

## Tuesday Reflection 14 September 2021

### **“Blessed are the peacemakers”**

This weekend we rightly commemorated the tragic loss of life of those killed in New York on 11th September 2001. Thinking about this, I wonder what ‘turning the other cheek’ might have looked like in a situation like this, and how peace would have been possible.

In the event, the cost of the US American knee-jerk reaction to “9/11” has been immeasurably greater than the initial damage caused..

Shortly after the attacks, President Bush asked Congress for a blank cheque - the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force (2001 AUMF) which gave him or any other president the authority to wage war against any and all enemies of their choosing. It was complemented by the 2002 AUMF which authorised war against Iraq. Together these two AUMFs have been used by three successive presidents to engage in warfare in at least seven countries from Yemen to Libya to Niger.

The human cost of these two AUMFs has been high - 238,000 deaths in Afghanistan (nearly 800 eyes for an eye) and some 288,000 in Iraq.

In financial terms, the result has seen US military spending running at \$32 million **per hour** - truly an eye-watering figure when you realise that 2 1/4 hours of US military spending is about the same as CAFOD’s budget for a whole year, and that 500 days of expenditure at that rate would enable the world to eradicate global hunger.

With the establishment of the detention centre on Guantanamo Bay and the use of torture against detainees there, a savage blow has been delivered to human rights everywhere, and it could be argued that the Western reaction to “9/11” has resulted in an increase in xenophobia and anti-immigrant sentiment, while at the same time leading to an increased displacement of populations with the effect of increasing the number of migrants.

It has become a commonplace, when faced with situations such as those in New York, Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria to ask “Where is God in all this?” The partial answer is perhaps that God is with the suffering, but He is also with those who put themselves at risk to help those who suffer. As Christians who believe in the Divine Presence in each and every one of us, might God also be asking us where we are in all this?

**Michael Townson**