

**Reflections for Prayer Service on occasion of 20th anniversary of
Pax Christi Baltimore
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“Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not let them be afraid.” (John 14:27)

We hear “Peace I leave with you” ... as the deep roots of violence are nurtured all around us. “My peace I give to you”as massive treasure and talent are invested in weapons and war-making. “Do not let your hearts be troubled ... do not be afraid” ... as those in power orchestrate fear and isolation.

Do we believe in world peace? Is it possible for the human community to imagine a radical redefinition of security, an end to war?

For Christians, whose worldview is defined by hope, I believe that the answer to these questions has to be yes. Peace is essential to the Promise; war, violence and the New Creation cannot co-exist. In these times when violence abounds, we have to focus on that fact.

Clearly, this is a statement of faith. Does it have any meaning at all in the real world, where terrorists and tyrants roam, where millions of people are caught in the midst of violent conflict, and where war is big business?

War is not inevitable. Say it again. War is not inevitable. The prophets among us, the ones whose lives are given to proclaiming peace, believe that. They are profoundly pro-life. They profess that we human beings are subjects of a future in which life can be protected, not victims of a future over which we have no control. We can live now as if peace were upon us. We can decide to end war, commit to the long haul task of making war obsolete. The already peace – how we do our living every day, how we nurture right relationships close to home; and the not yet peace, Pax Christi on the very distant horizon.

The first we can do every day – living the peace of Christ step by step. But to approach Pax Christi on the distant horizon will require a nearly complete reversal in the direction we are headed, a new paradigm within which to shape the human endeavor, a new stage on which to play out the drama of creation ...

- where we really believe that every human life is sacred – that the lives of Iraqi children, the women of Afghanistan, Saddam Hussein, even Osama Bin Laden, are as precious in the eyes of God as are the lives of our own beloveds;
- where we take extreme care to understand and honor the rich cultural differences between peoples;
- where we define our relationship to place not according to nation state, but according to bioregion;
- where we know that we are part of a global community in which no one is secure until all are secure; and

- where we humans understand that our future is intrinsically interconnected with that of the rest of creation.

We can reach the horizon if we define security not in terms of higher walls and stronger fighting forces but in terms of community, access to food, water, decent jobs, education, health care, recreation ...for all people everywhere.

We can reach the horizon if we take the profit out of war and production for war, if we stop usurping the resources of the planet to sustain our way of life.

We can reach the horizon if we are willing to commit treasure and talent to securing the peace in perpetually conflicted regions - ensuring the safety of threatened peoples in places like Darfur; engaging devastated communities in processes toward a just peace in the Middle East, Colombia and elsewhere.

We can reach the horizon if we pursue the truth about past atrocities - including those supported by the United States - in Haiti, El Salvador, Guatemala, Chile, Peru and many other countries, and do away with impunity, as necessary steps toward reconciliation and healing.

We can reach the horizon if we are willing to invest in the prevention of war, in conflict resolution, in peace education, in inter-religious and cross-cultural dialogue.

We can reach the horizon if we are willing to draw upon the vast experience of grassroots peace builders in countries like El Salvador and the D.R. Congo, East Timor and the Sudan, Guatemala and South Africa.

We can reach the horizon if we are willing to make the centerpiece of public policy the exploration of effective alternatives to war and violent conflict, effective ways to protect vulnerable populations without violence.

To seek peace, deep peace rooted in justice, the fullness of life for all – that is the Christian vocation. As followers of the One who is Peace, we are called to help move our broken and violated world toward the full flowering of New Creation. That is the mission of Pax Christi International, of Pax Christi USA, of Pax Christi Baltimore. We are on a long, long journey. Peace is a yet distant, but a not impossible dream.