In April 2022, at the 45th anniversary conference of Pax Christi Michigan outside of Detroit, members of Pax Christi Michigan with representatives of the Pax Christi USA National Council and staff, formally recognized Bishop Thomas Gumbleton, Pax Christi USA Teacher of Peace and founding member of Pax Christi USA, as Pax Christi USA’s Bishop-President, Emeritus. The in-person celebration had been delayed because of the COVID-19 pandemic, following the original announcement made by the Pax Christi USA National Council at their January 2020 meeting in Washington, D.C.

At the time of the announcement, then-National Council chair, Bob Shine, wrote that “Bishop Thomas Gumbleton has been named Bishop-President, Emeritus of Pax Christi USA in honor of his decades-long commitment to the Catholic peace movement.”

“Bishop Gumbleton’s involvement with Pax Christi USA dates back to his crucial role as a co-founder in 1972. He was one of the few U.S. bishops willing to condemn the Vietnam War at the time. In the intervening years, Bishop Gumbleton has advocated courageously for the cause of peace with justice, work rooted deeply in nonviolence. He has traveled the world to accompany peoples mired in conflict and violence, all the while condemning publicly the militarism behind so much of their suffering. He was instrumental in the U.S. bishops’ 1983 peace pastoral,” Shine wrote.

“Beyond the cause of peace, Bishop Gumbleton has been an advocate for many other justice issues. He stood against his own archbishop’s decision to close parishes attended predominantly by communities of color, and has been a strong advocate for racial justice in his hometown of Detroit and elsewhere. He has been a healing presence to people harmed by the institutional Catholic Church, including to LGBTQ people and their families and to survivors of sexual abuse by clergy.”

Shine asserted how Bishop Gumbleton exemplifies those “credible witnesses”, people who refuse to be indifferent and who choose to risk for the Gospel, of which Pope Francis has said our world is in great need.

“Few Christians living today offer as credible a witness as Bishop Thomas Gumbleton, his life a masterclass in how to pursue justice even when it hurts ... in the wounded church and the troubled world we inhabit, studying the credible witness of one who refused to be indifferent and risked so much for the Gospel is precisely what we need to be people of hope and action,” Shine stated.

See additional photos from the recognition ceremony on page 8 of this newsletter.
A special Easter message

By Bishop John Stowe, OFM Conv., Bishop-President, Pax Christi USA

In the midst of the smells and bells of our Easter liturgies, with Alleluias on our tongues and the feel of the baptismal water sprinkled upon us as we renew our faith in the triune God, we cannot help but feel the weight of the death and destruction we witness from afar in Ukraine — and in Yemen, Darfur, Myanmar and so many other places in our wounded world. It is all the more important that we proclaim the triumph of the victim Messiah, buried hastily on Friday but emerging alive from the tomb on Sunday. Orthodox, Catholic and other Christians in Ukraine are clinging more than ever to the promise of resurrection at this time when senseless killing and indiscriminate bombing seem to have the upper hand. As we gather in remembrance of the death and resurrection of Jesus, we must be in solidarity with Ukrainians who are worshipping in the midst of bombs: the Catholics sharing our Easter feast and the Orthodox just beginning their Holy Week.

When we entered Holy Week this year, we heard Luke’s version of the Passion proclaimed in liturgy. The compassionate and merciful Jesus portrayed by Luke offers Peter a glance of understanding when the rooster crows, he forgives those who are nailing him to the wood of the cross, and he comforts the women and children who mourn for him on the Via Dolorosa. Surely he also had in mind the women and children seeking exile from war throughout Europe and beyond. He counseled the women to weep not for him but for themselves and their children; the cause for weeping continues to the present moment. Women and children are especially affected, but there is a reason to weep for the men required to stay and defend their homeland as well.

In our part of the world, where we would like to think that the cruel whims of a dictator could not harm us, we also see plenty that calls for lament. The systematic exclusion of people from full participation in society because of their race, language, economic status, sexual orientation, immigration papers, past crimes or many other factors remind us that Jesus’ resurrection inaugurates the Reign of God, but we are called to take part in building it.

Easter is a time for rejoicing whether the loudest sounds around us are the joyful peals of church bells or the death-dealing sounds of machine gunfire. We rejoice that the Risen Savior brings about the triumph of love and mercy. Very few understood how God would bring good from the tragedy they witnessed on Good Friday. It can be difficult today to believe that God’s love is the force that conquers all that would destroy — but it is the essence of our faith.

Continued on p. 8...
“Seeing through the Prism of Justice” - Pax Christi USA’s 50th Anniversary National Conference, August 5-7, 2022

Note: Please see the accompanying brochure included in the membership mailing in this newsletter and check out the website for the latest, most up-to-date information about the conference, happening in Washington, D.C., August 5-7 with special lead-in events starting August 3rd. You can register using the form on the brochure or going to the website. This 50th anniversary conference is a once-in-a-lifetime occurrence and we hope to have as many folks from throughout our community participate as possible! Register today!

Theme: Seeing through the Prism of Justice | When: August 5-7, 2022 | Where: Washington, D.C.

Over the past few months we’ve been releasing information on the conference, including challenging keynote speakers and plenary sessions, engaging workshops, participation in a national action, as well as chances to reconnect with old friends and make new ones! The conference includes special opportunities honoring our 50 years of praying, studying and acting for peace with justice!

Find information on the website and in the brochure enclosed with this newsletter and plan on joining us!

Keynote presenter: Archbishop John C. Wester

Pax Christi USA is pleased to announce that Archbishop John C. Wester of Santa Fe, New Mexico will be the opening keynote speaker on Friday, August 5th of the 2022 Pax Christi USA 50th Anniversary National Conference. In January 2022, Archbishop Wester released “Living in the Light of Christ’s Peace: A Conversation Toward Nuclear Disarmament,” a pastoral letter calling for nuclear disarmament.

“Archbishop John Wester’s call for an end to the arms race and for taking the necessary steps towards full nuclear disarmament comes from the voice of a good shepherd who pastors the place where nuclear weapons were first tested and continue to be developed and stockpiled,” stated Bishop John Stowe, OFM Conv., Bishop-President of Pax Christi USA. “We should all heed his voice and contribute to the process of disarmament through practicing nonviolence in our daily lives and advocating the end of nuclear weapons. In his address to the ambassadors accredited to the Holy See on January 10, the Holy Father re-iterated that even the possession of nuclear weapons is immoral. Archbishop Wester brings this teaching to the U.S. in a significant way.”

Pax Christi USA members have worked on nuclear disarmament at the local, state, national, and international levels for decades, dating back to our founding in 1972. Welcoming Archbishop Wester to the 50th Anniversary National Conference is both an acknowledgment of the work and legacy of the movement and a recommitment to the integration of nuclear disarmament with PCUSA’s other priorities, which include economic and racial justice, human rights and care of creation, the spirituality of nonviolence and peacemaking, and demilitarization and reconciliation with justice.
Bread Not Stones 2022

Redirect military spending to address the root causes of conflict, injustice, inequity, and environmental catastrophe

Note: Announced in Lent and continuing throughout the year up to the mid-term elections in 2022, we’re reimagining a campaign that we launched back in 1999, Bread Not Stones, a campaign aimed at redirecting the obscene amount of money the U.S. invests in military spending to the challenges presented by the pandemic, the climate crisis, racial oppression, and economic injustice. Despite the end of the Cold War in the nineties, the U.S. has continued to operate out of the mentality that peace is assured through military might, the manufacturing of weapons, and investment in preparation for war. As we celebrate our 50th anniversary as a movement this year, we are drawing on the lessons of the past to address the issues of the present in order to create a better future. We draw inspiration from the original Bread Not Stones campaign of 1999-2000 in launching this one, Bread Not Stones 2022, with the statement below. We invite you to fill out the form on our website at https://cutt.ly/breadnotstones if you would like more information and to help in the promotion and execution of this campaign through November 2022.

________________________

“Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone?” (Mt 7:9)

This question posed by Jesus to his followers seems to have an obvious answer: Who would give a stone to a child asking for bread? And yet, too many people – especially children – do not have access to the resources they need to develop to their fullest human potential. In Pope Francis’ World Day of Peace Message, he highlighted this discrepancy, calling on governments to “develop economic policies aimed at inverting the proportion of public funds spent on education and on weaponry.”

In 2000, when it was apparent that the end of the Cold War had not transformed the budget priorities of the United States away from war-making and military power toward answering the needs required for people to live with human dignity, we launched Bread Not Stones, a national Catholic campaign of prayer, study and action to end exorbitant military spending and answer Pope John Paul II’s plea for “a moral about-face” regarding our appetite for weapons of war. The past two decades – highlighted today by a worldwide pandemic, racial injustice, the climate crisis and the Russian invasion of Ukraine – have made abundantly clear that investing in militarism neither keeps us safe nor promises the peace our communities long for. The military budget continues to grow while our hungry children go unfed. The need for nonviolent solutions remains more urgent than ever.

The U.S. Congress authorized $768 billion for military spending for 2022, $25 billion more than President Biden requested. Simultaneously, social service programs remain inadequately funded, under-resourced, and not prioritized. As we survey the health of our democracy and the well-being of our communities, we ask: Is there a better way to safeguard people and protect human dignity than spending hundreds of billions of dollars on militarism and weapons of mass destruction? Can we give our communities more than stones?

Reductions to the military budget must be accompanied by new ideas about what “security” means. Guns offer the same false sense of security to individuals that the military’s strength offers to the country at large. No method of violence will ever lead to more secure communities: we must address the root causes of inequity. Efforts to change the U.S. government’s spending priorities will fall short so long as we remain politically, socially, culturally, and religiously captive

Continued on page 5...
to the heresy of redemptive violence – the mistaken belief that violence can ensure our safety and establish peace.

The United States is ranked #1 in the world in terms of military spending, outpacing the next seven highest spenders combined. At the same time, almost half of all the civilian guns in the world are in the hands of people in the United States, who make up only four percent of the world’s population.

By our actions and our inaction, we have demonstrated our willingness to sacrifice everything on the altar of weaponry, including the lives of our children. The violence of weaponry and war is not just a public health crisis; it is a spiritual crisis that challenges the very credibility of the Gospel.

We need to work for a new understanding of security that moves beyond narratives of “us and them” by fostering healthy communities of interdependence and global solidarity. We need a new vision of human security that rejects radical forms of individualism which are too often mistaken for freedom.

**WE CALL** for a life-enhancing understanding of security that nurtures empathetic and sustainable communities where:

- Healthcare, housing, and food are fundamental human rights.
- A living wage is guaranteed to all people.
- Restorative justice practices, a process for reparations, and other means to dismantle systemic racism are funded.
- The human dignity of all people is protected – especially those who are in any way excluded, marginalized, or oppressed.
- Effective education is free for all regardless of their zip code.
- Care for the earth’s many ecosystems becomes central to our economic model.

**WE CALL** for a new peacebuilding foreign policy based on just and environmentally sustainable strategies, a fairer distribution of wealth between all people, and the protection of the human dignity of all. The reduction of the military budget and redistribution of resources toward human needs will bring us one step closer to collective liberation.

To this end, Pax Christi USA commits our resources to a reimagined *Bread Not Stones* campaign for 2022, organizing within the Catholic community and alongside allies to redirect military spending in the U.S. federal budget to the “things that make for peace” (Lk 19:42) & elevating the issue in the 2022 election cycle.

Because we deserve bread, not stones.
An Easter reflection: The beauty we must hold fast to

By Mary Lou Kownacki, OSB, Pax Christi USA Teacher of Peace

On the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning, while it was still dark, and saw the stone removed from the tomb. (Jn 20:1)

What to do in times of despair and hopelessness? What to do when a dark night of the soul has descended on the nation? When that same darkness has defeated our spirit?

I often turn to a passage that I copied in my commonplace book from the novel, The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society, by Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows. The book tells how a clandestine book club helped the residents of the island of Guernsey deal with the German occupation during World War II. Here’s the excerpt:

Do you know what sentence of Shakespeare I admire most? It is “The bright day is done, and we are for the dark.” I wish I had known those words the day I watched those German troops land, plane-load after plane-load of them—and come off ships down in the harbor! All I could think of was damn them, damn them, over and over. If I could have thought the words, “the bright day is done, we are for the dark,” I’d have been consoled somehow and ready to go out and contend with circumstances—instead of my heart sinking to my shoes.

Another thing I do is listen to Albonini’s Adagio in G Minor and think of the cellist of Sarajevo, Vedran Smailovic. He caught the world’s imagination when he risked his life by playing that piece for twenty-two days in the bombed-out square of a downtown Sarajevo marketplace after a mortar round had killed twenty-two people waiting for food there.

It’s the mystery of beauty that such difficult words, “the bright day is done, we are for the dark”, and such a solemn, almost tragic musical piece, can lift the spirit and bring comfort. Talk about opening the mausoleum door just enough to let in a ray of light.

The church knows all about the power of beauty. Amid the most horrific of human circumstances—betrayal, torture, mutilation, crucifixion, murder—we are given a beautiful story. Once a year the church presents us with the Easter story awash with angels of light, sweet-scented perfume, an empty tomb, a garden of promise, and the resiliency of the human spirit to overcome any force of evil:

The angel said to the women, “do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. Come, see the place where they laid him. Now go at once and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead…” (Mt 28:5-6)

Yes, it’s beauty that we must hold fast to. It’s beauty—in words, painting, music, nature, and in the stories of Scripture—that can transform despair into confidence and helplessness into hope. It’s beauty that reveals our common humanity and gives us the courage to roll away the stone and rise anew each day.

This reflection was excerpted from our reflection booklet for the Lenten season. The photo on the right was taken by Jo Clarke.
On the line: News from Pax Christi groups around the U.S.

FROM ASH WEDNESDAY TO GOOD FRIDAY

Pax Christi local groups from around the nation joined together in the day of prayer and fasting for peace in Ukraine called for by Pope Francis on March 2, Ash Wednesday, including Pax Christi Upstate NY’s Ben Salmon chapter [pictured below] and the Pax Christi Young Adult Caucus, who led multiple vigils outside of the Russian Embassy in Washington, D.C. [pictured to the right]. Many groups continued to publicly vigil in support of peace in Ukraine, Yemen, Palestine and elsewhere around the world every Wednesday throughout Lent.

Additionally, over a dozen Pax Christi local groups organized or participated in Good Friday Way of the Cross vigils and actions on (or around) April 15. From Pax Christi Harrisburg (PA) to Pax Christi Metro New York, members of Pax Christi in Atlanta to Franciscan sisters in Clinton, Iowa, hundreds of Pax Christi USA members participated in a “Way of the Cross” event on Good Friday, connecting the sufferings of Christ during his passion with the suffering of our brothers and sisters at the hands of violence, greed, poverty, sickness and war. These Good Friday witness actions addressed the intersectionality of war, racism, economic injustice, the climate crisis & more by reflecting on Jesus’s steps to Calvary.

PAX CHRISTI MI, FL CELEBRATE ANNIVERSARIES

Several Pax Christi state chapters are also celebrating major anniversaries this year, including Pax Christi Florida and Pax Christi Michigan. Pax Christi Florida members gathered together in March for a retreat entitled, “Re-Imagining the Peace of Christ 2022: The Path to a Better Future”, facilitated by Mary Carter Waren. As part of the retreat, stories, photos and memories were shared in celebration of their 40th anniversary as a chapter. Pax Christi Michigan gathered in April for their 45th anniversary with a conference that included award recipients Bishop Thomas Gumbleton, Therese Terns and Lulu Nestor. The program’s theme was “Celebrate Peace” and included a video montage of photos from throughout their 45 years.

PC GROUPS AND THE SYNOD

Pax Christi Northern California has been offering guidance to Pax Christi local groups and state/regional chapters to conduct Synodal processes of their own. Kim Vanderheiden (kidae.family@gmail.com) led a webinar and has curated resources. For more info, check out the Pax Christi USA website and find “Synod 2021-23” listed under “Resources”.
Bishop Stowe’s Easter message (continued from p. 2…)

May we again look to Jesus, the wounded Savior, whose presence in the midst of the suffering and oppressed is just as real today as when he was surrounded by thieves and insurrectionists sentenced to death on the cross. May we be willing to follow the example of a Simon of Cyrene who could not have known the universal significance of his help when he was pressed into service, or the example of the brave Veronica who demonstrates charity and decency with the simple gesture of wiping Jesus’ face. May we never tire of disciplining our own tendency to violence or willingness to choose the path of least resistance, like Pilate.

May the exuberance of our Easter feast inspire us to be messengers of the resurrection and bearers of hope even where war is still trying to destroy and kill that which is destined for immortality.

May we extend the greeting of the Risen Christ, “Peace be with you”, and commit ourselves to building that peace with justice that is the foundation of God’s reign. Christ is risen! Indeed he is risen!