

FOOD FOR THOUGHT - Peace and Chocolate

Mary Rowell, CSJ, on behalf of the Federation Ecology Committee

Usually, this contribution to the Federation Newsletter from the Ecology Committee addresses, in a direct way, issues around food security. Some recent visits to Antigonish, Nova Scotia, however, reminded me of an initiative through which food, in this case chocolate, is connected intentionally with global peace.

Driving through lovely Antigonish I spotted the premises of “Peace by Chocolate,” a thriving business that was the dream of the Hadhad family who emigrated to Canada as refugees from Syria in 2016. Tareq Hadhad, the eldest son of the family tells the story in this way, “When we came to Canada a few years ago, we had a dream and mission: A dream to rebuild our lives and a mission to share our story of hope and resilience. Today, “Peace by Chocolate” is run by Tareq, his father, Isam and his mother, Shahnaz. Other family members are also engaged in the company. The Hadhad family of chocolatiers had previously run a thriving business in Damascus for over 30 years. In November of 2012 their business was bombed leaving them destitute. They fled to Lebanon for safety and spent 3 years there until they were able to come to Canada and to a warm Nova Scotia welcome.

Beginning in their home kitchen in Antigonish they began rebuilding their lives piece by piece or as Tareq would say, “Peace by Peace”. Today their expanding business is highly successful producing artisan chocolate and employing numerous people in cities across Canada and in the United States.

What is truly significant in this story is the contribution by the Hadhad family of a percentage of all their profits to the “Peace on Earth Society.” The charitable organization was begun in Nova Scotia by the Hadhad family in 2018. It supports peace building initiatives around the world. As Tareq says, “peace is the noblest value on Earth,” a value which all people

should embrace. How true his words are as we look around the world at present with all its turmoil, wars and violence.



The Hadhad story is remarkable, highlighting the importance of peacebuilding initiatives. It also echoes a wider narrative about the relationship between violence and food insecurity. The Stockholm Peace Research Institute reports that “Global food Insecurity is driven

primarily by violent conflict, climate change, the ripple effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and the rising cost of living.” Food insecurity and its consequences, the Institute points out, are most prominent in countries where conflict exists and those affected by human and natural disasters. “Therefore, food security is a critical issue for peace and security. The food crisis requires a response that is simultaneously humanitarian, pro-development and peace oriented.”

Such a response is illustrated by the commitment, born of their own sufferings, of the Hadhad family as they work to help build peace through their support of practical projects across the world; projects that address ways to create an environment and climate for peace. Food for peace! Chocolate for peace! They provide an example for us and they invite us to find our own ways to work for peace and security including food security, locally and globally.

So, the next time we are looking for that “sweet” gift for someone perhaps it will be a gift of “Peace - by Chocolate”! Having tasted it I can guarantee its “deliciousness” and delicious too is freedom from hunger, conflict and loss for the millions who suffer in the world today.

(Peace by Chocolate can be ordered on line, through various specialist shops, Ten Thousand Villages outlets and is often available at Sobeys stores)

