

## **Called to be Peacemakers: A Global Solidarity Retreat August 10-14, 2008**

### **An Update**

#### **What are the dates of the Retreat?**

The dates of the retreat are Sunday August 10<sup>th</sup> through Thursday August 14<sup>th</sup>.

#### **Where will the Retreat be held?**

We have made bookings at Malvern Retreat Center in Malvern, Pa. We will be using the Family life Center.

#### **What Do We Have To Budget For?**

Accommodations and Food;  
Flyers and advertising materials;  
Stipends for Staff;  
Props and Paper including the participants' journal;  
Transportation of staff and invited speakers; and  
Scholarships for participants.

#### **Who Will Pay for This?**

Contribution from Catholic Relief Services;  
Contribution from Parish/High School;  
Contributions from individual participants.

#### **Is this the first time this program will be offered?**

Yes, in this format.

#### **Is this the last time this program will be offered?**

Continuity is the key to this program and it is our wish that it will continue to be offered in following years. (See the section entitled "What happens after the August Retreat?" below.)

#### **How many participants?**

While it is tempting to work with many people, we feel that the nature of this work determines that we should work with a relatively small group. We will cap numbers of participants at twenty-five.

#### **Who are these people?**

The youth are all High School students from the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. They come from a range of parishes and high schools. We do think it is important to have more 'city kids' involved. We are looking at present juniors and sophomores to participate.

#### **Who is the Staff Team?**

We will have an experienced staff team during our time together in August. Hedley Abernathy is the Peacebuilding Education Advisor with Catholic Relief Services and is based in Baltimore, Maryland. We will also be joined by experienced facilitator and trainer, Pam Wood from Portland, Oregon.

#### **Keeping It Real.**

Talking about peacebuilding is tough. Actually carrying it out can be even tougher. With an eye to keeping it real, we have invited two of our colleagues working with Catholic Relief Services in the West Bank to join us. Burcu Munyas will share her experiences of working in one of the most hotly contested conflict zones on the planet and will give us particular insight of the realities of making peace 'on the ground.'

### **What happens after the August Retreat?**

Follow up is a key component of the program. During our time in August, participants will be given opportunities to record what they are going to do with the knowledge and skills they have gained during the retreat – we call it the “So What?” It is envisaged that each young person will go back to their parish and/ or school and will carry out some activity or project that will further peacebuilding in this world. This can range from arranging for a speaker to come to their parish to address a particular peacebuilding issue, setting up a Peace Chapter that meets regularly or maintaining contact with elected representatives on a particular issue e.g. Peace in the Holy Land. They may also develop their own program using materials developed by the Alternatives to Violence Project. Participants may wish to collaborate on running this retreat again in 2008. Whatever they come up with, we would like the participants to actively engage in peacebuilding activities and know they are supported as they do so.

### **The Role of Youth Ministers**

Our primary contact has been with Youth Ministers and if we want to see effective follow up to the program it is important that we also support our youth ministers/teachers. It was agreed that we would put together an information packet for Youth Ministers and possibly arrange a time to engage them in a conference call about the program.

### **The Journal**

Each of the participants will be given a journal to complete with a number of components:

- The key points from the General Sessions during the Retreat
- Inspirational quotes or poetry
- Questions to guide the young people's learning
- Notes on their Solidarity Work Plan.

Staff members have been assigned different sections of the retreat program and they will be asked to provide the above components relative to their particular section.

### **Stories at Bedtime**

A part of the program is what we call Stories at Bedtime. It is an acknowledgment that we are inspired to work for peace and justice by hearing the stories of others and also, we each have a story to tell. Each night we will ask two of the youth participants and one of the adult participants to share their particular peace and justice story.

### **Liturgy and Prayer.**

Prayer is an important component of our time together.

### **Where we stand.**

As we discuss what we mean by building peace, it is important to focus on a specific aspect of the work. Throughout our retreat, we will be able to focus on peace in the Holy Land. We are fully aware that peace generally and the issue of Peace in the Holy Land can be difficult to discuss. However, the nature of peacebuilding means that we must not seek to avoid contentious issues. It is our aim to provide a safe environment that not only allows us to express our views but also enables us to hear the views of others.

The Catholic Campaign for Peace in the Holy Land, an initiative of the Catholic Bishops' Conference endorses statements issued by the National Interreligious Leadership Initiative (NILI) in the United States. These statements provide our guiding principles in relation to our position on peace in the Holy Land. We will endeavor to be faithful to these principles and ensure that any and all points of view are heard with the premise that we are committed to the calls for action as set out by the National Interreligious Leadership Initiative.

**Arab-Israeli-Palestinian Peace:  
From Crisis to Hope  
Jewish, Christian and Muslim Religious Leaders  
Call on the United States to Make Peace a Priority**

**We call on the United States government to:**

- Make peace in the Middle East a top priority and exercise persistent, determined leadership at the highest levels to secure a just peace.
- Work, in coordination with the Quartet (U.S., European Union, Russia, United Nations), to create conditions that bring about serious negotiations on a two-state solution following the lines of the Roadmap.
- Build upon principles, benchmarks and practical ideas for peace that emerged from earlier initiatives.
- Explore bold initiatives for peace such as appointing a special envoy, hosting an international conference, and/or forming mutually acceptable security arrangements for a negotiated two-state solution.
- Work with Israelis, Palestinians and the international community to guarantee access to the Holy Places and religious liberty for all peoples.
- Support full implementation of U.N. Security Council Resolutions 1701 and 1559 in relation to Lebanon.
- Provide necessary and generous bilateral reconstruction assistance to Lebanon to help rebuild the civilian infrastructure and restore devastated communities, and aid to Israel to help rebuild communities that experienced destruction due to the war.
- Undertake diplomatic efforts to restart Israeli-Syrian and Israeli-Lebanese negotiations for peace.

**We call on the United States to encourage Palestinian leaders to:**

- Work actively to resolve the current crisis in Gaza and achieve an effective Israeli-Palestinian ceasefire.
- Work to achieve a comprehensive and lasting ceasefire with Israel, eliminate violent attacks against Israel and punish perpetrators.
- Make clear that the Palestinian Authority is committed to negotiating a two-state solution with Israel.
- Continue to develop democratic institutions and strengthen the rule of law, ensuring transparency and effective monitoring of aid to the Palestinian people.
- Work with Israelis and the international community to guarantee access to the Holy Places and religious liberty for all peoples.

**We call on the United States to encourage Israel to:**

- Work actively to resolve the crisis in Gaza and achieve an effective Israeli-Palestinian ceasefire.
- Seek effective ways to restart negotiations for peace with the Palestinians.
- Take concrete steps to support the prospect of a viable Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza.
- Support full implementation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1701 in Lebanon.
- Initiate diplomatic efforts to restart negotiations for peace with Syria and Lebanon.
- Work with Palestinians and the international community to guarantee access to the Holy Places and religious liberty for all peoples.

**We call on the United States to encourage Arab states to:**

- Support formation of a Palestinian Authority government fully committed to achieving an effective ceasefire with Israel and to negotiating a two-state solution.
- Support full implementation of U.N. Security Council Resolutions 1701 and 1559 in relation to Lebanon.
- Undertake diplomatic initiatives to restart and advance Israeli-Syrian and Israeli-Lebanese negotiations for peace.
- Work toward a comprehensive peace that recognizes Israel and ensures security and peace for all the nations of the region.
- Work with Israelis, Palestinians and the international community to guarantee access to the Holy Places and religious liberty for all peoples.

**A Common Commitment to Action**

As religious leaders we commit ourselves to working with the Administration and the Congress to support active, fair and firm U.S. leadership to help Israelis, Palestinians and Arab states achieve a just peace. We will pray for God's blessing to sustain all those who seek to build a just peace and will work within and across our respective faith communities to build bridges of understanding and a shared commitment to a just peace for all of the peoples of the Middle East.

We commit ourselves to building public support for peace with justice for all in the region. With the blessing of God, we are confident that this urgent moment of crisis can give way to genuine hope for all God's children in the Middle East.