

Stirrings



A Basilian Peace & Justice Newsletter

Fall 2018

CHRISTIAN
PALESTINIAN
PEACEMAKERS
1

PEACE &
JUSTICE
PILGRIMAGE
2

THE CHURCH
LISTENING
TO YOUTH
3

REFLECTION:
RIPE FOR
JUDGEMENT
4

LITANY:
JESUS
WEPT
5

KAIROS
WOMEN OF
COURAGE
6-7

BOOKS:
N. KLEIN &
T. SCHMIDT
8

Listen to the Voices of Palestinian Christians

By Robert Holmes CSB

In September/October 2018 our thirteen pilgrims, led by Fr. Maurice Restivo and myself, travelled to the Holy Land visiting, reflecting and praying at the holy sites where Jesus was born, taught, died and rose, but also visiting the holy people who today are working to bring peace in this conflicted land. Below are some learnings from four Christian Palestinian peacemakers we met.

Cedar Duaybis



Pilgrims Elly Kaas and Anna Tratnyek talk with Cedar at *Sabeel*

A founding member of *Sabeel* in Jerusalem – an ecumenical grassroots liberation theology movement among Palestinian Christians – Cedar described the effect of the *Nakba* (catastrophe), which began in 1948 and is on-going today, has had on the Christian communities of Palestine. The establishment of the state of Israel made possible by the displacement of three quarters of a million Palestinians, which included Cedar and her family, was a “**Human Nakba**.” Being placed under military control and discriminated against by Israeli law she describes as an “**Identity Nakba**.” And reading the Bible with Palestinian eyes has been a “**Theological Nakba**” – is God a tribal god or the God of all? Hence the need for a Palestinian Theology of Liberation.

See <https://sabeel.org/>



Daoud talks with Fr. Bob at *Tent of the Nations Farm*

Daoud Nassar

The Nasser family has title to their 100 acre *Tent of the Nations* on a hilltop near Bethlehem which goes back to Ottoman times. But being surrounded by five constantly expanding Israeli settlements seeking to squeeze them off their land has been a constant threat. Their access road has been blockaded, they receive no water or electrical service, anything they build is immediately issued a demolition order by the Israel army. But their response is – “We refuse to be victims. We refuse to hate. Our Christian faith is central to our lives. We refuse to be enemies. We believe in Justice. We espouse creative, active nonviolent resistance.” And with international support it is working!

See <http://www.tentofnations.org/>

Sami Awad

Sami is the founder of *Holy Land Trust* in Bethlehem. How do you build “trust” in the Holy Land today when the constant message is “fear”? Palestinians live in fear fed by 70 years of on-going *Nakba*.



continued on page 2

Stirring: (adjective) exciting, arousing, awakening, animating, quickening

Voices of Palestinian Christians

continued from page 1

Jewish Israelis, always recalling the holocaust, are taught “Never Again! ... To Us!” Both suffer from a narrative of historical trauma which feeds fear. Holy Land Trust is committed to nonviolence, trauma healing and nonlinear thinking. Linear thinking leads to decisions based on past experience. Nonlinear thinking seeks decisions shaped by future dreams and possibilities. Jews and Palestinians need to hear and accept each other’s trauma narratives but then move on to questions of justice and equality for all who share the land. From this a new narrative can develop which can lead to possible political solutions.

See <https://holylandtrust.org/>



Elias Chacour

Elias is the retired Melkite archbishop of Haifa and lives in Ibillin at *Mar Elias*, the school he founded in Galilee. “We Palestinian citizens of Israel don’t want to be tolerated, we want to be accepted with equal rights. The land doesn’t belong to Jews or Palestinians, the people belong to the land – we are blood brothers, children of Abraham. Peace can only be built on justice.” Abuna Elias begged for our ears, our voices, and our solidarity – to be both pro-Palestinian and pro-Israel.

See <http://www.pilgrimsofibilin.org>

We met many other peacemakers – Jewish Israelis, Palestinian Muslims, Internationals – learnings from these will follow in future articles.

Stirrings

A Peace & Justice Newsletter
A project of the Basilian Centre for Peace & Justice

Basilian Peace & Justice Pilgrimage to the Holy Land



We have been brought not only to the Holy Land but also to meet the Holy People and to hear their stories.

We return home to the comfort and relative safety of our North American homes, but we return changed.

We return enraged by the injustices that we have seen with our own eyes and heard about through their stories.

We return humbled by their ability to live with dignity in the face of a bureaucratic nightmare designed to frustrate and humiliate.

We return inspired by their passion in resistance and their *sumud* (steadfastness).

a Previous Pilgrim

24 Sept. - 8 Oct. 2019

contact:
mrestivo@basilian.org

The Church goes back to its roots

Something in the Catholic Church began to shift in the Youth Synod

By Christopher Lamb

Unlike the stormy 2014 and 2015 synod gatherings on the family, the youth synod did not become preoccupied with contentious doctrinal questions. Although the issues on the table were young people, the faith and vocational discernment, more fundamentally, the 2018 synod was about ecclesiology, the nature of the Church, and its pastoral strategy.

In the past two centuries the Church has been increasingly characterised by a devotion to unchanging tradition, directed from the top, with house rules set by popes and bishops, and the people expected to fall into line. Pope Francis and the latest synod of bishops gathering are recovering a radical ecclesiology, becoming a Church that listens and “walks with” people rather than one in which edicts are issued from on high and blindly obeyed.

It’s radical in the classical sense of the word, which derives from the latin “*radix*,” meaning “root.” Synods are rooted in Scripture, and reflect Jesus’ mission of accompaniment. They were a feature of Christianity for several centuries, and are used across the Orthodox Churches.

The final document is imbued with the spirit of the Second Vatican Council. The dust is at last being blown off the idea of “collegiality”, one of the central themes of Vatican II, which had boldly proposed a worldwide synod of bishops to address the challenges facing contemporary Catholicism.

The Franciscan ecclesiology is built on a living notion of

“synodality,” a Church where bishops, priests and people each have their distinct part to play but are “co-responsible” for its mission; one which opens the sacristy doors and goes out to bring the Gospel to the world’s outsiders and to those with no formal connection to Christianity. “Synodality” is more than abstract theology, and more than signing off agreed statements. As he closed the synod, Pope Francis said that the



Pope Francis greets Canadian youth

gathering had shown the “synodal style” for the Church in action: “a way of being and working together, young and old, in listening and discernment.”

Significantly, synodality is a *modus operandi* that lays the groundwork for more radical pastoral shifts in the future, and the final synod document puts a strong emphasis on conscience and discernment. Any genuinely synodal Church has to include women, and it’s no surprise that on this the synod document called for the most dramatic shift from the current state of affairs. It is a “duty of justice,” the text says, that women become involved in decision-making in the Church; there is an “urgency of an unavoidable change” in its approach.

The synod included bishops and young people from across the globe with vastly different concerns and agendas. “Synodality” is a method that can be applied universally, without coming up with local uniformity. In the final text, the bishops’ conferences across the world are urged to take up the synodal “path,” by listening, welcoming and engaging in a “common discernment” in order to transform the lives of everyone involved in it.

Some worry that “synodality” is a questionable way of doing business, and threatens the universality of the Church, opening up the possibility of local churches following different disciplines and interpretations of church teaching. But synodality should not be misunderstood, Cardinal Coutts told me. “It’s not the same as liberal democracy, where everyone can vote; it’s a walking together, it’s listening.

As Pope Francis stressed in his address after the voting had been completed: “The synod is not a parliament. It’s a protected space where the Holy Spirit can act. Let us never forget this; it was the Holy Spirit at work here.”

In other words, the synodal journey is insured by the papacy. The Pope is the one who gets to press fast forward, pause or rewind on how fast, or slow, things proceed. It’s also up to the Pope to decide what to do with the final document. He can reject it, rewrite it or elevate it to magisterial teaching.

Christopher Lamb is the Rome correspondent for The Tablet. This article is a shortened version of that published in The Tablet of 3 November 2018.

Ripe For Judgement

*A Biblical reflection seen from
our current settler colonial context*

By Sheila Klassen-Wiebe

***“Come now, you rich people,
weep and wail for the miseries
that are coming to you.” James 5: 1***

Hey You! Yeah, you – the white settler, (neo)colonial,
fur trader turned
industrial-agribusiness-commercial logger:
Do you know your fortunes are about to turn?
Rant and rail, weep and wail.
No good that will do.

The sentence has come down.

The black crude investment, blood of the earth,
will burst from its confining steel veins, giving
slick sheen to pristeen waters.

Fish belly-up and gasping
you too drink poisoned water.

Hectares upon rolling hectares of shining gold
will parch and perish,
million dollar combines silent in the fields
as drought conquers the land.

You have taken more than you need,
hoarded for yourself today what could sustain
your children tomorrow

But it is running through your fingers like sand
or maybe dust/rust,
rotting, molding, withering, fraying,
eating your life like a cancer,
“nothing gold can stay.”¹

Treasure stored up in dirty stocks and bonds
will be your “treasure” on the day of reckoning.
“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”²

Weekly paychecks meted out meticulously,
minimum wage and not a penny more for all those
migrant workers picking peaches,
factory labourers in mind-numbing lines,
“dirty Indians” hoeing fields of sugar beets
on lands your ancestors loved, and stole.

Health and dental care not your problem, so you say,
hearts hard and ears deaf to the cries, the petitions,
the tired despair of workers
you’ve used and discarded.

Listen! Can’t you hear them?

God is not deaf!

From fields and factories, the cries rise up to Lord Sabaoth.
From inner city tenements and remote reserves,
their cries batter the doors of heaven.

And the Creator opens the door.

From ancient times this Divine Warrior has battled
injustice and oppression.

The Lord of Hosts has heard.

The Lord of Hosts will hear ... and hear and here
will act with justice once again.

You rearrange rivers and lakes

to feed your hydrelectric need-greed,

drunk on the power of those humming lines,
oblivious to the destruction of traditional lifeways,
sacred sites, wildlife habitats

You have water slides, water parks,
just-turn-on-the-tap water to drink,

yet Indigenous neighbours just down the road
die with an 18-year-long boil water advisory,
suffer mercury poisoning from the Settler mill.

But you live!

in gated communities’

crisp new suburbs of cookie-cutter condos,
walk-through pantries and walk-in closets,

marble countertops and maple cabinets,
as reports of substandard housing
in remote communities

play on your flat screen TV:

”Eighteen people live in a shack with
no indoor plumbing, mold on the walls ...”

You are ripe for judgement.

You have twisted that flat steel blade of the law
to serve yourself and let justice die.

You have murdered the innocent

with your insipid concerns for suicides
among Indigenous youth,

with your hardness of heart for prisons full
of Indigenous casualties of “the system,”

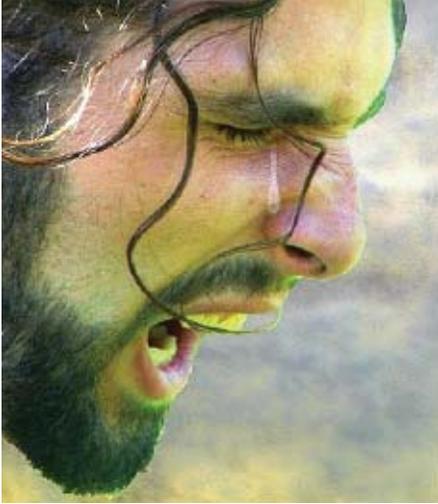
with your pathetic silence about missing
and murdered Indigenous women,

with your cultural genocide in residential schools,
legacy ongoing and unforgotten.

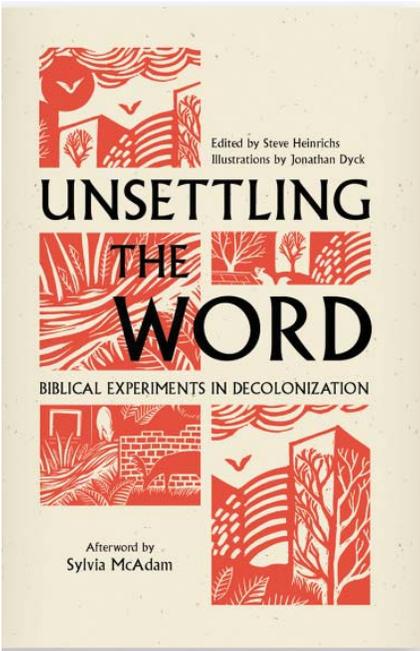
How can they resist?



continued on page 5



Jesus Wept



Ripe for Judgement

continued from page 4

Ah, but these words, brother James, are surely not for us good Christian folk?

Surely your audience is elsewhere
 the big shots who work in government,
 legal offices, corporations
 the callous who don't give a cup of cold water
 in the name of Christ,
 the irreligious who don't pray your kingdom come.

Surely they are not us.

Are they?

A Litany for Weeping

By Kaitlin Curtice

We think
 that there are no more tears left,
 that we can't,
 as a people,
 possibly mourn this deeply, this often.

So we breathe and remember:
 Jesus wept.

We are numb,
 staggering with disbelief,
 scared and wondering if shalom
 still exists

So we breathe and remember:
 Jesus wept.

We try to make sense of hate,
 try to trace the line
 of white supremacy.

We see that though we've come so far,
 it's not so far that we've come.

So we breathe and remember:
 Jesus wept.

We name those who have died
 from unjust institutions
 and the carrying on of hate.

We raise our fists and
 beat our chests.

So we breathe and remember:
 Jesus wept.

We hope to be brave,
 but we are tired.
 We hope for freedom,
 but there are so many in shackles.

So we breathe and remember:
 Jesus wept.

We fight with weapons of
 peace and humility.
 We fight with the power
 of listening.

We breathe and remember:
 Jesus wept.

And when tomorrow comes,
 and the day is new,
 we cannot deny reality.

We live our own belovedness,
 and the belovedness of others.

So today, in all our places,
 we breathe and remember:
 Jesus wept.

And so we breathe and weep
 with him.

Kaitlin Curtice is a Native American Christian writer, speaker and worship leader. She is an author with Paraclete Press and writes at www.kaitlincurtice.com, on the intersection of culture and spirituality.

Sheila Klassen-Weibe is a Settler Christian living in Winnipeg, Manitoba - Treaty 1 territory and homeland of the Métis Nation. and an Associate Professor of the New Testament at Canadian Mennonite University.

*This reflection is taken from **Unsettling the Word** - in which Indigenous and Settler authors come together to re-imagine the ancient Scriptures for the sake of reparative futures.*

1 - poem by Robert Frost, "Nothing Gold Can Stay"

2 - Matthew 6:21



Women of Courage

KAIROS' Women of Courage: Women, Peace and Security initiative is rooted in the understanding that in situations of conflict and post-conflict women are victimized many times over, through gender inequity, poverty, racism, military conflict, and sexual violence as a strategy of war.



Lucy G Talgeih

Lucy is the Women's Coordinator at the **Wi'am Palestinian Conflict Transformation Centre** in Bethlehem. Lucy holds a MA in Democracy and Human Rights from Birzeit University and strives to work for women's rights, eradicate extremism, and promote a more peaceful homeland.



Gloria Amparo Suarez

Gloria is an executive member of **Organización Femenina Popular (OFP)** in Colombia. Gloria has extensive experience in providing psychosocial accompaniment to women victims of armed conflict and as an advocate for human rights, peace and gender justice.

Report on KAIROS Event

On 23 November, 2018 I had the opportunity to participate in the **KAIROS Circle of Partnership** gathering in Toronto where each of these brave **Women of Courage** spoke of the ongoing programs of their organizations, partnered with **KAIROS Canada**, in the defense of human rights and in processes for peace, justice and reparations.

KAIROS works with partners in Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Israel/Palestine, the Philippines and South Sudan to end gender based violence in militarized conflict and to increase the participation of women in peacebuilding processes at all levels.

It was an inspiring and enlightening experience for me and my short notes will provide only a small indication of what was learned.

Bob Holmes CSB

Palestine

Wi'am runs conflict transformation and mediation programs for children, youth, university students and adults in the Palestinian city of Bethlehem and surrounding area. Especially important is the ministry of trauma coping and healing. Their clients are both Christian and Muslim.

Lucy is involved mainly with women's empowerment. She is a strong advocate for women's rights and encouragement of women to take an active part in the politics. She herself was recently elected as a municipality council member of Bethlehem.

Advocating for women's rights in a male dominated Arab culture means education which stresses that the males' role towards women is one of protection rather than control.

In situations of domestic violence Wi'am offers both counselling and shelter.

Colombia

Similar to Wi'am in Palestine, OFP in Colombia offers women workshops on domestic violence and shelters. It is a national organization with 3000 members which has been existence for 46 years.

Education is a major element of their ministry - women's rights, peacebuilding, political advocacy, leadership training, etc. Their education programs are not only for women but also for men and especially boys – as a primary means to violence prevention.

OFP is a strong voice against violence and war and their active resistance in marches and demonstrations against the violence of paramilitary groups has led to the necessity of accompaniment of their leaders by Peace Brigades International.

The Catholic Church has been a strong ally. Especially the bishops.



Agnes Wasuk Satafino

Agnes is the Coordinator of the **National Women's Programme (NWP) of the South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC)**. She was born in Juba and belongs to the Bari ethnic group of the Equitorial Region.



Vernie Yocogan-Diano

Vernie is currently the manager of the **KAIROS Women, Peace and Security project in the Philippines**. She is an Indigenous (Kankanaey-Bontoc) woman and has extensive experience working with Indigenous women in the Cordillera region.



Chantal Bilulu

Chantal is a women's rights advocate from the Congolese human rights organization **Héritiers de la Justice** which promotes human rights and peace building in war-torn eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

South Sudan

In 2010 the South Sudanese voted "yes" on a referendum for independence from northern Sudan which became a reality in 2011. What has ensued is years of political violence and war.

In South Sudan the churches are the strongest voices calling for peace, especially the Catholic Church. They put forward an action plan for the end of war and for promotion of peace.

Agnes coordinates the National Women's Program which trains leaders in order to reach out to women all over South Sudan.

Working with youth is an integral part of this outreach. The women are encouraged to educate their children in practices of peace. This investment in youth is an investment in a better future in this war-torn region.

Agnes describes her ministry as "Hope in Action."

Philippines

The Philippines, a nation of Islands, caught politically between China and the United States, is experiencing a political contempt for human rights and a normalization of violence – 23 thousand persons killed in the drug war including 169 peace activists.

Vernie, manager of the Woman of Courage program, works with church communities, predominantly Catholic, to facilitate service to indigenous, urban and rural women. Her work with church communities involves formation of consciences on human rights issues.

She is a courageous human rights and community activist teaching and speaking out in opposition to the war on drugs.

Because Human Rights activists are so often attacked, she organizes trainings to develop Human Rights Defenders.

Congo

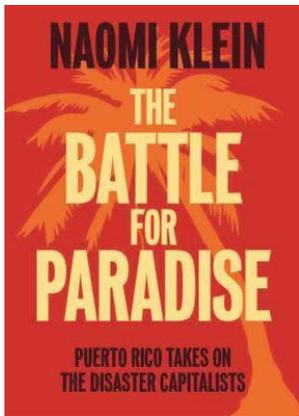
The DRC is embroiled in violence created by armed militias, some supported by neighbouring countries. The large UN peacekeeping force is unable to keep the peace. Poverty and unemployment feeds these militias.

Women are affected by the armed violence. Rape is used as a weapon. The justice system is unresponsive to their plight. The *Héritiers (heirs)* run workshops for women and paralegals on their human rights and offer legal mediation in human rights cases.

They also work with children and their teachers, especially in marginalized communities, to discourage them from joining the armed militias.

They have a weekly radio program to raise public awareness of women's rights and even run training sessions for police.

Naomi Klein



The Battle for Paradise

Puerto Rico Takes on the Disaster Capitalists

Review by Leo Reilly CSB

This eighty-page book describes the two sides involved in the current battle for Puerto Rico.

On the one side are the sixty neighborhood groups, including the academics from the University of San Juan, who invited Naomi to write a report on the struggle for recovery following the devastation of Hurricane Maria.

And on the other side are the appointed governing council, Governor Ricky Rosselló and the Neo-liberal one percent who plan to make Puerto Rico a tax haven for the rich, who are willing to establish residence on the island.

The island has acquired an unpayable seventy-five billion dollar debt through an unfair tax system that does not affect the rich. Hurricane Maria has made the situation worse, leaving the Island without power except for isolated pockets sustained by solar panels.

President Trump applied his philosophy of winners and losers to the situation – You lost and you have to accept the consequences. Although you are American citizens, the federal government has no obligation to you.

This is the same philosophy that allows the Israelis to call the United Nations “Useless Nobodies” when they voice concern for the Palestinians. The UN, on the other hand, embraces a Christian and religious philosophy of justice for fellow human beings and love for those in need. Naomi puts it in terms of the rich taking advantage of disasters to impose a system where they increase their winnings.

Meanwhile, despite the tremendous burdens under which the ordinary Puerto Ricans labor, they are working for a society of justice and love.

Ted Schmidt



I was a Catholic Zionist

A Biblical challenge to tribalism and idolatry

“I was a Catholic Zionist, but now I’m a Groucho Marxist.” Groucho Marx, the brilliant American comedian and raconteur asked: “Who are you going to believe, me or your own eyes?”

Review by Bob Holmes CSB

Like many of us, Ted was excited about the return of the Jews to the Holy Land and the establishment of the State of Israel as their homeland in 1948. But, also like many of us, once he placed his feet on the holy ground and saw with his own eyes what was happening to the Palestinians, the indigenous people of the land, he realized that there was a deeper, hidden story, an original sin, which tainted the founding narrative of Israel.

In a reverse metamorphosis Ted Schmidt researched the emergence of the beautiful butterfly of the Zionist dream to discover that the cocoon from which it emerged hid ugly secrets.

While remaining an admirer of Jews and Judaism, he has seen with his own eyes the consequences the enforcement of the Zionist dream has had on the indigenous Palestinian population.

In plain language he delves into the beginnings, growth and present realities of Zionism and the ongoing devastation it has wreaked on Palestinians.

But in his research he also discovered modern-day Jewish prophets – Jews of Conscience – who are heartsick with what is being done in their name.