†† DAVID JOHN KALKE
ARCHBISHOP AND PRIMATE / THEOLOGIAN
THE ECUMENICAL CATHOLIC CHURCH

PEACE AND WAR IN THE 21ST CENTURY

"…Yet in another way, what I am writing to you, and what is being carried out in our lives as it was in his, is a new commandment; because the night is over and the real light is already shining. Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his/her brother/sister is still in the dark…" I John 2:8-9

Discussions about *war and peace* have long been fluid in Christian communities of faith. As the early martyrs suffered persecution and were many time killed for their faith, the early church fathers/mothers were suspicious of State power and its abuse. St. Martin of Tours left his life of luxury and militarism to become a bishop of the poor and the father of pacifism, denouncing both a luxurious life style and militarism.

As wars during the Middle Ages advanced, so did the discussion about the Christian's role in wars. From pacifism to theories of "Just Wars," conversations sought to balance the role of the Christian inside the role of the developing modern State. Theologies and discussions of morality sought to find a role for the individual in a violent State, without ever questioning the State's right to wage war and to demand obedience to violence from its citizens. The mystic's space as prophet to the State shrunk as the "render unto Cesear" theme came to equal blind obedience to an oppressive State.

Rules were created to balance the obligatory violence with concerns of the Church. Soldiers were asked to lay down their arms, for example, during holy days and not kill on Christmas or during Holy Week. The discussions about "just wars" created the slippery slope that modern day liberal churches find themselves on as they attempt to apply medieval concepts of war to modern day realities. Modern day liberal churches – be they of the Catholic or Protestant traditions – find themselves ill equipped to discuss the moral issues confronting Christians who live in countries

F. (33) 3144 6704 C. 33 1546 9107 MAIL. DAVID.JOHN@ECCHURCH.NET
/THE ECUMENICAL CATHOLIC CHURCH /IGLESIA CATÓLICA ECUMÊNICA MÉXICO / AMÉRICA LATINA
WWW.ECCHURCH.NET
MARCO POLO N. 2934 FRACC. 18 DE MARZO C.P. 44960 GUADALAJARA, JALISCO MÉXICO.

where globalization has taken away State boundaries; where torture is accepted, pre-emptive strikes are the *modus operandi* and those involved in such crimes against humanity are given immunity; where technology has totally dehumanized war; and where the concept of "collateral damage" gives open space for unlimited violence against combatants as well as civilians, be they men, women, children, disabled or the elderly. Bombs from drones can be launched from thousands of miles away with the killer never seeing the victims or the results of his button-pushing. An ideology of computer games and the dehumanization of war seem to be the best moral guideline available in a civil religion out of spiritual control.

With the United States' announcement of an increased offensive in the Middle East against ISIS, the scene for Christians becomes clouded and appalling. As no one wanted to see the now-famous Walter Cronkite photo of the child burning from US napalm in Vietnam splashed across CBS screens in the early 1970's, so now no one wants to see images of journalists being beheaded. As a voice within the Ecumenical Catholic Church (ECC) and its Archbishop, I believe it is time to stop and reflect on who we are as Christians. Our church – located primarily in the Global South - is found in the United States, the United Arab Emirates, Kenya, Italy, Serbia, Mexico and Colombia. The ECC is an affirming church of the GLBT community. We are migrants and victims of violence. We therefore must take an internationalist and ecumenical perspective. The theories for "just war" do not serve us. The Crusades and inquisition cannot be repeated.

1. As a church which preaches the Good News, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Magnificat as sung by Mary, *we side with no Empire.* We must identify with the victims of oppression as it is being lived out today. We dare not live the fears of false realities created with no facts. We saw a war waged in Iraq based on such fears. The fear of the future

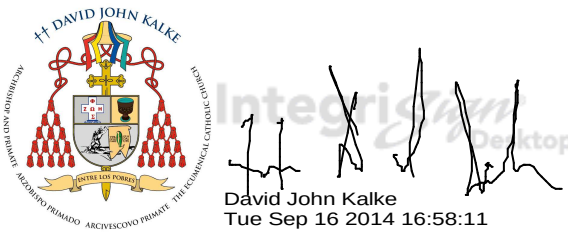
and the possibilities for terrorist attacks should not be used to justify acts against humanity.

2. Our Gospel is a radical message of *love.* We are called to love that which is outside of the boundaries of the societies in which we live, outside of the globalized comfort zones in which we seek to hide, outside of a multi-culturalism that is class-bound and defined. We are called to overcome discrimination, sexism, gender-phobias, etc. But we stumble over *"Love your enemies."* Rather than creating self-serving, weak coalitions, as one Holy and Apostolic Church, we are called into a world of the unknown to love. We are called to love that which is different from us. We are called to touch and heal, to embrace and bring back life.
3. We are a church of reconciliation, seeking to forgive as we distance ourselves from the violence of the Empire which has created a spiritually bankrupt environment. Can we forgive *seventy times seventy times?* The "eye for eye and a tooth for a tooth" ethic must be replaced. As we forgive, do we have the courage to ask for forgiveness, for secret "black hole" torture camps, Guantanamo, Abu Graib, civilians killed by drones, etc.?
4. The nations of the North and their Middle Eastern clients in globalization must ask themselves deep questions: Can the nations of the North ask for forgiveness for the destruction they wrought in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria and now Iraq again? Can the nations of the North conceive of economic aid, as opposed to just military aid? Can the nations of the North conceive of medical, educational, agricultural brigades or can they only think in terms of military responses?
5. In his thesis of 1796, the Father of Mexican Independence, Father Miguel Hidalgo, called on us to use the tools for political, economic and social analysis in our theological response to the world in which we live.

In the current Middle East reality, we have to ask the questions: Who created the borders and when, now being pushed by ISIS and other groups? Who funded and then killed Saddaam Hussein? Who funded and then killed Osama Bin Laden? Who funded and now want to kill ISIS? Where did the weapons being used by ISIS come from? What have been the results of so-called U.S. led coalitions, i.e. Libya and Egypt?

6. Communities of Faith in the Christian tradition have *priestly and prophetic* tasks to accomplish. **We need to stand with the bombed, and not the bombers.** We must denounce the abuse of power and sinister plans for globalization that look at the speck in the eyes of the "enemy" while overlooking the log in the eye of the Emperor and his court. We must care for the limp bodies being washed onto the shores of Sicily as we care for the undocumented migrants building Dubai.
7. We must pray and act:
   a. I call on Communities of Faith in the Christian tradition to reflect deeply on these issues as we maintain distance from an ideology that seeks yet another war, another death, yet more maimed and legless children and bombed pieces of life-giving infrastructure, from electrical systems, to health care systems to agricultural capabilities.
   b. I call on Christian theologians and ethicists to rework the themes of "just wars" and develop a life-giving ethic of love and tolerance fit for the 21st century.
   c. I call on liberal churches to distance themselves from the civil religions and dominant religions which blindly follow polices of death and destruction. The Crusades have ended! The time for just wars is over. As internationalists in a Church Universal, we need a new ethic.
   d. I call on members of Christian communities of faith to find ways to be priests and care for the wounded *and* be prophets denouncing

useless destruction and killing. The days are here for protests and resistance. The days are coming for us to make our voices heard and our presence felt.

e. I call on Christian communities of faith to not be used as weapons in an aggression against the Moslem world and the Islamic faith. We must separate ourselves from governments who want to take the "enemy to the gates of hell." A bellicose foreign policy cannot be dressed in bankrupt religious language that makes us complicit.
f. Pope Francis has warned of the dangers of World War III given the escalation of events. I call on all denominations and religious bodies to join with us in denouncing these acts of war and aggression being advanced by the nations of the North. I call on the religious press to ask its readers to reflect critically on these aggressions often times advanced using Christian symbols and to denounce it. Christian means for communication dare not simply follow the "line" of the Empire calling for war.

Jesus says *"Blessed are the peacemakers."* May we be moved to receive that blessing in these times of war and rumors of war. May we leave the darkness and walk in the light. *"…But anyone who loves his brother/sister is living in the light and need not be afraid of stumbling; unlike those who hate their brother/sister and is in the darkness, not knowing where s/he is going because it is too dark to see…" I John 2:10-11.*