



from Garth...

Activists on the Way

The other day I was at the Zoom launch of the film *The People's Patriarch - Reflections* with Patriarch Michel Sabbah (Catholic Patriarch in Jerusalem). At the end of the showing the Director of the film, Mohammed Alatar, told an amazing little story. He said his son asked if he could interview him for school and he had a microphone there and he asked, "Who is your hero?" Mohammed said, "Oh, I don't know, I've never been asked that question before." So his son said he would give him time to think about it, and he came back the next day and asked it again. And Mohammed said, "Jesus." And his son said, "But we're Muslims!" Mohammed said, "Yes, but **Jesus was the first human rights activist. And his Sermon on the Mount is the best document on human rights.**"



Mohammed Alatar, film director

I was inspired by the comment, the clarity of spotting something which maybe many Christians wouldn't put in that way, but he saw it, that Jesus was an activist with a very well defined agenda.

It made me miss doing live concerts at the moment, because I would be sharing that quote each night. Thank you Mohammed, and thank you for the sensitivity of the moving film *The People's Patriarch*.

Sometimes we find that Christians are called "The People of the Way" - the people who follow the way of Jesus. Perhaps in line with Mohammed's quote we could call ourselves Activists on the Way.

Armed with love and human dignity, dignity for all

people



The People's Patriarch - Michel Sabbah

The People's Patriarch is an unusual film with an unusual atmosphere. It reflects the comments of an 80 year old man who's life is very much a life of prayer, but his comments about the situation in Palestine become even sharper because of that. A good film to look at in Lent home groups.

The film starts with these words,

"There's hardly any disagreement nowadays that the Palestinian people are experiencing the worst turn in their history. Gaza has been strangled by fire and siege and the West Bank is torn apart by settlements and walls. And Jerusalem? Jerusalem is out of reach. And to the millions of refugees stuck in the camps of despair, clinging to the hope of return - their Palestine has now become farther away than the sky. The country is being liquidated in front of our eyes in an unprecedented manner. It is hard for Palestinians to make sense of what is happening around them due to the injustice of their oppressor and abandonment of their Arab brothers. Has Palestine reached its last act? Or will there be a new dawn?

In a village (Taybeh, known in Jesus' time as Ephraim) blessed by the visit of Christ where he took refuge during his final days, there is a man in his 80s worshipping in solitude and praying for a new dawn, armed with love and human dignity, dignity for all people."

[You can see the film here](#)

From the album that didn't tour...

The very morning I was due to be in Swansea for the first concert that would feature the songs from **My Name Is Palestine**, I was talking with the promoter Alan Cram and we decided we had better cancel the concert, and that was it! No more touring since then, the lockdown had begun!

I'd been looking forward to doing the concert - it would include not only my own songs but on the new (it was new then!) album there are three or four songs of other people's. One of those is **Love Is The Way**, by a great songwriter and poet, Kris Kristofferson.

*Deep in the heart of the infinite darkness
A tiny blue marble is spinnin' thru space*

*Born in the splendour of God's holy vision
And sliding away like a tear down his face*

It seems like a suitable song at this time, and for this Lent.

We've put it on the website so [you can hear it here](#)

This song ends the album, and guitarist Dave Perry gives us a very nice playout!

You can read more about the Garth Hewitt Foundation and what it does [here](#), and if you would like to support Garth's continuing ministry you can donate by using the '[Support the GHF](#)' button there or on any page of his website, or contact us on info@garthhewitt.org

The cover-up has to stop

The prophetic figure of Archbishop Tutu has been an inspiration to so many of us.

His generous gospel message that sees the value of every person; his refreshing sense of humour; but also he is not afraid to raise issues that matter deeply. His recent article about the cover up of Israeli nuclear weapons appeared in the The Guardian on 31st December which [you can read here](#), or this slightly edited version below.

The cover-up has to stop – and with it, the huge sums in aid for a country with oppressive policies towards Palestinians.

Every recent US administration has performed a perverse ritual as it has come into office. All have agreed to undermine US law by signing secret letters stipulating they will not acknowledge something everyone knows: that Israel has a nuclear weapons arsenal.

Part of the reason for this is to stop people focusing on Israel's capacity to turn dozens of cities to dust. This failure to face up to the threat posed by Israel's horrific arsenal gives its prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, a sense of power and impunity, allowing Israel to dictate terms to others.

But one other effect of the US administration's ostrich approach is that it avoids invoking the US's own laws, which call for an end to taxpayer largesse for nuclear weapons proliferators.

Israel in fact is a multiple nuclear weapons proliferator. There is overwhelming evidence that it offered to sell the apartheid regime in South Africa nuclear weapons in the 1970s and even conducted a joint nuclear test. The US government tried to cover up these facts. Additionally, it has never signed the

nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

Yet the US and Israeli governments pushed for the invasion of Iraq based on lies about coming mushroom clouds. As Israeli nuclear whistle blower Mordechai Vanunu said: the nuclear weapons were not in Iraq – they are in Israel...

Israel's per capita gross domestic product is comparable with that of Britain.

Nevertheless, US taxpayer funds to Israel exceed that to any other country.

Adjusted for inflation, the publicly known amount over the years is now approaching \$300bn. This farce should end. The US government should uphold its laws and cut off funding to Israel because of its acquisition and proliferation of nuclear weapons. The incoming Biden administration should forthrightly acknowledge Israel as a leading state sponsor of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East and properly implement US law. Other governments – in particular South Africa's – should insist on the rule of law and for meaningful disarmament, and immediately urge the US government in the strongest possible terms to act.

Apartheid was horrible in South Africa and it's horrible when Israel practises its own form of apartheid against the Palestinians, with checkpoints and a system of oppressive policies. Indeed another US statute, the Leahy law, prohibits US military aid to governments that systematically violate human rights...

...and there are few truths more critical to face than a nuclear weapons arsenal in the hands of an apartheid government.

by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Nobel Peace Laureate, former Archbishop of Cape Town, and served as Chair of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission



Gill & Garth with Archbishop Desmond Tutu



Garth with Mordecai Vanunu

Prayer - God's Dream by Desmond Tutu

Dear Child of God,
Before we can become God's partners,
We must know what God wants for us.

"I have a dream," God says. "Please help me to realise it."

It is a dream where there will be more laughter, joy and peace,

More justice and goodness and compassion

And love and caring and sharing.

It is a dream of a world whose ugliness and squalor and poverty,

Its war and hostility, its greed and harsh competitiveness,

Its alienation and disharmony

Are changed into their glorious counterparts.

It is a dream where there will be more laughter, joy and peace,

More justice and goodness and compassion

And love and caring and sharing.

I have a dream that swords will be beaten into ploughshares,

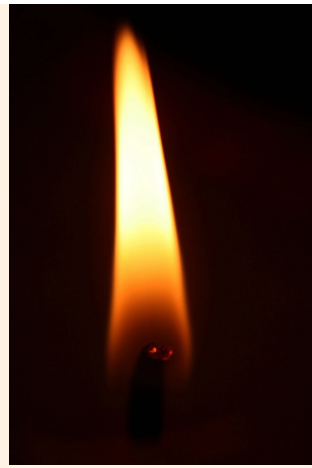
Spears into pruning hooks.

My children will know they are members of one family,

The human family,

God's family.

It God's family there are no outsiders. All belong.



A prayer used weekly by Amos Trust in the Words of Hope service, and also in the book Words of Hope

A pandemic of human rights abuses

The UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres has said the world is facing "A pandemic of human rights abuses," with authoritarian regimes imposing drastic curbs on rights and freedoms as a pretext to stifle dissent. Guterres said Covid had rolled back years of progress on human rights, and that abuses had thrived because "poverty, discrimination, the destruction of our natural environment and other human rights failures have created enormous fragilities in our societies..."

A recent report by Human Rights Watch found that at least 83 countries had used Covid-19 as a justification to attack free speech. Guterres said that the failure to ensure equity in vaccination efforts was "the latest moral outrage" to come out of the pandemic.

In the wilderness of Lent let's not forget these words - let's pray for our world, our countries and our communities. Let's stay sensitive to all that is happening in our world.

Prayer at Lent

O God as we enter Lent

May we remember we are walking with you on a journey towards Holy Week –

May we pause and pray and meet with you.

Your teaching has been about the kingdom or community of God,

A way of life and a community that goes up against the empires of domination –

As relevant now as it ever has been.

The empires of greed favouring the rich and powerful,

Instead of your way reflecting justice for all.

As you head to Jerusalem you are witness to this on Palm Sunday

As you ride in with non-violence,

From one side of Jerusalem gentle and riding on a donkey –

From the other side the army of empire, injustice, greed and oppression.

As you turn the tables of oppression, so the empire wants you killed

The powers who rule, crucify you: the sinfulness of the world kills you

But on Easter Sunday God affirms you and all you have done –

It is a rising again -

God's community of love continues forever.

May we be in the community of love -

The community that is never silent

And so a community of the Gospel bringing justice and hope to all.

It witnesses to the wounded God -

It whispers of the generous God of love

We walk with the activists on the way

And we are encouraged to become communities

That are just and loving - communities that make a difference

Communities that reflect the light of the Gospel and do justice, show mercy, and walk humbly with God.



Garth Hewitt



A CD of songs emphasising the dignity and value of each human being, with a strong rejection of the arms trade and war



Fourteen songs you go away singing - this album is a place of rest and encouragement for campaigners and activists, a place to draw strength and be renewed



Songs suitable for pilgrimage, born out of the stories of this land, but also out of the stories of the people of this land. The album is a prayer that Palestinians and Israelis will be treated as equal human beings, so the occupation of Palestinians will stop, justice will come, and then there will be peace and security for all.



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