

Pax Christi International

Milestones 1945-1954

The beginning of Pax Christi

The official founding date of Pax Christi is 13 March 1945. At that moment, Southern France was already liberated from the grasp of the Nazis. *Msgr. Pierre Marie Théas*, bishop of Montauban, had just returned from the detention camp at Compiègne after being arrested by the Gestapo for speaking out against the persecution of Jews. He allowed

Marthe Dortel Claudot to start a Christian movement for reconciliation and peace. On the evening of 13 March, this movement was baptized as Pax Christi in a flat in Montauban, France. Mgr. Théas consented to become the president of this 1st Pax Christi, while Mme Dortel Claudot herself became General Secretary.

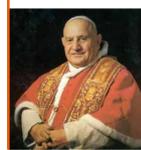


Marthe Claudot was native of the region Alsace-Lorraine. Because of her origin she was well conversant with the sensibilities in French-German relations. She studied literature at the Clermont-Ferrand University, and started as lecturer for Latin, Greek and French in a government high school. She was well appreciated for her qualities as pedagogue and lecturer. Marie Claudot was a progressive republican and strongly supported the separation of church and state. This 'wordily women' was an authentic practicing Christian and proclaimed without fear her well thought-out contemporary belief.

In her note dated 1979 about the origin of Pax Christi we find: "On 11 March 1945, I called on *Mgr. Théas* at his diocese in Montauban, accompanied by my husband and my uncle. I was allowed a personal meeting with the bishop. When entering I felt convinced that it was God's will that I should turn to him. Mgr. Théas agreed, providing I submitted his approval to the archbishop of the region (...)"

1948

From 1 to 4 April, a *1st International Pax Christi Congress* has found place in Kvelaer, in Germany near Aachen. It was assisted by Bishop Théas, Marthe Dortel-Claudot, her husband and many Pax Christi members from France, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Great Britain, Italy and other countries. The organisers had hopes for 150 or 200 participants, but there were about 600. An important part came out of the four zones into which Germany was divided after the war. Witnesses declared that the feeling for a new start was in the air.



1949

Msgr. Roncalli, then nuncio in Paris, who later became Pope John XXIII, asked Cardinal Maurice Feltin, the Archbishop of Paris, to become president of Pax Christi International. Feltin enlarged the movement's mission to "prayer, study and action", which has remained a central aspect through the present.



1950

An international meeting launches the International Catholic Movement for Peace. *Cardinal Feltin* is elected International President. *Msgr. Théas* becomes President of the French section of the movement.



1951

The 1st Council is held. Fr. Bernard Lalande is appointed Secretary General. The International Secretariat is established in Paris.



1952

Pax Christi gains status as an official international Catholic peace movement under Pope Pius XII. The *1st International Route for Peace* takes place from Assisi to Rome, Italy. International routes will be organised in many countries in the decades to follow.

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Pax Christi International Milestones 1955-1964

1955-1965

During the 1950s and the 1960s, it became more and more clear to Pax Christi that peace cannot be reduced to the mere absence of war, that peace is establishing order, making successful history and an order of truly planetary dimensions. *For total war, total peace* – were the words of Cardinal Feltrin at the Pax Christi International Congress in The Hague in August 1964. A few months later, the UN Secretary General replied with: “It is urgent to perfect and build up an international order that will enable us to confront the crises and conflicts that lie ahead” (U Thant, New York, February 1965).



1963

Pax Christi adopts Pope John XXIII's encyclical *Pacem in Terris* as its charter.



1964

Pax Christi Germany makes its 1st pilgrimage to Auschwitz.

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Pax Christi International Milestones 1965-1974



1965

Cardinal Alfrink becomes International President. Carel ter Maat, from the Netherlands, is appointed Secretary General. The International Secretariat moves from Paris to The Hague, in the Netherlands.



1967

The 1st Peace Week is organised in the Netherlands in cooperation with the Inter-church Peace Council (IKV) and becomes a model of cooperation in many countries.

1970-1980

Protests against the Vietnam war, support for conscientious objectors, and nuclear disarmament all become central issues for the movement. Pax Christi Germany engages in Germany-Polish reconciliation: an important action towards peace.



1974

A dialogue to a series of seminars and exchanges with the Russian Orthodox Church is started and continues for several decades.

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Pax Christi International

Milestones 1975-1984



1978
Msgr. Luigi Bettazzi from Italy elected International President.



Etienne de Jonghe, from Belgium, becomes Secretary-General.

The International Secretariat moves to Antwerp, Belgium.



1979
Pax Christi is granted Special Consultative status as NGO at United Nations and starts to make regular submissions – especially to the Human Rights Commission in Geneva, among others – on violations in East Timor. Representative status is subsequently established at UNESCO and the Council of Europe, in addition to a growing presence at the European Union.

1979-1981

The work of Pax Christi in the Americas and the Caribbean began in earnest in the late 1970s. At that time, the wars and human rights abuses in Central America strongly demanded international action.

In the early eighties, Pax Christi International and its member organisations sent the first of several delegations and fact-finding missions to El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. The consequent reports were published and advocacy was carried out at the human rights bodies of the United Nations and other organisations. Pax Christi's work in the region in the 1980s focused its attention on the situation in Brazil and Haiti. Several international fact-finding missions and visits, especially to Brazil, Haiti, and Mexico, were organised. The main aim of these visits was to uncover and report on violence and human rights violations against the population. Since then, Pax Christi International has been able to build a network of member organisations in Brazil, Colombia, Peru, Guatemala, El Salvador, Puerto Rico, Haiti, the United States, and Canada. At the same time, good working relationships with NGOs in other Latin American countries have been established as well. The first Human Rights report on the missions to Central America is published in 1981.

1979-2015

Pax Christi International has had special consultative status at the United Nations since 1979. Over the years, staff members and volunteers have had a vibrant presence at the UN in New York, Geneva and Vienna, advocating tirelessly on issues pertaining to the work of the global network.



1980
Shortly before his assassination, Archbishop Romero of El Salvador asks Pax Christi to strengthen solidarity with the people of Latin America, which leads to several missions in Central America, and later to Haiti and Brazil.



Dom Helder Camara of Brazil asks Pax Christi to sponsor several influential consultations on non-violence.

1980-1990

The decade was dominated by increasing tension between superpowers. Pax Christi members were prominent in disarmament activities around the world. Pax Christi developed its structure of commissions to discuss policy on the interlocking issues of disarmament, human rights and East-West relations.

East-West dialogue leads to networking in communist Central and Eastern Europe among others with dissidents such as Tadeusz Mazowiecki.

1981

The 1st Human Rights report on the missions to Central America is published.



1983

Pax Christi is awarded the UNESCO Prize for Peace Education, the purpose of which is to promote actions designed to construct the defenses of peace in the minds of men.

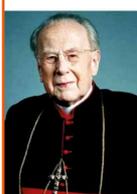
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Milestones 1985-1994



1985
Cardinal Franz König from Austria is elected International President.



1987
Pax Christi is named "Messenger for Peace" by the UN.



1989
An international conference in the Netherlands brings together Central and Eastern European partners from civil society at the very moment of the collapse of communism in Europe.



1990
Cardinal Danneels from Belgium is elected International President.

1990-2000

The ending of the Cold War between East and West, for which Pax Christi had worked, was a moment of great hope of a disarmed and more just world order. However, it soon became clear that the humanity was facing new versions of old problems... poverty... ethnic conflict... racism... refugees...

Throughout the 1990s, Pax Christi develops representation teams in different inter-governmental organisations including the UN, UNESCO, the Council of Europe, the European Union and the African Union.



1991
Comissão Pastoral da Terra in Brazil becomes the 1st affiliated organisation with Pax Christi International.



1st Asia-Pacific Consultation is held in Hong Kong. Further consultations will follow in the Philippines in 1996, and in Bangkok in 2001 and 2006.

The International Secretariat moves to Brussels, the European Capital.

1994

Pax Christi leads a mission to Sudan, which results in a permanent commitment.



Pax Christi International

Milestones 1995-2004

1995

Pax Christi International celebrates its 50th anniversary. 700 members from 37 countries take part in the celebrations in Assisi, Italy.

iansa 1998

international action network on small arms Pax Christi International co-founds IANSA: the International Action Network against Small Arms and Light Weapons.



1999

1st World Assembly is held in Amman, Jordan and Jerusalem. Patriarch Michel Sabbah of Jerusalem is elected as the 1st non-European President.

Many years of monitoring violations of human rights and ongoing conflicts in DR Congo, and a growing number of local groups in the Great Lakes region, lead Pax Christi to co-organise, together with the International Peace Bureau and the International Fellowship of Reconciliation, the international Congo appeal to the United Nations.

2000

First All Africa Consultation is held in Pretoria, South Africa, bringing peace groups from across Africa together. The results of this consultation were the strengthening of networks, building capacity of Member Organisations, and developing regional networks.



A longstanding involvement in the struggle for peace in the Middle East leads Pax Christi to develop an annual Christmas Prayer Action for Peace and Justice in the Holy Land.

2003

Annual Peace Weeks begin throughout the Great Lakes with growing participation each year.



Partners in Southeastern Europe (Balkans) come together for first consultation in Vukovar, Croatia. Over 80 participants were brought together to discuss reconciliation. This was the first meeting in which religious groups and civil society both participated.



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Milestones 2005-2015



2005
Long-time contacts in the Greater Horn of Africa help to build a Pax Christi network in the region. Exploratory visits to West Africa lead to more contacts in that region.



The Pax Christi Great Lakes network is officially launched following 2 consultations held in Bukavu and Kinshasa (2003) and Bujumbura (2005).



The movement grows rapidly as many new members join. Pax Christi's 60th anniversary celebrations take place in Brussels, Belgium.



2007
First Regional Consultation for Latin America & the Caribbean is held in Lima, Peru. This leads to the creation of a regional Pax Christi Latin American network.



Pax Christi International embraces an International Co-Presidency shared by a bishop, *Msgr. Laurent Monsengwo* (DR Congo), and a lay woman, *Marie Dennis* (USA).



Claudette Werleigh from Haiti is appointed as new Secretary General.

The *Pax Christi Triennial World Assembly* is held in Belgium, more than 100 delegates from 50 different countries attend.



2011
Pax Christi International is nominated by the Nobel Peace Committee for the *Nobel Peace Prize*, representing recognition of the movement's work towards peace and disarmament.

2008
Three Regional Consultations take place in Cyprus, Belgium and Uganda with a focus on strengthening networks and building capacity of Member Organisations. Visit of Iraqi delegation of Church leaders to Europe. Peace Pilgrimages of Member Organisations to the Holy Land.

2010-2012

Some 200 ex-combatants are trained in reintegration techniques, in a project organised by Pax Christi, to assist them in reintegrating into civil society and local communities.



2010
Msgr. Kevin Dowling, bishop from Rustenburg in South Africa succeeded Cardinal Monsengwo and joined Marie Dennis as Co-President. Their mandates were renewed in June 2013.

The Pax Christi World Assembly takes place in Strasbourg, France.

A *Peace Spirituality* programme is launched enabling members to reflect on their spiritual journeys.



2012
José Henríquez, from El Salvador, is appointed Secretary General.



2013
At the occasion of the meeting of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of *Pacem in Terris*, the Co-Presidents met with Pope Francis.



Pax Christi actively supports the campaign, which leads to the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty by overwhelming vote by the UN General Assembly on 2 April.



Pax Christi International contributes to the discussion in the 37th session of UNESCO on its leadership role in defining the development objectives that will replace the Millennium Development Goals.



Representatives of the Pax Christi sections met in Germany with an agenda which include the renewal of the international leadership structures for 2013-2016.



Religious and civil society leaders from Central and Eastern Europe come together in Poland, on 15-20 May, for a peace spirituality encounter. The workshop is followed by a *Pax Christi International pilgrimage/retreat in Auschwitz/Birkenau*.



2014
Pax Christi International launches a worldwide campaign, *Encountering Peace*, to express solidarity with the people of Syria and to promote a negotiated solution to the crisis gripping the country.



Pax Christi International joins the *Campaign to Stop Killer Robots*.



Pax Christi International attends the *Sarajevo Peace Event* commemorating 100 years since the beginning of World War I.

Pax Christi International is invited to be part of the *Advisory Group of the Network of Religious and Traditional Peacemakers*.



2014-2015
Pax Christi International and partner organisations submit joint written statements on the human right to peace to the Human Rights Council during its various sessions.

2015
The 70th anniversary celebrations take place in Bethlehem, Palestine, on 13-17 May.



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