

Pax Christi International's 70th anniversary celebrations begin in Bethlehem

Bethlehem, 13 May 2015 - The Pax Christi International 70th anniversary celebrations "[Pilgrims on the Path to Peace \(https://paxchristi2015.files.wordpress.com/2014/11/wa-2015-agenda.pdf\)](https://paxchristi2015.files.wordpress.com/2014/11/wa-2015-agenda.pdf)" started tonight in Bethlehem, Palestine, in the presence of more than 150 delegates from 30 countries, local people, including political and religious leaders, and Pax Christi partners.

In celebrating our 70th anniversary in one of the most challenging regions in the world, we want to *encourage peace* and *promote hope*. Real *peace* is what we aspire and *hope* is one of our deepest values. It makes us what we are, courageous peacemakers, connected across regions and continents, who address complex violence through nonviolence and promote truth and reconciliation in our local communities.

The opening ceremony featured guest interventions by Mr. Rock Rock of the Bethlehem City Council, Ms. Rania Murra, Director of the Arab Educational Institute, member organisation of Pax Christi in Bethlehem and local partner for this event, [H.B Fuad Twal, Patriarch of the Latin Church in Jerusalem \(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X15o0k-4OII\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X15o0k-4OII), [H.B Michel Sabbah, Latin Patriarch Emeritus of Jerusalem and former International President of Pax Christi \(/sites/default/files/pax_christi_international_h.b._michel_sabbah_13_may_2015_bethlehem.pdf\)](/sites/default/files/pax_christi_international_h.b._michel_sabbah_13_may_2015_bethlehem.pdf), [Ms. Marie Dennis, Pax Christi International co-President \(/sites/default/files/marie_dennis_message.pdf\)](/sites/default/files/marie_dennis_message.pdf), and [Mr. José Henriquez, Secretary General of Pax Christi International \(/sites/default/files/jose_henriquez_message.pdf\)](/sites/default/files/jose_henriquez_message.pdf).

Pax Christi International is grateful for the congratulatory messages received on this occasion from the [Vatican \(/sites/default/files/1._pax_christi_-_papal_message.pdf\)](/sites/default/files/1._pax_christi_-_papal_message.pdf), the [World Council of Churches \(/sites/default/files/2._wcc.pdf\)](/sites/default/files/2._wcc.pdf), the [United Nations \(/sites/default/files/3._un.pdf\)](/sites/default/files/3._un.pdf), the [International Peace Bureau \(/sites/default/files/4._ipb.pdf\)](/sites/default/files/4._ipb.pdf), the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace, as well as from numerous [member organisations \(http://Bethlehem, 13 May 2015 - The Pax Christi International 70th anniversary celebrations "Pilgrims on the Path to Peace" started tonight in Bethlehem, Palestine, in the presence of more than 150 delegates from 30 countries,\)](http://Bethlehem, 13 May 2015 - The Pax Christi International 70th anniversary celebrations \) worldwide.

In many ways, this four day event will be a celebration of the work of local and international peacemakers. This week we will learn more about the seeds already planted by our 115 member organisations around the world. We will look back a bit to retell our story - our stories - about 70 years of working for peace and reconciliation. This has always been a challenging journey - from the first gestures of reconciliation following the Second World War to the most recent efforts to accompany communities threatened by extremist violence in Syria and Iraq.

Over the next days, the programme will first look at the concrete situation on the ground and see the local reality of life in Palestine, and then - in a set of 'deepening discussion groups' - we will go beyond this local Palestinian reality and connect with global peace issues, closely related to the mission of Pax Christi. The [Peace fair and the Peace Award celebration \(http://www.paxchristi.net/news/pax-christi-international-peace-award-2015/4293#sthash.BryDEXz4.jYViA8bm.dpbs\)](http://www.paxchristi.net/news/pax-christi-international-peace-award-2015/4293#sthash.BryDEXz4.jYViA8bm.dpbs) on Saturday will mark in a special way our 70th birthday and the final celebration on Sunday will send us off as pilgrims on a renewed journey as peacemakers.

We look forward to sharing the 70th anniversary of Pax Christi with you all!

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