



Rewards of Reading and Discussing Nonviolence

by Marian Ronan

During Lent, a group of us from Downtown Brooklyn Pax Christi participated in Pax Christi USA's Advancing Nonviolence Study Circles. The Study Circles are part of the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative, a project of Pax Christi International, which aims to advance nonviolence in the universal Church and around the entire world. To do so, we read and discussed weekly the book, *Advancing Nonviolence and Just Peace in the Church and the World*, a collection of writings edited by Rose Marie Berger, Ken Butigan, Judy Coode, and Marie Dennis. * In order to help achieve the goal of the study circles, to deepen the Catholic understanding of and commitment to Gospel nonviolence, we share with you here some of what we learned.

Because the materials included are “biblical, theological, ethical, pastoral and strategic,” each of us harvested different insights from the volume. But some of us definitely came together around a particular chapter or idea. For two of us, the section on the biblical foundations of nonviolence was especially helpful, undercutting as it did mistaken assumptions about the God of the Hebrew Bible—that the God of the Israelites is a violent God, demanding and justifying violence on the part of human beings.

For example, some Christians take as proof of God's violence the demand that Abraham sacrifice his son, Isaac. The authors show, however, that that command was a “trial” to test the faith of Abraham and Sarah, one God revoked as soon as Abraham showed his obedience. There are, in fact, many prohibitions against shedding blood and the sacrifice of humans throughout the Scriptures. God categorically rejects violence but engages again and again with the violent proclivities of creatures throughout the history of salvation. Jesus himself, we learn, left out themes of retribution and harshness in his reflections on Scripture passages, creating a framework for the peaceable kingdom of the early Church.

Some members of our group were also struck by the fact that Jesus became angry at times but was never violent. Indeed, his acceptance of death showed him to be the fullest embodiment of Isaiah's “suffering servant.” Another member dove into the ways the principle of “just war” was used to legitimate extremely problematic violent actions on the part of the Church itself: Pope Urban II declaring in 1095 that some wars were not only just, but holy; the justification of the crusades against Muslims in the Middle Ages; and Pope Urban IV in 1252 allowing for torture to extract confessions from heretics. In order to authentically teach nonviolence as the heart of the Gospel, the Church must no longer speak of wars as “just” and must repent of its own violence.

That brings us to the actions that the members of our group found themselves called to as a result of reading and discussing *Advancing Nonviolence*.

Some have begun to work to find ways to love their enemies, especially their political ones—quoting, in one instance, a sermon which urged “Love the person against whom you plan to vote.” Others felt called to encourage a similar emphasis on the part of priests, other religious leaders, and entire communities, that is, to address the importance of nonviolence in their preaching and ministries

Some group members were especially taken with a section later in the book about various forms of *jus in conflictione*, that is, skills, virtues, and principles for acting justly and wisely amid all conflicts. One emphasized, within this

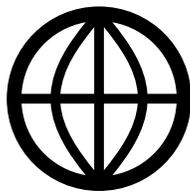
trajectory, continuing to educate herself about nonviolence, especially about actions by some heroic leaders, like St. Oscar Romero, as well as by less well-known women and men. Another noted, in this regard, the importance of developing “participatory processes for discernment and decision making which could lead to much change for the better within the Church.”

And a number of us resolved to pray more, especially for peace and nonviolence, continued patience and compassion.

So impressed were we by our experience of reading and discussing *Advancing Nonviolence*, we have decided to continue meeting weekly to discuss other writings about the meaning and challenges of nonviolence. Our next choice is Ronald Sider’s *Nonviolent Action: What Christian Ethics Demands but Most Christians Have Never Really Tried*. We meet by Zoom on Wednesday afternoons from 4 to 5:30. We would love to have you join us! Please email Marian Ronan marian.ronan4@gmail.com to be added to the list.

by Marian Ronan, on behalf of Seth Davis, Gillian Frasier, Kelly Hamilton and Jim Kelly

**Advancing Nonviolence and Just Peace in the Church and the World: Biblical, Theological, Ethical, and Strategic Dimensions of Nonviolence*. Edited by Rose Marie Berger, Ken Butigan, Judy Coode, and Marie Dennis. (Pax Christi International, 2020). 322 pp. \$29.45.



Retreat 2021 Compassion on the Path to Peace: Parable of the Good Samaritan for Our Times

by Anne Bjornson

That compassion is necessary on the path to peace sounds self-evident. However, it is often sadly lacking and rarely talked about in the times in which we live. So this was a timely and needed topic for Pax Christi Metro New York’s 2021 Lenten Retreat. The annual weekend retreat was by necessity shortened to a morning ZOOM retreat led by Fr. Fred Thelen. Fr. Thelen is retired pastor of the Cristo Rey Church in Lansing, Michigan; former Maryknoll Associate Priest; founder of the first Office of Peace and Justice Ministry of the Lansing Diocese; past coordinator of PC Michigan; and current member of the PCUSA National Council.

The retreat began with the story of the Good Samaritan, a parable we all know. Fr. Thelen added historical context: the 800 years of enmity between Jews and Samaritans preventing any interaction between them.

But in the story it is the Samaritan traveler who, moved by compassion, stops to help the Wounded Traveler, likely a Jew, lying on the road after two religious leaders passed him by. The Samaritan tended to his wounds and brought him to an inn where the next day he asked the innkeeper to continue to care for the man.

Fr. Thelen shared his prayerful reflections on this icon by Josef Sedmak, (used on the front cover of the Paulist Press edition of *Fratelli Tutti*). "... It revealed Jesus present in the wounded man. The Samaritan holding the half dead man appears like Mary in the Pietá; the donkey ready to carry the burden of the wounded traveler, like essential workers; and Mother Earth soaking up the blood of our wounds. There's the Inn and Innkeeper beyond our sight, and the passersby. Different elements of our life might be in all of these."



We then had time to reflect on the Icon and how we might identify with anyone in the picture. One person identified with the donkey, standing by to do what is asked, but not taking the initiative. Another wondered if the passerby looking back was relieved to see someone doing the work so he does not have to.

The parable reminds us that Jesus has no regard for rules and customs that divide people. The Samaritan saw only a wounded human being and was moved to compassion to help the man. Today we may see that action in people leaving food and water in the desert for refugees traveling through the desert.

The second half of the retreat brought us from compassion to community and to peacemaking. Pope Francis holds up compassion as a lens through which we see the world.

Fr. Thelen talked about Lent as the time to reform, usually interpreted as examining our shortcomings and trying to do better. He put it in a more positive light -- as a chance to re-form our lives, to soften the hard clay of our lives and allow the Potter to re-form us. We must be re-formed into community. Citing Dorothy Day and Pope Francis, Fr. Thelen noted community is essential to compassion. The Good Samaritan, the wounded traveler, and the innkeeper had to form a community, had to be willing to trust each other and cross boundaries so healing could take place.

Jesus teaches compassion as a way of life. Drawing on Pope Francis and *Fratelli Tutti*, peacemaking is the necessary extension of the compassion of the Good Samaritan. Following his example means we become a neighbor to the wounded, willing to cross barriers. Pope Francis advises starting locally and then expanding to look globally. We must seek and love the common good, seek justice in social structures, help create a "culture of enough that can lead to social peace." We must keep the memory of events like Hiroshima and other atrocities, have a connection to the victims. "It is the memory that encourages the building of a more fair...future."

We were reminded that we cannot do everything, but we can see each other as parts of the body working together, each part different, but no one part more important than the others, each part supporting the others to make the body whole.

Anne Bjornson is a member of Pax Christi Queens and on the Witness and Education Committees.

We cannot love God unless we love each other, and to love we must know each other...We have all know the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love and that love comes with community.

The Long Loneliness, Dorothy Day

A Gift of Peace has been given:

In memory of:

Laureen Andruseaski
Gerard Clark
Richard Deats
Fr. Anselm Deehr, ST
Joan Fealey
Eileen Hoban
Fr. Joseph Keenan, ST
Sr. Cora Marie McGuire, MSBT
Sr. Virginia Morris, MSBT
Sr. Dianna Ortiz
Vincent Palange
Rita Ripley
Bernard Brian J. Skelly
Debbie Trance-Mordecai
Fr. Francisco Valdovinos, ST
George Zine, MCA



In honor of:

Eleni Maria Montero
Rosemarie Pace

Please remember them in prayer.

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Spring 2021

“Kerux” is the Greek word meaning “herald”. As the name of our newsletter, it reminds us that we are to be heralds of God’s nonviolent love. We welcome letters, articles and reviews.

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Book Review

by Marian Ronan

***Climate Crisis and the Global Green New Deal: The Political Economy of Saving the Planet.* by Noam Chomsky and Robert Pollin. 157 pp. Verso. 2020.**

In recent months, we have heard frequently about the Green New Deal. But what is it? If you want to find out, I can think of no better resource than Noam Chomsky and Robert Pollin’s new book, *Climate Crisis and the Global Green New Deal*. (GGND)

Chomsky, as you probably know, is a linguist, historian, philosopher and activist who is frequently designated the nation’s “foremost public intellectual.” Pollin is a distinguished economist with a special interest in the environmental crisis.

One of the things that makes GGND a go-to resource is that it’s laid out in such an orderly fashion and is so accessible, an accessibility underpinned by the book’s question and answer format. And the same question is sometimes asked of both experts, resulting in somewhat different but overlapping angles on the issues addressed. The first chapter, “The Nature of Climate Change,” reminded me of the basic proposal structure I learned years ago: always start with the problem statement. And I love that Chomsky begins with what I have long considered his fundamental doctrine, that the two greatest problems facing humanity are climate change and nuclear war.

Chomsky illustrates this “doctrine” by starting his discussion of climate change with the bombing of Hiroshima and the ongoing nuclear buildup since then. Then we learn that the years immediately after the introduction of the “technological madness “ of nuclear weapons also saw the beginning of the massive rise in fossil-fuel emissions. Because of the skyrocketing of these emissions since 1945, the time available to avoid “tipping points,” that is “moments at which effects of global warming will become irreversible,” may have shrunk to zero and is at best thirty

years. Chomsky and Pollin then detail the causes of these skyrocketing emissions, from industrial agriculture to deforestation to air pollution to the neoliberal capitalist enforcement of the privatization of everything.

The second chapter of GGND lays out the relationship between capitalism and the climate crisis, beginning with the Republican Congress's blockage of the COP21 climate change treaty in 2015 and every other aspect of Obama's climate change agenda, under the massive influence of the highly class-conscious corporate world, especially the fossil fuel magnate Koch brothers.

And a major part of the problem is that a huge segment of the electorate goes along with this rejection of climate remedies because the government has, for decades, paid little attention to their desperation, driving miners and unemployed factory workers out into the streets. Most people forget that even Republican presidents once spoke out against Texas oil millionaires and established federal environmental agencies. Then in the 1980s, federally subsidized corporations like Exxon Mobil, with no oversight from the government, took extensive measures to deny climate change, no matter the accompanying likelihood of the destruction of the planet. The only solution, Chomsky and Pollin argue, is a shift to local, green-energy worker-owned and managed enterprises, including manufacturing.

Chapter three, the longest and most challenging, explores the elements of the "Global Green New Deal" essential to saving the planet. The goal of the GGND, we learn, is to achieve the 45% decrease in global net carbon emissions by 2030 and reach zero net carbon emissions by 2050, which was mandated by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in 2018. And to accomplish this in a way that "also expands decent job opportunities and raises mass living standards for working people around the world." In order to do this, nations must shift 2.5% of the global GDP to massively expanding energy efficiency standards in buildings, autos, public transport and manufacturing as well as shifting to clean renewable energy sources.

The authors stress that these changes will completely pay for themselves over time. They likewise emphasize that the only way such a program can succeed is if there is a total commitment to what they call a "just transition," that is, that the employment level and living standards of those currently involved in the fossil-fuel-driven industries are maintained and even improved in the new green economy. The authors also totally reject the notion that nuclear power can play any part in a GGND because of the dangers of radioactive wastes, spent nuclear fuels, the theft of nuclear technology for weapons building, and nuclear meltdown.

Also rejected are carbon capture and sequestration—pumping CO₂ into the ground--and massive aerosol injections; widespread reforestation is cheaper and less dangerous. The notion of "degrowth" advocated by some environmentalists is likewise rejected because we have to grow a clean energy infrastructure even as we degrow the fossil fuel economy.

Finally, in chapter four, "Political Mobilization for Saving the Planet," the authors highlight the impressive people's movements of recent years, like the 2019 global Climate Strike, Extinction Rebellion, and the imposition of serious green targets in many countries and some US states. These all point the way toward possible change.

Nonetheless, and interestingly enough, Chomsky and Pollin employ their extraordinary analytic skills to raise serious questions about activist tactics that are based more in abstract theories than in analyzing local contexts. Weekday demonstrations that shut down public transportation for example, alienate working people. Indeed, the authors argue that aiming for the establishment of a completely socialist society is not a viable tactic because of the short time remaining before irreversible climate disaster. Ultimately, Chomsky and Pollin return to their conviction that the critical factor in climate stabilization around the world is the GGND's commitment to "expanding decent work opportunities, raising mass living standards, and fighting poverty in all regions of the world."

May we come together to achieve such a world.

Marian Ronan is a member of the Downtown Brooklyn Pax Christi group and Research Professor of Catholic Studies at New York Theological Seminary.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Tax Days Actions—*Taxes for Peace — Not for War!* War Resisters League and several other Pax Christi associates met on Thursday, April 15, at the Internal Revenue Service in Manhattan with signs, banners, and leaflets. Another opportunity to join us will take place on **Monday, May 17**, 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm starting at the Times Square Military Recruiting Station, 43rd St. & Seventh Ave. At 3:30 pm, we'll march to the General Post Office/Moynihan Train Hall, 32nd St. & Eighth Ave. Let us know you plan to attend by selecting “going” on this [Facebook event page](#). For more information, email nycWRL@nycwarresisters.org or call 718-768-7306.

Peacemaker Awards Celebration, Sunday May 22nd—see below...

Hiroshima/Nagasaki Memorial Save Saturday, August 7th for our annual commemoration of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan and our appeal for the abolition of nuclear weapons. Details to come.

Annual Appeal: If you haven't already done so, please reflect on the many reasons you value PCMNY, especially in the current political climate, and respond as generously as possible to our annual appeal. If you did respond, THANK YOU!

Other Ways to Support Your Pax Christi Region: Visit <https://www.nfggive.com/guidestar/13-3424349> to donate online. Also support us by searching the Internet with GoodSearch.com (powered by Yahoo) or shopping online with GoodShop.com. Just indicate Pax Christi Metro New York as your charity. You can also turn your online shopping and searching into much-needed donations at www.iGive.com/PaxChristiMetroNewYork OR <http://smile.amazon.com/ch/13-3424349>.

“Gifts of Peace”: Donate to PCMNY in honor of those you love, whether they're celebrating a special holiday, a birthday, anniversary, jubilee, or new baby, are in need of encouragement, or mourning a loss. Cards are available from the PCMNY office for a recommended donation of \$5 each.

Pennies for Peace: On your own or with others, collect pennies throughout the year. Convert them to dollars and send them to PCMNY as a year-end gift.

Matching Gifts: Ask your company if it will match your gift to PCMNY.

Bequests: Please remember PCMNY in your will. Our legal name is Pax Christi Metro New York and our tax ID number is 13-3424349.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

If you would like to become more involved with Pax Christi Metro New York, consider volunteering for a committee or to help in the office and occasional mailings, volunteering to work on this Newsletter, Kerux. Fundraising experience is always welcomed. If you are interested or to get more information, contact the office at info@nypaxchristi.org.





Pax Christi Metro New York

invites you to our

Peacemaker Awards Celebration

Honoring:

Dr. Betty Reardon,
Renowned Peace Educator and Author

Nancy Lorence,
Veteran Peace and Justice Activist

Stella DiCicco,
Young Peacebuilder and President of Pax Christi at The Mary Louis Academy

Help us celebrate these wonderful women.
Pray with us, and play with us—
Give peace a chance with our annual raffle.
Have some fun with our Game of Peace.

Saturday, May 22nd, 2021
wherever you are on Zoom
1:00 – 3:00 PM Eastern Daylight Time

Donation: Mercy--\$25; Justice--\$50; Peace--\$75
or whatever you can afford
(scholarships may be available on request)

Reservation required by May 19th to get the Zoom link
Payable by Mastercard, Visa, American Express, or check to:
Pax Christi metro New York 371 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10014
212-420-0250; info@paxchristi.org; www.nypaxchristi.org; or
<https://www.nfggive.com/guidestar/13-3424349>

Calendar

- Apr. 15th: Tax Day Action I, the IRS, 290 Broadway, Manhattan, noon – 1:00 PM
May 17th: Tax Day Action II, Military Recruiting Station, Times Square, Manhattan, 3:00 PM
March to the GPO/Moynihan Train Hall, 3:30 PM
May 22nd: Peacemaker Awards Celebration, on Zoom, 1:00 – 3:00 PM
Aug. 1st: *Kerux* Deadline for the Fall issue
Aug. 7th: Hiroshima/Nagasaki Memorial, TBA

Contact the office for updated information on all events:
info@nypaxchristi.org, 212-420-0250, or www.nypaxchristi.org.
Also visit us on Facebook and Twitter.