formation

Inviting people and communities of faith to understand and act on peace issues through the lens of Catholic Social Teaching is an integral part of Columban mission. Formation happens in a variety of contexts including parishes, schools, universities, mission centers, short term mission service, and online and print publications. In Australia for example, the ***Columban Mission Institute*** offers workshops and online resources for Educators who wish to learn more about peace and non-violence. In Britain Columban JPIC works closely with Pax Christi UK on peace education initiatives.

Publications / Raising awareness

Through online and print publications and peace campaigns Columbans invite critical thinking, action and prayerful reflection. The following are examples:

- Australia - [Columban Mission Institute](#)
- Britain - [Conflict and Climate DVD](#)
- Japan – [Global Article 9 Campaign](#)
- South Korea – [Save Jeju Now](#) campaign
- Philippines - [Subanen Crafts](#)
- Fr. Naill O’Brien, SSC, *Revolution from the Heart*
- Fr. Naill O’Brien, SSC, *Island of Tears, Island of Hope*

Networking

Columbans participate in a number of national and international networks and partnerships that address Peace and related issues.

- [Pax Christi International](#) and Pax Christi local and national Chapters
- [Pace e Bene](#)
- [Global Campaign on Military Spending](#)
- [Movement for the Abolishment of War](#)
- [Christian Campaigning for Nuclear Disarmament](#) -
- [Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament](#)
- [Drone Wars](#)
- [Campaign Against Arms Trade](#) -

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¹⁰ Columban Climate Covenant – For a copy of the Covenant contact Amy Woolam Echeverria