



PRESS RELEASE

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Father Michael Lapsley, SSM to receive the Niwano Peace Prize

The 39th Niwano Peace Prize will be awarded to Father Michael Lapsley, SSM of South Africa in recognition of his relentless struggle against apartheid and social discriminations, his support for the liberation movement in South Africa and various peacebuilding activities in other parts of the world. Father Lapsley's non-violent, multi-faith peacebuilding efforts and activities of healing based on restorative justice approach, dialogue, and reconciliation are continuing to contribute to the healing of South Africans as well as many others all over the world. He has contributed immensely to the cause of peace and inter-religious cooperation, which is in congruence with the mission of the Niwano Peace Prize.

The presentation ceremony will take place in Tokyo, Japan, on Tuesday, June 14, 2022. In addition to an award certificate, Father Michael Lapsley, SSM will receive a medal and twenty million yen.

To avoid undue emphasis on any particular religion or region, every year the Peace Foundation solicits nominations from people of recognized intellectual and religious stature around the world. In the nomination process, some 600 people and organizations, representing 125 countries and many religions, are asked to propose candidates. Nominations are rigorously screened by the Niwano Peace Prize Committee, which was set up in May of 2003 on the occasion of the 20th Anniversary of the Niwano Peace Prize. The Committee presently consists of nine religious leaders from various parts of the world, all of whom are involved in movements for peace and inter-religious cooperation.

Here are some comments by members of the Committee on the selection of Father Michael Lapsley, SSM for this year's award:

- [He] lost both hands and one eye. He did not become bitter. Rather he not only carried on his struggle, he set about working on healing and reconciliation. His work focuses on healing across all sorts of divides. He saw injustice and he fought it. He saw damage and he has strived to heal it. (Mrs. Sarah Joseph OBE)
- Father Michael Lapsley is very deserving of the Niwano Peace Prize. Father Lapsley has fought apartheid, which is one of the most striking forms of a hateful and painful phenomenon such as racial or ethnic discrimination. By doing so he has earned the esteem and respect of black South Africans of all religions. This commitment... was the cause of a very serious attempt on his life... gravely injured him, he lost both hands, the sight of one eye, and was severely burned. But a few years later, this attack also provoked a real transformation in him, a conversion, from... freedom fighter to healer and reconciler. This shows that in addition to exercising the virtue of fortress, thanks to which he has endured the very serious consequences of the attack suffered, Father Lapsley also exercises the

virtue of humility. In his commitment he has met and collaborated with people of different religious beliefs to lead them to peace of heart. (Dr. Flaminia Giovanelli)

- After experiencing some gruesome torturing from those favoring racism, discrimination and inequalities; Father Lapsley was not scared to challenge the evils imposed by his own people over the disadvantaged. Even after liberation of South Africa from apartheid, Father Lapsley did not stop his mission of being a social justice activist for all. He realized that something more needs to be done to the victims of racism and apartheid for their holistic healing. As a global activist, Father Lapsley after recognizing that racism had not been confined to South Africa alone, he did not end his campaign for healing of memories of those within his country, he also moved globally. (Dr. Nokuzola Mndende)
- Forgiveness and hope are essential as learned from his life experiences in order for healing to take place across societies around the world. His contribution to this long-term work emphasizes and supports trauma healing and peaceful coexistence. He has reached many persons through dialogue processes at the grassroots to the top of political and religious hierarchies. His influence on healing of memories has helped many persons all over the world. (Mr. Somboon Chungprampree)
- Despite of the attack and losing his both arms, he courageously promotes healing of memory. He does not only preach it but practices it in his institution for healing memories. A victim of violence but an example of forgiveness. I still believe that Father Lapsley deserves to be recognized in such a ruthless world, where violence and power crush the victims. He paid a high price but still speaks about healing of memory. As there are many persecuted victims in our world, this is a sign of an empowered victim who speaks about forgiveness and healing. People of power need to see that we recognize victims of power. (Bishop Dr. Munib A. Younan)

The Niwano Peace Prize

The Niwano Peace Foundation established the Niwano Peace Prize to honor and encourage individuals and organizations that have contributed significantly to inter-religious cooperation, thereby furthering the cause of world peace, and to make their achievements known as widely as possible. The Foundation hopes in this way both to enhance inter-religious understanding and cooperation and to encourage the emergence of still more persons devoted to working for world peace.

The Prize is named in honor of the founder and first president of the lay Buddhist organization Rissho Kosei-kai, Nikkyo Niwano. For Niwano, peace was not merely an absence of conflict among nations, but a dynamic harmony in the inner lives of people as well as in our communities, nations and the world. Seeing peace as the goal of Buddhism, Niwano devoted much of the latter half of his life to promoting world peace, especially through inter-religious discussion and cooperation.

Niwano Peace Prize recipients are:

1. Archbishop Hélder P. Câmara (1983)
2. Dr. Homer A. Jack (1984)
3. Mr. Zhao Puchu (1985)
4. Dr. Philip A. Potter (1986)
5. The World Muslim Congress (1987)
6. Rev. Etai Yamada (1989)
7. Mr. Norman Cousins (1990)
8. Dr. Hildegard Goss-Mayr (1991)

9. Dr. A. T. Ariyaratne (1992)
10. Neve Shalom/ Wahat al-Salam (1993)
11. Paulo Evaristo Cardinal Arns (1994)
12. Dr. M. Aram (1995)
13. Ms. Marii K. Hasegawa (1996)
14. The Corrymeela Community (1997)
15. Ven. Maha Ghosananda (1998)
16. The Community of Sant'Egidio (1999)
17. Dr. Kang Won Yong (2000)
18. Rev. Abuna Elias Chacour (2001)
19. Rev. Samuel Ruiz García (2002)
20. Dr. Priscilla Elworthy (2003)
21. The Acholi Religious Leaders' Peace Initiative (2004)
22. Dr. Hans Küng (2005)
23. Rabbis for Human Rights (2006)
24. Dharma Master Cheng Yen (2007)
25. His Royal Highness Prince El Hassan bin Talal (2008)
26. Rev. Canon Gideon Baguma Byamugisha (2009)
27. Ms. Ela Ramesh Bhatt (2010)
28. Mr. Sulak Sivaraksa (2011)
29. Ms. Rosalina Tuyuc Velásquez (2012)
30. The Rt. Rev. Dr. Gunnar Stålsett (2013)
31. Ms. Dena Merriam (2014)
32. Pastor Esther Abimiku Ibanga (2015)
33. Centre for Peace Building and Reconciliation (2016)
34. Bishop Dr. Munib A. Younan (2017)
35. Adyan Foundation (2018)
36. Dr. John Paul Lederach (2019)
37. Venerable Pomnyun (2020)
38. Venerable Shih Chao-hwei (2021)

The Niwano Peace Foundation

The Niwano Peace Foundation was chartered in 1978 to contribute to the realization of world peace and the enhancement of a culture of peace. The foundation promotes research and other activities based on the spirit of religious principles and serves the cause of peace in such fields as education, science, religion and philosophy. The Foundation's assets of about 4.4 billion yen makes possible the Niwano Peace Prize and other activities such as grants, research projects, lectures, symposia, and international exchanges. The Niwano Peace Foundation is a government-recognized charitable organization.

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