

# PEACE OFFERINGS

## **Pax Christi Little Rock Board Members**

- Mary Hunt (President)
- Sherry Simon (V. President)
- Sandee Haslauer (Secretary)
- Sherry Martin (Treasurer)
- Lee Bass (Chairperson)
- Sr. Iliana Aponte, DC
- Jan Pipkin
- Rosalyn Pruitt
- Tim Pruitt
- George Simon
- Tamara Tahat
- Father Warren Harvey (Chaplain)

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

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## Diocesan Council for Black Catholics to Share National Black Catholic Congress XIII Experience



### **National Black Catholic Congress XIII**

Nine members of the Diocesan Council for Black Catholics (DCBC) in Arkansas attended the National Black Catholic Congress XIII on July 20-23, 2023 in Washington, D.C. They have generously agreed to share information learned at the conference at the Pax Christi Little Rock Speaker Series scheduled for Thursday, August 17 at 6:30 CST.

The National Black Catholic Conference meets every five years, representing African American Roman Catholics and affiliated organizations. Their mission is based on their baptismal commitment to witness and proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ. This commitment inspires members to enrich the Church by evangelizing and enhancing the physical and spiritual well-being of African Americans both within and outside of the Church.

Over 3,000 people gathered for the congress, celebrating their faith and

one another. The theme of this year's convention was "Write the Vision: A Prophetic Call to Thrive," based on Habakkuk 2: 2-4.

The Diocesan Council for Black Catholics is an organization that seeks to sensitize people in Little Rock to the needs and gifts of the black community for the purpose of inviting more of the black community to be part of the Church. The DCBC office is located at St. Augustine Church in N. Little Rock. For more information, contact Rosalyn Pruitt at (501) 375-9617.

## **PAX CHRISTI LITTLE ROCK presents**



## **The Diocesan Council for Black Catholics**

**Stories from the National Black  
Catholic Congress XIII**

**August 17, 6:30 pm CST**

**Fitzgerald Hall, St. John's Catholic Center  
2500 N. Tyler St.**

**Little Rock, Arkansas**

**Live Presentation/Zoom option**

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85871404521>

## Peace Offerings

# Backpack Party Connects Young and Old in Community Outreach



**Packing Team**

This year, Pax Christi Little Rock (PCLR) provided school supplies for four schools (1159 students) as well as gift cards for teachers at two schools in Osceola, AR (North Elementary and Carroll Smith Elementary). Washington Elementary, St Theresa Catholic School and NLR Catholic School requested bulk supplies without backpacks. All of these supplies/cards were delivered to the schools by the last week of July. However, Broadmoor Elementary School in Pine Bluff, with 360 students grades K-6, requested their supplies pre-packaged in backpacks for each child. So, as in pre-Covid years, Pax Christi planned a party at 6:00 on Monday, July 31 in Fitzgerald Hall and over 25 people showed up to help pack these backpacks.



**Teamwork**



**6th Grade Team**

Probably the most beautiful thing about this event was the number of young people who showed up to volunteer with their



**Amazing Families!**

families! Their presence added an incredible energy to the undertaking. So much energy, in fact, that the whole process including instructions took less than one hour!

Of course, volunteers were provided with a dinner of "chicken nuggets and cookies" to fuel their efforts. There were lots of jokes and laughter, but it was awesome to watch how seriously everyone took this project. At the end of the night, Pax Christi loaded up exactly 360 backpacks, with the appropriate number assigned to each grade and supply list, into a U-Haul rented by Raymond and Leslie Bertasi. The next morning, the Bertasis delivered all of the backpacks to Broadmoor Elementary in Pine Bluff. This backpack project was a twofold success. Pax PCLR provided school supplies to children in need and PCLR received the



**Breakin' It Down**



**"Well-Oiled Machine!"**

gifts of community and growing friendships in return. It was truly a win-win proposition for everyone who participated!



## Peace Offerings

LOVE *thy* NEIGHBOR | TENDING THE SACRED FLAME

THURSDAY, SEPT. 7 - 6 P.M. - ALL ARE WELCOME

ST. MARK'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH - 1000 N. MISSISSIPPI - LITTLE ROCK  
& ONLINE @ YOUTUBE.COM/USER/THEINTERFAITHCENTERAn Interfaith Celebration of Peace  
through music, prayer, and wisdom, followed by  
The Interfaith Food Festival

Sponsored by: Arkansas House of Prayer and The Interfaith Center of Arkansas

MORE INFO AVAILABLE AT [theinterfaithcenter.org](http://theinterfaithcenter.org)

## Nagasaki and Hiroshima Remembrance: PCLR Members Join ACPJ and WAND at Oppenheimer Movie to Promote Nuclear Disarmament



The Oppenheimer Movie

In remembrance of the 78th anniversary of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings, Mary Hunt and Sandee Haslauer, Pax Christi Little Rock board members, joined Arkansas Coalition for Peace and Justice (ACPJ) and WAND (Women's Action for New Directions) at the Riverdale 10 VIP Theater August 6-8 during the screening of the newly released Oppenheimer movie. These groups worked together to host

an information table where they shared materials about the history of the bombings, the cost and threat of the US current nuclear arsenal, and talked with interested parties

about possible steps that can be taken to prevent future nuclear aggression.

Pax Christi Little Rock works with these peace partners and others each year to commemorate the bombings August 6-9) as a reminder of the dangers of nuclear weapons and the importance of developing nonviolent solutions to conflicts between nations.



Mary and Sandee

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**SAVE THE DATE****PAX CHRISTI LITTLE ROCK****presents****a screening of the documentary****Thursday, September 21****@ 6:30 pm CST****Fitzgerald Hall-St. John's Catholic Center****2500 N. Tyler Street****Little Rock, AR****Zoom link TBA****PCLR Sponsors Table  
at Taste of Faith****PCLR Members Sponsor Table at Taste of Faith**

On August 5, 2023, Pax Christi Little Rock supported the education of seminarians in the Diocese of Little Rock (DOLR) by sponsoring a table at the fundraiser, Taste of Faith. In addition to a wonderful meal at the Statehouse Convention Center, attendees were treated to music, entertainment, and testimonials from the seminarians and talks from Fr. Jeff Hebert, the diocesan vocations director and Bishop Taylor. The event also featured the premiere of "Why Priesthood?" a video about why seminarians decide to answer the call.

It costs the diocese approximately \$36,000 per year to educate and provide for the living expenses of one seminarian. The funds raised at Taste of Faith are the biggest financial support provided for DOLR seminarians.

**Diocese of Little Rock Seminarians 2023**



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### July Food Pantry Notes

Pax Christi Little Rock continues to provide initial start-up food pantries for previously unhoused individuals and families assisted by Settled Souls.



Settled Souls and Ms. Sharon

In July, Pax Christi assisted with two moves. On July 4, Settled Souls helped settle in Ms. Sharon. She was referred by Sr. Dominga at Abba House. She slept in her car for a prolonged period of time before moving to Abba House. Once there, she was able to get a housing voucher to help her get back into permanent housing. She had some furniture already, but Settle Souls provided a bed, bedding, bath towels and a dining room table and chairs. Lee Bass provided the startup pantry.



Initial Pantry Set-up



Settled Souls and Ms. Pam

On July 14, Settled Souls provided furniture for Ms. Pamela and her intellectually disabled daughter. They lost housing in Florida, so she moved back to her hometown of Little Rock. They received help from Abba House. She was grateful for all the help with cleaning supplies (she loves to clean), home goods, and food. Lee Bass and Sherry Simon provided the initial start-up pantry from Pax Christi Little Rock.

## Essay Contest

Open to students 7th – 12th grade  
Cash awards to winners in each grade

Entry deadline September 6, 2023

Visit [ArkansasPeaceWeek.com/Schools/](https://ArkansasPeaceWeek.com/Schools/)



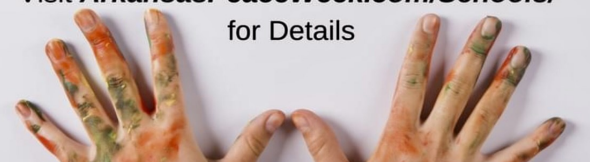
Pax Christi Little Rock is involved with several peace partners in organizing events for Arkansas Peace Week each year. Peace Week is part of the Campaign Nonviolence Week of Actions that takes place across the country and is designed to educate and promote peacemaking in our society. This year, Arkansas Peace Week is being held September 17-24, 2023.

## Arkansas Peace Week YOUTH ART CONTEST

Open to students 1st – 12th grade  
1st, 2nd & 3rd prizes winners for each grade

Entry deadline September 6, 2023

Visit [ArkansasPeaceWeek.com/Schools/](https://ArkansasPeaceWeek.com/Schools/)  
for Details



## Peace Offerings

## Hiroshima, Nagasaki change Forever How U.S. Christians Observe the Transfiguration

by Johnny Zokovitch

**NOTE:** Johnny Zokovitch, Executive Director of Pax Christi USA, was invited to offer the following reflection last week at the Masses at his parish in St. Louis on the Feast of the Transfiguration. You can read the pastoral reflection that was printed in the bulletin that accompanied the homily by [clicking here](#).



As a student of scripture, the transfiguration is one of my favorite passages. There's a ton here to unpack, especially narratively, from the significance of the mountain to why Moses and Elijah show up but not David or Abraham to Peter's puzzling desire to construct three tents and what that weirdness might be all about.

But August 6, 1945, changed forever the lens through which Christians, especially Christians here in the US, should and must read this passage.

Karl Barth, the great Protestant biblical scholar, spoke of what was essential in reading scripture. He said our study of scripture must be with the bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other. Or, since I might be the youngest person I know who still subscribes to the physical, hard-copy newspaper, Barth might say your iPad or tablet or whatever device you regularly get your news of the world on.

It is that intersection of what is happening in the world with the stories of our scripture that make the bible a living word. It is this ongoing conversation between the gospel stories and our cultural, political and economic narratives where our faith must be worked out.

Thus do we find a grotesque symmetry between reading the story of the transfiguration today, the 78th anniversary of the dropping of the atom bomb on Hiroshima, and how this Feast Day is forever linked to the violent eruption of the nuclear age. Only if we are living in denial or willful ignorance or scripturally illiterate can we not cringe or tremble at the language of Matthew in the years follow-



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ing Hiroshima: “he was transfigured before them, his face shone like the sun, his clothes white as light” and “a bright cloud cast a shadow over them.”

I was in Hiroshima on Aug. 6, 2017, and the testimony of survivors spoke of bodies DIS-figured, a perverse mockery of transfiguration. They spoke of a flash of light like the sun, but it was a white light which burned their eyes; and a cloud, like a mushroom, casting a shadow over the destruction of the city and the tens of thousands who died in that first instant, with over 300,000 dying eventually from the effects of the bombing.

My affinity for today’s passage in scripture lies in the fact that it is built around what is the simplest of requests that God makes of Peter, James and John – and by extension all of us who would take up their mantle these past two thousand years, calling ourselves disciples of Jesus. It is the voice from the biblical cloud that says: “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased. LISTEN TO HIM.” Listen to him. This is no summa of St. Thomas Aquinas, no Catechism of the Catholic Church, with their hundreds of thousands of words. It’s just three words: Listen. To. Him.

If our scientists and military leaders and elected officials actually had listened to him, there would never have been that other cloud, the one over Hiroshima, nor the next one over Nagasaki. The voice that spoke from those clouds said something else. It

was the voice of another kind of power, crying out in gleeful ecstasy and awe, “We have become death, the destroyer of worlds.” Maybe the voice of the chief priests, or Pilate; maybe Caesar. But not the voice of God.

As human beings, we still struggle, in big ways and in small, with the fundamental choice that God placed before the Israelites in Deuteronomy: “I set before you the choice between life and death, between blessing and curse.”

Culture warriors on the right who lament that the United States is rapidly losing its identity as a Christian nation have a point, despite exhibiting no evidence that they have any understanding of what it actually means to be a follower of Jesus, or, for that matter, any clue about who Jesus is, what he said, did, taught, died and rose for.

If slavery didn’t make it clear enough, if Jim Crow didn’t, if capitalism and wealth inequity hasn’t made it obvious ... if misogyny and ridiculous attacks on “woke-ness” and the marginalizing of LGBTQ+ folks, the obscenity of a military budget in the billions of dollars while veterans are homeless on our streets, the fact that the US imprisons millions of our fellow human beings, the complete and utter grip that the NRA has on our elected leaders and the children that are frequently sacrificed on the altar of Second Amendment idolatry ... if the failure to take seriously climate

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change and the risk of nuclear annihilation hasn't driven home the point ... let us not equivocate or dither any longer about whether this nation evidences anything Christian about it. What we have is the absolute failure of powerful people who claim Jesus as their lord and savior to do even that most simple of things that today's scripture insists is the starting place for discipleship: Listen to him.

Hiroshima made it clear about who those who crave worldly power worship, no matter where they might go to church on Sunday. And for those among us who enable or benefit from or allow such power to be exercised, it is clear that we too have failed that most basic of asks that God begs of us: Listen to him.

I considered ending this homily right there. The anniversary of Hiroshima seems to require no easy out here, no quick turn to optimism or to hope. But the people that I met in Hiroshima, especially the hibakusha, the survivors of that terrible day, seem to, in the power of their witness for a nuclear-weapons-free world, anticipate the very place where today's scripture passage ends.

As the disciples cast their faces to the ground, frozen in fear – perhaps at remembering that part of what they were being asked to listen to from Jesus included his prediction of his arrest, torture and death awaiting him in Jerusalem, and that his disciples would also be asked to take up that Cross in order to follow him – Jesus' words to them, maybe to us, are: "Rise, and do not be afraid."

Standing up to the powerful, resisting injustice, confronting violence, casting our lot with the rejected, the threatened, the victims, the survivors, this is the evidence of what it means to listen to Jesus. And despite the fear such choices might invoke in us – what it may cost us, where it may lead us – Jesus stands before us, his disciples, touching us, saying: "Rise, and do not be afraid." So here today – and every day – let us listen to him, then rise from these pews, and live out what we have heard as his disciples, knowing his touch and not being afraid.

**After six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them; his face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, conversing with him. Then Peter said to Jesus in reply, "Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you one for Moses, and one for Elijah." While he was still speaking, behold a bright cloud cast a shadow over them, then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." When the disciples heard this, they fell prostrate and were very much afraid. But Jesus came and touched them saying, "Rise, and do not be afraid." Matthew 17: 1-7.**