

*Building Bridges for Tomorrow – a reflection by Sr. Bridget Crisp, rsm,
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The title of Pax Christi's Celebration of 80 years of presence in the World, with a world Assembly in Florence, Italy, is quite pertinent. The world assembly has coincided with the Catholic Church's Jubilee Year of Hope. Building Bridges is always about hope and resilience for a better tomorrow.

The conference began by remembering the founders of Pax Christi – Marthe Dortel Claudot and the Bishop of Montauban, Pierre Marie Théas, who started the Pax Christi movement in 1945 with the focus of practising the reconciling love of Jesus, following World War II between the war-torn countries of France and Germany.

For Marthe Claudot and Bishop Théas, the emphasis was on listening, dialogue, prayer, discernment, and reconciliation. Over the 80 years of the Pax Christi movement, these fundamental practices remain vital today. This is clear in the new initiatives of Pax Christi International—the Catholic Institute for Non-Violence and the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative—which focus on in-depth research into Pax Christi practices that promote a just and peaceful world, aiming to make their research more accessible to all who seek to work towards a similar goal.

Along with the new initiatives, world assembly participants heard from those working in areas where issues threaten to undermine the ideal of a just and peaceful world – the threat to democracy, ecological justice or lack thereof, particularly related to the extractive industry, nuclear weapons, and the rise of autonomous weapons, as well as the continuing tension between Israel and the Palestinian Authority in the Holy Land.

Pax Christ Aotearoa New Zealand supports the endeavours of all groups and acknowledges and shares the challenges that other member sections in our Pax Christi Family have echoed at this conference. We have reminded and shared during the World Assembly that colonisation, and the resulting power, have underpinned many of the issues mentioned. Although not mentioned literally in the Florence Commitment that came out of the World Assembly, the recognition of Indigenous peoples and the suffering they have had due to the ongoing impact of colonisation is acknowledged by the statement: ...we will work alongside communities defending land, water, and life, and promote a just ecological transition rooted in care, reverence, and shared responsibility. The cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor remain inseparable at the heart of our mission.

The World Assembly was an opportunity to pray, listen, dialogue and discern together the issues we are dealing with. We practised core Pax Christi principles, and we continue to aspire to the ideal that Marthe Dortel Claudot and the Bishop of Montauban, Pierre Marie Théas, desired – a world that practices a Jesus' reconciling love irrespective of religion or nationality.