Chadian Sister Engages Kansas City Youth about Peace and Justice

Londadjim, Nelkem

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What Inspired Me to Work for Peace?

Conversation with literature students

What inspired me to work for peace?

A big question! Very often, the priests and laypeople I rub shoulders with at Justice and Peace meetings are astonished to see me so up to date in discussions and debates about national and international political life.

One of the questions which comes nearly always to their lips is: “You’re a nun. Where does this passion for politics come from? This passion for justice and peace?”

I never know how to answer. I am embarrassed to give a plain answer, without getting into the details of my life. So I answer laughing, saying that if I had not been a nun, I probably would have gone into politics…
My story is simple. It is the story of a girl born in a big family. Yes, I am from a big family. The neighborhood where I was born was nicknamed L. P. Village, after my father, Londadjim Paul. I was living there safely, until one day…

I grew up surrounded by murmurs of war. In the beginning, it was far away. In my childhood, I used to hear: “Bandits have attacked such-and-such a place (in northern Chad). They have burnt down such-and-such a village.” It was all so far away… And then, one day, what was happening far away came close.

Stampede of people, dispersion… we fled, returned, fled farther, and then farther and farther away. These travels and displacements shaped me. The wounds, the happy things…

During that long journey of war and peace, I met somebody, Jesus Christ. I had not known him before. When I was a child, and we were sleeping in the same room with my mother, she never went to bed without saying, “Thank you, Lord.” Nor did she leave her room in the morning without saying, “Thank you, Lord.” Sometimes, we asked her: “Who are you thanking?” This question gave her the occasion to tell us about Jesus.

This Jesus, someday, would become somebody for me, so much so that he would mobilize all my life. What touched me in Jesus’ life is his humanity, his way of relating with people. What upset my life is when, on the cross, at the cruelest moment, he still had a kind word for his fellow human beings: “Father, forgive them. They do not know what they are doing.” That moment gave meaning to my life. I wanted to be like Jesus. I wanted to be an instrument of his love. Above all, I wanted to be an instrument of peace, justice, and reconciliation.
What inspired me to work for peace?

People used to say that Christians in the South and Muslims in the North disagreed, and that is what led to the war in Chad. Since then, I grew up, read a lot, and grew wiser. I learned that the war in Chad was much more complex and involved invisible foreign actors. I learned that it is the underground riches of Chad that became the problem of the country and its people.

The Word of God made me discover that denouncing evil without proposing any solution does not lead to the construction of peace. From then on, I learned to learn alongside others. With young people and less young people, we ask questions and look for the causes of problems. In so doing, we discover that we need each other. It is in cultivating understanding about how our differences are complementary that we are able to balance each other out and gain durable peace.