Thank you Pax Christi

I am bemused that you feel I deserve this award, but so honoured.

Thank you to Valerie and Nan for nominating me so eloquently and generously. I thought – gosh I must deserve this award - after reading that!

Pax Christi has given me so much, from 1990 when my dear friend Pat Gaffney moved from CAFOD to work there and drew me in. Amongst the highlights have been producing ‘A Tase for Peace’ – Recipes and beautiful Reflections for Peace; Joining a delegation to Bethlehem in the West Bank in 2015 for an international gathering - witnessing the enormous effort for peace as we walked around the barrier wall and Palestinian refugee camps, saw the oppression of the Bedouin and even visited the site of the Oak of Mamre monastery amidst the tensions of Hebron. And the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative. I joined one of the many courses that have been runig.

It has been so important to me to get to know the peace community at home and internationally …. such inspirational, creative, compassionate and thoughtful people. We have shared meals – the best of any NGO gathering - and multiple experiences, but most of all have shared an affinity and a vision.

I’ve been led into kneeling outside the Ministry of Defence on Ash Wednesday, playing the guitar in the crypt of Westminster Cathedral in the annual service to commemorate Franz Jaggerstatter, and, last Saturday, joining in the alternative vision presented by the conscientious objectors day service in London as well as being introduced to a Sambalpuri Folk Dance in the dance-a-thon for Pilgrimage for Peace! I turned my camera off – but I assure you I did it!

The nomination says I bring together strands of justice and peace and highlighting the scale of violence against God’s creation. And Yes, some might call me obsessed with the Church’s Social Teaching, particularly Laudato Si.

In all this, I thank the Columbans – who are marking Biodiversity Day today - for having me in their Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation team in Britain for more than three decades, giving me the freedom and resources to pursue that agenda. The Columbans are active members of Pax Christi internationally; in fact, in Washington and London we have shared an office building!

And I thank my family – Gerry and our three gentle and wonderful young men who have prompted a life-long commitment to the Justice and Peace movement, and Pax Christi in particular, to give all our young people a future of peace.