

Born from lament: Alastair McIntosh's Thought for the Week

'Our true battlefield is first the soul.'

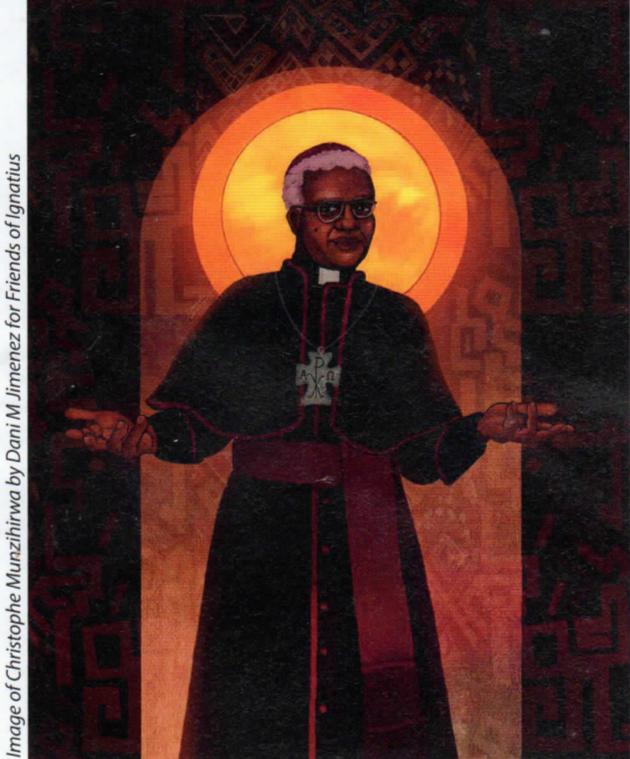


Image of Christophe Munzihirwa by Dani M Jimenez for Friends of Ignatius

There are things that can be seen only with eyes that have cried.

That's a line from a book called *Born from Lament*, which I've been reading over the New Year. The book is by Emmanuel Katongole, a professor of theology and

peace studies at the University of Notre Dame, who suggests that, in the midst of suffering, hope takes the form of 'arguing' and 'wrestling' with God. But the line itself is from Christophe Munzihirwa Mwene Ngabo, a Catholic priest from Democratic Republic of the Congo, who in 1996 was tortured and then murdered by Rwandan soldiers, after a life of advocacy for human rights.

Human rights, and with them, the rights that protect nations, are embedded in international law. As we embark on 2026, these are what risk being unravelled as the White House announced this week that it will consider, 'utilizing the US military' to take Greenland away from Denmark.

These are distressing times, for international law exists to help the nations to live in peace.

In the Jewish, Christian and Islamic faiths, the law of Moses was written down on Mount Sinai on tablets of stone. Christians call it the Old Covenant, mapping out the paths of righteousness, or right relationships, with God and one another.

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But the Hebrew prophets knew that words alone would never be sufficient. They looked towards fulfilment in a New Covenant, what Christians call 'the Way, the Truth and the Life', written not on stone or statute books, but on the beating hearts of every one of us.

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emotion. It has no transformative potential; it lacks the imaginative hope, the spiritual vision that can be 'born from lament'.

'We cannot transform the social system,' said Munzihirwa, 'without reforming ourselves first.'

'Our true battlefield is first the soul, the spirit of man'; and so, he concluded, 'The strongest countries are those [that] have succeeded in reconciling differences.'

An icy blast is blowing down from Greenland this new year. But it need not leave us frozen to the marrow and blinded by despair. Remember those heartwarming words of the martyred Munzihirwa: 'There are things that can be seen only with eyes that have cried.'

Enfolded from lament, is born a deeper hope. ●

Alastair is from Glasgow Meeting.