

THE CATHOLIC RADICAL

“...to foster a society based on creed instead of greed.” Peter Maurin

February/March 2017

Price: For whatever it's worth.

Nonviolence: a Style of Politics for Peace

by Pope Francis

At the beginning of this New Year, I offer heartfelt wishes of peace to the world's peoples and nations, to heads of state and government, and to religious, civic, and community leaders. I wish peace to every man, woman, and child, and I pray that the image and likeness of God in each person will enable us to acknowledge one another as sacred gifts endowed with immense dignity. Especially in situations of conflict, let us respect this, our “deepest dignity,” and make active nonviolence our way of life.

This is the fiftieth *Message for the World Day of Peace*. In the first, Blessed Pope Paul VI addressed all peoples, not simply Catholics, with utter clarity. “Peace is the only true direction of human progress — and not the tensions caused by ambitious nationalisms, nor conquests by violence, nor repressions which serve as mainstay for a false civil order.” He warned of “the danger of believing that international controversies cannot be resolved by the ways of reason, that is, by negotiations founded on law, justice, and equity, but only by means of deterrent and murderous forces.” Instead, citing the encyclical *Pacem in Terris* of his predecessor Saint John XXIII, he extolled “the sense and love of peace founded upon truth, justice, freedom, and love.” In the intervening fifty years, these words have lost none of their significance or urgency.

On this occasion, I would like to reflect on nonviolence as a style of politics for peace. I ask God to help all of us to cultivate nonviolence in our most personal thoughts and values. May charity and nonviolence govern how we treat each other as individuals, within society and

in international life. When victims of violence are able to resist the temptation to retaliate, they become the most credible promoters of nonviolent peacemaking. In the most local and ordinary situations and in the international order, may nonviolence become the hallmark of our decisions, our



Pablo Picasso

relationships, and our actions, and indeed of political life in all its forms.

While the last century knew the devastation of two deadly World Wars, the threat of nuclear war, and a great number of other conflicts, today, sadly, we find ourselves engaged in a horrifying world war fought piecemeal. It is not easy to know if our world is presently more or less violent than in the past, or to know whether modern means of communications and greater mobility have made us more aware of violence, or, on the other hand, increasingly inured to it.

In any case, we know that this “piecemeal” violence, of different kinds and levels, causes great suffering: wars in different countries and continents; terrorism, organized crime and unforeseen acts of violence; the abuses suffered by migrants and victims of human trafficking;

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Israel

by Scott Schaeffer-Duffy

On December 28, 2016, US Secretary of State John Kerry delivered a blistering criticism of Israeli policy concerning the Palestinians. He recalled how 1.3 out of 1.8 million Palestinians in Gaza are in daily need of food and shelter, while electricity is sporadic, and only five percent enjoy water that's safe to drink. He described how 2.75 million Palestinians in the West Bank, under Israeli military occupation, “are restricted in their daily movements by a web of checkpoints” while the number of Jewish settlements has “steadily grown.” He also noted, “Over 1,300 Palestinians, including over 600 children, have been displaced by demolitions in 2016 alone — more than any previous year.” Kerry concluded that Israel's policies are making a two-state peace plan impossible, but that, “if there is only one state, you would have millions of Palestinians permanently living in segregated enclaves in the middle of the West Bank, with no real political rights, separate legal, education, and transportation systems, vast income disparities, under a permanent military occupation that deprives them of the most basic freedoms. Separate and unequal is what you would have.” Kerry called on Israel to respect United Nations resolution 242, which calls for the withdrawal from land occupied in 1967, and to allow the creation of a Palestinian state.

Although Kerry's speech was denounced by Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, it was consistent with long-standing US policy.

Irwin Arief in his book *The Limits of Diplomacy: Israeli Settlements*, documents dozens of futile American and international efforts to halt settlements. Arief tells how on April 12, 1980, a

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Israel

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reporter asked President Jimmy Carter why he lets Israel keep on “humiliating the United States” by continuing to build settlements. Carter answered, “Our position on the settlements is very clear. We do not think they are legal, and they are obviously an impediment to peace.” Nonetheless, settlements continued to increase exponentially. The disconnect between US and Israeli policy was never more apparent than on March 9, 2010, when US Vice President Joseph Biden arrived in Israel to announce the start of a round of peace talks, and Israeli officials disclosed plans to build 1,600 new settler homes in East Jerusalem. A furious Biden told Netanyahu, “This is starting to get dangerous for us. What you’re doing here undermines the security of our troops who are fighting in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. That endangers us, and it endangers regional peace.” With equal frustration, on April 25, 2014, Kerry said that, without a peace deal, Israel could become an “apartheid state.”

While nations have invaded, occupied, and annexed territories throughout history, they have succeeded in holding onto them primarily through the displacement and/or destruction of the indigenous population. This is precisely what white Anglo-Saxon Protestants did to achieve their “manifest destiny” of coast-to-coast domination in America. But Israel, founded in 1948 as a liberal democracy and refuge for victims of anti-Semitism, was loathe to embrace genocidal tactics. A sufficient number of Palestinians were displaced in 1948 to create a coastal Jewish coastal state, but neither Jewish settlement nor military occupation has been able to secure a Jewish majority in the West Bank. And yet, these internationally-condemned policies endure.

Quizzically, despite defiant Israeli opposition to US policy, American aid to Israel has increased. This contradiction recalls the relationship the US had with the Salvadoran junta in the 1980s. On paper, aid was contingent on an improvement in human rights, but in reality, as Ray Bonner pointed out in his book *Weakness*

and *Deceit: US Policy in El Salvador*, the junta said, “Give us a million dollars and go to hell.” In Israel’s case, it would be more accurate to say, “Give us a trillion dollars, discredit your international reputation, and go to hell.”

But then I think about my great, great, great... grandfather, William Brewster, who came to Massachusetts on the Mayflower. He was a victim of religious persecution seeking a safe haven. He saw the colony he was forming as “God’s New Israel,” a nation to be fashioned without the consultation or participation of the Native Americans, who were massacred or relegated to impoverished reservations.

While in more recent years, the United States has managed to integrate



European Catholics and Jews, it now faces challenges from women, blacks, Latinos, Asians, Muslims, LGBT people, and atheists vying for equal rights and economic justice. After Obama was re-elected, many predicted the “browning” of America would redefine the political culture so profoundly that the Republican Party might become irrelevant. But as we all now know, Donald Trump tapped the fears of white America to seize power. He has made promises to stem the tide of immigration and to expel many who are already here.

While I do not subscribe to Trump’s fear-filled agenda, even I am sad to see

some of the Christian-centered culture of my youth vanish. My children were perhaps the last public school students to sing Christmas carols and make paper wreaths and Santas. I also wonder how I will fare with my mediocre Spanish.

My unease is nothing, though, compared to that of the Israelis, who came out of millennia of oppression to recreate a nation where their language and religion dominate and they hope to live without fear. Their concern that granting equal rights to Palestinians could overwhelm and imperil them is not unreasonable. And yet, the alternative to apologizing for injustice and respecting the rights of Palestinians is a dark road of segregation and domination, a road fraught with bloodshed and perpetual insecurity.

To avoid that grim future, dominant elites have to share power. If the oppressed have to wrest change by force, the aftermath is never good for those who are deposed. It’s in humanity’s interest to see that every human being has the opportunity to live in peace in the land of their heart’s desire. Netanyahu and Trump can resist change, but cannot stop it.

External pressure like the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement or the cutting of US military aid, could prod Israelis to take a long view. But every day that justice is denied to the Palestinians imperils the chance for a harmonious future. Whether two states are created or not, Israeli Jews will have to live with Palestinians either as siblings or oppressors. The latter choice has already failed. It’s well-past time to embrace the former. Ω

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My Journey With Guns

by Katie Kelso

Editor's Note: This article is reprinted with permission from the 12/16 newsletter of the New Orleans Catholic Worker.

“Sir, you forgot your ammo” is what I had to say to a customer recently. I have a part time job as a waitress and had a three generational family at one of my tables. They even held hands and prayed before they ate their meal. When they left, I noticed they left something on the floor; it was a fully loaded magazine clip. I quickly grabbed it and returned it to them out on the street and was thanked. I resented that I had to touch part of a weapon and return it to such an irresponsible gun owner; but, that encounter was a trigger for my own past with guns.

I remember after a day of shooting, my boyfriend was inspecting his gun at home. He asked me if it was unloaded; I said yes. I was the last one to use it, and I thought I checked it. We were in his bedroom and the gun faced the ceiling. He pulled the trigger and, thank God, no one was in the way. It shot a hole in the roof. I guess I didn't check it well enough. He was furious with me, but more furious with himself. He remembered how he taught me to always check first to see if a weapon was loaded or not. We both failed that day, and probably by some miracle of God, no one was hurt.

Understanding what gun ownership actually means to our society has been a long journey for me. I did not grow up with guns in my house and I can't remember my parents ever talking about our right to own them, why they are important for self defense, or speaking about them at all. The subject never came up.

How then did I become so excited when I was of age to be able to buy my first handgun? How did I also end up with a shotgun? How did I, a person who has always known that I could never shoot a living creature, find so much joy in this ownership?

I remember well the first time I went out to the desert to go shooting; growing up in Las Vegas, it was pretty easy to find spots to do this. I went with my boyfriend and a

group of his friends. They all had their own guns and brought many objects to make targets — old computers parts, empty beer bottles, and melons. Watermelons were the most interesting because they were supposed to most closely represent what shooting a human head would look like. If, after someone drank their beer, they could throw the bottle in the air and hit it, that meant they were still sober enough to keep shooting.

The guys went over some basics with me; make sure to always point the gun at the ground, lock your arms so they fly up after you fire, these type of tips. I felt safe and completely prepared to start shooting.

What I was not prepared for was how entrenched with feelings my body would become. I haven't had much drug experience, but I imagine the first time for both is similar. I loved it. It made me feel powerful, adventurous, sexy, and I wanted more.

Some of the other guys brought their girlfriends as well, but I was different. I was more engaged, and this too gave me a certain sex appeal. My eagerness to learn about all the guns out there and my enthusiasm for the “sport” brought me much attention. My boyfriend's friends were all commenting, and both he and I glommed on to that reinforcement.

While those years of going out shooting were very fun for me, I wasn't acknowledging what else it was doing to me. I wasn't admitting to myself that I used the sex appeal it gave me as an excuse to not address my own insecurities or to address what might be lacking in my relationship if I needed the approval of others to gain my own partner's interest in me. Finally, I didn't consider what having those guns in my family home would mean for them.

My family knew my guns were in the house, and I had shown everyone how to use them. I felt that was all the responsibility I needed to exercise.

I remember one night telling my brother

that I heard someone in our garage; it would not have been out of the norm for us to forget to close the door. Within a minute, my little vegetarian brother, who has been described as “an ocean with no waves,” was downstairs with gun in hand about to walk into that garage. I can't imagine him ever shooting someone, and what his plan was I have no idea. I don't think he had a plan, just an idea that somehow having a gun in his hand would resolve the situation. He never did bring that gun into the garage, and by the time we went to scope things out, no one was there. No one died over a stolen bongo.

Not long after that episode, my sister became pregnant and had enough sense to tell me she wouldn't be raising her child in a home with guns. I found a few people to give them to — which is actually not that easy when you attach stipulations such as, I won't give this to you if you're planning to use it for “protection.” I haven't touched a gun since.

Now, after seven years of Catholic Worker experience, I can truly see how much more powerful non-violent direct action is than the possession of a weapon. My exposure to conflict resolution and non-violence has caused me to learn another way, Jesus' “third way.” It has shown me to use my mind to come up with alternative solutions and has empowered me as a woman. In fact, the times I have gotten in between adult men in conflict, I have felt most safe without the presence of a “tuff” guy, or security, and most certainly, the police. I have been able to look people in the eye and calm them down. I have been able to hug men carrying a weapon and convince them that violence wasn't worth it. There have been times when I failed. I have been hit and I have been scared, but those experiences can be counted on one hand. The times accidental deaths happen because of guns being present cannot.

I haven't found myself bored with the absence of shooting, but what I have found is that never once has there been a time when I said to myself, “You know what would help this situation? A gun.”



Nonviolence

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and the devastation of the environment. Where does this lead? Can violence achieve any goal of lasting value? Or does it merely lead to retaliation and a cycle of deadly conflicts that benefit only a few “warlords”?

Violence is not the cure for our broken world. Countering violence with violence leads at best to forced migrations and enormous suffering, because vast amounts of resources are diverted to military ends and away from the everyday needs of young people, families experiencing hardship, the elderly, the infirm, and the great majority of people in our world. At worst, it can lead to the death, physical and spiritual, of many people, if not of all.

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.”

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.” He went on to stress that: “For Christians, nonviolence is not merely tactical behavior 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’.” 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.”



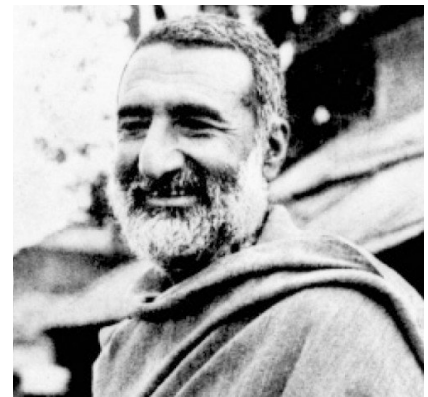
Martin Luther King, Jr.

Nonviolence is sometimes taken to mean surrender, lack of involvement, and passivity, but this is not the case. When Mother Teresa received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979, she clearly stated her own message of active nonviolence: “We in our family don’t need bombs and guns, to destroy to bring peace — just get together, love one another.... And we will be able to overcome all the evil that is in the world.” For the force of arms is deceptive. “While weapons traffickers do their work, there are poor peacemakers who give their lives to help one person, then another and another;” for such peacemakers, Mother Teresa is “a symbol, an icon of our times.” Last September, I had the great joy of proclaiming her a Saint. I praised her readiness to make herself available for everyone “through her welcome and defence of human life, those unborn and those abandoned and discarded.... She bowed down before those who were spent,

left to die on the side of the road, seeing in them their God-given dignity; she made her voice heard before the powers of this world, so that they might recognize their guilt for the crimes — the crimes! — of poverty they created.” In response, her mission — and she stands for thousands, even millions of persons — was to reach out to the suffering, with generous dedication, touching and binding up every wounded body, healing every broken life.

The decisive and consistent practice of nonviolence has produced impressive results. The achievements of Mahatma Gandhi and Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan in the liberation of India, and of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in combating racial discrimination will never be forgotten. Women in particular are often leaders of nonviolence, as for example, was Leymah Gbowee and the thousands of Liberian women, who organized pray-ins and nonviolent protest that resulted in high-level peace talks to end the second civil war in Liberia.

Nor can we forget the eventful decade that ended with the fall of Communist regimes in Europe. The Christian communities made their own contribution by their insistent prayer and courageous action. Particularly influential were the ministry and teaching of Saint John Paul II. Reflecting on the events of 1989 in his 1991 Encyclical *Centesimus Annus*, my predecessor highlighted the fact that momentous change in the lives of people, nations and states had come about “by means of peaceful protest, using only the weapons of truth and justice.” This peaceful political transition was made possible in part “by the non-violent commitment of people who, while always refusing to yield to the force of power, succeeded time after



Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan

time in finding effective ways of bearing witness to the truth.” Pope John Paul went on to say: “May people learn to fight for justice without violence, renouncing class struggle in their internal disputes and war in international ones.”

The Church has been involved in nonviolent peacebuilding strategies in many countries, engaging even the most violent parties in efforts to build a just and lasting peace.

Such efforts on behalf of the victims of injustice and violence are not the legacy of the Catholic Church alone, but are typical of many religious traditions, for which “compassion and nonviolence are essential elements pointing to the way of life.” I emphatically reaffirm that “no religion is terrorist.” Violence profanes the name of God. Let us never tire of repeating: “The name of God cannot be used to justify violence. Peace alone is holy. Peace alone is holy, not war!”

If violence has its source in the human heart, then it is fundamental that nonviolence be practised before all else within families. This is part of that joy of love which I described last March in my Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, in the wake of two years of reflection by the Church on marriage and the family. The family is the indispensable crucible in which spouses, parents and children, brothers and sisters, learn to communicate and to show generous concern for one another, and in which frictions and even conflicts have to be resolved not by force but by dialogue, respect, concern for the good of the other, mercy, and forgiveness. From within families, the joy of love spills out into the world and radiates to the whole of society. An ethics of fraternity and peaceful coexistence between individuals and among peoples cannot be based on the logic of fear, violence, and closed-mindedness, but on responsibility, respect, and sincere dialogue. Hence, I plead for disarmament and for the prohibition and abolition of nuclear weapons: nuclear deterrence and the threat of mutual assured destruction are incapable of grounding such an ethics. I plead with equal urgency for an end to domestic violence and to the abuse of women and children.

The Jubilee of Mercy that ended in November encouraged each one of us to

look deeply within and to allow God’s mercy to enter there. The Jubilee taught us to realize how many and diverse are the individuals and social groups treated with indifference and subjected to injustice and violence. They too are part of our “family”; they too are our brothers and sisters. The politics of nonviolence have to begin in the home and then spread to the entire human family. Saint Thérèse of Lisieux invites us to practise the little way of love, not to miss out on a kind word,



Leymah Gbowee

a smile, or any small gesture which sows peace and friendship. An integral ecology is also made up of simple daily gestures that break with the logic of violence, exploitation, and selfishness.

Peacebuilding through active nonviolence is the natural and necessary complement to the Church’s continuing efforts to limit the use of force by the application of moral norms; she does so by her participation in the work of international institutions and through the competent contribution made by so many Christians to the drafting of legislation at all levels. Jesus himself offers a “manual” for this strategy of peacemaking in the Sermon on the Mount. The eight Beatitudes (cf. Mt 5:3-10) provide a portrait of the person we could describe as blessed, good, and authentic. Blessed are the meek, Jesus tells us, the merciful and the peacemakers, those who are pure in heart, and those who hunger and thirst for justice.

This is also a program and a challenge for political and religious leaders, the heads of international institutions, and business and media executives: to apply the Beatitudes in the exercise of their respective responsibilities. It is a challenge to build up society, communities and businesses by acting as peacemakers.

It is to show mercy by refusing to discard people, harm the environment, or seek to win at any cost. To do so requires “the willingness to face conflict head on, to resolve it and to make it a link in the chain of a new process.” To act in this way means to choose solidarity as a way of making history and building friendship in society. Active nonviolence is a way of showing that unity is truly more powerful and more fruitful than conflict. Everything in the world is inter-connected. Certainly differences can cause frictions. But let us face them constructively and non-violently, so that “tensions and oppositions can achieve a diversified and life-giving unity,” preserving “what is valid and useful on both sides.”

I pledge the assistance of the Church in every effort to build peace through active and creative nonviolence. On January 1, 2017, the new Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development will begin its work. It will help the Church to promote in an ever more effective way “the inestimable goods of justice, peace, and the care of creation” and concern for “migrants, those in need, the sick, the excluded and marginalized, the imprisoned and the unemployed, as well as victims of armed conflict, natural disasters, and all forms of slavery and torture.” Every such response, however modest, helps to build a world free of violence, the first step towards justice and peace.

As is traditional, I am signing this Message on 8 December, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Mary is the Queen of Peace. At the birth of her Son, the angels gave glory to God and wished peace on earth to men and women of good will (cf. Luke 2:14). Let us pray for her guidance.

All of us want peace. Many people build it day by day through small gestures and acts; many of them are suffering, yet patiently persevere in their efforts to be peacemakers. In 2017, may we dedicate ourselves prayerfully and actively to banishing violence from our hearts, words and deeds, and to becoming nonviolent people, and to building nonviolent communities that care for our common home. Nothing is impossible if we turn to God in prayer. Everyone can be an artisan of peace. Ω

If You Want Peace, Don't Pay for War



Editor's Note: Refusing to pay taxes for war is an American tradition reaching back to Henry David Thoreau and beyond. The statement below will be published in many peace and justice publications and media sources soon. To add your name, contact Daniel Sicken at: dhsicken@yahoo.com.

We refuse to pay for war! Nearly half of the federal income tax is funding endless war and war preparations. In good conscience, we will not pay this war tax. Some of us live below a taxable income. Many of us who are taxable have chosen to re-direct our refused taxes to organizations that provide for basic human needs. To explore this form of conscientious objection, please contact the National War Tax Resistance Coordinating Committee at www.nwtrcc.org or (800) 269- 7464 – for information, literature, counseling, and guidance.

Pamela Allee, Bob Bady, Steve Baggarly, Johnny Baranski, Larry Bassett, Nathan Beall, Suzanne Belote Shanley, Ruth Benn, Frida Berrigan, Greg Boertje-Obed, Roy Bourgeois, Kathy Boylan, Joseph Byrne, Jean Chapman, Minga Claggett-Borne, Alan Clemence, Frank Cordaro, Betsy Corner, Susan Crane, Frances Crowe, Larry Dansinger, Nathan Deall, Ralph Dolan, Frank E. Donnelly, Jim Douglass, Shelley Douglass, Bill Durland, Genie Durland, Padma Dyvine, shulamith eagle, Aaron Falbel, Raquel Falk, Margie Farren, Katherine Fisher, Maureen A. Flannery, Ken Freeland, Eszter Freeman, Fran Fuller, Rick Gaumer, Carol Gilbert, Rick Gottesman, Clare Grady, David Gross, Bishop Thomas Gumbleton - Archdiocese of Detroit, James Haber, Emilie Hamilton, Clark Hanjian, Larry Harper, Arthur Harvey, Ed Hedemann, David Hartsough, Jan Hartsough, Martha Hennessy, Janet Hicks, Tonia Jodis, Tom Joyce, Barb Kass, Randy Kehler, Charlie Keil, Judith Kelly, Kathy Kelly, Stephen Kelly SJ, Gene Keyes, John Klein, Phoebe Knopf, Sam Koplinka-Loehr, Loren Kramer, Randee Laikind, Scott Langley, Henry Lappen, Linda Leaks, Steve Leeds, Mary Link, Paul Magno, Jonathon Marley, Stephen Matchett, Bonner McAllester, John McIntire, Stan McCumber, Karl Meyer, Mike Miles, Rick Mihm, Mary Moody, Anne Moore, Markley Morris, Michele Naar-Obed, Hattie Nestel, Bill Offenloch, Steve Olszewsky, Patrick O'Neill, Mary Jo Pfander, Becky Pierce, Ardeth Platte, Susan N. Quinlan, Jason Rawn, Mary Regan, Robert Riversong, Lawrence Rosenwald, Vicki Rovere, Nelia Sargent, Claire & Scott Schaeffer-Duffy, Ginny Schneider, Ralph Schwartz, Janice Sevre-Duszyńska, Brayton Shanley, Cindy Sheehan, Joanne Sheehan, Patrick Sheehan-Gaumer, Mary Lynn Sheetz, Daniel Sicken, William Spademan, Kara Speltz, Mary Sprunger-Froese, Jessica Stewart, Finian D. Taylor, Don Timmerman, Joan Wages, Denise Ward, Paki Wieland, Kim Williams, Thomas A. Wilson DDS, Steve Woolford, Jenny Wright, and Lenore Yarger.

Letters



Dear Patrick O'Neill,

I was quite troubled when I read "Flag Idolatry" in the Oct/Nov *Catholic Radical*. I served in the US Navy for 22 years attaining the rank of Captain, Medical Service Corps. I am a devout Catholic, who was blessed to be ordained a Deacon in 2000.

I worship the almighty and triune God, and I respect the American Flag! There is a difference! What these young men are doing [kneeling during the National Anthem] is disrespectful to "Old Glory" and to those women and men since the Revolutionary War who wore the uniform of our armed forces, so selflessly and so bravely throughout the years, many of whom shed their blood for the freedom that is so precious to us.

I serve as a fire chaplain and have seen first hand the evil that is in our world. I was deployed by our State Fire Marshal to minister to the brokenness of "Ground Zero" at the request of FDNY. We stared evil in the face. It was in the air and on the holy ground we trod. We showed God's love and mercy as best we could to a city and a nation who were grieving inside and out. Our Corps is comprised of men and women of many denominations, serving and worshipping God in their own traditions.

True, we have quite a way to go. Like our beloved Church, our country is human and thus shows the flaws of that humanity. But why did the Pilgrims come to the shores of New England in 1620? Well, they disliked the King and the heavy burden of taxation, but more importantly, they wanted to worship God the way they wanted to worship Him!

All lives matter. My firefighters and EMT's do not discriminate when they minister to those in need and offer a ray of hope in the midst of tragedy. I've never seen them check ID's of the people they might encounter. We are, after all, fashioned

in the image and likeness of God! I am 3rd generation of Italian immigrants who were persecuted when they got here. They had to struggle to be accepted, and they rose above the discrimination that they encountered at what seemed like every turn. If we continue to live in the past and not venture into the future with the hope of a better way of life for all, we will become stagnant and never correct the wrongs that we encounter as Americans. We are free to worship God and free to respect our National Emblem. Each country has its own flag, and those flags are respected as a rule, despite the flaws that are inherent in each of those countries. We are not unique. We hope for a better future while we learn from the past. We can only pray that, with the help of Almighty God and the fortitude of the People of our beloved United States, someday soon, discrimination will be a word of the past and unity will be the word of the future, where ethnicity and color are meaningless and we are one in spirit, hope, and love.

I hope that you can see the difference between worship and respect. I have!

Deacon Dick Martino, Capt. USNR
West Boylston, Massachusetts

Editor's Note: While we recognize that the US flag represents many admirable ideals, it falls short of Christ's transnational nonviolent message and has been the banner for many cruel campaigns. It is our preference, not to disrespect it, but to abjure from its use and certainly anything resembling its worship.

To the Editors,

On the second Sunday of Advent, we heard in Matthew 3 about John the Baptist putting down the Sadducees and Pharisees for putting too much emphasis on tradition and not really following the true path. Jesus chastizes them for placing rules on the people, rules they do not follow themselves, and for having blinders on and thus missing the big picture.

It seems that our shepherds, the bishops, have fallen into that mindset. Joseph Grizzone's *Joshua and the Shepherd* seems to foretell our current pope, Pope Francis. He is all about the big picture and making the world a better place.

The February/March 2016 *Catholic*

Radical pointed out that, over the past forty years, Republicans have failed to make any changes to *Wade vs Roe* or the abortion issue in general. It further noted that Pope Francis states that we should not be totally influenced by one issue, but look at all issues, and that he believes global



warming is of major concern to the entire planet. I was told at a seminar in my parish, shortly before the election, that the writer of the article (Scott Schaeffer-Duffy) had misinterpreted the Pope's message. When I mentioned it to Scott, he told me Pope Francis had written an entire encyclical on global warming. I checked it and the Pope certainly spoke out on that topic.

Our bishops took a very strong stand that there were specific evils which disqualified candidates. These were abortion and changing the definition of marriage. When I suggested that the death penalty and abortion both kill and should both be considered disqualifying, I was told they differ because there are cases where executions can be justified,

whereas abortion is never justifiable. But, unless the Church has changed its teaching, abortion to save the life of the mother is allowable – at least that is what I was taught growing up in the 50's and 60's. It was pointed out on numerous occasions during my catechism and CCD classes.

I also asked why the bishops did not publish, early in the year, a list of potential candidates who were viable options that we as Catholics could support during the primaries. The answer I received was that they couldn't tell us whom to vote for. But didn't they do just that by publishing and distributing documents like: *Where Do The Candidates Stand on Abortion?*; *A Comparison of the 2016 Republican and Democratic Platforms*; Steven W. Mosher's *Report On Meeting With Donald Trump*; *A Guide to Catholic Voting*; *In the Voting Booth: a Catholic Perspective*; and *A Brief Catechism for Catholic Voters*? These documents concluded that Catholics with "well-formed consciences" basically had one option: support the Republicans.

After Donald Trump was elected, Pope Francis did not offer his congratulations, something the American bishops did, which many consider a snub. In my humble opinion, our shepherds acted like Sadducees and Pharisees rather than directing their flocks as Our Holy Father Pope Francis does.

John Thornton
Webster, Massachusetts

Catholic Worker Calendar

February 1, 15 March 8 & 22 — Evening Prayer: Join us in prayer and Taize chant at 7:30 P.M., 52 Mason Street. Followed by refreshments.

February 18 & March 18 — Reversing the Gun Culture Vigil: Join us opposite the entrance to the The Gun Parlor shooting range. 12:30-1:30 P.M., 170 Prescott Street, Worcester.

February 22 — Renewal: Join us for a screening of Marty Ostrow and Terry Kay Rockerfeller's documentary on the emerging movement of religious environmentalism in the US. 7 P.M., 52 Mason Street. Followed by refreshments.

March 7 — Race Relations and Southern Catholics: Join us for a talk by Justin Poche, a professor of history at Holy Cross College. 7 P.M., 52 Mason Street. Followed by refreshments.



Mason Street Musings

2017 began with a few weeks of irritating pain from runner's knee, then a whopping cold which had me shuffling around the house in a feverish stoop. These ailments are nothing compared to the cancer that leaves a dear friend feeling "so very exhausted," all the time, or the tumor that sprouted unsuspectingly in the brain of Brian Doyle, whose prose poems I have come to love. The body has never been unfailingly reliable. Nonetheless, I am affronted when mine falters.

While I shivered and sneezed, Scott did all the work — cooking, cleaning, and fielding requests for hospitality which seem to come in erratic torrents. We can have as many as twelve calls in one day followed by brief periods of quiet.

Too many of our guests, of late, have faltered in their sobriety, a condition for staying here. I am thinking of A., smoking crack on the upstairs back porch, and J., using during the day then nodding off at supper, swearing all was well, when I knew it was not. Even D., who spent a sweet Christmas with us, used while he was here, because a urine test — a prerequisite to his entry into a permanent shelter — revealed traces of cocaine and opioids.

It's the deception that infuriates and not the using itself which is always piteous. The emphatic, embarrassing denials that leave you wondering, if you are being overly suspicious. The maneuverings. The bold-faced lies. "Do you take us

for fools!" I have sometimes wanted to scream. Useless to rave and take the deception personally, I know. Addiction is an indifferent disease. It's also a red demon stalking lives shimmering with goodness and possibility. Here we are eyewitnesses to the fight: the red demon vs. shimmering life. Many struggle valiantly. After our



Nigel Brown

momentary anger subsides, we always root for life. "You deserve to fully live," I've told many a guest. "God wants this."

But I am being too bleak in this chronicle of our hospitality. Many guests, arriving weary and defeated, perk up as dramatically as a wilted sunflower after rain. I am thinking of C., who came here weepy and worrying, giving me a breathtaking hug of gratitude the other day, and R, so stunned with fear her first night she wouldn't eat, now swapping recipes at supper. Sharing a home-cooked meal with others each

evening and having a clean, peaceful place to sleep is reviving.

2017 is the year we go solar, God willing. Scott is studiously researching prices for the installation of panels that will provide between sixty and seventy-five percent of our electricity. This conversion follows our recent successful protest at a local TD Bank calling for the de-funding of the Dakota Access Pipeline. We can't ask others to break from an oil economy without taking steps ourselves. We are able to consider the solar option because of the generous donations received during Christmastide. Thank you, all. Our investment in this climate-saving project leaves little for the monthly bills that will come as sure as the sunshine on our new solar panels. We welcome your help.

In less than two days, Donald Trump will be sworn as the 45th president of the United States. The anxiety and foreboding among friends and loved ones are palpable. If my whopping cold recedes, I head to Washington, DC to report on the protest march following the inauguration, then it's home to the work that will always be needed regardless of who takes office: prayer, hospitality for the poor and excluded, nonviolent resistance to the violences of the day. If I am back in time, I'll stop in for the round-table at our sister community the Mustard Seed Catholic Worker. The evening's topic: Perseverance. ♪

Claire

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