



# The Peace Current

Pax Christi USA

*The national Catholic peace movement*

Winter 2025 edition

## Across the country, Pax Christi stands with immigrants

With encouragement from **Pope Leo XIV**, Catholics are taking to the streets to support the rights and dignity of the immigrant community. Over the past few months, Pax Christi members across the country have organized or participated in demonstrations, prayer vigils, processions or other public witnesses, including direct service ministries, in support of immigrants and in opposition to the draconian and terrorizing tactics of the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency (ICE).

To highlight one area, we are sharing an update from Pax Christi USA Ambassador of Peace **Tom Cordaro** who writes from Illinois: "In the face of daily assaults on the human dignity of our immigrant brothers and sisters, Catholics in the Chicagoland area continue to resist the masked secret police force set loose upon the Body of Christ."

On October 11, a group of about 1,000 people prayed outside the Broadview, IL immigration processing facility; several folks, including Pax Christi members, requested permission to offer Communion to those being held inside, but they were denied entry. A few



Marigolds on the fence around the Broadview, IL ICE facility. Photo provided by Bryan Sebastian, courtesy of the Coalition for Spiritual and Public Leadership.

weeks later on All Saints Day, more than 2,000 Catholics gathered outside the same Broadview facility for an event organized by the Coalition for Spiritual and Public Leadership. They began by celebrating the Eucharist outside of the center; the Xochitl Quetzal Danza Azteca, a Catholic dance group, opened the Mass with their sacred cultural traditions.

Participants again requested permission to administer Communion to those in detention, and once again were denied, despite following the protocols outlined by the Department of Homeland Security and ICE. At the end of the service, participants placed orange Mexican marigolds on the fence of the detention center in memory of those kidnapped and disappeared by ICE.

In addition to this nonviolent direct action at the Broadview detention center, many Catholics are participating in Migra Watch Training to protect their neighborhoods.

"This federal assault on our community has, in many ways, had the opposite intended effect," writes Tom Cordaro. "We are discovering the strength we have in community. We are becoming the Body of Christ for the salvation of the world."



In Washington DC, Pax Christi members, friends, and colleagues gathered on Nov. 13 for a prayer service outside the headquarters of ICE, as part of the One Church One Family campaign.



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# Pax Christi International celebrates its 80th anniversary

**By Charlene Howard**  
**Pax Christi USA Executive Director**

*A homecoming – a reunion – a celebration – a meeting of hearts and minds:* These are just a few words to describe the incredible experience of participating in the Pax Christi International 80th anniversary convening in Firenze (Florence), Italy, as Pax Christi leaders from around the world celebrated 80 years of being a consistent presence for reconciliation and nonviolence amidst the various and ongoing violent conflicts around the world. National Council Secretary **Jeff Sved** and I attended as the representatives of Pax Christi USA.

During the gathering, held November 5-9, we heard presentations provided by Pax Christi International members, board members, and guest speakers who brought into clear focus the threats to peace experienced around the globe but also the progress and successes being realized through nonviolent resistance and advocacy. Participants had multiple opportunities to process the details from each presentation in small groups, with special contributions from young adult attendees. Sofi, a young adult leader from the Philippines, addressed the group with accolades for Pax Christi’s work in general but with particular focus on how its steadfast witness draws young people to the work of peacebuilding. She noted that, inspired by our movement, young people are not asking for permission to pursue nonviolent means of standing for peace in their communities. She praised Pax Christi for its support, guidance, and accompaniment.



Every morning, a different region of Pax Christi began the day’s convening with prayer. The European region focused their prayer on the icon of reconciliation which stands as a symbol of Pax Christi International. The icon, created by a monk from the Monastery of St John in the Desert near Jerusalem, depicts the meeting of Jacob and Esau found in Genesis 33:1-17, with scenes of other scriptural stories of transformative restoration between people. On the morning of the Americas section’s prayer, Pax Christi USA shared about the seven US Americans of African descent who also represent South, Central and North America through their places of origin and their ministries.



Other highlights from this historic gathering was a pilgrimage to Casa per la Pace, a 500-year old villa gifted to Pax Christi Florence. There, the young

**Continued on page 8 ...**

# Kairos II: “A moment of truth: Faith in a time of genocide”

By Scott Wright  
Pax Christi USA Ambassador of Peace  
Ignatian Volunteer Corps

*The following is an excerpt of a longer essay posted on the Pax Christi USA website.*

In November, I participated in a Pax Christi International delegation to the Holy Land, to visit partners and to be present at the conference initiating the release of the Kairos Palestine document to the churches entitled “A moment of truth: Faith in a time of genocide.” ...

It is difficult for people in the United States to fully grasp what is happening in Palestine. How we understand our own history, how we understand human rights and international law, and how we understand our faith, has not prepared us to be able to see and respond to the violence and destruction of an entire people and their roots on the land.

We must not close our eyes to what United Nations and international human rights advocates – as well as prominent Jewish historians like Ilan Pappé, scholars of the Holocaust such as Omar Bartov, and Holocaust survivors – are saying about apartheid and genocide being committed by the Israeli government against the Palestinian people.

Equally important, and we heard this on many occasions, this is not a religious conflict, and increasingly we see how Christian, Jewish, and Muslim solidarity with the Palestinian people is speaking with one voice, both in Western nations as well as within Israel.

## West Bank: “All my dreams have been erased”

On the first two days of our week-long visit to Bethlehem and the West Bank, we heard testimony from some of the 32,000 survivors of the January 2025 attacks by the Israeli military on the refugee camps in Jenin, Tulkarem, and Nur Shams ... “the largest displacement of Palestinians in the West Bank in one operation since the 1967 war,” and constituted “crimes against humanity” according to international law. (Human Rights Watch)

... [One] woman told us, “We cannot compare our suffering to what our families experience in Gaza. Still, my home

has been demolished. Please, tell your government to stop supporting what the Israeli government is doing to our families and homes.”

We also witnessed the testimony of a deeply traumatized 12-year-old girl, who spoke haltingly and quietly of what she had suffered during the attack. Several Palestinians spoke of the trauma and psycho-social impact of the violence, particularly on the children.

In addition to our encounter with the refugees, we visited a Bedouin community,

one of hundreds of communities under attack from Israeli settlers and the Israeli army. We could see the Israeli settlement and outpost across the road. The community members told us that they continued to be attacked twice daily by the settlers, who seek to drive them from the land, either by threat or by force.

## Kairos Palestine: Faith in a time of genocide

... The message of the Palestinian churches to the world was clear: Kairos II emerges “from the heart of the assault on Gaza,” a war that has caused mass displacement, starvation, the destruction of every sector of life, and the burial of families under the rubble. It speaks of a cry of hope in a time of genocide, renewing faith, hope and love in the darkest moment.

Strong words were specifically addressed to Western nations and Western churches. While Kairos I (2009) named the Israeli occupation as “a sin against God and humanity,” Kairos II (2025) takes this reading of reality a step further and speaks with theological clarity. In Rev. Munther Isaac’s words: “Refusing to name genocide, apartheid, or settler colonialism is not theological caution: it is moral failure.”

Forty years ago, the original Kairos South Africa document challenged their own churches as well as the churches of the West to ... be courageous enough to assume a prophetic stance in clear opposition to the state violence of apartheid by a minority white government.

The message of the Palestinian churches to the churches of the world is equally insistent. *Neutrality is not a Gospel option.* ...

*Read the entire essay on the Pax Christi USA website.*



Scott Wright, center front, with other members of the Pax Christi International delegation and Palestinian partners in Bethlehem.

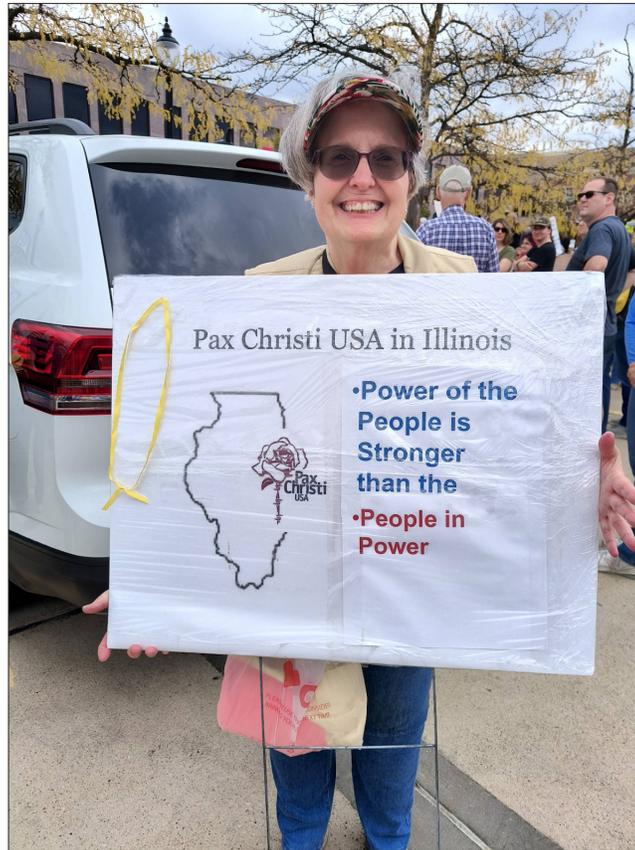
## On the line: Updates from local, state, regional groups

**Pax Christi Baltimore** celebrated its 40th anniversary this year. The chapter was formed in 1985 and is still going strong. On May 10, members and friends of the chapter gathered for a joyful and inspiring anniversary event, a review of past activities and undertakings, a prayer service, refreshments, and remarks by Pax Christi USA Executive Director **Charlene Howard**.

**Pax Christi Florida** is putting together a new webinar series featuring regional partners doing work in nonviolent resistance and peacebuilding. The first session will feature *Journey of Hope...From Violence to Healing* and their work against the death penalty. Pax Christi Florida is also planning sessions with Partners for Palestine and a panel on **Pope Leo XIV's Dilexi Te**. They have started reaching out to Miami's **Archbishop Thomas Wenski** and other Florida bishops to discuss immigration issues and the Church's role in supporting immigrant communities.

**Pax Christi Hawaii** hosted a luncheon for Santa Fe **Archbishop John Wester** on October 11, the day before his speaking engagement at Chaminade University. In addition to the archbishop, guests included the Chaminade University officials, Catholic Workers, and Hospice chaplains. During his Chaminade University lecture, titled "Nuclear Weapons: It's 89 Seconds to Midnight—Does Anybody Care?," Archbishop Wester expressed his appreciation to Pax Christi USA for its work and, in particular, publishing his pastoral letter in 2022.

**Pax Christi Maine** has a planning group focused on creating a series of mini retreats based on **Fr. John Dear's** book, *The Nonviolent Life*. The retreat process will focus on personal and communal deepening of our own spirituality and practice of Gospel nonviolence. The longer term intention is to develop a workshop on this topic for interested parishes and other faith groups. Monthly PAX Community Conversations began in January 2025; the October gathering focused on learning more about the faith journeys and worldview of young



Pax Christi Illinois member **Nancy Oetter** joined the No Kings demonstration in October.

adults involved with PCYAC in order to help with more effective engagement with young people in Maine. They met with Portland's **Bishop James Ruggieri** last November and hope to follow up with regular contact. Many Pax Christi Maine members participated in the No Kings rallies around the state.

**Pax Christi Massachusetts** held its annual assembly on October 18. Since its last assembly, they have been working on two main initiatives: nuclear disarmament and outreach to youth. They have established two groups that work on specific issues: the Pax Christi New England Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (PCAN) and Pax Christi Massachusetts Gaza Action Group, both of which are open to new members.

They co-sponsored the Good Friday Stations of the Cross, and the Agape community's Francis Day Celebration, and local groups also co-sponsored many events such as Hiroshima/Nagasaki remembrances.

**Pax Christi New York State** held its Fall Assembly on November 1, featuring the new Ben Salmon No Just War Catholic Conscientious Objector Registry. Pax Christi New York State members participated in various actions across the state to observe Veterans/Armistice Day, and joined the monthly vigil in New York City to close Guantanamo. Pax Christi New York State was deeply involved with promoting the CO registry at the Ignatian Family Teach-in, both at the break-out session and at an exhibit table, to many interested young people. (Read more on page 7.) **Pax Christi Long Island** has been involved in the immigrant issue with a vigil at the diocesan cathedral and a postcard campaign aimed at urging the bishop to speak out on behalf of migrants facing ICE and deportations.

**Pax Christi Quad Cities-Iowa/Illinois** has offered several presentations with guest speakers over the past year, focused on gun violence and gun control, refugee resettlement, and interfaith efforts to foster

understanding and respect, and has given three presentations on Kingian nonviolence to Catholic parishes in the area. The focus of the Quad City Pax Christi USA chapter is to learn, practice and teach gospel nonviolence and *agape*, practicing the teachings of **Gandhi** and **Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.** The group networks with other human rights, social peace and justice, and interfaith organizations. They have enjoyed support from the Catholic Messenger, the weekly diocesan newspaper, and the diocese's social media.

### **Pax Christi Rhode Island**

held its annual retreat on October 11; the program explored the theme of the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises and Formation. The group continues to pursue disarmament and the elimination of nuclear weapons by banner and leafleting frequently throughout Providence, in front of college campuses and legislators offices. Members are involved with supporting local immigrants who are faced with the trauma and uncertainty due to ICE and its unfair practices. In collaboration with other peace groups, Pax Christi Rhode Island celebrated the International Day of Peace on Sept. 21 with several interfaith prayer vigils and community services.

**Pax Christi St. Joseph Parish (Indiana)** is planning a book study of *A Theology of Migration: The Bodies of Refugees and the Body of Christ* by **Fr. Daniel G. Groody, CSC** (who visited with the parish and celebrated a bilingual Mass with them in March), and is exploring other ways to educate and build community as it relates to migration. They distributed print-at-home Red Cards/*Tarjetas Rojas* that help people to know their rights regardless of citizenship status; the parish St. Vincent de Paul group followed up with a supply of them that were professional printed. They also received PDFs for Cabrini Pledge info cards in Spanish and English and St. Cabrini prayer cards in Spanish and English from the USCCB. Pax Christi St. Joseph Parish is also beginning to find ways to coordinate with organizations such as the Abolition Coalition that are seeking to end capital punishment.

**Pax Christi Seattle** participated in an archdiocesan panel in May on "Active resistance to evil," and as homilists at the Masses in remembrance of the 80th

anniversary of the bombing of Nagasaki. Many members have individually or as a group participated in rallies such as Hands Off and No Kings, immigration vigils, and other demonstrations. They participated as a group, with the Pax Christi banner, in the October 4 Archdiocesan Jubilee Immigration Pilgrimage of Hope.



Mary Ihli and Renae Green were recognized as Artisans of Peace by Pax Christi South Dakota for their work in organizing the Take Back the Site prayer services.

### **Pax Christi South Dakota**

has sent their Take Back the Site team to arrange prayer services at the location of murders that tragically have taken place in Sioux Falls in recent months. Due to the new season of pheasant hunting, human trafficking has increased (as it does at other major events), and several Pax Christi South Dakota members are focused on that issue. Members also joined in the No Kings rallies across the state.

### **Pax Christi Stark**

**County (Ohio)** heard from guest speaker **Sr. Karen Lindenberger**, who has worked for 20 years providing daily support to the Hispanic community, at their October meeting. Sr. Karen shared how the impact of ICE on local families to date has left 38 children without fathers, now in jail or already deported. It was inspiring to hear her dedication to the families, but troubling to hear the reality of the terror being inflicted. Many Pax Christi Stark County members attended the October "No Kings" rally, some for the first time, and found the number of people and the positive energy at the rallies hopeful. The Interfaith Coalition of Stark County is now official, with many Christian pastors, two rabbis, one imam, one Catholic priest, and a lot of lay Pax Christi folks working at developing an interfaith nonviolent voice for Canton.

**Pax Christi Texas** is working with the Archdiocese of San Antonio and the Alamo Sierra Club to address issues connected to youth and the environment. The objective is to meet every two months to network, meet, and share resources to be used on a local level, and to welcome and dialogue with a speaker who will update on the care for the earth. Pax Christi Texas has continued to offer its quarterly online forums – recent presenters have included **Dr. Sherry Simon**, former chair of the Pax Christi National Council; **Archbishop John Wester; Cooper Christianity**, Rapoport Center for Human Rights and Justice, UT Austin; and **Dylan Corbett** with Hope Border Institute.

## Updates from PCYAC and Pax Christi campus chapters



From November 15-17, Pax Christi USA once again co-sponsored the **Ignatian Family Teach-In for Justice (IFTJ)** conference held near Washington DC for high school and college students from across the country.

Several Pax Christi high school chapters, friends, and colleagues came by the display table, including **Loyola Academy** (Wilmette, IL), **Elizabeth Seton High School** (Bladensburg, MD, left, with staff members **Camila Perez** and **Michelle Sherman**), and **College of the Holy Cross** (Worcester, MA, below, with staff members Camila and Michelle).

In addition to the presence of the national staff (**Charlene Howard**, **Judy Coode**, **Stephen Niamke**, Michelle and Camila), Pax Christi Young Adult Caucus (PCYAC) members

and young adults who have been part of the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative programming were present, including **Jessica Sun**, **Tiffany Hunsinger** (with Michelle and Camila, below right), **Kascha Sanor**, **Becky McIntyre**, and **Cathy Nguyen**.

Read **Rosemarie Pace's** report on the weekend -- including the workshop on conscientious objection organized by Pax Christi USA -- on page 7.

### PCYAC events

Recent monthly online gatherings included:

- A conversation with **Anna Riley** on the Chiles v. Salazar court case
- A report-back from national council member **Jeff Sved**, who gave a recap of the Pax Christi International World Gathering in Florence, Italy
- Brief sharing of the soon-to-be-launched "Pope Leo XIV and nonviolence" article series.

### On the horizon

- Advent retreat with booklet authors **Cameron Bellm** and **Flora x. Tang**, December 13, 5-7 PM Eastern
- Peace Pairs 2026 application launches later this month
- PCYAC Literary Circle of Liberation starts early next year
- "Pope Leo XIV and nonviolence" article series by PCYAC authors will launch in the coming weeks.



## Updates from Pax Christi USA Gun Violence Prevention working group

By Angela McParland

The Pax Christi USA Gun Violence Prevention working group meets monthly to share opportunities to engage in gun violence prevention at local and national levels and to offer out education and advocacy to the broader Pax Christi USA community. Our members report from Massachusetts, New York, Maine, Virginia, Rhode Island, Arkansas, Ohio, Tennessee, and California and without exception, every month there are local chapters pushing back on our national epidemic of gun violence by writing letters to the editor, hosting vigils, and coordinating interfaith events in their communities. Recent victories have also included election of many gun-sense candidates and the passage of a “red flag law” in Maine that will aid local law enforcement in removing firearms from those who could pose a danger to themselves or others.

Some fruit of this labor was shared with the larger Pax Christi USA audience at the conference in Detroit this summer where members **Madeline Labriola**, **Sherry Simon**, **Jeanne Allen**, and **Mary Ellen Quinn** presented a workshop entitled “Kids, Guns, and Suicide.” We are also grateful to **Bob More** for his ongoing labor of updating the Interfaith Toolkit on Gun Violence Prevention with the latest statistics and information from the Centers

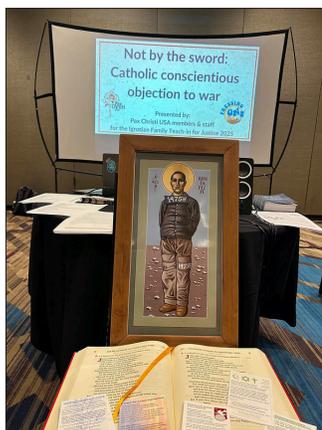
for Disease Control. We continue to partner with **Nuns Against Gun Violence**, a coalition of Catholic sisters, associates and allies who work on gun violence prevention through prayer, education, and advocacy. Recently, the group sent letters to every bishop in the country asking them to speak out against gun violence and citing their 2020 document, “A mercy and peacebuilding approach to gun violence.” Happily, the US Conference of Catholic Bishops has since updated that letter and launched a new website devoted to gun violence.

Our working group hopes to spend some time in the new year discussing newer articles on gun violence, having already completed two longer book studies that can be replicated by local chapters. We have also signed on to a letter from our partner, Faiths United to Prevent Gun Violence, urging the House to reject legislation allowing concealed carry nationwide and will continue to advocate against this bill in Congress. We are always looking for new advocates who want to get involved in gun violence prevention, whether through education, supporting survivors, or legislative advocacy and we are especially grateful for our co-chairs, Madeline Labriola and Sherry Simon, who have shepherded this group into action so well.

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## Not by the sword: Catholic conscientious objection to war

By Rosemarie Pace, Ed.D.  
Pax Christi New York State



From November 15-17, the Ignatian Solidarity Network hosted its annual Ignatian Family Teach-in in Crystal City, VA. (See more on page 7.) Keynote speakers included **Fr. Greg Boyle, SJ**, founder of Homeboy Industries; **Christina Leño** of the Laudato Si' Movement; and **Yuneun Trujillo**, an immigration lawyer and faith-based community organizer. Approximately 2,000 people attended, mostly Jesuit high school and college students, but many others, as well, including several Pax Christi members who were grateful for the opportunity to have an exhibit table and a well-received break-out session. Supplementing Pax Christi USA's table was another by the Friends of Ben Salmon who highlighted the new Ben Salmon No Just War Catholic Conscientious Objection (CO) Registry staffed by the Registry's founder, Pax Christi New York State Council member **Mark Scibilia-Carver**, and **Fr. Bernie Survil**. They reported a constant stream of interested young men and women.

The real highlight of the weekend for us was the break-out session, titled “Not by the sword: Catholic conscientious objection to war;” which “played” to a full house. Combining a PowerPoint slideshow with prayer, a personal CO testimony, a skit illustrating the importance of early filing as a CO, plus Q&As, we covered Catholic Social Teaching on nonviolence, a bit of CO history, why now, how, and where to get support. The questions we received were thoughtful. Everyone in attendance left with a copy of our application to the Registry, and we left with great hope that many will choose to become COs.

To learn more, visit [bit.ly/CO-registry](http://bit.ly/CO-registry).

## Pax Christi International, *continued from page 2*

adults lead a beautiful prayer vigil around a candlelit peace sign while chanting, “Peace is the language of the heart” in their respective languages while encouraging those in attendance to do the same. Another pivotal moment was the compilation of the Firenze Commitment 2025-2026, based on the input from the various meetings which took place throughout the four day convening.

Finally, the Pax Christi International Peace Award was presented to the Diocese of El Paso, TX (with **Auxiliary Bishop Anthony Celino** on hand to receive the award), Annunciation House, Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center, and Hope Border Institute for their work in accompanying and advocating for migrants crossing the southern US border. I was honored to serve as mistress of ceremonies for the occasion.

In all, the 80th anniversary convening of Pax Christi International was a great success due to the hard work, dedication and faith of its international members. Pax Christi USA is committed to continuing and strengthening our relationships with our Pax Christi sister sections to build peace through collaborative efforts.



Marisa Limon Garza from Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center; Bishop Celino; Pax Christi International outgoing Bishop President Marc Stenger; Annunciation House, and Pax Christi International Secretary General Martha Inés Romero at the peace award ceremony.

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## A reflection for Christmas Day, December 25

By Flora x. Tang

An excerpt from “*Entering the night of peace: Reflections for Advent and Christmas 2025*”

These past several years, iconographers, preachers, and those who write from contexts of war and human suffering have helped us highlight the meaning of Christmas in our troubled world: iconographers such as Kelly Latimore have depicted the infant Jesus as a migrant child at the border today; whereas Palestinian Lutheran pastor Munther Isaac has created a nativity scene of “Christ under the Rubble,” calling the world’s attention to the Holy Land, where if Jesus was born today, he too would have been born under the rubble. Christmas — and the very image of God incarnate as an infant child — calls our attention to “make room” in our hearts and in our living spaces for those who are also the weakest among us today, because they, in a special way, bear the image of the infant Jesus Christ who has come to dwell among us.

Today, I’d love to reflect with you on a different image of the weak and vulnerable present in our Christmas gospel reading. Matthew 1:1-17 is frequently skipped over as a reading and rarely preached on. This reading marks the beginning of the New Testament and contains the genealogy of Jesus Christ, listing Jesus’s ancestors from Abraham and Isaac, to David and Solomon, to women such as Tamar and Rahab and Ruth, to lesser known figures like Jechoniah and Shealtiel, all the way to Jesus’s parents Mary and Joseph and Jesus Christ himself.

The story of Jesus Christ’s birth, Matthew 1 reminds



us, did not begin on Christmas Day. It had already begun since the time of Abraham and Sarah, the very imperfect people with whom God first chose to be in covenant. These imperfect, sinful, lowly, and forgotten ancestors (all 42 generations of them! of Jesus Christ are as much part of the Christmas story as the miraculous birth of

Jesus Christ himself. ... We can barely pronounce their names and know little of their stories. Yet today’s gospel honors them. We, too, honor them

The good news of Christmas is this: **that all who are forgotten in the eyes of the world are remembered in the story of God.**

My time as a member of Pax Christi USA has reminded me over and over again of this same good news of Christmas. The Peace Pairs program, which matches seasoned peacemakers with young adult peacemakers as a mutual co-learning program, puts into this practice of remembering — and learning from — those who came before us in this shared work. ...

This Christmas season, drawing from the witness of the Gospel of Matthew and of Pax Christi USA, may we, too, remember all those who are forgotten in the eyes of the world. We remember that they, in a special way, lie at the heart of the mystery of the Incarnation and of the story of God.