



# PEACE OFFERINGS

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**Blessed are the  
Peacemakers, for  
they shall be called  
the children of God.  
Matthew 5:9**

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## PCLR March Speaker Series: Catholic Charities Organizes Refugee Resettlement Jennifer Ruthven and Betty Jo King



**Jennifer Verkamp-Ruthven**, Director of Catholic Immigration Services and Refugee Resettlement for Catholic Charities of Arkansas and **Betty Jo King**, Director of Missions at Christ the King Church in Little Rock, will present information on the resettlement of Afghan refugees in Central Arkansas over the past six months on Thursday, March 17 at 6:30 pm in Fitzgerald Hall at the Catholic Diocese of LR. The presentation will also be accessible via the following zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82263246790>.

There are nine different Sponsor Teams that have worked tirelessly to settle 11 Afghan families in the Central Arkansas area. The total number of Afghans settled in the Little Rock area is 82. The Sponsor Teams are made up of various churches throughout Little Rock including Second Presbyterian, St. Margaret's/St. Michael's Episcopal, Immaculate Conception Catholic Church, Christ the King Catholic Church/Pax Christi Little Rock, The Madina Institute and Mosque, Temple B'nai Israel/Trinity Cathedral, Second Baptist, and the Islamic Center of Little

Rock.

Pax Christi Little Rock has partnered with Christ the King Catholic Church to work with an Afghan family of seven that arrived in Little Rock on December 6, 2021.

Catholic Charities has established a set of criteria for each sponsor team to meet with their families including registration in ESL classes, school enrollment for children, movement from temporary to permanent housing in 30 days, application for all appropriate financial aid, and job acquisition. Presenters will provide updates regarding resettlement as well a look to the future aspirations for these Afghan families.

## **PAX CHRISTI LITTLE ROCK SPEAKER SERIES**

**presents**

## **CATHOLIC CHARITIES ORGANIZES AFGHAN REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN ARKANSAS**

**JENNIFER RUTHVEN  
BETTY JO KING**

**DIOCESE OF LITTLE ROCK  
FITZGERALD HALL, RM 101  
THURSDAY, MARCH 17  
6:30 PM**

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## PAX CHRISTI LR CONVENES SYNOD MEETINGS



Pax Christi Little Rock members responded to the Pope's message that the synodality of the Church is achieved through communion, participation, and mission by creating a forum for all interested parties to share their experiences on the margins. Pope Francis encouraged us "to journey together, in order to experience a Church that receives and lives this gift of unity and is open to the voice of the Spirit." He stated that the Synod is an "ecclesial moment", not a parliament or an investigation into opinions, but "an ecclesial moment whose protagonist is the Holy Spirit. Without the Spirit, there is no Synod."

With that said, Pax Christi Little Rock scheduled two sessions (February 27 and March 6) where the Holy Spirit was invoked and then participants were invited to share their experiences within the Church. Specific care was taken to listen to the voices of those who had been pushed to the margins or who had known those through their mission work who had felt marginalized.

It was an amazing two days in which people shared intimate details of their lives within the Church. One of the members of Pax Christi shared his person-



PCLR Synod Forum

al story and then summed it up by saying, "The Church has been with me and provided me with many beautiful and truly life-changing and life-sustaining things over the years, but it has also done its best to keep me out and exclude me from things to which I felt deeply called, and to make it difficult for me to give it my whole heart. . . That's why I made the global statement that the Church seems to find a way to exclude as opposed to include. Institutionally, it operates like an exclusive club, touting its superior product (the real Presence) and only granting the pious and those who recognize its special status entry and a seat at the most important table in the club. You can't do this and wonder at the same time why you don't have a lot more members. It seems to me that it often operates like the cafeteria Catholics it condemns, picking and choosing lines of scripture to justify its ways of excluding and degrading, especially women."

Another member, speaking anonymously, dared to share the most difficult of stories. She said, "Alone in my kitchen, I heard God whisper, "You don't have to live this way. Not knowing at the time my path would lead to divorce. Gradually, I gained strength to tell an emotionally abusive spouse/father I needed him to leave after 20 years of marriage. . . The judgment you feel. No one

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knew my story. Nor did they reach out to a friend through a very difficult time. I felt isolated and alone. I also was not to receive communion until I had an annulment. For five years, I wasn't supposed to receive the Eucharist. . .To receive communion or remarry in the church I had to do the grueling paperwork for an annulment. Relive the experience, AGAIN. The paperwork is lengthy. I sat in my bed one night and my goal was to do a page a night. Well, God decided we were going to knock it out in one night. My answers screamed fear and abuse. I stated how God had whispered to me to get out of my marriage. Months later on my birthday, I learned my annulment had been denied. A group of men, I assume mostly unmarried, decided they needed more information for me to get an annulment. How do you trump God? I can't prove that God spoke to me, but shouldn't a group of Catholics deciding my case understand that he spoke to me and hear my fear and abuse?"

One of the Pax Christi members spoke about their experience as a counselor with parents of LGBTQ individuals. "I am a clinical psychologist who has been in private practice in Little Rock, AR for the past 33 years. Given the fact that I am also Catholic, I have had several families seek my counseling services after they became aware that one of their teenage/adult children came out as gay. Sadly, I have observed parents reference the Catechism of the Catholic Church as they labeled their children "disordered" and told them that they couldn't be part of their family any longer unless they "changed their ways." One of these parents told their teenage child that they were afraid they were going to go to hell if

they "didn't stop being gay." I also found that one of the main concerns of these parents was about what family and friend groups would think of them if they found out their child was gay. Even when I shared with them that "conversion therapy" was not effective or appropriate and that it would be more helpful for them to listen to their children and try to understand what they were going through, they continued to insist that they couldn't go against the Church and that it was their responsibility to teach their children right from wrong.

Given these situations where parent react to their children in an anxious, non-loving, rejecting manner due to their perception that their children are "disordered," it seems that it might be helpful for the Synod of Bishops to re-examine the vocabulary employed in the Catechism to describe a group of people who are just as much a creation of God as any other group. It also strikes me as psychologically unhealthy to expect people to ignore their biology and make the decision to live a celibate life even when this is not their discerned vocation. Certainly, there needs to be boundaries on indiscriminate sexual behavior across the board. Unfortunately, I don't see the Church talking consistently about denying communion to those heterosexual individuals who have affairs, decide to have sex outside of marriage, etc. We must ask ourselves why we do not allow all to come to the table. No one is perfect, no one has all the answers, and we are all in need of the grace that comes from our relationship with Jesus Christ."

A report synthesizing the words of the individuals who came to our synod meeting will be sent to our Bishop as well as directly to the Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops. We pray they hear the voices on the margin. We are not Catholic (universal) without them.



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**SAVE THE DATE****PAX CHRISTI LR  
BOARD MEETING****THURSDAY, MARCH 10  
6-7:30**

**ALL BOARD MEMBERS HAVE BEEN SENT AN INVITATIONAL LINK FOR THIS ZOOM MEETING. IF YOU AREN'T ON THE BOARD AND WISH TO ATTEND, PLEASE EMAIL US AT [paxchristilr@gmail.com](mailto:paxchristilr@gmail.com).**

The Gospels frequently show us Jesus “on a journey” (Mk 10:17); he walks along side people and listens to the questions and concerns lurking in their hearts. He shows us that God is not found in neat and orderly places, distant from reality, but walks ever at our side. He meets us where we are, on the often rocky roads of life. Today, as we begin this synodal process, let us begin by asking ourselves—all of us, Pope, bishops, priests, religious and laity—whether we, the Christian community, embody this “style” of God, who travels the paths of history and shares in the life of humanity. Are we prepared for the adventures of this journey? Or are we fearful of the unknown, preferring to take refuge in the usual excuses: “It’s useless” or “We’ve always done it this way”? . . . Celebrating a synod means walking on the same road, walking together. Let us look at Jesus. First he **encounters** the rich man on the road; then he **listens** to his questions, and finally he helps him **discern** what he must do to inherit eternal life. **Encounter, listen and discern.** . . . these three verbs characterize the Synod. (excerpted from Pope Francis’ homily Oct 10, ‘21)

**PRAYER FOR THE SYNOD  
ON SYNODALITY**

We stand before You, Holy Spirit,  
as we gather together in Your  
name.

With You alone to guide us, make  
Yourself at home in our hearts;

Teach us the way we must go and  
how we are to pursue it.

We are weak and sinful; do not let  
us promote disorder.

Do not let ignorance lead us down  
the wrong path nor partiality influ-  
ence our actions.

Let us find in You our unity so that  
we may journey together to eternal  
life and not stray from the way of  
truth and what is right.

All this we ask of You, who are at  
work in every place and time, in  
the communion of the Father and  
the Son, forever and ever.

Amen.

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## Pax Christi LR Pantry Mission

### Updates: February, 2022

Greetings to all Pax Christi Pantry Box volunteers! February was a very slow month due to the transitions taking place over at Jericho Way and the fact that several moves that were scheduled could not be completed because of inclement weather and recipient changes. However, there is great news that will be making a big difference in this ministry in the days to come. Christ the King, under the leadership of Mike Bernardo, is training with Stephanie and Lindsey and forming a CTK Settled Souls! Our prayer is that we will be twice as busy once the weather clears up and this new team becomes fully operational. Pax Christi will provide pantry start-ups for both Holy Souls and CTK recipients as needed. Five new bins were loaded with food on March 6 by our volunteers in preparation for the busy days ahead. Thanks to all of you for your donations of food and all you do to make this ministry a reality for the newly sheltered in our community.

On February 1, the Pax Christi Care team moved an Afghan family of seven from a temporary cabin at Ferncliff Camp and Conference Center to their new home in Little Rock. Settled Souls, along with donations from Christ the King Catholic Church, furnished their new space.



Stephanie!

This family was so grateful to have a place to call their own. Since departing Afghanistan in August, 2021,



Move-In Day

they had been moved around to three different bases and finally flown to Little Rock on December 6, 2021. Needless to say, they were very happy to be in a home that was more permanent!

As part of the resettlement process, Christ the King provided funds for food until the family was approved for subsidies that would get them through until the father could secure a job. And the care team took on the task of taking the family shopping



Kitchen Area

for food each week. There is such a difference in cultures and it will take a while for the family to learn to navigate in this very different world. However, this sponsor team is committed to supporting the family until they get on their feet and can function independently.



Living Room

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# SAVE *the* DATE

**Sunday,  
April 24, 2022  
2:00 PM**

**HEIFER INTERNATIONAL  
1 WORLD AVENUE,  
LITTLE ROCK  
BEACON OF PEACE & HOPE  
120 RIVERFRONT DRIVE  
NORTH LITTLE ROCK**

## 8th ANNUAL PILGRIMAGE For PEACE



**Remembrance  
Service  
3:00 pm  
Honoring those  
who have died  
at the hand  
of violence**

[www.pilgrimageforpeace.com](http://www.pilgrimageforpeace.com) [www.facebook.com/PilgrimageforPeaceLR](https://www.facebook.com/PilgrimageforPeaceLR)

### PILGRIM'S PRAYER Nineveh Murray

Dear God,  
We ask you blessing as we travel today in spirit;  
Guide our minds as we learn of those who  
came before us, traversing the pilgrim way.  
Give us a hunger to see you face  
in paths through fields,  
along roads trod by many seeking the blessing of your presence.  
Nurture our fellowship  
And help us to see each other as a  
brother or sister  
Sharing the journey to your blessed kingdom.  
Amen.





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## DIOCESE OF LITTLE ROCK

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Ash Wednesday  
March 2, 2022

To the people of the Diocese of Little Rock,

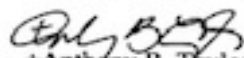
As we enter the penitential season of Lent in the midst of the completely unprovoked invasion of Ukraine by Russia, I would like to follow up on my recent statement on Just Peace by endorsing the pastoral letter on nuclear disarmament published on January 11, 2022 by Archbishop John C. Wester of Santa Fe. This is a very timely document given the invasion of Ukraine (a country which gave up its nuclear weapons following the breakup of the Soviet Union almost 30 years ago) by their nuclear weapon possessing neighbor. Can you imagine the danger to the whole world if both countries still possessed nuclear weapons? The text of his 51-page presentation can be downloaded from the website of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe at the following link:

[https://archdiosf.org/documents/2022/1/220111\\_ABW\\_Pastoral\\_Letter\\_LivingintheLightofChristPeace\\_Official\\_Reduced.pdf](https://archdiosf.org/documents/2022/1/220111_ABW_Pastoral_Letter_LivingintheLightofChristPeace_Official_Reduced.pdf)

Pope John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI and now Pope Francis have all spoken repeatedly about the immorality of even merely possessing nuclear weapons, given the existential threat they pose to the whole human race, the impossibility of their moral use and the grave danger of accidents that might occur. Over time the teaching of the Holy See has moved beyond the previous conditional acceptance of "deterrence" to the moral imperative of abolition. Indeed, the Vatican was the first nation state to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. As Pope Francis declared: *"We must never grow weary of working to support the principal international legal instruments of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, including the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons."* As such, Pope Francis calls all of us to work toward universal, verifiable nuclear disarmament.

As we begin this Lent, let us recall Jesus' call to be peacemakers in our families, in our communities and in our broken world. Our prayer for peace must then lead to concrete action to foster peace, that we might all live in peace as brothers and sisters, sons and daughters of the one Heavenly Father of us all. As Archbishop Wester writes in the Epilogue to his statement, *"But it is not enough that we become instruments of peace, as important as that is. No, we must take up the cause of worldwide nuclear disarmament with an urgency that befits the seriousness of this cause and the dangerous threat that looms over all of humanity and the planet."*

Sincerely in Christ,

  
+Anthony B. Taylor  
Bishop of Little Rock

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## PAX CHRISTI USA STATEMENT ON RUSSIA'S INVASION OF UKRAINE



Pax Christi USA condemns the Russian invasion and bombardment of cities throughout Ukraine that commenced earlier today. As St. John Paul II said in 2003 in response to the build-up and subsequent war in Iraq, “War is always a defeat for humanity.” The invasion of Ukraine is a direct violation of international law. The death and destruction already unleashed has only frustrated the hope for a just resolution of differences. To continue this war will only undermine long-term peace for the region. War does not solve the historical and political challenges at the root of this conflict; war is not the vehicle for creating a just peace.

Pax Christi USA is particularly troubled by Russia’s heavy-handed allusions to its nuclear weapons arsenal

and the implied threat of the use of nuclear weapons in the conflict. As explained by the [International Campaign Against Nuclear Weapons](#), such threats are prohibited by the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and elevates the risk of a massive humanitarian catastrophe.

Pax Christi USA urges the international community to stand united against the invasion of Ukraine and in support of diplomacy and dialogue to bring this crisis to an end. **We urge the United States and NATO to refrain from pursuing military responses and to pursue solutions that address the context and complexity of the root causes which gave rise to the crisis in the first place.** It should not be lost that in addition to Russian aggression, [the expansion of NATO](#) with the proliferation of bases, the continued manufacturing of weapons of war, and the reliance on security upheld by military power has played a significant role in the events building up to this current crisis. This war is additional evidence of the failure of policies predicated on the threat of violence to deliver the peace and dignity the human family deserves.

We urge political leaders, the media



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and influential voices within the U.S. Catholic community to refuse to beat the drums of war and to not support efforts to justify U.S. or NATO military action nor increase the flow of arms into the conflict. Such a response will only assure that the current violence will spiral ever more deeply and make even more unlikely the possibilities for an end to this war through dialogue and diplomacy.

We implore members of the Pax Christi USA community, U.S. Catholics, and people of faith everywhere to join together in [the day of prayer and fasting for peace in Ukraine called for by Pope Francis on March 2, Ash Wednesday](#). We encourage our community to publicly vigil in support of peace on this day. Our hearts are with all those in Ukraine who tremble in fear at the violence which has overturned their lives. Our hearts break for the losses already experienced, the suffering, displacement and death that cannot be erased. We stand with the people of Ukraine and all who are crying out for peace, and we join our voices to the plea of Pope Francis, "War, never again!"



## Prayer for Ukraine

Loving God, your Son Jesus Christ wept over Jerusalem.

Today, we weep over Ukraine.

We weep for those uprooted from their homes and lives.

We weep for those cowering in basements.

We weep for those who have witnessed death and destruction on their streets.

We weep for those separated from parents, from children, from spouses and siblings.

We are amazed at the resilience of people seeking to comfort those in need and so we pray for Governments opening up borders so that Ukrainians can have safe passage.

We pray for churches and individuals providing food, clothing and shelter.

We pray for medical workers ensuring that shattered bodies are put back together again.

We pray for ordinary Russians demonstrating and voicing their disapproval of the military actions in Ukraine.

May the Holy Spirit give us the willpower to turn our tears into action also.

May we, through our words, prayers and example pursue the things that make for a just peace in the world today and especially in Ukraine.

In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray.

Amen.