

Tomorrow [December 10] this year's Nobel Peace Prize will be awarded in Norway. The recipients are not world leaders or internationally recognized authorities in law or economics or science or philanthropy. The 2018 Nobel Peace Prize will be shared by a 63-year-old physician working in Africa and a 25-year-old survivor of sexual violence. Dr. Denis Mukwege is gynecologist who has seen the damage from Congo's brutal civil war play out in the bodies of women. In 1999, he opened a hospital that specializes in treating the victims of sexual violence and rape. At the risk of his life and that of his family, Dr. Mukwege continues to operate his struggling hospital, with little electricity and never enough medical supplies, and campaigns relentlessly to call attention to the plight of his innocent patients. Dr. Mukwege was in the operating room when he was told that he won the Nobel.

When the Islamic State overran her homeland in Northern Iraq in 2014, Nadia was abducted along with thousands of other women and girls. Nadia was sold into sexual slavery. She managed to escape — but rather than remain silent and anonymous as her culture dictates, Nadia has openly and courageously told her story, calling the world to act on behalf of millions of women and girls who have been sexually brutalized by war. She has spoken before the United Nations Security Council, the British Parliament, and the U.S. House of Representatives — but while other Iraqi survivors testified before the same bodies with faces covered so as not to be identified on television, Nadia insisted on showing her face. She is considered an icon in the villages of her homeland. As she writes in her autobiography **The Last Girl**, “I want to be the last girl in the world with a story like mine.”

St. Paul prays for growth in goodness. You and I never reach a point at which we can say this is all I am ever going to be. I think we human beings take very gladly to the notion that we do not always have to be only what we have been. Choose to change. Our advent call to wait for the coming of Christ and for the perfection that that will bring into our lives is no passive thing. Prepare the way of the Lord; in other words, get the world ready for perfection. There is a big difference between the stance of simply waiting for Christ to come with trumpets blaring and take the world back from us and the stance of we ourselves actively gathering the world together and giving it back to Christ. Do we not agree that each of us want to leave this world of ours a better place? This is how we prepare for perfection, this is how we mark the world, as much of it as we can touch with goodness, with generosity, with love. It really is true, in a profoundly Christian sense, the only things we ever really own are the things we give away.