Engaging in the Dialogue of Peace

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Sisters of Saint Francis

Focus: Engaging in the Dialogue of Peace

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Letter from the President

Sister Tierney Trueman

Dear Friends,

When I pray the beautiful Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi, I ask God to make ME a channel of God's peace... seeking not to be loved, but to become God's love in our wounded, weary, violent world. This issue of *Interchange* is dedicated to inviting each of us to ***engage*** *in the dialogue of peace.* The excellent selection of articles challenges us to a personal commitment to be actively involved in meaningful discussions that lead us to actions that will begin to transform our world into a place where all created life is honored as sacred; to believe that *"there is still a vision for the appointed time... it will not fail!" (Habakkuk: 1:2-3).* This vision calls us to *"stir into flame the gift of God which is within each of us – the Spirit that inspires strength, love and self-discipline, and take our share of suffering in the strength that comes from God." (2 Tim: 6-9).*

So, I invite you to journey through these articles, collecting the particular thoughts that especially challenge you in this moment. What most speaks to your tender heart and invites you to action?

- The plight of the millions of immigrants, victims of forced migrations because of the terrifying fear and violence that is daily life in their homelands? "Where there is compassion and love, God is present."

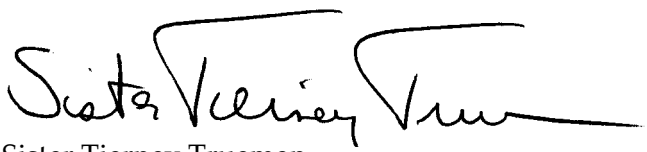
- The acute sufferings of the millions of victims from nuclear radiation, with cancers and genetic mutations that live for generations within their peoples. "Peace is not easy or simple, but an evolutionary process requiring constant work, admission of wrongs, and unearthing new and respectful ways forward."

- The painful plight of our incarcerated brothers and sisters, victims of the "injustices in our country in our incarceration system and whom we incarcerate; awareness that prisons do not rehabilitate. The ingredients for rehabilitation, addiction and sexual trauma treatment; familial and societal support, and education preparation for re-entry into society are practically non-existent. Our liberation is bound up with theirs! Our peace is bound up with theirs!"

- How do energy and water crises possibly invite negotiating neighbors? "Harmonizing with nature allows humans to recognize their attachment to all creation."

What are the stories that "nourish us during our hungry times" – to give us strength and wisdom in our search for peace? We turn to music, stories, art, all of which means we turn to the heart whisperings from one another. And out of these experiences, we find gratitude, the first step to peace. May the song we sing be *"Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with ME!"*

Wishing you peace and all good,



Sister Tierney Trueman
President / Congregational Minister

Prayer of Saint Francis

Make me a channel of your peace:
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
and where there is sadness, joy.
O divine Teacher, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Attributed to Saint Francis of Assisi

Peace – A Fruit of the Holy Spirit

by Sister Ruth Snyder

Image by Gerd Altmann courtesy of Pixabay

What did St. Paul have in mind when he named peace as one of the fruits of the Spirit? (Gal 5:22-23). He probably was not thinking of "absence of war." Instead, he might have had in mind some of the following qualities of peace:

- Quiet, calm
- State of harmony between persons
- Freedom from anxiety
- Feeling safe and secure
- Knowing that you are loved

There are many in our world today who lack these qualities of peace due to the circumstances in which they live. Let us consider just one group – the undocumented persons living among us – and how we might be instruments of peace for them.

There are roughly 11 million undocumented persons in the U.S. and about 60% of them have been here more than 10 years, worked, and paid taxes. The latest census of Olmsted County lists close to 6000 such residents who live with the possibility of arrest and deportation daily, because of something as simple as a traffic stop. They are unable to get a driver's license or insurance because they have no legal documents. If they are stopped while driving, it could mean permanent separation from their families. Anxiety, fear, and worry – the opposites of peace – are a part of their everyday life.

How can we be instruments of peace in this situation? In addition to personally welcoming them, one simple way is to advocate for a path to citizenship for them. Currently, a bill has been presented in the House of Representatives (H.R. 8433) that would do just that. We can take action by supporting that legislation. In Minnesota, we can also support the efforts to grant driver's licenses to eligible immigrants, as it is in 18 other states.

Advocacy does work. As a result of years of work by an Interfaith Immigration group, the Rochester City Council recently granted their request for Municipal ID cards which will be issued by the Library. This is a small but important step forward. One example of its use is for a parent to have identification if they needed to pick up their child at school.

A sub-group of the 11 million undocumented persons are the DACA recipients. An article was recently published in the September, 2022 edition of St. Anthony's Messenger, entitled *"Living in Limbo: 10 years of DACA."* An executive order from President Obama, in 2012, allowed persons under 31 who had entered the U.S. before their 16th birthday to get temporary freedom from deportation and a right to study or work. DACA has been under pressure in courts to be considered illegal since President Trump canceled it in 2017, and no new applicants have been accepted. The recipients are in limbo because, at any moment, DACA could be canceled and they could be deported. Many of us know some of these young persons who are contributing to our society as nurses, teachers, and other professionals. We can be instruments of peace by challenging our senators to pass the Dream Act (S.264) and by supporting the present DACA recipients as much as possible.

Success in these efforts could bring peace to our immigrant brothers and sisters. When Jesus said "When I was a stranger you welcomed me," he might have added "... and you were an instrument of peace for them."

TURN, TURN, TURN

Image by Gerd Altmann courtesy of Pixabay

It was the 1960s. Young men were burning their draft cards, some fleeing to Canada, others joining rallies, singing *Where have all the flowers gone? Gone to graveyards every one,* as other young men were dying in the jungles of Vietnam. *When will they ever learn?* In D.C., we joined hands and swayed together, singing *We shall overcome,* and marched in front of the White House protesting police brutality in Selma, as the Civil Rights Law was being written and signed at last. And on college campuses, students refusing to be held back by laws, regulations and traditions that no longer made sense to them, joined Bob Dylan, singing, *The Times They Are A-Changin'.* And then, with body bags returning from the war, with revelations of racial tortures and killings, came the assassinations that shocked the nation: our President, John F. Kennedy; his brother Robert, beginning his campaign; and Martin Luther King, Jr., who had led us all to dream a great dream. What was happening to our country?

Some may have thought that was no time for folk songs, not a time to sing in the midst of such horrors. It was one day of terrible news after another. But sing we did anyway, more so than ever. A song Pete Seeger had written in the 1950s streamed again across the airways and gave words, old words borrowed and set to music, old words made new in our lives: *To everything, turn, turn, turn / There is a season, turn, turn, turn / and a time to every purpose under heaven.*[2] And then the song picks up the words of Ecclesiastes 3:1—8, old words written centuries before, old words, words so wise they sing to us today, too: *A time to be born, a time to die / A time to dance, a time to mourn / A time of war, a time of peace /… A time to every purpose under heaven.*

So, we bring these words, wise with the centuries, and we carry them singing, into our lives today: war and genocide in the Ukraine; climate change bringing the melting of glaciers and permafrost; rising sea levels threatening coastlines; floods; droughts; a pandemic virus mutating, threatening. But nations rally to come to the aid of the Ukraine; calls for attention to climate change increase (late, but increasing at last); development of vaccines to help curb the threat of the viruses. All this is our season.

So, we sing *Turn, Turn, Turn*[2] once again, finding some consolation in it, one place to look for wisdom in this challenging time. And there are other places to look for strength and wisdom in our search for peace in the midst of troubles… "coolness in the midst of heat." There is a little children's picture book called Frederick.[3] Frederick is a mouse who sits around dreaming up stories while his fellow mice scamper around, gathering nuts and acorns, burying them for the winter days ahead. But Frederick keeps on thinking up his stories. And then the winter comes. The mice huddle in their nest, gradually diminishing the stash of food until they have to ration it so carefully, they are all constantly hungry. Will spring never come? So here comes Frederick, who begins telling them his stories: mysteries solved; dangers overcome; challenges met and dealt with; funny stories bringing laughter to accompany the growling tummies. And, finally, the first crocus is sighted. The winter is over. The mice begin to venture out to find nuts and, later on, acorns, but they tell Frederick before they go, to keep on making his stories, because those stories had nourished them during their times of hunger.

Why does this now remind me of Mary and Martha? Martha, busy in the kitchen, preparing food for their favorite visitor, Jesus. And Mary? She sits by Jesus. After washing the desert dust from his feet, she listens to his stories. Martha is not amused, but her gift will come in the form of the dinner. Mary's gift was to listen and then to know what Jesus had to say. And Jesus? He told stories, stories that nourished in one way as Martha's gift would do in another. *Turn, turn, turn.*

In the Sunday, September 11, 2022, issue of The NewYork Times, Lee Child has a piece called, *Our Stories Rescue Us, Sometimes.*[4] In the article, after a brief discussion of how language in general has helped the human race survive, she discusses how a single human, facing all the predators around, would be quite puny. But with the development of language, human beings could devise and communicate plans for food gathering, defense from other beings and from the elements, make comparisons with past events, etc. But then, she says, something out of the ordinary occurred:

"We started talking about things that hadn't happened to people that didn't exist. We invented fiction."

She continues to explore why early humans would have begun, like Frederick, like Jesus, to tell stories. She considers that everything, especially back in prehistoric times, every action was tied in some way to the efforts to survive. So, why tell stories? Not just to fill leisure time, she says. Then why? Wouldn't telling and listening to stories just be a waste of time? How did stories make it possible that the tellers and listeners would more likely survive? Here's what Lee Child surmises:

"Surely by encouragement, and empowerment, and invigoration, and by boosting dangers averted, order restored and justice done. After a rousing tale the night before, we woke to the new and perilous morning with squared shoulders, steady hands and a determined gleam in our eyes. This was the evolutionary value of story."[4]

Among many paths to peace are music, literature, and one more, art. A friend in New Mexico, a retired lawyer – his hand trembling from essential tremor, no longer able to paint – turns to sculpture from found articles. As age makes its claim on his body, he makes beauty in the bodies of his sculptures. Hanging on our wall in the living room is a triptych print by another friend. His parents, Ukrainian Jews, immigrated to Philadelphia, and our friend was born there. As a little boy, he would make the rounds of art galleries, loving what he saw, finding something there that connected to his heart. His prints now hang in galleries across the U.S. His daughter was born severely physically handicapped, but intelligent and talented. He has immortalized her in a series of prints, including one entire exhibit of drawings of her hands that to some eyes might at first glance seem grotesque, but as eyes linger on the expressiveness of those hands—

supplication, affection, anger, love, disgust, dance—they begin to see, as her father always had, the beauty of her soul. Art, his own, hers, that of others, spoke to his heart, and now speaks to ours.

So, here we are now in our own time of terrible news coming at us every day. Here in the U.S., a possible recession looms, everyday costs climb, and the challenges of aging and loss, cry out to us and all around us as we search for peace in the midst of it all. We want to find that "coolness in the midst of heat." So, we turn to music, stories, art, all of which means we turn to the heart whisperings from one another, the music that sings of them, the stories that tell of them, the art that shows them to us. And out of those experiences, we find gratitude, the first step to peace. There are others, but that is a big one.

We can go back to that song that helped us through the traumas of the 1960s:

To everything, turn, turn, turn,
There is a season, turn, turn, turn,
And a time to every purpose under heaven.

It trails through the seasons, and we have known many, if not all, of them. Look, then, at the last verse of the song and see what it says to you:

To everything, turn, turn, turn,
There is a season, turn, turn, turn,
And a time to every purpose under heaven.
A time to gain, a time to lose
A time to rend, a time to sew
A time for love, a time for hate
A time for peace, I swear it's not too late.

1. *Pete Seeger, "Where Have All the Flowers Gone." (Written and composed in 1953, made famous by The Kingston Trio in 1961 and Peter, Paul and Mary in 1962). Recorded in 1968 in Sweden. YouTube video, 4:36, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PS3-lyqCl80.*
2. *Pete Seeger, "Turn, Turn, Turn." (Written in the 1950s, made famous by The Byrds in 1965). Smithsonian Folkways Recordings. YouTube video, 2:46. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ImZnbqYYRpU.*
3. *Leo Lionni, Frederick, (NY: Penguin Random House, 1967).*
4. *Lee Child, Our Stories Rescue Us, Sometimes. (New York: NY Times, September 11, 2022), 2.*

The Language of Peace

by Fran Weidner, Cojourner

Image by Ri Butov courtesy of Pixabay

I am feeling afraid... afraid of sharing this topic so deeply personal to me. I am afraid of the injustices in the world: children, women, and men going to bed hungry, living in the streets – hot in summer, cold in winter – not feeling the contentment of wearing clean clothes, trying to lead normal lives in war-destroyed cities... and experiencing some forms of these injustices in the "richest country in the world."

"They should just pull themselves up by their bootstraps and find a job."

I cannot count the number of times I have heard this cliché repeated. How should I respond to statements that make no sense to me, but makes sense to the other person? They may have heard words like those all their lives.

What scares me about this is language can incite violence, whether it be internal blaming of self or the other person. If I don't take a mental step back, I may say something that I wish I had not said. Name-calling, attacking a person with language – words one may hear every day on TV newscasts – encourages conflict. Conflict makes good news.

Language can invite chaos, and violence, inciting destructive behavior, whether it be within a family at the dinner table or storming the White House on January 6, 2021.

Perusing the newspaper and magazines, the language of disrespect among politicians, angry men and women interviewed or quoted as they spew unkind words of anger, makes me not want to read the morning paper nor watch the news. I criticize the politician, news commentator from a network I judge to be biased and untrustworthy, and the neighbor who watches the news channel I find offensive. I can think critically of someone who holds views, which I judge to be radically different from my beliefs and values.

I judge the language expressed by friends and news reporters, and only become frustrated. This can create a kind of violence within my mind. All of the negativity in the world seems to be like smoke clouds in my mind. Then it all comes back to God whispering in the gentle breeze, "What is your part is this?" "How can you be part of reaching across the abyss of difference to creating ways to speak your perception and to listen... hear what the others' words can teach you?"

When we lived in Southeast Asia, I learned to listen and to carefully speak my words in English, and I studied Cantonese, to better communicate with the local people. I remember slowing my thinking process, in order to give attention to the person speaking to me. They also listened persistently to my words and pronunciation.

Ministering in pastoral care, I experience the space as sacred. I realize all conversation is sacred. I see language as a gift... a gift of words. Words I can use to paint pictures in the minds of readers. There are glad words, sad words, verses, texts, terms, expressions, poetries and more. My prayer is to voice language that heals, affirms, articulates clearly and truthfully my beliefs and values... and know when to be silent and listen to others' words.

If You Want Peace, Work for Justice

Image by John Hain courtesy of Pixabay

"If you want Peace, work for Justice" goes the familiar social justice mantra. I believe one of the biggest injustices in our country is our incarceration system and whom we incarcerate. We, a rich, democratic country, incarcerate more people than any other country in the world. An even bigger injustice, is whom we incarcerate: 60% are people of color, and incarcerated African American women are 3 times the number of white women incarcerated.

One of the calls to peace is, for us as a society, to address this issue! After 25 years of prison ministry with women, I will use them as the lens for this article.

It all began when I worked as a social work supervisor at Salvation Army in Chicago, and I saw the many grandmothers struggling to obtain resources for their grandchildren (whose parent, the children's mother, was in prison). Then, only to see that parent return to society also without resources – needing everything from transportation and documents to

housing and jobs – but being denied because of her record; thus punished twice by society. I questioned "where was the social work community in all of this?" But then I realized that I was part of that social work community, and thus began my work with incarcerated women.

Insights, Learnings, Reforms

I saw and learned that prisons do not rehabilitate. The majority of women incarcerated are there because of addiction, which has led to mostly non-violent crimes, and the root of most of their addictions is child sexual abuse or partner abuse. So, their only chance of rehabilitation is being able to access a treatment program in prison; but only a fraction of them are able to do so. And even those may not have the possibility of addressing the trauma of their sexual and physical abuse. To complicate matters, women are often prey to male guards, both emotionally and physically. In addition, many are economically poor, have not completed high school, or have few job skills.

It is often said that not only the person convicted is in prison, but also their families and friends. Unfortunately, the separation of mothers and their children has lasting effects on all of them. Most prisons are quite a distance from where families live, often in other states, thus families need a car, which few have, or they have to pay someone to take them. So, the visits are rare or not at all. Children become depressed and angry because of this separation and/or because they live with other family members or are placed in a foster home. They are often are ridiculed in school because of this "disgrace." Unless the children are in a school system which provides counseling, they are unattended.

Education is one tool prisons have offered: GED for high school diplomas and Pell grants for college courses. As a result of lack of funds and interest, GED is only available in some prisons, and only if one is there for a certain length of time; while Pell grants are available in about one-half of the states. The punishment continues!

The ingredients for rehabilitation: addiction and sexual trauma treatment; familial and societal support; and education preparation for re-entry into society; are practically non-existent.

If we want peace in our society, we have to help society build alternatives to punishment, which would not only affect the philosophy of punishment, but would build a healthy society.

The "something new" for women, at the very least, is treatment for addiction and the trauma of sexual and physical abuse in a treatment center, not a prison. Their children could be with them, also receiving treatment, and the mothers could be simultaneously developing parenting skills, if needed. This is a win-win for the incarcerated person, their family, and society; and it is much cheaper for the taxpayer, too. If these are non-violent crimes, then treatment replaces conviction, and they would not have a criminal record. If there is no criminal record, there is no effect on the women obtaining housing or potential employment. The women and their families re-enter society with no stigma, only tools to be a healthy citizen.

The treatment center could be coordinating with a re-entry center, offering GED education and/or employment training. More tools to enable them to become a contributing citizen. Social workers could accompany the woman and family to enable her to cope with any hurdles when she re-enters society.

If society would become aware of the victims of violence (often called "perpetrators") and what would help them, and if violence is lessened by the state (prison system), we would have the possibility of peace. Our liberation is bound up with theirs! Our peace is bound up with theirs!

Witness for Peace

Mexican side of wall painted with the word HOPE

On a fact-finding tour by 30 faith leaders from North Carolina to El Porvenir, Nicaragua, in the early 1980s, the visitors found themselves in the middle of a town almost totally destroyed by the Contras, (the right-wing anti-government rebels opposed to the Sandinista Junta of National Reconstruction Government in Nicaragua) leaving dead, wounded and frightened people. The visitors felt not only shocked and angry, but helpless. They heard shooting all around them and the bus driver hurried them to leave. Suddenly, the shooting stopped and one of the visitors asked why it had stopped. "Because you are here," was the answer they received. They were rushed to safety, but those words haunted several in the group. They knew that the U.S. was sending funds and support to the Contras. Couldn't they do something to stop this?

The tour had been led by Gail Phares, a former Maryknoll Sister, who has spent many years working in Latin America. Jefferson Boyer, a former Peace Corps Volunteer and Professor at Appalachian State University, was also on the trip. They decided that, if their presence had stopped shooting even for a brief time, a vigil of thousands of U.S. citizens might have an even greater effect in stopping the war. They met with Nicaraguan Sandinista government leaders Ernesto Cardenal, Sergio Ramirez, Tomas Borge, and Daniel Ortega. They returned to the U.S., met with government, civic, and religious leaders, and tried to get a national organization to sponsor them for a follow-up vigil. When that failed, they decided to organize it themselves and recruited volunteers to make phone calls, distribute fliers, and trained 153 people "willing to go to the border and risk their lives to stand with the Nicaraguan people."[1] Their purpose was to call attention to the war and demand an end to the U.S. funding of the Contras.

This was the beginning of Witness for Peace, and its

by Kathy Johnson, Cojourner

Group gathered for prayer vigil

history for the last 50 years has had many successes. Over the years, thousands of people from all across the U.S. were brought to Nicaragua and other war zones. They came back and met with their legislators, the press, churches, friends and neighbors, and spread the word of what was really happening. By 1987, they were able to get the U.S. to stop funding the Contras. In Guatemala, they accompanied people and were able to get the Clinton Administration to support the Peace Accords. In Colombia, they brought a delegation of 100 people to see what the U.S. supported war was doing to the people and the land. Through their work with Congress, they were able to decrease military aid by 50% and increase economic assistance.

For many years, I was not aware of the origins of WFP (Witness for Peace) but I have now been on three delegations: Cuba; Colombia; and this past August, to the border of Douglas, Arizona and Agua Prieta, Mexico.

Up until 1994, the border was open and people traveled freely back and forth from Mexico to Arizona. When the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) passed in 1994, this changed. Five million small farmers were bankrupted and lost their farms. They took jobs in the shops the U.S. set up. Even now, they work for $10-14 per day.

Much of the poverty in Central America was deepened by the U.S. government supported wars in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador, causing unrest and desperation in trying to care for their families. Organized crime has increased as some try to profit from the situation, promising to assure "safe passage" to the U.S. if people will pay huge sums of money or carry drugs.

In 2020, the U.S. spent over $25 billion on the Border Patrol and ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement). Billions have been spent on drones,

high tech cameras, motion sensors, war technology, night vision goggles and weapons." Almost 2000 feet of wall, some of it over 30 feet tall, has been built to separate the U.S. and Mexico to block immigrants from entering the U.S. to seek sanctuary. Hundreds of men, women, and children die each month crossing the desert or trying to climb the wall. People have a right to seek sanctuary when they are fleeing violence, danger and war.

On our trip in August, we heard the testimony of Lorenzo and his wife who remain in a shelter in Agua Prieta. They were forced to leave their home in Cuernavaca, Mexico, when they could no longer pay the protection money gangs were demanding of them, so their van was blown up and they were threatened with death. Their three-year-old boy was so traumatized by the incident, that he did not eat for two weeks. While we were in Agua Prieta, a 31-year-old man, Abigail, from Chiapas, Mexico, was stabbed in the heart and lungs by Border Patrol after he fell off the wall. Thirty of us planted a cross (shown above) where he had died and we prayed for his family (see photo on prior page).

The current war on our southern border is funded by our tax dollars. Thousands have died and thousands more are waiting at the border for safety and support. It is hopeful knowing that there are many churches and civic groups working at the border to help the migrants. These groups provide food and loving support.

We must urge the Biden Administration and Congress to create policies and systems to support the people seeking to enter the U.S. We must do all in our power to support reasonable immigration reform. These are our brothers and sisters. Where there is compassion and love, God is present.

1. *Ed Griffin-Nolan, Witness For Peace: A Story of Resistance, (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1979), 29*

2. *Todd Miller, Build Bridges, Not Walls: A Journey to a World Without Borders, (San Francisco: City Lights Books, Open Media Series, 2021), 12-14*

Peace in the Midst of Struggle

by Carol Warren, Cojourner

Image by CQF-avocat courtesy of Pixabay

"Justice and Peace" are so often said in the same breath in the Church. And I understand it - especially in statements like Pope Paul VI's, "If you wish for peace, work for justice." It makes perfect sense. But working for justice is not always a peaceful-feeling pursuit. I have often felt I was in a boxing ring with the bad guys, being beaten up. Maintaining "peace" in the midst of struggles for justice can be challenging, particularly when they involve strong emotions and reactions from those involved. There are a few techniques I have learned over the years that sometimes reduce tensions, and even yield results.

Go for the bigger picture. A small rural community was affected by noxious fumes settling over their homes from a nearby natural gas operation. Some homes had become devalued and impossible to live in, because the residents became nauseated, developed nosebleeds, or just constantly felt ill. The Legislature scheduled a public hearing, where a number of the residents spoke passionately (and angrily) about the problems. The gas company proponents essentially retorted that it wasn't happening, or even if it was, it wasn't their fault. The state benefitted from the gas revenues, and people who were leasing their property for drilling the gas were profiting handsomely. There was a lot of heated dispute in the chamber and the atmosphere felt tense. How could I focus the attention where I felt it needed to be? In my two minutes, I gave a very brief summary of both sides – one's capacity to live safely in one's home, and the industrial, money-making process. At the end, I gestured toward the residents, saying, "These are people." I held up a five-dollar bill. "This is paper."

Call on a higher power. Admittedly, even in a place as religious as Appalachia, this doesn't always work, but sometimes it is an appropriate answer. A gas company preparing a drilling site had "unwittingly" bulldozed an old rural cemetery, throwing what were obviously gravestones over the hillside, and ejecting metal grave markers into a dump pile. How could

Peace in the Midst of Struggle... *continued*

Image by Gordon Johnson courtesy of Pixabay

that happen? The families buried there over the years were black. The committee hearing was attended by justifiably irate descendants, company officials, and a contingent from the Council of Churches, seeking justice: that the remains be moved at company expense to another consecrated site. One of the company men couldn't see what all the fuss was about. "A lot of those graves were nearly two hundred years old, so there wasn't anything left in them, anyway." This remark produced an outraged storm of protest from the families. When it was my turn to speak, and said, "These people were buried in a family cemetery, according to the rites of their faith. And guess what? God is faithful forever! Two hundred years, two thousand? God still knows and cherishes each one."

Bring more authority than the bullies. A modest town here in California was being pressured to expand its oil transport facilities by a company seeking a larger rail hub. The City Council was well aware of recent devastating accidents involving derailed oil trains that exploded. Despite promises of more employment, many in the town did not consider jobs a just trade-off for the added danger. However, the oil company aligned with railroad spokesmen who threatened the town with lawsuits for blocking interstate commerce. They tried to bully the Council into submission, with veiled threats of bankruptcy. The hearings grew increasingly tense and angry, especially outside the room before and after. Local activists wondered what could be done to get the truth out, and decided to generate calls to the state's Attorney General (now a national figure in much higher office). I remember calling and briefly explaining the injustice being done. "We're sure what the companies are saying isn't true. We need someone to speak whose authority the City Council will recognize and accept." The staff person asked if we wanted the Attorney General to intervene. "A thousand times, yes!" At the very next City Council's public meeting, two lawyers from the Attorney General's office appeared and shut down the nonsense, giving the city cover to reject the project.

When I am engaged in a justice issue, I remind myself that, although my insides may be churning, there is often a solution that is peaceable, or at least moderating. Responding to upset and angry people in a strident way never helps, no matter how much I feel like yelling in someone's face. (And I must admit to feeling that way sometimes!) Instead, I try to calm myself, breathe deeply, and try to see the crux of the issue as clearly and in as large a frame as I can. I have found those three frames of reference, noted above, can help me.

Roots of Peace and Un-Peace

by Sister Joan Brown

New Mexico sky by Mike Goad courtesy of Pixabay

The roots of peace run deep in the soul of humanity and individuals. The sacred roots extend into ancestry to peacemakers, saints, and those who have sacrificed, always drawing upon the aquifers of wisdom and grace.

The roots of un-peace run just as deep through time. Centuries later, conflicts still unresolved, with families and dynasties caught in disturbed feelings of being disconnected from actual events, but feeding current disastrous actions. Roots of un-peace often rest below surface soil waiting for an event to call them into action.

I believe there is no place in the United States more the epicenter of roots of peace and un-peace than in the Southwest. This is a place of deep colonization and taking of land from the deeply spiritual and ancient Pueblo and Navajo people, whose beauty is as deeply colored as the mesas at sunset. A place where United States colonialism based on the premise of creating the first nuclear bomb to "protect the world" continues the drumbeat of ever more nuclear destruction and legacy concerns. We view this place where we live as the "Land of Enchantment" and "Sacrifice Zone."

This past August 9, the anniversary of the bombing of Nagasaki, I attended a Mass and a panel discussion held at the Cathedral of the Santa Fe Archdiocese in Santa Fe. The beautiful Robert Lenz icon screen, with contemporary and ancient saints in the background, and the controversial Our Lady Conquistadora at a side altar, symbolized the reality that peace is not easy or simple, but an evolutionary process requiring constant work, admission of wrongs, and unearthing new and respectful ways forward.

A group retreat prayer pilgrimage for healing at Tsoodzil, Mt. Taylor

Archbishop Wester, who recently penned a pastoral, "Living in the Light of Christ's Peace: A Conversation Toward Nuclear Disarmament," called for the Mass and interfaith panel discussion that followed, as a way to commemorate a day that changed human history. The event was televised to Japan, where Hibakusha victims of the nuclear bombs sat in attendance. Mostly gray-haired folks, who had worked for a world without nuclear weapons for decades, filled front pews. A group of Hispanic families from the Carrizozo area of White Sand, where the dawn rose too early on the morning of July 16, 1945, sat in other pews. Their sorrow was palpable. I was surprised how moved I was by this event and I was surprised by reflections that surfaced with tears and my own sorrow seeking forgiveness for a country still not aware of the destructive path it treads.

Some reflections:

Within the context of the Mass, the beautiful and long-suffering people of Carrizozo were called to the altar for a blessing. Cancers ravage these families; genetic mutations live within them. The United States government has not recognized them as downwinders, nor have they received any financial recompense for their health and suffering. Some drive hundreds of miles to doctors and for cancer treatments. This was the first time they were honored and blessed by a church, that during the 1950s, promoted medals of Mary with the image of the nuclear cloud behind her.

A second reflection: Notably absent from the event were the Pueblo people of Santa Clara and San Ildefonso whose land, with sacred and pilgrimage places, was taken for the scientific war project to create the atomic bomb at what is now Los Alamos. Nor were there people from Acoma and Laguna Pueblos and the Navajo land present. Their communities continue to live with uranium poisoning from mining, breathing radioactive dust on windy desert days and are unable to drink polluted water left from legacy mining that has not been cleaned up. They still fight new uranium mining and seek compensation and clean-up of

hundreds of uranium mining sites next to homes and grazing sheep and cattle.

Deeply rooted in Holy Mother Earth, these people hold important spiritual and cultural beliefs springing from sacred land and waters. One holy place, Mt. Taylor, or Tsoodzil, as she is named by the Navajo, is the place of an important story of first man who was planted at Turquoise Mountain which is guarded by the cougar. Tsoodzil is the Southern sacred mountain of the four mountains creating the center of the world for indigenous people in the Southwest region.

Ancient stories of the people reveal that they were told a yellow monster lived deep in Tsoodzil. They could choose to dig up the monster or leave at rest. They chose to leave it. But in the 1940s, the United States' government chose to dig it up – uranium – saying it was for local jobs and the security of the nation. The monster was unleashed. The United States government still owes apologies and recompense to the indigenous peoples of the region. The Catholic Church has still not rescinded the Doctrine of Discovery, whose 500-year-old roots continue to justify taking lands to this day in courts of law.

My final reflection, that weighed heavily on me as I left the Cathedral, was that we choose to walk this destructive path. We justify it for a national, and even international, security myth, and for large profits of some corporations, and for power. We have not drunk deeply enough from the spiritual aquifers to know what we must do. We are caught in the myth that nuclear weapons and nuclear power are the way to keep peace, and also provide an energy solution to climate change. Some facts that make me wonder if we are evolving an inch toward peace include:

1. This year, the proposed Los Alamos lab's plutonium modernization funding to build triggers for nuclear weapons is increasing by 50% to $1.56 billion from this past year's $1 billion.

2. The United States has not yet signed or ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). The United States has consistently voted against an annual UN General Assembly resolution, since 2018, that welcomes the adoption of the TPNW and calls upon all states to sign, ratify, or accede to it "at the earliest possible date." In December 2021, the current U.S. Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, said: "We do not support the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Seeking to ban nuclear weapons through a treaty that does not include any of the countries that actually possess nuclear weapons is not likely to produce any results."

3. The conflict in Ukraine, where the world waits on edge for a possible nuclear disaster from a power plant, is one of many reasons nuclear power is not viable in addressing climate change. There are 93 nuclear power plants in 23 states in the United States. Many are aging and need to be decommissioned. There is no place to put the highly radioactive fuel rods. A plan is proposed to send them to New Mexico, which has not one plant. They would be transported by rail in faulty cannisters for partially above ground storage, which is vulnerable in so many ways.

Prayers for peace lead to action. This responsibility rests upon us all. What can you do? Contact your federal leaders to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons for petitions at: https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/tpnw/ and www.actionnetwork.org. Work for clean-up and green jobs. You can find out where your energy comes from and work to have nuclear power plants decommissioned in place and pressure the United States for real solution to address waste.

Peace and un-peace are both deeply rooted in humanity. The call is to learn of both deep roots and evolve in ways that reconcile the past and move into a possible future.

Colombia's Peace Agreement and Truth Commission Report

Image by Rawpixel courtesy of istockphoto

Peace is "Shalom," an ancient traditional greeting that wishes peace, health, well-being, social justice, and harmony with nature. It is a process under construction that does not end either in space or in time; that is why for us believers it is essentially utopian. Aware of this, we commit ourselves to a lasting peace, a result of overcoming the structural causes of poverty, of social and environmental injustice, grounded in the territories and land of the communities and peoples. In this sense, our understanding of peace falls within the concept of "Positive Peace," understood as the presence of social and environmental justice; as well as the hope of achieving the absence of war and all violence.

Therefore, based on our religious beliefs and spiritualities, peace includes the care of all forms of life, a preferential option for the marginalized and impoverished people, and a profound respect for differences and contradictors. It includes letting the Spirit of Life flow to renew the face of Mother Earth, to restore the bonds of universal brotherhood.

Towards the construction of peace in Colombia.

After more than 60 years at war, we lived in hope with the signing of the Peace agreements in 2016 between the FARC-EP guerrillas and the Colombian government. The main issues of the agreement contemplated: a comprehensive rural reform so that the peasants and demobilized would have access to land, political participation, a solution to the problem of illicit drugs, and recognition of the victims. There were four years of dialogue, in which the parties listened to the victims, were able to say directly to each other the impact and consequences of violent acts on families, communities, and territories, in addition to the long chain of injustice, exclusion and marginalization of the rural and impoverished population of the country.

In these six years since the signing of the Agreements, their implementation has been full of difficulties that include lack of political will and the assassination of nearly 300 of the signatories of the peace agreement.

The Truth Clarification Commission: "There is a future if there is truth."

As a result of the agreements, a Truth Commission for the "clarification of what happened during the Colombian armed conflict to offer an explanation of its complexity" was in session for 3 years and 7 months.

by Sister Ma. Carolina Pardo J. and Abilio Peña, Cojourner

Image by Julian Zapata courtesy of Pixabay

Based on the question: "Where is your brother?" and looking for the report to help overcome the oblivion, fear and hatred unto death – on June 28, 2022, the Truth Commission launched its report. It seeks to heal the physical and symbolic body of a nation shattered by violence, and to open space for those who think differently. Numerous stories of pain and untold horror led to the questions posed by the director, the Jesuit Francisco de Roux: "How could this be possible? Where were we while this barbarism was happening?" According to the report, 80% of the victims were civilians; 450,666 people lost their lives in the context of the armed conflict; 121,768 were victims of forced disappearance; 50,770 were kidnapped; 16,238 children and adolescents were recruited; 32,446 people were victims of acts against freedom and sexual integrity; and about 8 million have been forcibly displaced; among other violations of rights.

The presentation of the report – including theatrical staging, concerts and proposals for dissemination in schools and colleges – is allowing the entire country and the new generations to know the truth of what happened, of what was never heard, especially in the face of State responsibility for many of these crimes. All this is with the hope that this barbarity will never be repeated or aided by our silence, indifference and acquiescence, especially today, when we see large parts of the country again with massacres and fights for territory.

The Truths that the Commission exposes are seeds of hope for the construction of peace. These need to be nourished and cared for so that there is a great, inclusive, and encompassing peace. A peace that includes a social level but also that is based on our on-going personal conversion to guarantee its permanence.

The Truth Commission made 67 recommendations including resuming dialogue with other guerrillas; the implementation of agreements already signed; the protection of social leaders and signatories of the peace agreement; a solution to the drug trafficking problem; the construction of a public policy of peace and reconciliation; the construction of a new military doctrine, among many others.

The government of President Gustavo Petro, which took office on August 7, 2022, has expressed his desire and political will to "comply strictly with the recommendations."

More reasons for hope.

The Greening of the Thin Veil

Image by Gerd Altmann courtesy of Pixabay

"When one tugs at a single thing in nature, he finds it attached to the rest of the world." - John Muir

Connecting peace and peaceful practices with environmental issues ushers me to a thin place. The veil is thin, porous and can be either opaque or transparent. Environmental issues harbor both negative and positive pathways to peace. Negative or reluctant peace refers to the absence of, reduction of, or elimination of destructive practices without enthusiastic or amicable support. Conversely, optimistic or positive peace efforts refers to the alignment of justice and equality systems that make available a sustainable and peaceful society.

Living in the "Land of 10,000 Lakes," I thought the one connecting element I might focus on is Minnesota's most precious resource - water. Fact: our water is contaminated! The world over, water is in apocalyptic stress either in short supply or overly abundant and almost always polluted. The path to clean water is both transparent and opaque, depending which fringe of the veil brushes your profits.

Let me hopscotch around the world listing just a few diverse environmental challenges seeking peaceful resolution.

In my home state of Iowa, residents are trying to improve the federal oversight of radioactive waste produced by phosphogypsum. It is used in the production of fertilizer and now leftover phosphate rock was approved for road construction. Toxic waste is stored in gypsum stacks, leaking in the community water supply. The veil hides the elements use in construction and it exposes a 1600 year to ½ life decay.

Washington and Oregon grapple with the Goldendale Energy Storage of Hydraulic Project. This project incorporates great restorative and sustainable practices, but the veil covers sacred lands. The project would store solar and wind energy until needed, but it would obliterate irreplaceable Yakima Nations cultural resources, including archeological, ceremonial, burial and petroglyph monuments and ancestral sites. Tribal nations bear the cost of energy development. The veil conceals the cultural values of native peoples. Construction is scheduled to take place 2022-2024.

by Sister Marlys Jax

Image by mysticsartdesign courtesy of Pixabay

Coal Ash is a by-product of burning coal that contains multiple contaminants known to be associated with long-term health and ecological risks. Ameren is the largest utility company in Missouri and now stores 3 million tons of coal ash in massive unlined pits on the banks of the Mississippi River seeping in the ground water. Contaminant secrets hide in drinking water.

Storm water runoff is one of the most significant threats to our water quality. Water gravitates to the nearest river or lake. It picks up hitchhikers such as litter, leaves, oil, herbicides and pesticides lurking on the way. Mother Earth drinks in this water, treating it gently and naturally, enjoying the hidden gifts while exposing the pests in the process. Adding buffer zones protects the quality, attempting to making peace naturally but in little portions.

Golf courses are unnatural recreational lands with sculpted links and carved out sand traps, fastidiously clipped greens depending on regular herbicide and pesticide water treatments. They flaunt beautiful veils while needs of diverse human, animal and plant species languish in thirst.

The United States is not alone in dealing with Mother Earth's anxieties. The rest of the world is attached.

How is it possible to turn a water crisis into a road to peace? Peace, energy, and water are in grim supply in Israel, Jordan and Palestine. Jordan is nearly land-locked with only 16 miles of seashore, but it has 320 days of sunlight for solar panels. Israel and Palestine have access to the sea and water. Jordan could sell energy while Israel and Palestine could sell water to Jordan. Can this be a three-way win/win exchange for peaceful co-existence? Water and climate change are not political issues but scientific human issues. Negotiating neighbors may be able to breach the veil.

Sweden is currently advocating the removal of many dams and restoring the natural rivers to flow freely, improving biodiversity and supporting the Baltic Salmon and trout industry. Rewilding is the regeneration and restoring of native species animals, birds and fish. Reestablishing native plants, shrubs and trees can absorb and store carbon while making properties more resilient against floods and extreme weather. Trees increases the ability of land to absorb

water and make landscapes resilient. Harmonizing with nature allows humans to recognize their attachment to all creation.

Tole Sap, a 1000 square mile lake, is the soul of the nation in Cambodia. Seventy-five percent of Cambodians rely on fresh water fish. Illegal fishing activities, deforestation, fires, flooded forests, population growth, and hydropower dams threaten it. It is complicated by private ownership outside the country. Mekong Rivers flow to the Tole Sap Lake in June and July, and it flows back to Mekong in October and November. Now, it only flows a couple of weeks in August.

Disney Corporation developed Lighthouse Point for docking their new cruise ship in the Bahamas. Not seriously considered in their equation was the low-lying island, so vulnerable to sea level rising, and the air stream paths of intense storms which disrupts the rich biodiversity.

Climate is at a tipping point to avoid catastrophic warming. Scientists the world over estimate that 80% of fossil fuels need to stay in the ground. At a time when we need to rapidly transition to clean energy, the last thing we should do is lock ourselves into decades of continued fossil fuel extraction. We will always need some fossil fuels. Extraction has devastating effects on water that the community badly needs.

These few stories are just one drop in the ocean of environmental challenges searching for peace. The ocean is deep!

What can we do to build peace one drop at a time?

1) The goal is to believe in and invest in the common good of all the world's citizens.
2) Be informed and be part of the citizen conversation.
3) Seek reasonable care for our shared resources.
4) Be knowledgeable and challenge the interests of investors.
5) Recognize/acknowledge our past failures and be part of restoration processes.
6) Recognize that accountability is part of every equation.

We live in a time when our world is crumbling and the quest for environmental peace seems no longer real. People are unsure of the goal, insecure of the search for meaningful benchmarks and unconvinced that the path to peace is possible. It is a major crisis of meaning and hope. In the world of peace efforts, differences make headlines but stories of hope miss the deadline.

The anxiety cannot be addressed in mere surface or problem-solving avenues. Only spiritual psychology and mythology are powerful enough to address the depth of peace. Peace involves wrestling, negotiating, and willingly agreeing that contrasting agents have equal benefits. Both hearts need to give up power and prestige for the good of the whole.

The veil of the spiritual has always opened to the symbolic world of the soul. It is the main entry point of the spirit world where peace resides. Harnessing natures healing powers teaches us to plumb the spiritual. Nature's gift of water leads us through heartbreak, failure, destructiveness, goodness, dreams and beauty. Every experience is grace filled. There are no dead-ends. There is no wasted time, no useless consumers, nor random happenings. Everything has meaning. God is equally hidden and revealed in all things wanting to break out. Water is precious. Peace is a fragile journey to be walked. So, God says to Jeremiah:

"Stand at the crossroads,
and look and ask for the ancient paths,
where the good way lies;
and walk it,
and find rest for your souls."

- Jeremiah 6:16

On Sunday, October 2, we welcomed five new Cojourners, who signed a covenant with the Rochester Franciscan Sisters.

Listening With the Ears of the Heart

Patricia Barrier

Bescye Burnett

Justin Drescher

Tim Haskamp

Patrick Ryan

What is Cojourning? Cojourning describes a relationship in which individuals and the Sisters of Saint Francis desire to journey together, or "co-journey", sharing their lives, prayer, mission and ministry in the spirit of Saints Francis and Clare of Assisi and the foundress, Mother Alfred Moes. Cojourner is the name given to a lay associate with the Sisters of Saint Francis of Rochester, Minnesota.

In Memoriam

Sister Ancel Fischer (April 28, 1937 - May 18, 2022)

Sister Ancel (born Monica Vivian) grew up on a farm near Morgan, Minnesota, where she developed an appreciation for the beauty of nature, the value of the earth, and dependence on God. Living on the farm, she learned the worth of work and this evolved into her spirit of selfless service to others, which became the hallmark of her life. Because of this spirit, it is easy to understand why she chose nursing as her career. While in training at Saint Marys Hospital, she was attracted to the Rochester Franciscan Sisters and entered the order on January 27, 1957. After the novitiate, Sister Ancel was missioned to Assisi Heights as a nurse in healthcare. She served at Assisi Heights at several different times in a number of positions. Her gentle presence and compassion was exemplified in her care for each person. Wherever Ancel was assigned – whether it be St. Francis Convalescent Home in Denver, Colorado; Mercy Hospital in Portsmouth, Ohio; or as Director of Health Service at the College of St. Teresa in Winona – her professional skills were exemplified. Later, after completing several years as Congregational Coordinator of Healthcare, Sister Ancel served as a dedicated companion for many of our Sisters going to the clinic. All, who knew her well, always spoke of her faithfulness to relationship. She lived her life in faithfulness to her family, to others, and to her God.

Sister Janel Crumb (May 7, 1932 - May 12, 2022)

Sister Janel Crumb's life, like the many landscape drawings and watercolors she created, is a canvas of vast horizons, locations, communities, and people she served. Her life was art lived in works of justice and care for those suffering economic inequities. The love of earth carried through in her art throughout her life, as did the experience of having brothers in the war. The stories of her brother, who was among the first to step foot amidst the ashes, death and devastation of the nuclear-bombed Hiroshima, took root in her soul calling her to be a peace-maker dedicated to the vow of non-violence. Like her landscapes that depicted so many different geographies, her life spanned many ministries – from teaching young children to teaching students at the College of St. Teresa. Many students were inspired by her classes in art and social justice. During her years at the College of St. Teresa, she initiated alternative classes which featured and gave voice to the Native American and African American students whom she befriended, so that they could survive in a dominant culture and thrive to meet their own goals. Even as she loved her life founded in Gospel living, through the inspiration of St. Francis and St. Clare, she also found that other perspectives on spirituality and ministry were enriching. Inspired by the social justice focus of the Loretto Sisters, she became a co-member; drawn to ecumenical expressions, she was part of Church Women United meetings and prayers. While in the Southwest, she worked with people without shelter, women in need, and with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Later in life at Assisi Heights, art and social justice ministries continued to be her focus.

Sister Margaret Boler (January 19, 1933 - May 10, 2022)

It is said that the happiest persons are those who are grateful. Sister Margaret Boler chose to guide our reflection today with the words "Praise and Thank you, God, for the Gift of Life." Isn't it true that these words easily offer a framework for understanding her: a woman whose gratitude was reflected in a witty, Irish sense of humor that generated many a laugh. Six months after high school graduation, Margaret left home and joined the Rochester Franciscans. Her education there began with a BS in Elementary Education from our College of St. Teresa. Subsequent education prepared Sister for a great variety of ministries, including: as a social worker, Coordinator of Human Resources, serving as a member of one of our Executive Councils and as a Hospice Intern. Were her frequent changes of ministry due to dissatisfaction or difficulties? Definitely not; for Sister Margaret once commented that she loved each of them, though for different reasons. Some time ago Sister Margaret stated, "I look back with gratitude upon blessings I have received and pray I am able to share these blessings through ministry during years to come." Indeed, she did share those blessings and we are blessed to be among the many benefactors.

Sister Patricia Keefe (July 11, 1942 - September 11, 2022)

Sister Pat Keefe wrote in her 2013 memoir, "Out from the Blufflands," that she had reread an essay written in high school on human rights: "without my knowing it, that paper revealed the passion of my life and the primary conviction that guided my choice-making when choices became a way of life for the Congregation I entered." Clear and articulate about her choices, at the time of her Golden Jubilee she expressed gratitude for the many ways in which the Rochester Franciscan congregation had enriched her and encouraged her along the path of life. From the farm girl who helped with chores of raising sheep, working in the garden, and picking up eggs; to living the urban life in major cities of the world—New York, Washington, D.C., London—Pat had a sense that God was leading her from one position to another. Her choices led her to teach theology and to become a lawyer working for the disadvantaged in our society. Her legal mind was sharp and clear with her heart full of compassion in the various lawyer positions she held for Minnesota Legal Aid, Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services, Global Education Associates, Amnesty International, Archdiocese of Oklahoma and Global Nonviolent Peace Force. From 1994-2000, she served on the Congregational Leadership Team with the responsibility of initiating studies of the demographics of the community; a very helpful study for ongoing planning for the future. Whatever Pat did, she did with her whole heart.

Sister Ronan Degnan (November 9, 1926 - May 9, 2022)

Born Rosemary Ann, to Ellen Nancy Ronan and Bernard Degnan, she was the third of seven in the Degnan family raised on a farm in rural Lewiston, Minnesota. On the farm, everyone had age appropriate chores with the Degnan's training model – known as observation. After graduating as valedictorian of her high school class, she set off to Winona for the College of St. Teresa. Education ranked high in the Degnan family. After the first semester, her parents agreed to her entrance into the Sisters of Saint Francis, on January 2, 1945, where she received the Irish name Ronan – the maiden name of her mother and the name of her brother. She taught math in junior high/senior high schools in Minnesota, Illinois, and Ohio, and served on the faculty of the College of St. Teresa. There she served as the Director of the Upward Bound Program for disadvantaged girls. Though she taught Home Economics, math remained her strong suit. In addition to math, she had a vested stake in women's studies and women's issues. In Congregational affairs, she always sat on the edge during community meetings, raising issues, seeking clarification or questioning the rationale. If we look at Sister Ronan from a math perspective, we can say she **added** savory ideas to every conversation; she **subtracted** obstacles in narrow escapes. She **multiplied** friends, by such things as crashing an outdoor wedding party. She **divided** her values after she read the life of Dan Berrigan. She took reading newspapers/magazines and books to the **Nth power**. In addition, with **equations**, she knew how to convert **negatives** to **positives!**

Peace Within Oneself

by Sister Claren Sellner

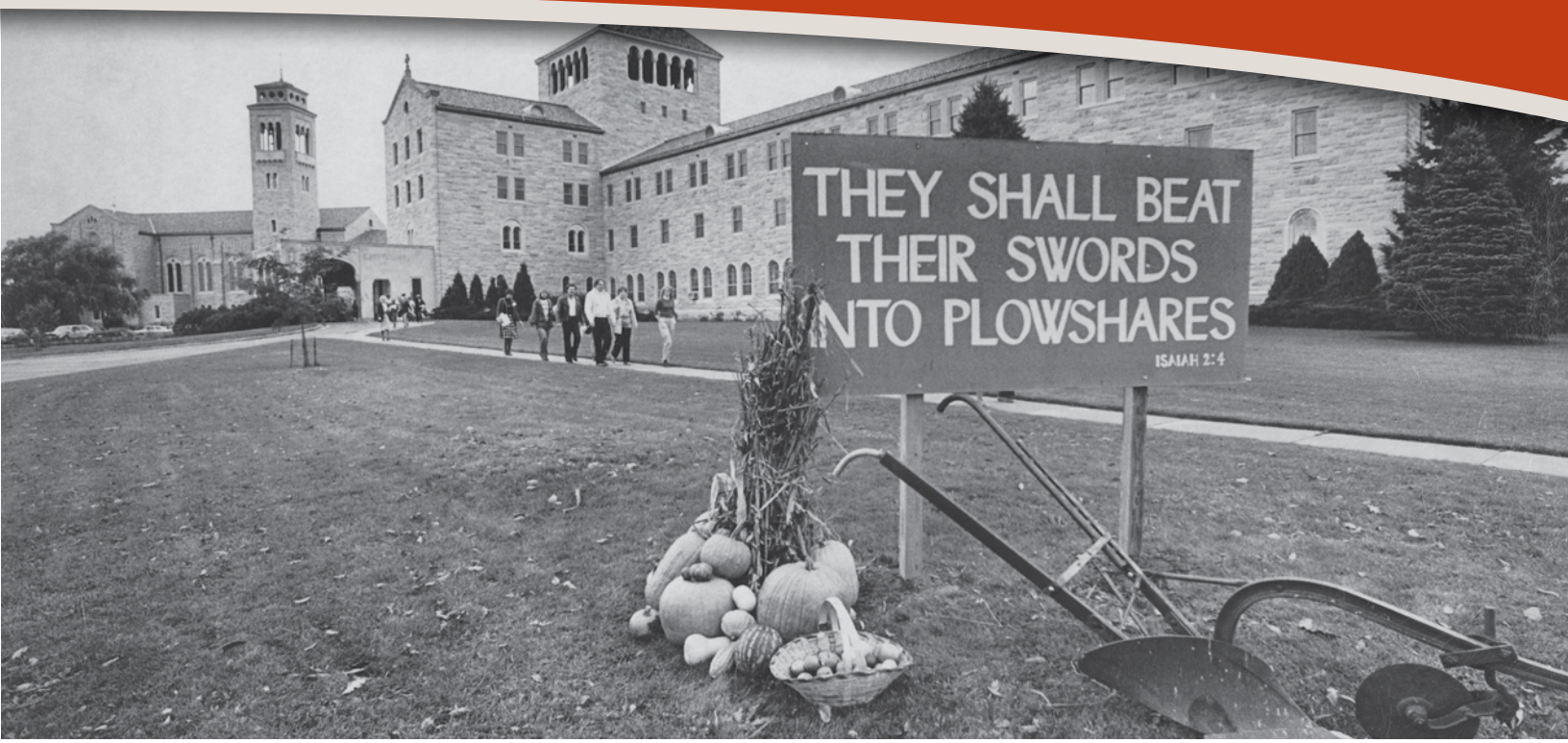
I cannot give another peace. I can wish and desire peace for others. Peace is of the self-being. Either I am a peace-maker or a peace-lover. Both are important in all relationships. A person can learn peace. It's likely based upon what one witnesses or experiences in daily life. Name a social, physical or moral issue. Confront the issue within oneself and name the action that could be taken.

In peace there is strength and energy. Persons want peace. It's a growing sense of self-worth within. Persons ache for peace. Families, churches, communities and all in society seek peace.

It is with the grace of God, this higher power beyond each of us, which allows a calming of oneself, or as a group together seeking, asking praying for peace. Mindfulness, or the silence within, offers the building of peace. Taking time for this silence every day allows each person to claim peace. Practicing the quiet is a task. You must claim it as you challenge yourself each day. It is in the quiet that one learns forgiveness; forgiving others without judgement. Peace cannot make judgements. Though I may not be able to change matters of the world, I can start to do my part by maintaining peace within myself.

From the Archives: Pax Christi USA

by Sister Marisa McDonald



Pax Christi is an International Catholic peace movement that began after World War II as a way of promoting reconciliation. In 1972, it was brought to the United States and initial members included notable Catholic peace activists such as Eileen Egan, Dorothy Day, Thomas Merton, Bishop Thomas Gumbleton, and others.

The United States group began to have annual Assemblies in order to educate persons about critical peace and justice issues; 2022 is the 50th Anniversary of Pax Christi USA. But did you know that the Rochester Franciscans and Assisi Heights were involved years ago?

As part of the celebration marking the 800th anniversary of the birth of Saint Francis, and at the suggestion of Sister Elizabeth Gillis, the 10th Annual Pax Christi Assembly was held at Assisi Heights, October 8-10, 1982. 700 peacemaking participants from all over the United States gathered to discuss various topics, including: nuclear weapons, conscientious objecting, the Just War Theory, and nonviolent resistance.

"Alternatives to Violence" was the theme of the Assembly. The keynote address on "Gospel Nonviolence" was given by Bishop Carroll Dozier of Memphis, and Bishop Thomas Gumbleton was the primary celebrant at the Sunday liturgy.

There was also a public component to the weekend -- Rochester Mayor Chuck Hazama designated October 4-10, 1982, as "Alternative to Violence Week," and there was a presentation at the Mayo Civic Center on "Bishops and Physicians on the Threat of Nuclear War".

Sister Ann Redig had a major role in the Assembly as she served as the Rochester Coordinator of the event, along with the staff of the Christian Community Center.

Sister Ann remembers that Sister Franchon obtained roses from the Lake Winona rose garden, which were then used with strands of barbed wire to create the Pax Christi symbol in displays throughout the house.

Other Franciscan involvement in the weekend included presentations by Sister Janel Crumb on "St. Francis on Nonviolence," and Sister Gretchen Berg on "Feminine Perspective on Nonviolence." Future Cojourner Jane Campion spoke on "Wholistic Health and Personal Nonviolence." Many others assisted with the planning and execution of such a large event -- liturgy, art, environment, housing, arrangements, publicity, etc., as well as the local Sisters providing the usual incomparable Franciscan hospitality to the guests.

Help us Build a Future of Hope!

Founded 37 years ago by the Sisters of Saint Francis of Rochester, Colegio Anexo San Francisco de Asis (CASFA) – a school for children and youth from low-income families in a disadvantaged sector of Bogotá, Colombia – needs your help to keep building for the future. Since 1985, CASFA has been educating children from El Codito, a slum partly built in a natural reserve zone unfit for construction, located in the northeastern mountains of Bogotá. Those who have been working in this sector for decades and have noticed the school's positive healing influence on the neighborhood, often acting as the only viable alternative to gangs and drug-dealing for its vulnerable youth. The 'miracle' of CASFA is that it has grown to a full Pre-K-12 school with an excellent reputation for quality education. Graduating seniors test out at the highest level (A+) of all national schools and 85% go on to higher education. In addition to strong academics, they develop and live out Franciscan values, demonstrating genuine leadership skills and commitment to the needs of their local community. As one student put it, "Thanks to my school, I have experienced the power that education has to break the multi-dimensional cycle of poverty and structural violence. All that I am began at CASFA, in an absolutely richly human educational experience…"

by June Howard, Director

Unfortunately, given their economic situation, the parents of our students are only able to contribute approximately 12% of the actual cost of educating their child. The cost per student, depending on the grade level, is about $1,750 per year in American dollars. To make up the difference, we have relied on generous donors to participate in "Plan Madrina" – the Godparent plan. Each person offering to support a student is paired with a student, and receives their name, photo and an annual update on the student's progress. A suggested donation amount is $50.00 monthly or $600.00 annually; plus, if you wish, an extra $25.00 donation at Christmastime to purchase an article of clothing for the child or a food basket for the family. As you can see from our figures, we need about three godparents per child in order to make ends meet, but we are appreciative of any and all gifts.

If you'd like to help support the Sisters' CASFA school in Bogotá, Colombia, please contact June Howard at 507-529-3536 or email Robin Stearns at mission.assistant@rochesterfranciscan.org.

Thank you,

June Howard

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