

Ordinary Time
August, 2017

Magnificat



Dear Friends,

No more drought in Alabama! We have had lots of rain this year, and even now the humidity is high enough to make us suffer. Some days it coalesces in thunderstorms; some days we just swelter. It's all enough to make us talk nostalgically on the vigil line, remembering the cold days of winter.



The rain was good for the garden - cukes and tomatoes, sugar snap peas, and lots of flowers. Last year's chard and kale need to be pulled, and most of the tomatoes are gone. Time to visit the farmer's market for a big watermelon!

Our guests too have found this a fruitful year. One mom with 3 kids was hired by a firm in Memphis, and I hear that she's already gained a promotion and had to go to Texas for training. Good for her! Our other two guests have been working now for a couple of months and are beginning to look for places of their own. Savings accounts are growing nicely.



We are in the process of filling our empty room.

Sometimes it takes a while to find a good fit. This week we met with a mom who wanted to come with her two daughters - but she didn't show up for her move-in time. Perhaps she found a friend to stay with, or worked out another solution. We'll be meeting with another mom next week to see if she thinks this might be a place for her.

As always, we thank you for your help in keeping this place open. We are very small, and no one gets paid. That means our expenses are low, but we still have expenses. Thank you to everyone who helps us meet them, those who donate regularly and those who give when they can. Thanks to those who answer calls for diapers and baby clothes and paper goods - like the Ladies Auxiliary of Peter Claver, and to the parishes that give food and money, like St Peter's. Thanks to John who comes weekly to mow the lawn, and to Jean who came to take the house this month while we were away, and to Carmen who filled in when I was a whole day late getting home!

Writing the thank you paragraph always reminds me of the generosity that surrounds us, and how that generosity needs a funnel to flow through.

We are like the funnel here - your generosity flows through this house and brings succor to those who need it. It's our privilege to be the faces of your care for others. Thank you.

Our big trip to the Northwest in August was a lovely break. We went to join four other friends from Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action who were all born in the same year as Jim - 1937. This year they turned 80! We had a great time toasting the birthday kids and also celebrating the 40th anniversary of the founding of Ground Zero, which we helped begin. (Check it out at www.gzcenter.org. Still going strong, working to end nuclear weapons!)



As we live into these elder years, we're quite aware that my time at Mary's House is limited. I find that as I age my patience is thinner, my energy less. We've made adjustments around here - a 9 pm curfew instead of 10, for example, but the time will come when I need to hand Mary's House off to someone (or someones) else. We are meditating on this with our board, and asking for insight from others - like you - about who might feel called to take on this work, and/or what form it might take. We've looked for people to join us over the years but it hasn't worked out. Perhaps this is the time for someone, or some family who've been thinking or hoping for a Catholic Worker life to try it here.

Meanwhile our life goes on - we have been out almost every day this week at our own regular vigils for peace and justice or at solidarity events for Charlottesville. Words seem inadequate for this time in our communal life when the government backs hate at home and threatens nuclear war abroad all at once.... While it's possible that the president will be removed, the current government will remain to cut services, build up arms, and repress civil rights. We remember Franz Jaegerstatter and the White Rose, simple people who gave their lives in resistance to the Nazi regime in Germany. We take heart from their example. And we remember Franciscan father Jerry Zawada who has just moved into the Cloud of Witnesses. May we live up to their examples.



God's peace,
Shelley D.

ADVENT RETREAT: December 8-10, 2017

A Pilgrimage Into Nonviolence

With Marie Dennis and Rose Berger



Advent is a season of pilgrimage, a time of sacred travel. It helps us answer what Goethe called "the holy longing". Making a pilgrimage is different from "making progress". Advent is a season of transformation, an invitation to be born again, a time of embracing God's peace.

Join Marie Dennis and Rose Marie Berger on this retreat where we will explore the Catholic Church's pilgrimage toward nonviolence and peace. We will build on the stories and experiences of those who gather and encourage lively dialogue between our own stories and Pope Francis' words in his message "Nonviolence: A Style of Politics for Peace." We will also explore the international roundtable process occurring over the next year to lay the groundwork for a possible encyclical on recentering nonviolence at the heart of the Catholic Church.

Join us: Friday, Dec. 8th, 7 pm, to Sunday, Dec. 10th, noon at the Rush Center, 1126 Wilkes Rd, Midfield AL.

Cost: \$60 for days only, \$65 for overnight. Includes all meals & the weekend.

To register, call, write, or email: shelermcdouglass@gmail.com; Mary's House, 2107 Ave 6, Birmingham, AL 35218; 205 780 2020.

Marie Dennis has been co-president of Pax Christi International since 2007. She worked with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns from 1989 to 2012, including 15 years as director. She is a laywoman and mother of six. She holds a masters degree in moral theology from Washington Theological Union and honorary doctorates from Trinity Washington University and Alvernia University. She is author or co-author of seven books and serves on many boards and committees dedicated to peace and justice. She is a Pax Christi USA Ambassador of Peace.

Rose Marie Berger is a religion journalist, author, public speaker, and poet. She is a veteran activist who educates and trains groups in nonviolence, leads retreats on spirituality and justice, and writes on a wide range of topics relating to faith, politics, and culture. In April 2016 she and Marie joined a global conference in Rome to wrestle with how the Catholic Church could "recommit to the centrality of Gospel nonviolence", contributing a framing paper on Just Peace.

Background for our Advent Retreat!

The Catholic Peace Initiative was launched at the Nonviolence and Just Peace Conference held in Rome April 11-13, 2016. It was co-sponsored by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and many international bodies. People from the Americas, Asia, Oceania, the Middle East, and Europe gathered to call on the Catholic Church to take a clear stand for active nonviolence and against all forms of violence. This gathering contributed to the message partially reprinted below and initiated a roundtable process to lay the groundwork for a possible encyclical recentring nonviolence at the heart of the Catholic Church. Come and hear more at our retreat!

NONVIOLENCE: A STYLE OF POLITICS FOR PEACE

Message of Pope Francis for the 50th World Day of Peace

The Good News

3. Jesus himself lived in violent times. Yet he taught that the true battlefield, where violence and peace meet, is the human heart: for "it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come" (Mk 7:21). But Christ's message in this regard offers a radically positive approach. He unfailingly preached God's unconditional love, which welcomes and forgives. He taught his disciples to love their enemies (cf. Mt 5:44) and to turn the other cheek (cf. Mt 5:39). When he stopped her accusers from stoning the woman caught in adultery (cf. Jn 8:1-11), and when, on the night before he died, he told Peter to put away his sword (cf. Mt 26:52), Jesus marked out the path of nonviolence. He walked that path to the very end, to the cross, whereby he became our peace and put an end to hostility (cf. Eph 2:14-16). Whoever accepts the Good News of Jesus is able to acknowledge the violence within and be healed by God's mercy, becoming in turn an instrument of reconciliation. In the words of Saint Francis of Assisi: "As you announce peace with your mouth, make sure that you have greater peace in your hearts".[3]

To be true followers of Jesus today also includes embracing his teaching about nonviolence. As my predecessor Benedict XVI observed, that teaching "is realistic because it takes into account that in the world there is *too much* violence, *too much* injustice, and therefore that this situation cannot be overcome except by countering it with *more* love, with *more* goodness. This '*more*' comes from God". [4] He went on to stress that: "For Christians, nonviolence is not merely tactical behaviour but a person's way of being, the attitude of one who is *so convinced of God's love and power* that he or she is not afraid to tackle evil with the weapons of love and truth alone. Love of one's enemy constitutes the nucleus of the 'Christian revolution'".[5] The Gospel command to *love your enemies* (cf. Lk 6:27) "is rightly considered the *magna carta* of Christian nonviolence. It does not consist in succumbing to evil..., but in responding to evil with good (cf. Rom 12:17-21), and thereby breaking the chain of injustice".[6]

Read the whole message at

<https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents>

BREAKING BOUNDARIES

As I write, on August 20th, it's one week after the shattering events in Charlottesville, and about two weeks after the president's nuclear threat to North Korea. "You will not replace us!" or alternatively, "Jews will not replace us!" - chanted the young men with the Tiki torches in Charlottesville. They have a hatred born of fear, fear of being replaced, of not being good enough, of being superseded. Well-armed hatred, I think, as I look at the photos and videos of paramilitary groups in Charlottesville carrying automatic weapons and "protecting" their cohorts.

The president's threat of "fear and fury" on North Korea has a similar flavor: you will not replace us! He made this threat on August 8th, between the anniversaries of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Those (now primitive) A-bombs are the only ones to have been used deliberately on a human population. They were used by the United States. Korea was not hit by nuclear weapons, but the peninsula was heavily bombed by the US during the 1940s and 50s. It isn't surprising that Koreans are afraid of American military intentions.



In today's Gospel reading we find Jesus too protecting his people's national interests - his mission, his gifts, were "only to the children of the house of Israel". His people were conquered, after all, and most of them were exploited both by the Romans and by their own rulers. It would be natural to save his gifts for them, but the determined mother who confronted him had no patience for boundaries. "Even the dogs," she says, "get the crumbs from beneath the children's table." And I don't think she considered herself a "dog".

I can imagine her standing stiffly, proudly, and answering this stranger in his own idiom: even the dogs get the crumbs. She knew the insular nature of the Jews among whom she lived, and I can imagine that with the rest of the population she probably considered them strange. Maybe she looked down on them, but her daughter had a demon, and this man could help. Perhaps she had to humble herself and let go of her own prejudices to ask for his help. Perhaps she tore down some walls of her own.

Her response seems to have made a change in Jesus. He does what she asks, and he commends her faith. Maybe her courage tore a hole in his own boundaries, and he began to see the image of God in those outside. At any

rate he broadened his boundaries for her, and he continued to broaden them. Indeed, after Easter the followers of the Way officially broadened their boundaries to include everyone. Everyone is invited. Everyone is In.

• We have made new signs for our twice-weekly vigils. We still keep and use the old ones - "War is not the answer", "No nukes", "Black Lives Matter". We've added "No fear, no fury", "No Hate in the Ham", "We Are All One Human Family". These days we get mostly positive responses, but there are negatives as well. There are young white men who gun their pick-up trucks past us and yell, "Trump! Trump!" or, once, "War is heaven!" Sometimes we can't understand what they're saying, but we know it's not friendly from the tone. We get some thumbs down signs too, and some single fingers, and frowns and headshakes.



My natural tendency is to shrug and dismiss these folks, but I have to wonder: those are my walls, and maybe I need to be looking beyond them. It's possible that the hostile folks have the gifts and insights we need to build a movement beyond racial and economic boundaries, a movement like the one Dr. King dreamed of. I remember Will Campbell, who ministered for years to the Klan as well as the Movement, trying to extend the definition of "In" for everyone.

The strategy of the corporate Empire is to divide and conquer, so perhaps our strategy needs to unite us all. Structural injustice needs to be recognized and overcome, and to do that we need to make common cause. Frankly, at the moment I find that hard to imagine. Reach out to those tiki-torch haters? How would we (I) even begin to do that? Where would I start? What would I risk? How many of my own walls would have to come down? How would I even prepare for such work? My mind boggles.

We have a sign that says "God loves enemies." Maybe I need to take that seriously. The Syro-Phoenician woman reached out to her enemy and her child was healed.

Shelley D.

"Behold, I make all things New."



JOIN US IN PRAYER:

Mass on the First Friday of each month, followed by potluck suppers:

Friday, Sept. 1, Fr Ray Dunmyer
Friday October 6, Fr Bob Crossmyer CP
Friday November 3, Fr Joe Culotta
Friday December 1, Fr. Alex Steinmiller CP



Retreat with us, Friday Dec 8 to Sunday December 10:

Come and reflect with us at our annual Advent Retreat. This year we'll be led by Rose Berger and Marie Dennis, two long-time Catholic peace workers who have been instrumental in the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative, which called together the Nonviolence and Just Peace Conference in Rome, April 2016. This conference, co-sponsored by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, called on the Church to take a stand for active nonviolence and against all forms of violence. It contributed to Pope Francis' 2017 World Day of Peace message, "Nonviolence: A Style of Politics for Peace". See inside for more information.

And join us for weekly vigils for peace & justice, at the Fountain at Five Points South: Wednesdays from 7:30 to 8:30 am, and Saturdays from 5 to 6 pm

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