



Second Sunday of Lent - March 16, 2025

Reflection by Sr. Bridget Crisp rsm, Pax Christi Aotearoa New Zealand - *Nonviolent Bridges for Dialogue*

A **bridge** is a way to reach the other side without spending too much energy traversing difficult or dangerous terrain. Thus, it is considered **a tool of connection.**

Dialogue can also be seen as a tool of connection. Dialogue between individuals creates **relationships**, opens the possibility of **choices**, and allows for the opportunity to work closely together for a common cause. If done well, dialogue can **build trust** and bring about **enduring relationships** centred on **respect** and **dignity** of others.

Dialogue that is not done well grows misunderstanding and distrust. It tarnishes respect and dignity and enables the misuse of power within relationships to go unchecked.

To create **stable, enduring, good, nonviolent dialogue** between individuals and people, we must couple or bridge dialogue with **active and authentic listening**. That means going into the complex and dangerous terrain of relationships and staying there to listen and understand the pain, anger, and frustration that may be present. It involves **staying actively present** in the painful dialogue and **collaborating together** to address the pain, anger and loss that arises.

The nations of our world have not had good relationships with the Indigenous peoples of their lands. Colonisation has affected all parts of the world. In history, we have seen global powers conquer the world and take ownership of lands not their own, stripping First Peoples/Indigenous Peoples of their culture and values. **The dialogue with Indigenous peoples and governing bodies has often been one-sided and lacked active listening.**



Building Nonviolent Bridges

Lenten Reflections



In **Aotearoa New Zealand**, the current coalition government introduced a Treaty Principles Bill, with the intention that specific principles –taken from the English version of the **Te Tiriti o Waitangi/Treaty of Waitangi** (1840), the founding document on how British and Māori tribes would live side by side– be considered as the only principles to which all people would live.

The proposal and introduction of this Bill has undone **many years of hard work in dialogue and listening** to the pain and anger that the Colonial Government in the latter half of the 19th century, followed by successive New Zealand Government policies, enacted resulting in land being seized and cultural language, values, and way of life being suppressed for most of the 20th Century.

Submissions to parliament opposing this bill have been overwhelming, as have the marches opposing it and **supporting the Treaty of Waitangi as it is**. The number of non-Māori opposing the bill and marching is significant, as all New Zealanders are becoming more aware of colonisation's impact on the country.

During this time of Lent and our reflection on 80 years of nonviolent dialogue and action by Pax Christi members worldwide, **let us reflect on how we (Pax Christi) are in our relationships of dialogue and listening with Indigenous peoples.**

Have we actively chosen to **understand and listen** to the pain Indigenous peoples have suffered at the hands of colonisers? Can we find **ways to connect and build relationships of trust, respect, and equality?**



Nonviolent Bridges for **DIALOGUE**