

A New Moment:  
An Invitation to Nonviolence



A New Moment was compiled by:  
Erie Benedictines for Peace



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## Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi offered  
this invitation:  
"Thos who are attracted to nonviolence  
should, according to their ability and opportunity  
join the experiment."

This book is meant for those  
Who are attracted to nonviolence  
And want to know more about it.

This book is meant for those  
Who are interested  
In the Pax Christi vow of nonviolence  
And want to discern whether to take it.

This book is meant for those  
Who have taken  
The Pax Christi vow of nonviolence  
And wanted to reflect on the experiment.

Most of all  
The book is a personal journal,  
Tracing your journey  
Toward disarming the heart.  
If you choose to journey  
With a group,  
The book offers a twelve-month program.

After you have completed  
This book  
Pax Christi USA welcomes  
Your personal or group reflections, questions, insights  
On any aspect of nonviolence.  
It is from lived experiences such as yours  
That a theology of peace will be formed.

One  
A New Moment  
*By Rev. Francis X. Meehan*

The nuclear age has brought us to a "new moment" – this is the challenge issued by the US Catholic bishops in their peace pastoral. The bishops place this concern about nuclear war in a theological context by seeing it as a "sign of the times."

To interpret the nuclear concern as a sign of the times suggests two important points. One is the theological call to seize the present as a moment of grace. The "now" is a time of opportunity, of special grace, a particular invitation from God. The second point to emphasize is that our response to the nuclear issue is a religious response rather than a political one.

One danger in arguing about nuclear issues is that we become drawn only to public policy issues. Yet the challenge to evaluate war with "an entirely new attitude" necessitates dealing with the deepest point of our faith. Are we not believers in Jesus? Did he not die on a cross? Did he not forgive his enemies? Every time we teach or discuss the arms race, we must keep one eye on the crucifix. We must keep asking ourselves, "What do we really believe?"

When all is said and done, if it should come down to our own cooperation and participation in the cataclysm of nuclear war, God is not going to ask us on judgment day, "What about the Russians?" or "What about America?" The question must always be, "What about me?" This is one reason we must seriously discuss nonviolence.

In cocktail discussions or family arguments when people say, "What will we do if the Russians do such and such?" notice how the word "we" is used. "We" usually means "we Americans." This limitation should be a reproach to a people of faith. After all, what is our primary identity – our national identity or our identity in Christ? Were we not baptized into Christ's death rather than into a national flag?

St. Paul put it this way: "In Christ, there is neither Greek nor Jew." In other words, once the Lord Jesus came, we became brothers and sisters, children of God. This is our primary identity. Now the question, "What shall we do?" becomes a different question. Once we have allowed Jesus to pull us beyond nationalism, we can seriously think about the witness of the New Testament.

More than a decade ago, James Douglass in his great work, *The Nonviolent Cross*, taught us how just war teaching rarely motivates anyone to suffer in union with Jesus. His insight is not merely pious, for he sees how any serious peacemaking involves suffering and how terribly important it is to understand the meaning of the cross if one is to be a true peacemaker.

There is a tendency to discredit nonviolence by making it seem passive, as though it were simply letting people walk all over us, with no concern for legitimate security and defense. After Gandhi and Martin Luther King, there is no excuse for this kind of distortion.

Nonviolence is not simply an individual spiritual heroism; it is a group strategy. This concept implies real activity and reflective thought. It is not something masochistic, merely seeking to bring down the enemy on our backs as though to expose their violence. Rather it seeks to dare to be successful, to find a place of insertion into the enemy's mind and heart. In a sense, there is even a note of pragmatism in nonviolence.

One cannot mention this subject without mentioning the studies of Dr. Gene Sharp. His three-volume work, *The Politics of Nonviolence* should be required reading for Christians, even though he comes to the subject from a secular perspective.

One of Sharp's special contributions is to show how nonviolence has been successful in history. Indeed, he contradicts some of the easy assumptions that nonviolence could not take place against an immoral and ruthless dictator by showing that some of the most successful struggles against the Nazis were nonviolent ones. He has similar points to make in recounting the struggle of the Czechoslovakian and Polish against the Russians.

Most of all, the Church must be developing a spirituality of nonviolence – a spirituality that somehow penetrates the most central of all Christian moral commands, to love our enemy. In the past, this has been a real weakness of our teaching. For too long we have neglected the heart of Christianity. I have noticed that when people ask the Church to teach the fundamentals they rarely seem to imagine "love of enemies" as a fundamental. Yet what could be more central to Jesus' message in the Sermon on the Mount? What could be more central in the meaning of his dying? Were not his last words, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do"?

Rev. Francis X. Meehan, moral theologian and author, is a member of the National Council, Pax Christi USA. This is an excerpt from an article which appeared in *The Living Light*, Vol. 20, No. 1, October 1983, pp. 34-42. Reprinted with permission.

#### Reflection

1. What experiences in your life have led you to explore nonviolence?
2. List any word or phrase that comes to mind when you hear the word "nonviolence."

Scripture: Luke 19:41-42

Coming within sight of the city, Jesus wept over it and said, "If only you had known the path to peace this day, but you have completely lost it from view."

1. Why did Jesus weep over the city? What new moment did the people of Jerusalem miss? What might this moment have meant for them?
2. Name some significant "signs of the times" of our day. Why is it so difficult to read "the signs of the times" in any day?

#### A New Moment

1. Reflect on the Scripture passage, Luke 19:41-42. How might this Scripture influence your life?
2. Do you ever feel tensions in your loyalties to your country, to the Church, to the teachings of Jesus? Cite specific examples. Can you think of a situation where you had to make a choice?
3. How might you begin to develop within your own life a spirituality of nonviolence? Be specific.

Two  
An Invitation to Nonviolence  
*By William Powers*

When the Catholic bishops of the United States issued their pastoral, *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response*, there were, no doubt, people who agreed with the letter but had to ask themselves, "Yes, this is all well and good, but what can I do? What can I as one individual do to help bring about a more peace-oriented world?"

Very few people have the inspiration or drive of a St. Francis of Assisi, a Gandhi, or a King – indeed, if such men were more common we would be living on a radically different planet. Still, most of us feel that we could do more to build a better world if we were just given the opportunity. For those who are at a loss as to what they can do, Pax Christi USA may offer a solution.

Pax Christi differs from similar peacemaking groups in that it springs from a gospel vision of peace and asks its members to bring to their peacemaking efforts prayer, study, and actions based on the message of Jesus.

An action sponsored by Pax Christi USA is its invitation to Catholics to take a vow of nonviolence. Taking the vow can be seen as a way of signifying one's refusal to support or take part in any action aimed at injuring or killing human beings – including those termed by our political leaders as "enemies."

We live in an age when nations are arming themselves with nuclear weapons that threaten the very future of humanity. By taking a vow of nonviolence people can show their rejection of a value system that verges on evil.

Besides being a means of separating oneself from government policies one disagrees with, taking the vow of nonviolence will add to the spiritual makeup of the person taking the vow. As Eileen Egan, a charter member of Pax Christi USA and biographer of Mother Teresa has said, "For those who see nonviolence and rejection of war as either a constitutive element of the gospel of Jesus, or as a personal vocation, the profession of the vow of nonviolence is a channel of grace to aid them in their commitment to a life of love."

Indeed, the vow is a means of strengthening one's commitment to peace, but it has auxiliary functions as well. By taking a vow of nonviolence a person is taking seriously the words of John Paul II at Hiroshima: "Our future on this planet, exposed as it is to nuclear annihilation, depends upon a single factor: humanity must make a moral about-face."

Taking the vow of nonviolence proposed by Pax Christi USA is one way of making that "moral about-face." The vow also represents an action that speaks directly to a government which daily increases its nuclear arsenal – weapons designed to destroy a good portion of the planet. And taking the vow is a way of setting an example for fellow Christians.

The vow of nonviolence recommended by Pax Christi is a private vow, taken as a personal commitment; it carries no canonical obligations. Those who take the vow are pledging themselves, in the name of Jesus, to try to live a presence of peace, to work actively for peace, to respect all creation, to live as neighbors with one another, and, finally, to refuse to support or take part in any action which injures or kills human beings.

Of course, the decision to make a private vow to God is a serious one, and it should be made only after careful consideration and adequate spiritual preparation. For people who have been in the vanguard of the peace movement for years, a quiet, brief period of reflection may be enough preparation. For others, new to the challenge of actually living the gospel, more reflective time might be necessary – no matter, as the vow can be taken at any time one wishes.

One may take the vow in the presence of a priest, but this is not necessary. Some people have taken the vow in a religious setting, while others have taken it in the shadow of a military installation. Some people made it a point to take the vow on August 6 to mark the 40th anniversary

of the bombing of Hiroshima; others have taken it on the feast of St. Francis of Assisi. But the essential thing is not the setting, the witnesses, or the time; what is important is the vow of nonviolence itself.

After a person has taken the vow, he or she should keep a record of it and send a signed copy to the Pax Christi national office in Erie, PA. This is not essential, but many people also send a copy to their bishop as well.

The vow is taken for one year and may be renewed annually.

Taking the vow may be a small step in creating world peace, but it is a step and a genuine act in following the peace message of Jesus. IF enough people were to speak up and turn their backs on the potential violence of our age, change would come about. In the Challenge of Peace, our bishops said, "To teach the ways of peace is not to weaken our nation's will, but to be concerned for the nation's soul." Further, "We believe that the church, as a community of faith and a social institution, has a proper, necessary, and distinctive part to play in the pursuit of peace."

Background on the vow, along with spiritual preparation one may do, and copies of the vow in triplicate can be had by writing to the Pax Christi national office.

The president of Pax Christi USA is Bishop Thomas Gumbleton of Detroit. He minces no words concerning the pursuit of peace. In speaking of Pax Christi he said, "We are a movement of Catholics who recognize that we must take seriously movement of Catholics who recognize that we must take seriously our Lord's words, 'Blessed are the peacemakers.'" That means we may not leave such issues as the arms race or conscription to the politicians and the Pentagon. We need to bring the gospel message of nonviolence to bear on the concrete issues of peace and justice of our day. The consequences of indifference are dreadful to contemplate.

Taking a vow of nonviolence is a way of saying "no" to indifference. There can be no doubt that present government officials have ignored the bishops' peace pastoral, and they appear indifferent to peace proposals by the Soviet Union. Perhaps in the end, the voice of the people will be listened to – the same voice that thundered its protest during the conflict in Vietnam. The vow of nonviolence may be the first cry heard.

William Powers is a free lance writer from Buffalo, NY.

### Reflection

1. How do you react to the idea of a "vow of nonviolence"?
2. React: "We need to bring the gospel message of nonviolence to bear on the concrete issues of peace and justice in our day."

Scripture: Jeremiah 7:5-7

Only if you thoroughly reform your ways and your deeds: if each of you deals justly with your neighbor; if you no longer oppress the resident alien, the orphan, the widow; if you no longer shed innocent blood in this place, or follow strange gods to your own harm, will I remain with you in this place, in the land which I gave your ancestors long ago and forever.

1. How does Jeremiah's challenge to "thoroughly reform your ways and deeds" relate to nonviolence?
2. Who is the "resident alien, the widow, and the orphan" today? How do you deal with them? How would you define "innocent blood"?

### An Invitation to Nonviolence

1. Reflect on the Scripture passage, Jeremiah 7:5-7. How might this Scripture influence your life?
2. What questions does the vow of nonviolence raise for you? Which aspects of the vow seem most difficult to understand?
3. What personal challenges do you anticipate in your own life before you are able to consider taking the vow of nonviolence? Be specific.

## Pax Christi Vow of Nonviolence

Recognizing the violence in my own heart, yet trusting in the goodness and mercy of God, I vow for one year to practice the nonviolence of Jesus who taught us in the Sermon on the Mount: Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons and daughters of God...You have learned how it was said, "You must love your neighbor and hate your enemy," but I say to you, "Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you. In this way, you will be daughters and sons of your Creator in heaven."

Before God the Creator and the Sanctifying Spirit, I vow to carry out in my life the love and example of Jesus

By striving for peace within myself and seeking to be a peacemaker in my daily life;

By accepting suffering rather than inflicting it;

By refusing to retaliate in the face of provocation and violence;

By persevering in nonviolence of tongue and heart;

By living conscientiously and simply so that I do not deprive others of the means to live;

By actively resisting evil and working nonviolently to abolish war and the causes of war from my own heart and from the face of the earth.

God, I trust in your sustaining love and believe that just as you gave me the grace and desire to offer this, so you will also bestow abundant grace to fulfill it.

Three  
To Strive for Peace Within Myself  
*By Bishop Thomas Gumbleton*

It is important to reflect on the life, teaching and prayer of Jesus to develop within ourselves an attitude of nonviolence.

In the Gospel of John we see the quiet dignity of Jesus when he refuses to let Peter defend him with a sword. Instead, he goes to his death refusing violence. This ought not to surprise us. This was the way he taught and lived throughout his public life. We read in St. Matthew's account of the Sermon on the Mount: "You have learned that they were told, 'Love your neighbors, hate your enemy.' But I say to you, 'Love your enemies and pray for your persecutors...'"

When we read this we may be tempted to think, "Surely he didn't mean that. That's going to far. Do we have to love our captors in Iran...Lebanon?" This is certainly not what is preached by the State Department or most newscasters. But that is the teaching of Jesus – we must love our enemies in any situation. That is what the gospel confronts us with – his clear teaching, and his life given over for us.

We can't become nonviolent on the basis of intellectual conviction. Commitment to nonviolence demands a very profound conversion of mind and heart.

I suggest that for Jesus, too, nonviolence was not immediately sensible or attractive. He was truly human, like us in every way except sin, and he may have reacted to the foolishness of nonviolence as we do. He had to struggle with it as he did in the Garden.

I'm suggesting that we do the same in our prayer – we too enter into the prayer experience of Jesus and take the same prayers he used and join ourselves with him in spirit.

Some that I find most helpful in this regard are the Servant Songs of Isaiah. Here is how the servant acts: "He will not raise his voice or make loud speeches in the streets. He will not break off a bent reed or quench the wavering flame. He will bring lasting justice to all." To me that says the servant has a task: to bring lasting justice. The servant, however, is not someone who will shout and holler, but someone who will be tender and careful with the wavering flame – make it burst forth again, not snuff it out. With bruised reed – gradually, tenderly bring it to life again. That's who the servant Jesus is called to be, and in his own prayer life Jesus slowly, carefully brought this into his consciousness.

And it is Isaiah who tells us that our ways are not God's ways – and that as high as the heavens are above the earth, God's ways are above our ways. If we follow the ways of God, it may seem illogical to people in the State Department, our families and our parishes. Yes, the way of nonviolence is the way of foolishness, but it is God's foolishness, God's power, and it is wiser than human wisdom and stronger than human strength.

If we take the time to pray with Jesus, we too will be converted in mind and heart. It won't work if we try to reason it out. The only way is through a change of heart, a coming into a way of being that is the way of Jesus.

Bishop Thomas Gumbleton, auxiliary bishop of Detroit, is president of Pax Christi USA.

#### Reflection

1. React: Commitment to nonviolence demands a very profound conversion of mind and heart.
2. How do you react to the idea that Jesus was influenced by Scripture? Do you think Jesus struggled with nonviolence?

Scripture: Isaiah 42:1-4

Here is my servant, who I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight. I have bestowed my spirit upon him, and he will make justice shine on the nations. He will not call out or lift his voice high, or make himself heard in the open street. He will not break a bruised reed, or snuff out a smouldering wick; he will make justice shine on every race; never faltering, never breaking down, he will plant justice on the earth, while coastlands and islands wait for his teaching.

1. What people come to mind when you read this Scripture passage? Why these individuals?
2. If you followed Bishop Gumbleton's advice, what passages, stories, parables in the Scripture would you reflect on for conversation of mind and heart toward nonviolence? List at least one. Why did you choose this one?

#### To Strive for Peace Within Myself

1. Reflect on the Scripture passage, Isaiah 41:1-4. How might this Scripture influence your life?
2. What questions, concerns does this aspect of nonviolence raise for you?
3. How might you live this aspect of nonviolence? Be specific

Four  
To Seek to Be a Peacemaker in My Daily Life  
*By Joe Allegretti*

Just because something is a cliché doesn't mean it isn't true. A cliché may actually express a profound truth – in a way which has lost the power to move us. So it is with the great truth clothed in hackneyed language: peace in the world requires peace in our hearts. Transformed selves is what we need – conversion. Or as they say in Greek, metanoia.

Pick up the book on Christian peacemaking. Ponder any article on the Christian response to nuclear arms. Almost certainly you'll find the cliché uttered again. Our violent world will know no peace until our own lives are rooted in nonviolence.

Yet as so often happens with clichés, the truth has little effect on us. We pause, nod approvingly – and move on. After all, we don't hit our kids. We keep our anger in check. We pray for the Russians. We try to be understanding when a waiter or waitress treats us rudely.

So it's back to bringing peace to the world. It's back to election strategies, letters, and marches. With scarcely a self-reflective thought, we hurry back to our demonstrations and acts of civil disobedience. Moscow and Washington – that's where the trouble is.

It's not that we reject the call to transformed selves or deliberately ignore our own violence. Occasionally, in fact, we flinch at the painful discovery that we are not as nonviolent as we wish. We catch ourselves loving the Russians and despising the Reagans, praying for our enemies abroad and cursing our enemies at home. We feel chastened and hypocritical and resolve to live more fully the nonviolent life.

But most of the time our violence is intangible and easy to overlook. Often our violence takes the form not of cold steel but cold stares, not of physical attack but verbal assault. We hardly recognize the subtle violence which needs no bullets or bombs to terrorize and kill.

Somehow we must recapture the essential truth that nonviolence begins with the person. We must make this more than a cliché; we must move beyond the stale words to the awesome challenge.

For most of us, the first step is to become aware of the violence within. We must break free of the illusion that lives without physical violence are lives of nonviolence. We must recognize that the violence in the world – the killing, the destruction, the pain and screams and weeping – is but a reflection and magnification of the violence we carry within.

Thomas Merton understood this clearly. The problem of war, he said, is not really political; it is personal. We must be willing to "sacrifice and restrain our own instinct for violence and aggressiveness." The conversion of the heart must accompany the conversion of the world.

Merton understood that we will not bring peace to the world if we focus solely on political results. Politics is important, but the solutions we seek must transcend politics. We could strengthen the United Nations, negotiate a freeze, curb arms sales, ratify Salt II, elect candidates committed to peace. Yet until our lives are purged of violence, the world will still be darkened by the war and weapons.

We must not forget that despite our work to bring peace to the world, we are not called only to work. Ultimately, we are not called to be successful. Like Jesus, we are called to be faithful to our God. We are called to live our the gospel, to be witnesses of God's peace, a peace which is not like the peace of this world (John 14:27).

So the work for peace must take place in our own hearts as well as in our streets and legislatures.

Yet we must also guard against the other extreme. When we see ourselves coldly, objectively, we can become almost overwhelmed by the hidden violence of our lives and the institutions within which we move. We can become paralyzed by our need for conversion. It is far too easy and

comfortable to postpone our work for peace in the larger world until we are completely transformed. If we wait for our complete transformation, however, we could wait forever.

The call to conversion and the call to bring peace to the world are mutually dependent. Indeed, each is essential for the other. As I work to be transformed daily, in all my relationships, it will naturally lead me to a concern for peace in the larger world. The movement can be so subtle it is ignored: the move from living a life of peace in my family to helping my family live a peaceful life.

Likewise, as I work to bring peace to the larger world, it will naturally lead me to a greater understanding of my own violence and need for conversion. My work for peace in the world emboldens me to dedicate myself anew to bringing peace into my heart.

The two tasks are really one. Ramana Maharishi once said, "As you are, so is the world." As we change, then we change the world. This is both a hopeful and distressing thought.

It is hopeful because each of us can participate in bringing peace to the world. Each of us can be a peacemaker, blessed by Jesus. We cannot all write or march or demonstrate or contribute money. But we can all begin the work of being converted. We can begin to live out the call to peace in our daily relationships with our family, friends, and acquaintances.

Indeed, we can begin even closer to home, by bringing peace and reconciliation to our own divided psyches. If we really believe that our struggle to live the nonviolent life can influence the larger world around us, then our every act becomes charged with meaning. Each day becomes the day on which the reign of peace advances or retreats.

A mother disciplining a child, a teacher instructing a student, a chance encounter in a grocery line, a visit to an ailing friend – all are opportunities and invitations to live a nonviolent life and bring peace to the world. Even someone sick on her back in bed can bring peace to the world. She can begin by bringing peace to her own life, by caring for those around her, by prayer and sacrifice. No one is too humble, no life too insignificant, to escape God's call to reconcile a divided world.

Yet it is also distressing to think that the world is like us. The world around us is full of pain, violence, hunger, death. If the world is full of such evil, what does this say about our lives? Are we to blame for racism in the United States, oppression in the Soviet Union, famine in Africa?

In *The Brothers Karamazov* Dostoevski lays the blame for the world's ills on each of us: You must "take yourself and make yourself responsible for all people's sins. That is the truth you know, friends, for as soon as you sincerely make yourself responsible for everything and for all people, you will see at once that it is really so and that you are to blame for everyone and for all things."

To Dostoevski, the world reflects our weaknesses. We live lives of anger, hatred, envy, greed. We crave power. We protect our power with violence. We see writ large in the world the consequences of our sins. We cannot escape our responsibility for the state of the world.

Our first reaction to Dostoevski's challenge may be righteous indignation. I do my best. I try to live a good life. I help the poor as much as I can. I try to avoid violence. I feel bad enough about my faults. I don't need someone to heap more blame on my head.

Too much guilt and blame will lead not to greater commitment but instead to frustration and anger. I may wearily conclude that the entire effort to live the gospel is a waste of time and effort, a goal never to be realized but only to be glimpsed tantalizingly over the horizon. I may eventually throw up my hands in despair and cry: "I'm doing what I can, what more do you want from me!"

This would be a tragic mistake, for Dostoevski's message is full of truth and wisdom. He does not so much indict us as challenge us. We are not to blame for all the evil in the world. Even without any one of us, there would be plenty of evil to go around. It's not my "fault" that violence erupts in faraway lands and threatens to engulf the world. It's not my "fault" that countries persecute and torture those they hate or fear. I may even have worked hard to change the evil policies of governments.

It's not my "fault," but it's my responsibility. As we are, so is the world. We help create the world in which we live. Each act rebounds and multiplies in obscure and hidden ways. We must not be paralyzed by guilt over our responsibility for the evil in the world. No, rather than blame

ourselves, we must see that it is our responsibility for the evil in the world. No, rather than blame ourselves, we must see that it is our responsibility, our vocation, to transform ourselves and the entire world.

So we must begin the work of transformation within. Violence without must be overcome by nonviolence within. Each action, each touch, each look, each word – each is important in its own way, even though it seems to reach only a few. We cannot postpone our own conversion until we have brought peace to the world, and we cannot postpone our work for peace until we have become translucent glass through which shines, clearly and without blemish, the light of God's love.

It is as if great scales hold weights of peace and violence. We did not put the weights there. They were on the scales before we were born. We can hardly make much difference. All we can do, at best, is add a bit here, a bit there, on the side of peace. And yet, as we open ourselves more to God's peace, as we resolve to accept God's grace and let that grace transform us – as we live and practice the peace of Christ – we see that our lives do make a difference.

We can do no more than love God and seek to share that love. Yet even that may be enough. As Elie Weisel once said, "An act of love may tip the balance." Who are we to disagree, we who hold that two thousand years ago a single act of love tipped the balance once and forever in favor of the reign of peace and love?

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### Reflection

1. Reflect on a recent experience of conflict in your own life that you handled in an aggressive or violent manner. Describe in detail a possible nonviolent alternative in handling the same situation.
2. Is there a relationship between the search for inner peace and peace in the world? Explain.

Scripture: Ezekiel 36:25-27

I will pour clean water upon you  
to cleanse you from all your impurities.  
I will remove all your idols.  
I will give you a new heart,  
and place a new spirit within you,  
taking from your bodies your stony hearts  
and giving you hearts of flesh.  
I will put my spirit within you  
that you may live by my statutes,  
careful to observe my decrees.

1. Ezekiel tells us that God will remove all idols. What idols need to be removed in your life?
2. God changes stony hearts to hearts of flesh. Can you think of ways God has done this in your life? What was your role?

### To Seek to Be a Peacemaker in My Daily Life

1. Reflect on the Scripture passage, Ezekiel 36:25-27. How might this Scripture influence your life?
2. What questions, concerns does this aspect of nonviolence raise for you?
3. How might you live this aspect of nonviolence? Be specific.

Five  
To Accept Suffering Rather Than Inflict It  
*By Donald Smythe, SJ*

Like the Jewish prophets before him, like Martin Luther King, Jr., and Oscar Romero after him, Jesus was called by God to live righteously. His life was a testament to faith, compassion and justice. He was a good man, but his values conflicted with those who saw in him a threat and determined to kill him.

Jesus could probably have avoided death. He could have backed off from what he was saying and doing, returning quietly to Galilee and resumed the safe life of a village carpenter. He did not. That would have meant a retreat from God's will as he understood it.

What was that will? That he die? No, that he live, but live righteously. That he continue to say and do what he felt inspired to do by the Holy Spirit. That he be faithful to his God, to the voice of the God he heard in prayer, and to himself. That he be a man concerned with justice and compassion.

Jesus was that kind of man. He lived that type of life. Sometimes, it brought him acclaim and honor, as on Palm Sunday. Other times, it brought him hatred and danger, as when he cleansed the temple, thus threatening the vested interests of the religious authorities.

But he did not seek acclaim or flee from danger. In a sense he was indifferent to them. His guiding principle, the lodestar of his life, was not, "Will this hurt or help me?" rather it was "What is right; what is God's will in this situation?" If doing right brought acclaim, he accepted it; if it brought death, he accepted that, too.

During Holy Week Jesus faced the choice that prophets before him had faced, that modern-day prophets such as King and Romero faced, that contemporary prophets such as Desmond Tutu now face: Should he continue to say and do what was right (even though it might mean death), or should he back off, trim his sails and seek safety?

For Jesus there was only one choice, the choice he had made all his life: to do right, no matter what the consequences. And so the pattern of his life brought him to death, "a death he freely accepted," because it was preferable to live righteously than to live any other way.

The choice that faced Jesus faces us. Countless people struggling for peace and justice find themselves opposed by certain persons, structures or vested interests determined to maintain their privileged positions. The struggle of blacks in South Africa, of campesinos in Central America and of Catholics in Northern Ireland are obvious examples. In these and other cases, death or the threat of death looms threateningly. Like Jesus, the dispossessed face the possibility of being killed for what they believe and do.

I remember a photograph on the front page of a newspaper during certain crime hearings in Congress. A middle-aged woman with a scared look on her face sat before a microphone, a rosary twisted around her fingers. She was testifying about organized crime. Unlike those who "don't want to get involved," she had put her life and safety on the line, doing what she could to put behind bars those who belonged there. The scared look on her face revealed that she knew she was taking a risk. The rosary in her hands indicated the source of her courage. At the end of that rosary was a cross.

We revere the cross, not in itself, but as a sign and symbol of what fidelity to God means. It means choosing his will above all other wills, his righteousness above expediency, his pleasure above our own. It involves a commitment to struggle for truth, peace and justice. It means living as Jesus did and taking the consequences as he did, good and bad.

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They tell this story about Clarence Jordan, the Baptist preacher, writer, who founded Koinonia Farm in south Georgia and struggled in the fifties and sixties to keep that interracial community alive. Clarence, it seems, once asked his lawyer brother, Robert, to represent Koinonia Farm in a legal transaction.

The conversation went as follows:

"Clarence, I can't do that," Robert pleaded. "You know my political aspirations. Why, if I represented you I might lose my job, my house, everything I've got."

"We might lose everything too," Clarence replied.

Bob shrugged his shoulders and said, "But it's different for you, Clarence."

"Why is it different for me?" Clarence asked.

"I remember, it seems to me, that you and I joined the church the same Sunday as boys. I expect when we came forward the preacher asked me, 'Do you accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior?' And I said, 'Yes.' What did you say, bob?"

"I follow Jesus," Bob replied, "I follow Jesus up to a point."

Clarence looked him in the eye and asked, "Could that point by any chance be – the cross?"

Bob nodded his head. "That's right, Clarence. I follow Jesus to the cross, but not on the cross. I'm not getting myself crucified."

"Well," Clarence said, "then I don't believe you're a disciple. You're an admirer of Jesus but not a disciple of his. I think you ought to go back to the church you belong to and tell them, 'I'm an admirer not a disciple.'"

"Well now," Bob replied, "if everyone who felt like I do did that, we wouldn't have a church, would we?"

"The question is," Clarence said, "Do you have a church?"

The late Clarence Jordan was widely known for his Cotton Patch Version of the New Testament and as founder of Koinonia.

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### Reflection

1. Do you feel you are an admirer or a disciple of Jesus? What difference does this make in your life?
2. The woman who spoke out against crime faced risks. Name some. List areas of violence and injustice in today's world where God might be inviting you to take a stand. What crosses might you face as a result of your action?

Scripture: Mark 8:31-35

Jesus began to teach them that the Son of Man had to suffer much, be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, be put to death, and rise three days later. He said these things quite openly. Peter then took him aside and began to remonstrate with him. At this Jesus turned around and, eyeing the disciples, reprimanded Peter: "Get out of my sight, you satan! You are not judging by God's standards but by humans'!" Jesus summoned the crowd with his disciples and said to them: "If anyone wishes to come after me, they must deny their very self, take up their cross, and follow in my steps. Whoever would preserve their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for my sake and the gospel's will preserve it."

1. In this situation, do you relate more closely with Peter or with Jesus? Why?
2. Can you identify a contemporary leader who might be on his or her way to Jerusalem? Who is this person? What questions would you ask this person?

1. Reflect on the Scripture passage, Mark 8:31-35. How might this Scripture influence your life?
2. What questions, concerns does this aspect of nonviolence raise for you?
3. How might you live this aspect of nonviolence? Be specific.

Six  
To Refuse to Retaliate in the Face of Provocation and Violence  
*By Mary Evelyn Jegen, SND*

It is an astonishing truth that we shy away from – our vocation is to make visible God's own response to violence. It is God who wants to express love, justice, mercy and forgiveness in us. "This is the love I mean, not our love for God, but God's love for us (1 John 4:10). We can do this only as children of God. It is the intimacy of our relationship to God that makes us bold, hopeful, able to take risks and to seek a company of sister and brother believers.

We are to make God's love visible. We learn how as disciples of Jesus; we act our way into his astonishing way of thinking. It begins by paying attention to people without exception, paying attention to their specific joys, hopes and pains, and also to their vague but overwhelming fears and anxieties that cannot even find expression in words.

For Jesus, making God's love visible meant his own active concern for John and Judas, for women and men, for children, widows, tax collectors, soldiers, even executioners – his own. For us, making God's love visible means active concern for each person in our families, and for the unemployed, the addicts, the people of Haiti, Mr. Reagan and Mr. Khadafy, Mr. Weinberger and Mr. Ortega.

Clearly, making God's love visible means something more, even something else than a token prayer for peace. It means inventing ways to let the others know that we really care about them, will really labor for their happiness.

We have spent so much energy resisting, so much time trying to figure out how far we can go in accepting deterrence, that we may have forgotten that in a way Jesus gave us there is precious little about resistance and nothing about deterring enemies. How could there be, when deterrence, by definition, means the threat to kill them?

The whole thrust of Jesus' good news is about seeking the best for each and everyone, because we are, after all, one family: God's. Jesus talked about the reign of God as a party where we all sit together and God serves the dinner (Luke 12:37). It was just one of his inventive ways of trying to get across the truth that we are connected by love, and that we refashion broken connections only by love.

We have a new challenge to our faith in the current climate of terrorism. Each day we hear new threats of vengeance and retaliation. If we are honest, we find the temptation to vengeance in our own hearts. Yet we know that the first victim of violence is the perpetrator of it. We need to remember that as we pray for our enemies. What Gandhi said is true: An eye for an eye results only in two blind persons.

More than ever, as militarism and terrorism tighten their grip on our way of life, we need to support each other in the risk of unconditional love, translating it into concrete actions in the social and political arena as well as in our interpersonal relationships. Only in this way can we enlarge and encourage our hope, can we be children of God, and disciples of Jesus who is our pioneer of faith (Hebrews 12:2).

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#### Reflection

1. What are some "concrete actions" that might reflect unconditional love in the social and political arena? In interpersonal relationships?
2. React: "Our vocation is to make visible God's own response to violence."

Scripture: 1 Peter 3: 8-9

In summary, then, all of you should be like-minded, sympathetic, loving toward on another, kindly disposed, and humble. Do not return evil for evil or insult for insult. Return a blessing instead. This you have been called to do, that you may receive a blessing as your inheritance.

1. Would you agree with Peter that we have been called to return a blessing for evil and insult? Give examples from Jesus' life which illustrate this.
2. During the last year, have you returned a blessing for an insult? Has anyone give you that gift? Can you share that experience?

#### To Refuse to Retaliate in the Face of Provocation and Violence

1. Reflect on the Scripture passage, 1 Peter 3:8-9. How might this Scripture influence your life?
2. What questions, concerns does this aspect of nonviolence raise for you?
3. How might you live this aspect of nonviolence? Be specific.

Seven  
To Persevere in Nonviolence of Tongue and Heart  
*By Gerard A. Vanderhaar*

One of the most common psychological mechanisms people have is to project an unpleasant characteristic onto others and then dislike them because of that characteristic. We often do this when we are unable to come to terms with some weakness in ourselves. If I am greedy, I can keep an eagle eye out for hints of avarice in others, and despise them for it. If I tend to be aggressive, I can magnify signs of menacing behavior in others, then denounce them for the cruelty I can't face in myself. If I'm ashamed of my sexuality, I can point to homosexuals or prostitutes, and feel clean when I consider them sinners.

We all have faults we don't like, that we have a hard time accepting. The psychologist Carl Jung called this part of us our "Shadow." It's not easy to feel comfortable with all our warts and wrongdoings. Sometimes I don't even acknowledge these failings in myself. I repress them. I deny that I have them. But they pressure me, make me uneasy. I can alleviate the anxiety by perceiving these same flaws in others, and looking down on them for it. If I'm a poor workman, I blame my tools. Our crowd may want to control the neighborhood or dominate the world. But instead of coming to grips with ourselves we accuse others of wanting to control the neighborhood or dominate the world. Our side may have been guilty of wanton cruelty in the past, but instead of facing it and exorcizing it from our lives, we accuse the adversary of the very behavior we dislike in ourselves. In Jung's words, "it is in the nature of political bodies always to see the evil in the opposite group, just as the individual has an ineradicable tendency to get rid of everything he does not know and does not want to know about himself by foisting it off on somebody else."

The Catholic monk Thomas Merton described the projection process as a way of dealing with a sense of sin: "We tend unconsciously to ease ourselves...of the burden of guilt that is in us, by passing it on to somebody else...The temptation is, then, to account for my fault by seeing an equivalent amount of evil in someone else. Hence I minimize my own sins and compensate for doing so by exaggerating the faults of others."

The original scapegoat ceremony described in the Bible involved the transferal of sins to an animal. "He (Aaron) is to lay both hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites – all their sins – and put them on the goat's head. He shall send the goat away into the desert...The goat will carry on itself all their sins" (Leviticus 16:21-22). The ritual's purpose was to lighten the load of guilt the people carried, and so relieve their fear of God's punishment.

It works. Scapegoating is not the best way to face life. But it's a pattern most people fall into fairly frequently, because it's a remarkably effective short term remedy for anxiety. In the words of psychologist Robert Coles, "We crave scapegoats, targets to absorb our self-doubts, our feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness." It works so well that it almost seems to be a natural process. According to psychoanalyst Israel Charny, "Knowing how to select a scapegoat and how to unload our feared weaknesses onto another seems rooted in our very being."

During the Vietnam War, American officials frequently engaged in scapegoating by alluding to the bloodbath the enemy would cause if they gained control of that country. President Nixon said at a press conference, "If we withdraw from Vietnam and allow the enemy to come into Vietnam and massacre the civilians there by the millions, as they would – if we do that, let me say that America is finished insofar as being the peacekeeper in the Asian world is concerned." When he said that the enemy would massacre millions, he was reflecting the view of a majority of Americans who would rather think the worst of the other side than come to grips with slaughters perpetrated by US

forces, as at My Lai. And so we bombed those enemies heavily, and they fought back fiercely, "proving" that they were as bad as our leaders said they were.

Scapegoating is also the effect of another anxiety-reducing device known as displacement – transferring an emotion from its authentic object to a substitute. When a business executive, angry from an early-morning argument at home, lashes out at the office staff, the executive is shifting the anger from the spouse or children or whoever was involved in the domestic unpleasantness to another, more easily available target, the people at work. "What did we do to deserve this?" Nothing, of course. They have become scapegoats.

When things are going badly, it's fairly easy to find targets for blame. Many Germans in the 1920s, upset over their deteriorating economy and chafing over the huge reparations they had to pay after the First World War, accused communists – and later Jews – for causing their troubles.

Some scapegoats do in fact have the qualities projected on them. At time people are greedy, or cruel, or lustful. The office staff does make mistakes. But this is not the decisive factor in the projection. It's a bonus that makes the scapegoater feel even better. "I came to the office on the prowl today, ready for a fight. I found some of my people slacking off, wasting time, I really let them have it."

If we want to know that we are projecting rather than reacting, we have the clues that can help. When we concentrate exclusively on the unpleasant traits in others without acknowledging failures in ourselves, we are projecting. The self-righteous American Firster constantly denouncing communist aggression, is projecting. Or when we use the undesirable actions of others as an excuse for similar actions ourselves, we are projecting. The guardian of public morals who searches out and examines obscene material to protect others from it is projecting. This doesn't mean that offensive behavior out there is purely imaginary, but it does mean the projector's response is dictated more by inner emotional imbalance than by the perceived irregularities.

Unfamiliar people are natural targets for projection and displacement. Hostility towards strangers is an ancient phenomenon. It's sometimes called fear of the unknown. We easily imagine unpleasant characteristics in people we don't know anything about. When strangers speak a foreign language, wear odd clothes, have a strikingly different appearance, our first reaction is to think of them as inferior. "They don't do things the way we do, so they're not as good as we are." And if they're not as good as we are, they might be dangerous.

Into the tiny Alpine village strides a tall, bearded man, clad in sheepskin, armed with a walking staff, a knife in his belt. He stops in the town square and looks around. The villagers peer out their windows cautiously. Nobody knows him. Some think he's a menace. "Hide the women and children." Some think he's a robber. "Bar the doors."

They have nothing to go on; they've never seen him before. The truth of the matter is that he's a decent family man who has been lost in the mountains for months after straying from his hunting party. All he wants to do is find his way back home. He's looking for help. But the villagers don't know this. They don't ask him why he's there. Nothing interferes with their suspicions. Small signs of danger on the stranger's part – a dark look, a sudden move, a hand to his knife – give grounds for their fear.

The stranger's suspected hostility may well turn out to be real. Perceiving the cautious quiet, the negative atmosphere of the village, he feels threatened. "Obviously the folks here are pretty nasty. I'd better get out fast." He starts to run, brushing aside a child who has wandered into the street. "Look, he hit that little girl. He really is dangerous. Come on, everybody, let's get him." They treat him like an enemy, and he becomes one. He fights back, hurting some of them with his staff before escaping into the hills.

Many a shipload of European explorers landed on shores in the Americas to find bronze skinned natives standing silently, staring inscrutably. They projected on these strange looking inhabitants the exploitative aggressiveness they had themselves. At the slightest sign of hostility they began to attack with swords and muskets, preventive strike. In retaliation, and in their own

self protective desire to push the foreigners back into the sea, many native peoples became real enemies. The European scapegoater felt vindicated. "These savages are just as bad as we expected."

It's easy for me to be hostile to a particular stranger when others around me are thinking the same way. Everybody on the ship knows that European Christians are superior to the New World heathens. All my neighbors are talking about Jewish bankers bleeding our Fatherland. The people I talk to all agree that the communists will cause a bloodbath in Vietnam.

When reality-testing contact with strangers is limited or nonexistent, our projections can go unchallenged. For years after the most Egyptians was of predatory, land-grabbing foreigners. There had been no diplomatic relations, no travel between the countries, no person-to-person contact except on the battlefield. Shortly after tensions were relaxed following the 1979 Camp David accords, a planeload of Israeli reporters landed in Cairo. The Egyptians were pleasantly surprised to see that the press representatives were decent, enthusiastic people. Their image of Israelis, reinforced by decades of isolation, gave way to an accurate assessment of the human qualities of their former enemies.

When I'm overly suspicious of people, doubt their integrity, believe without evidence that they're out to get me, I'm indulging in enemy thinking. Enemy thinking happens when I'm quick to fasten upon slights, when I interpret a careless remark as a personal affront. I'm doing enemy thinking when I attribute disreputable motives to people whose actions I disapprove. A disreputable motives to people whose actions I disapprove. A neighbor builds a fence. "They want to keep us out." That's enemy thinking, if what they really want to do is keep their dogs in.

Enemy thinking also occurs when I'm so totally sure of the rightness of my position that I know that those who oppose it are wrong. I don't have to wonder about their motives, because I see what they're doing. If I come home in the middle of the day and find an old pickup truck in my driveway half full of my furniture, my immediate thought is that those two men I see inside my house are robbing me.

They may be, but first I'd better make sure that I'm not conjuring up something on my own. Maybe those two men really are stealing my furniture. But before I go in with guns blazing, I would be better advised to enlist the help of the local police to check out the remote possibility that they are hired movers who have entered the wrong house by mistake.

Enemy thinking is an important factor in enemy making. It can lead me to take ill-advised steps, setting off the now familiar dynamics of provocation and defensive aggression. The carloads of teenagers who congregate at night in the church parking lot across the street may be planning to terrorize the neighborhood. Or I may be engaging in enemy thinking. If I get several large friends with shotguns and growling dogs to clear them out, I may be creating the very enemies I had hoped to eliminate.

Stereotyping is another form of enemy thinking. We do this when we attribute to all people in a particular category the when we attribute to all people in a particular category the unpleasant characteristics that may exist in a few. "Poor people are lazy." "The rich are greedy." "Blacks are violent." "Whites are racists." Stereotyping follows the same pattern as hostility to strangers. It's socially reinforced. It can also easily go unchallenged because we tend not to associate with people we've adversely characterized.

When I recognize that I am engaging in enemy thinking, I can handle the situation better, I can defuse it before the other side picks up on what's happening. And I'm better prepared to handle the enemy thinking others might be doing about me. I should be able to cope with their hostile behavior more realistically and not automatically resort to defensive countermeasures. But if neither of us realizes that enemy thinking is going on, the hostility invariably escalates.

A. Vanderhaar (paper, 144 pages, \$5.95) published by Twenty-Third Publications, Mystic, CT 06355. Further reproduction, without permission, is prohibited. Vanderhaar is also the author of "Christians and Non Violence in the Nuclear Age" (paper, \$5.95) from the same publisher.

#### Reflection

1. Can you think of one political situation in which any or all of the following were used: scapegoating, hostility to strangers, "enemy thinking"?
2. Have you ever been the victim of scapegoating, hostility to strangers, "enemy thinking"? Explain the circumstances and the effect it had on you. Have you ever used these elements of projection on others? Explain.

Scripture: Psalm 19:10-11, 15

Your words are holy, enduring forever.  
More desirable than gold are your words,  
even the finest of gold.  
They are sweeter than honey,  
than honey from the comb.  
May the words of my mouth  
and the thoughts of my heart  
be acceptable in your presence, O God,  
my glory, my rock.

1. Jesus must have prayed this psalm verse. Cite examples where Jesus reflected nonviolence in his language.
2. The psalmist describes God's word as "sweeter than honey." Do you experience God's word in this way?

#### To Persevere in Nonviolence of Tongue and Heart

1. Reflect on the Scripture passage, Psalm 19:10-11, 15. How might this Scripture influence your life?
2. What questions concerns does this aspect of nonviolence raise for you?
3. How might you live this aspect of nonviolence? Be specific.

Eight  
To Live Conscientiously and Simply  
*By Thich Nhat Hanh*

An American in the peace movement told me this: "Every time I see Mr. Reagan on television, I can't bear it. I have to turn off the set or I get mad." I think I understand him. He thinks that the US government is entirely responsible for the world situation. If only Mr. Reagan changes his policy and you have a freeze, there will be peace with the Soviet Union. That is not entirely correct, I tried to tell him. Because Mr. Reagan is in yourself. We always deserve our government. In Buddhism we speak in terms of interdependent origination. This is, because that is. This is not, because that is not. Has our daily life nothing to do with our government? That is the question I would like to invite you to meditate upon.

The other day I was talking about drinking a cup of tea in order for peace to be possible. Buddhists really believe that our daily life has to do with the situation we now find ourselves in. If we don't change our daily lives, we cannot change the situation. It is as clear as the fact that if I want to move this chair I have to stand up. I cannot move the chair without standing up.

I want to talk to you about the way the people in Japan drank tea in the past. It took them three hours to drink a cup of tea. You would say that this is very much a waste of time because time is money. But two people being with each other and spending three hours drinking tea has something to do with peace, I think. Please do not imagine that the two men or two women talk to each other a lot. They exchange only a word or two, but they are there. They enjoy the three hours and a few cups of tea. They really know what the tea is, and what the presence of each other means to them. Nowadays we only have a few minutes for a cup of tea. We go into a café and order a cup of tea and we listen to all the loud music and we think of the business we are going to do after the tea. We do not recognize it as living reality. That is why our situation is like it is.

Sometimes you pick up a newspaper to read in the morning, say The New York Times. I have seen the Sunday edition of The New York Times; it is very heavy – four or five kilograms. I don't know why I need such a heavy newspaper. To make such an edition they have to cut down a whole forest. And The New York Times is not the only newspaper in this country. There are several others like it, and we are destroying the earth without knowing it if we pick up our daily papers without being aware of what we are doing.

Drinking a cup of tea or picking up a newspaper has to do with peace. Nonviolence has another name: awareness. We should be aware of what we are, of who we are and of what we are doing. That is what I was taught the day I became a novice in a Buddhist monastery. They taught me to be aware of every act during the day. Since that day I have been practicing mindfulness and awareness. Once I thought that practicing like that was only important for beginners, that advanced people practiced other important things. But I have found out that practicing awareness is for everybody.

Are we really awake in our daily life? That is the question I would invite you to think about. Are we awake when we drink our tea? Are we awake when we pick up our newspaper? Are we awake when we eat an ice cream cone? Society makes it difficult to be awake, especially in Western countries. I am sure that you know this, but you keep forgetting because the kind of society in which we live makes us forgetful. That is why we need an exercise of mindfulness, for awareness. A number of Buddhists do this – they refrain from eating a few times a week in order to be in communion with the Third World.

Some of us practice this exercise with mindfulness. We sponsor a child in the Third World to get news from him or her, thus keeping in touch with the reality outside. We try many ways to be awake but society keeps us forgetful. That is why it is so difficult to practice awareness in this society. The head of the Institute of Mathematics and Economics in Paris told me this: "If Western

countries reduced the eating of meat by fifty percent and the drinking of alcohol by fifty percent, it would be enough to change the fate of the Third World." But how can we do it when we don't remember, when we are not aware? We are intelligent people but we keep forgetting, and that is what I think meditation is about: to remember.

There are other ways for us to nourish awareness. For instance, to enjoy silence. To enjoy the world. There was a young boy of twelve or thirteen who came to my place and had lunch with us in silence. It was his first time and he was embarrassed. The silence was so heavy. I explained to him that we eat in silence in order to enjoy the food and to enjoy each other's presence. If we talk a lot we cannot do that. Is there any time when you turn off your TV set to better enjoy the conversation with your friends or the food, I asked him. He said yes. The next time he came, he ate in silence and he enjoyed it.

We have lost our taste for silence. Every time we have a quarter of an hour, we have to pick up a book or the telephone or we have to turn on our television set. We cannot be alone with ourselves. We have lost our taste for being alone or silent. I think society takes away many things from us and destroys us with its noises and smells, its many distractions. The first thing for us to do to recuperate is to return to ourselves, to be our better selves. In the light of Buddhist practice, this is very, very important. We need to go back to our daily life and reorganize it so that society cannot colonize us any more. We have to be independent. We have to be real persons and not just victims of other people.

The boat people said that every time one of their small boats was caught in a storm the lives of those aboard were in great danger. They also said that if there happened to be one person on the boat who kept calm and did not panic, such a person would inspire faith and confidence. People would listen to him and keep serene. There was a good chance the whole boat might get through.

Our earth is somehow like a small boat. Compared to other big things in the cosmos, it is a very small boat and it is in danger of sinking. We need someone to inspire us with calm confidence and tell us what to do. Who is that person? The Mahayana Buddhist Sutras tell you one thing: you are that person. If you are yourself, if you are your best, then you are that person. And it is only with such a person – calm, lucid, aware and standing fast – that our situation can change and the danger be avoided. So please: good luck, be yourself, and be that person.

Thich Nhat Nanh is a Vietnamese Buddhist monk and poet who was active in the peace movement in Vietnam during the war. This article is reprinted with permission from the December 1983 issue of Fellowship magazine, a publication of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, Box 271, Nyack, NY 10960.

## Reflection

1. The article cites exercises for mindfulness. What could you do to help yourself to become more aware, more mindful? How might this affect your lifestyle?
2. Are you comfortable with silence? Why or why not? What does silence have to do with nonviolence?

Scripture: Matthew 6:22-23

They eye is the body's lamp. If your eyes are good, your body will be filled with light; if your eyes are bad, your body will be in darkness. And if your light is darkness, how deep will the darkness be!

1. How bright is the light within you? How do you nurture that light?
2. List other Scripture passages which call you to greater awareness. How do they affect your lifestyle?

## To Live Conscientiously and Simply

1. Reflect on the Scripture passage, Matthew 6:22-23. How might this Scripture influence your life?
2. What questions, concerns does this aspect of nonviolence raise for you?
3. How might you live this aspect of nonviolence? Be specific.

Nine  
To Actively Resist Evil  
*By Timothy Boylan*

My mother, Kathleen Ann Boylan, possesses the ardent belief that human beings live under constant threat because of the existence of deadly nuclear weapons. With this idea in mind, she, along with others compelled to express their concerns, gathered in prayer as they poured blood on the pillars of the Pentagon. She was immediately arrested and sentenced to thirty days in the Washington, DC, jail. I was devastated by the length of time. As the month passed, this separation caused tremendous grief; however, it was a learning experience of unparalleled significance.

My mother's imprisonment significantly changed my life. First of all, her absence meant being deprived of the one person whose love held our family together. My father, four brothers and I were living without the warmth which had always carried us through each day, which gave us a reason to continue and our fire-power to love.

At that time, I believed that maturity meant control, and at sixteen I was suppressing my feelings in trying to be a mature young man. However, my youngest brother's honesty touched me and changed my life; from him I realized that restraint was absurd. Sean, ten at the time, was experiencing a terrible emotional breakdown, and quite often I found him crying for Mother.

Compelled to help him feel better, I made sure I would give Sean almost excessive attention. We both shared our feelings about Mom's being away for so long. We cared for each other, spent time with each other, and also cried together. I allowed myself to cry, and what a difference it made.

Sean taught me that in times of trouble people must love each other. Every human must describe his or her true feelings. No longer should we build facades concealing our emotions. I learned from my mother's imprisonment, from the emotional impact it made, and from the honesty of a child, that self-expression is vital in order for love to flourish.

When my mother returned, I realized all the pain she had suffered. She told us that she had missed us very much and was glad to be back. I asked, "Why did you sacrifice your time?" She responded, "Because I love you and your brothers."

My mother loved us so much that she felt obligated to do what she could about nuclear weapons. She felt she must protest that evil, which might someday destroy her loved ones. I have assimilated that response, and I hold it as a very significant rule of life. Those who love others must sacrifice to make love last.

Literally, this is exactly what my mother did. She sacrificed to make love endure and not allow nuclear weapons to end it. True love must be a relationship in which lovers extend themselves to each other.

This sacrifice may mean spending a great sum of money for an operation, or leaving a job which doesn't allow you to see your loved one, or going to jail for your loved one's security.

I really do value this knowledge concerning self-denial. It is not only pertinent in interpersonal relationships, but also of primary relevance to world existence. Imagine the wonders that could occur if some degree of sacrifice were made by everyone worldwide for those millions who are starving!

My mother's action and jail sentence was definitely a very sad experience; however, it was from this event that I learned about both the expression and self-denial of love. These values are the basis of all that is good in our world. I know from the deepest core of myself that I have had a most significant experience.

Timothy Boylan, an 18-year-old student on Long Island, wrote this article as part of a college placement program. This article first appeared in Catholic New York and is reprinted with permission.

## Reflection

1. List the people in your life who have significantly influenced the way you view life. Why have they made such an impact on you?
2. Are you able to get in touch with your true feelings? How does this affect your attitude toward nonviolence?

## Scripture: Mark 3:1-6

Jesus returned to the synagogue where there was a man whose hand was shriveled up. They kept an eye on Jesus to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, hoping to be able to bring an accusation against him. Jesus addressed the one with the shriveled hand: "Is it permitted to do a good deed on the Sabbath—or an evil one? To preserve life—or destroy it?" At this they remained silent. He looked around at them with anger, for he was deeply grieved that they had closed their minds against him. Then Jesus said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." The man did so and his hand was perfectly restored. When the Pharisees went outside, they immediately began to plot with Herodians as to how they might destroy him.

1. In this passage, Jesus openly breaks a law of the Sabbath. Explain why. Was this act necessary? Why or why not?
2. Give other examples where Jesus attempts to cure closed-mindedness. What events, people in your life have cured your inner blindness?

## To Actively Resist Evil

1. Reflect on the Scripture passage, Mark 3:1-6. How might this Scripture influence your life?
2. What questions, concerns does this aspect of nonviolence raise for you?
3. How might you live this aspect of nonviolence. Be specific.

Ten  
To Work Nonviolently to Abolish War and the Causes of War  
from My Heart and from the Face of the Earth  
*By Richard Taylor and Ronald Sider*

We are in the midst of a very rapid and large shift in human consciousness regarding questions of war and peace. As recently as 1980, one of the main preoccupations of the peace movement was how to inform and arouse the public about the dangers of nuclear war. Given the current front-page stories on the nuclear issue, it is hard to remember that the 1970's saw very little public discussion of the nuclear peril. Very few church bodies or religious leaders were speaking out. No mass movement was addressing itself to stopping the arms race.

Now the concern is so widespread that one commentator estimates that the peace and anti-nuclear movements have involved a greater number of people from a wider variety of backgrounds in more countries than any other issue of our century. In the United States more than eleven million citizens have voted in favor of a nuclear freeze. And that largest demonstration in US history addressed itself to disarmament on June 12, 1982, in New York City.

Hundreds of thousands of Europeans have demonstrated for the same cause. Millions of people around the world are deeply concerned and are becoming active in disarmament advocacy. Religious leaders have come out so strongly that US News and World Report describes them as "the key force behind the American anti-war crusade." This burst of interest and activity has come about in less than three years.

These millions of newly involved peace advocates are looking for practical answers as to how the world can back away from the nuclear abyss. If they find meaningful answers and creative ways to act, they will stay involved and will draw in others. Their involvement in the nuclear freeze movement shows the power of a creative idea to involve people in meaningful, large-scale peace action.

What are the long-range steps that will move humanity away from self-obliteration and toward real peace?

So far our no to nuclear weapons has been loud and clear. We have condemned reliance on nuclear arms as idolatrous and suicidal. But this is only half a message, half an answer. It tells people what to be against, but not what to be for. It says that defense through nuclear weapons must be rejected as immoral, but it does not tell us whether defense through some other means is viable. It condemns deterrence through nuclear terror, but it does not say whether there are alternative, acceptable ways to deter aggression.

What if some hostile, totalitarian power threatened to invade the United States or some other country? It is not enough of an answer to say, "Trust in God, not the bomb," since this does not tell the questioners how they are to express that trust in the concrete situation of invasion or occupation.

The Pentagon and other military establishments have a clear answer: "We must defend ourselves through military means." As long as the peace movement does not have its own answer that is an alternative to the military's answer, people will continue to trust military means, even if they have moral qualms about them; their support for disarmament will be weak and vacillating.

Christians are called to be reconcilers, but also to actively resist injustice, evil, and oppression. But how can Christians engage in this resistance while living in obedient faith to the one who commands us to love our enemies?

A provocative answer comes to us from those who were closest to Jesus—the Christians of the early Church. It was in territory that had been conquered and placed under the brutal heel of imperial Rome in 63 B.C. that Jesus instructed his disciples to love their enemies and turn the other cheek. During the centuries of persecution, Christians were crucified, torn to pieces by dogs, set afire to illuminate Nero's ghastly circuses. Imprisonment, torture, and execution were common measures used by the Caesars in their attempts to bring Christianity to heel. Early Christians,

therefore, had to respond to the tyranny and oppression of totalitarian rulers.

Though early Christian leaders would be considered pacifists, they were far more passive in their response to persecution. They poured forth a torrent of protest, defiance, and censure against the persecutors and their decrees. But unlike those who choose a military response to oppression, they acted without violence and with willingness to endure suffering for their faith.

The early Christians did not simply refuse to kill their enemies. As Justinus said, "We pray for our enemies and try to persuade those who hate us unjustly." And as St. Cyprian said to his persecutors, "It is not lawful for us to hate, and so we please God more when we render no requital for injury...We repay your hatred with kindness."

This total commitment to the way of Christ, combined with the gospel message, had enormous power. Christianity began as the faith of a tiny minority whose founder was executed by a repressive state. Yet in time it not only overcame its persecutors but also won the professed allegiance of much of the empire's population.

As with the early Church, our commitment to justice should make us speak and act clearly against tyranny's injustice. But our commitment to the love of Christ invites us to find concrete ways to love our enemies and to reach them with the powerful, saving message of the gospel.

Throughout history can be found many cases of groups—and even several instances of whole nations—that confronted and overcame ruthless tyranny by nonviolent means similar to those of the early Church. Christians often played a key role in the resistance. One of the most interesting cases is Hungary's battle against Austrian rule in the mid-1880's. Through nonviolent means, Hungary resisted Austrian occupation. It won complete internal independence and equal partnership with Austria and prevented all of Austria's attempts to destroy the autonomy of its churches.

It is often asked whether such nonviolent tactics would work against the brutal and demonic policies of one such as Adolf Hitler. Whether something "works," of course, is not the basic criterion of Christian action. A Christian's first concern must be to be obedient to the Lord, even if this leads to suffering, death, and apparent failure. However, an assertive nonviolent stance was often effective even in the face of schemes as satanic as Hitler's.

In Bulgaria in the early 40's, for example, Bishop Kiril told authorities that if they attempted to deport Bulgarian Jews to concentration camps, he would lead a campaign of civil disobedience, including personally lying down on the railroad tracks in front of the deportation trains.

Thousands of Jews and non-Jews resisted all collaboration with Nazi decrees. They marched in mass street demonstrations and sent floods of letters and telegrams to authorities protesting all anti-Jewish measures. Bulgarian clergy hit Jews and accepted large numbers of Jewish "converts," making clear that this was a trick to escape the Nazis, and that they would not consider these vows binding. These and other non-military measures saved all of Bulgaria's Jewish citizens from Nazi death camps.

Similar nonviolent resistance in Norway prevented Vidkun Quisling, Hitler's representative, from imposing a fascist, "corporative state" on the country.

Although always a minority movement, similar nonviolent resistance to Hitler took place in many parts of Europe, with Christians often being key actors. Danes, led by their deeply Christian king, saved 93 per cent of their Jewish population in a dramatic nonviolent rescue action. Adolf Eichmann, head of the Nazi office for extermination of Jews, admitted that "the action against the Jews of Denmark has been a failure." Finland saved all but four of its Jewish citizens from the Nazi death camps. Finland's foreign minister told Heinrich Himmler, chief of Hitler's dreaded SS security police: "Finland is a decent nation. We would rather perish together with the Jews. We will not surrender the Jews."

During World War II forty million people died on battlefields using military weapons against Nazism. What if forty million people had been willing to give their lives in a nonviolent struggle, using the defiant but non-military methods of a Bishop Kiril?

These historical examples point to a power to resist evil and oppression that does not

rely on the ability to kill and injure. They suggest that it may be possible to defend cherished values in a way consistent with both the prophet's call to justice and Christ's call to love our enemies.

Today millions of newly involved peace advocates are asking: How can we get rid of nuclear weapons while defending precious values against tyranny's onslaught? How can we disarm the military, but also stand up against the evil, injustice, and oppression that an invading totalitarian power would bring?

Our answer might be: Yes, we must resist tyranny, but only with the means taught by Jesus and exemplified in his life, death, and resurrection. Yes, we must stand up against evil and oppression, but with the self-sacrifice of a Bishop Kiril, who was willing to lie down on the railroad tracks to prevent Nazi deportation of Jews, and with the love for enemies of St. Cyprian, who said that because we are Christians it is not lawful for us to hate.

Those who are attracted to this approach can begin to work for concretely. We can talk to people about it. We can encourage research into the largely neglected history of nonviolent resistance. We can form groups that use nonviolent means to attack existing social injustices and participate in nonviolent demonstrations to oppose specific military programs, while educating the public about an alternative means of defending precious values.

If a nonviolent approach to aggression were ever adopted on a large scale, its participants would certainly experience suffering and sacrifice. But such are also the requirements of military means, as any battlefield will attest. And "defense" through nuclear weapons has the potential to make us mass murderers, extinguishers of all life, and ravagers of God's precious creation.

Perhaps the main question for Christians looking at any system of defense is not, will it work with one hundred per cent certainty? The questions are rather: Does it offer a realistic possibility of success? And, if defeat comes, can it be a "defeat" such as the one Jesus suffered on the cross?

Defense through nuclear weapons cannot give an affirmative answer. Defense through assertive nonviolent resistance can. And nonviolent resistance knows that even defeat, if it is the defeat of the cross, is the dynamic out of which resurrection comes.

Richard Taylor works with Sojourners peace ministry. Ronald Sider is president of Evangelicals for Social Action. This is an excerpt from an article which appeared in *Sojourners*, Box 29272, Washington, DC 20017. Reprinted with permission.

### Reflection

1. What would happen if, as a nation, we gave the medal of honor to those who died in nonviolent resistance? What if we built monuments to those who resisted evil nonviolently? What if present military training was training in nonviolent resistance techniques and strategy? Describe the difference in our country.
2. React to the idea that the criterion for a Christian should not be whether an action "works" but whether it is the morally correct choice.

Scripture: John 2:14-17

In the temple precincts, Jesus came upon people engaged in selling oxen, sheep and doves, and others seated changing coins. He made a whip of cords and drove sheep and oxen alike out of the temple area, and knocked over the money-changers' tables, spilling their coins. He told those who were selling doves: "Get them out of here! Stop turning God's house into a marketplace!" The disciples recalled the words of Scripture: "Zeal for your house consumes me."

1. Is this violent action? Why or why not?
2. What motivated Jesus to act against the system?

## Face of the Earth

1. Reflect on the Scripture passage, John 2:14-17. How might this Scripture influence your life?
2. What questions, concerns does this aspect of nonviolence raise for you?
3. How might you live this aspect of nonviolence? Be specific.

## Eleven

### Disarming the Heart – Personal Testimonies *The following personal testimonies by those who have taken the Pax Christi vow of nonviolence.*

David Buer, SFO, of Chicago took Pax Christi's vow of nonviolence during a prayer service in memory of Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero.

For Buer, this was yet another step to reaffirm personal commitment made years ago to non-violence, adding "It was good to be surrounded by friends, song and prayer as I took the vow."

Buer, who helps run the Saints Joseph and Mary Shelter on Chicago's West Side, is reluctant to guess or attempt to predict what different this vow will make in his life. "That's not the point," he insists. "While I feel the vow is a solemn promise to God and should be taken only with serious preparation, it shouldn't become a burden of unhealthy guilt. It's a process toward a goal – we can't expect ourselves to become perfect overnight."

After first reading about the vow in *The Catholic Worker*, Buer found himself intrigued by the concept. "I liked the idea of the vow for several reasons," he says. "One, it puts us in contact with like-minded nonviolent types, which help us to get to know each other better."

"Two, it's a witness to others. And three, it's a grace to assist us in committing ourselves in our daily struggle to remain nonviolent in our thoughts, words and deeds. It can help propel us to find new, creative, nonviolent ways to respond to the injustices we are called to correct."

"This vow isn't new; others in the past have been called to gospel nonviolence. There was the Christian community of 1600 years ago; the early Franciscans; the followers of Martin Luther King; the disciples of Gandhi. They all found the vow a valid public statement of their interior conviction and a channel of grace to help them live it out."

For himself, Buer sees taking the vow as "a deeper promise to develop my interior life which inevitably will have an impact on my outer life. For me, taking the vow is a sign of an inner hunger to do better. I think it's a natural way to integrate Franciscan spirituality and a commitment to a simple lifestyle.

"Gandhi's nonviolence emanated from his spiritual life," Buer says in conclusion, "and I hope I can get in touch with the same source he drew his strength from. I hope I will become more aware of the violence in my own heart and the need to turn more fully to nonviolence."

From *Connections*, Spring 1986, published by Peaceful Solutions, a network of men and women supporting nonviolent alternatives to abortion and nuclear war. David is a member of Peaceful Solutions.

Taking the vow does not mean that I am perfect. I and others took the vow to declare publicly that I will try to practice the nonviolence of Jesus in all activities and circumstances of my life.

The ramifications of the vow of opportunities to practice nonviolence are countless; they are part of the fabric of life. For me, nonviolence of tongue requires the most attention, and I have literally stopped in the middle of a sentence...and that is grace for me.

Nonviolence includes care for the environment, living more simply, being more respectful of the resources I use, and not being wasteful. Care for myself is another expression of nonviolence, easing a too full schedule, letting go of something to allow more time for rest, recreation, prayer and people.

I pray the vow of nonviolence every morning.

Florence Steichen, CSJ

Joe Sands, a Jesuit scholastic from New Jersey, was traveling to Chile to begin three years of service there. In Guatemala, he came across the August issue of *The Catholic Worker* and read an article on the vow of nonviolence. He professed a vow of nonviolence by himself at the tomb of Archbishop Oscar Romero in San Salvador, El Salvador, in December, 1985, around the time of the fifth anniversary of the deaths of the four churchwomen. He is now serving the poor in Chile.

I've been involved in nonviolent studies since the Vietnam War...As soon as I saw the suggestion about the vow, I knew that it was for me. But I spent a month in prayerful preparation, eventually writing this vow. I took it for a year, but I know that it will be the beginning, not the end.

While pondering the process of taking the vow—to whom, when, etc.—I found myself in a retreat house in a quiet setting. I was there to give a talk, but the setting and Spirit moved me and I recited the vow alone, in the church there, at about sunrise on September 27, 1985.

I've sent a copy to my ordinary, Archbishop Weakland.

I presume you are saving these vows and these testimonies. Please do find the vehicle for sharing them even more. It will be a grace

The entire process has been a grace for me—thank you—and I live in our central city in a neighborhood torn by violence.

Rev. Thomas Suriano

In a somewhat secluded monastery here in Ligouri, MO, I took a vow of nonviolence on October 7, 1985...

Insignificant? Perhaps to the majority of people. For me, however, it was an outward expression of an inward calling. It took place on my retreat day for the month in our small prayer room where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved, and was witnessed by my prioress and confessor.

As a contemplative nun, 28 years old, and having completed the third year since my solemn profession of the evangelical vows, I felt called to a greater solidarity with my brothers and sisters suffering and hungering for peace and justice throughout the world.

Though I am physically removed from them and their situations, I am keenly aware of their strife in the face of violence...the people of Nicaragua, the Philippines, South Africa, Afghanistan and those in our own nation.

S. Phyllis Ann Whalen, O.SS.R.

I hedged for a long time in my decision because I saw so many reasons why I shouldn't take this vow.

My answer became clearer as I realized that the journey toward disarming the heart is a journey that I make together with my God. As I travel toward becoming one with the heart of God, God is also coming home to live in my heart. But when God comes, so do quite an array of our sisters and brothers who will also need a home in my heart—Russians and capitalists, the church hierarchy and hurting lay people, rich and poor, executioners and those on death row, Pentagon officials and peacemakers, my friends and family as well as my enemies. So the journey will require that I expand the home of my heart, realizing that my brothers and sisters living there need a place to live which is safe and warm and free from violence. And with them living in my heart, how can I possibly think of waging war with them?

Mary Ann Baudoin

Enclosed are the signed vows of six members. Taking the vow was very special. Our ceremony was done in the spirit of the Taizé community with Prayer before the Cross. The six of us will wear the scapular of St. Francis. Quite frankly, it has been a lot of years since I have worn a scapular, but I am finding it to be a good reminder of my vow...

Renee Rheams

### Reflection

1. Choose the testimony which you identify most closely. Describe how this person's testimony relates to your own ideas and feelings.
2. Write a response to one of the people whose testimony appears here.

Scripture: Luke 13:20-21

Jesus went on: "To what shall I compare the reign of God? It is like yeast which a woman took to knead into three measures of flour until the whole mass of dough began to rise."

1. What people have been leaven to the nonviolence struggle?
2. Discuss how nonviolence might act as a leaven in your own life.

### Disarming the Heart

1. Reflect on the Scripture passage, Luke 13:20-21. How might this Scripture influence your life?
2. What questions do these testimonies raise for you?
3. At this point, how might you describe your own ideas, feelings about taking a vow of nonviolence?

Twelve  
The Burden of Nonviolence  
*By Joan Chittister, OSB*

A Jewish tale relates that a young woman once said to an old woman, "Old woman, what is life's heaviest burden?" And, we are told, the old woman replied: "Life's heaviest burden is to have no burden to carry at all."

Ah, yes, the message is clear: The smallest of us is each responsible for something bigger than ourselves. To do less is to be less than we should be. The problem is that it is often so difficult to know exactly what the big thing really is. Martha of Bethany got her responsibilities wrong for a while, we know. Judas couldn't get them straightened out at all. The fishing disciples were sure, at first, that fishing was far more important than following Jesus. We need not, in other words, smugly conclude that we in our time will know our responsibilities when we see them.

It never crossed my mind when I was growing up, for instance, that a Christian's real responsibility was not to the Church but to the gospel, not to the country but to the world, not just to my own kind but to everyone, not simply to the private things that I wanted to do but to the great things that had to be done whether I wanted to do them or not.

And the struggle for insight is not getting much easier as life goes along. The only difference is that now at least I know that there are questions. For instance, there are faults in the Church, but is risking disunity by pointing them out necessarily a better state of affairs? There are major policy mistakes in the country but, as people in the peace movement are so often told these days, is the danger of finding ourselves in an even worse system a better solution than simply bearing the little sin of nuclear possibility? There are sick and old and poor and wounded in my own society but, knowing that I really can do very little about all of that, isn't it just as well to let those things to the officials whose responsibility it is to respond rather than to do so little noisily?

The questions were all bad enough as they were until fifteen of my own sisters in my own monastery gathered to begin the study of the Pax Christi vow of nonviolence with a view to pronouncing it in the priory chapel on the anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima. Then the clanging really started in my head. Of what good are foolishness and symbol in life? Of what good is a drop in the bucket? Of what use is it for the weak to institutionalize their weakness? Let's get excited when George Shultz or Zbigniew Brzezinski or Ronald Reagan take a vow of nonviolence, not when it's fifteen nuns, fifteen peaceniks, fifteen women. Let's hear it from the men before we think it means anything.

And then I began to think of the old woman's warning that to have nothing to carry at all was a greater burden than carrying what was too heavy for you.

It is an irreparable burden to be without conscience. To live at a moment of time when my country is capable of annihilating the planet and make no attempt to say no is to be weighed down in soul. What kind of hollowness does it take to see the effects of sin but have no sense of sin?

It is an immense burden to be without voice. The closest thing I know to the burden of silence in the face of the sacrilege of militarism and macho and nuclear madness is not that it makes a person a sheep; it is the pain of not being able to scream in the middle of a nightmare.

It is a galling burden to be without obligation. Life becomes perfectly meaningless when we are finally convinced that nothing we do has any meaning. Why then do we live at all? Rosten wrote once: "The purpose of life is not to be happy; the purpose of life is to matter—to have it make a difference that you lived at all." If I am not obliged to something bigger than myself, even though it may be unattainable, then has my life really been worth anything at all?

It is a frightening burden to be without trust. To live in a nuclear world and never say a word against it is to live in a bubble of arrogance and hate. And arrogance and hate are the worst kind of pollution. Arrogance poisons reality and hate poisons life. Arrogance and hate make diploma-

cy and negotiation and human community impossible because they render trust impotent. Someone has to be able to be humble enough not to have to be the best, the first, the perfect. Someone has to be trusting enough to say, "I believe; I accept; I'll try." That is, perhaps, Gideon's best gift to the Church. Having raised an army of forty thousand to do battle for his God, Gideon was instructed to reduce the army to three hundred and face the enemy with screeching trumpets and banging lanterns so that when the battle was over its observers would not say, "See what Gideon has done for God," but, "See what God has done for Gideon."

Indeed, my fifteen sisters have confronted me with the real burden of my life.

The real burden of my life is not nuclear disarmament and the elimination of sexism. The real burden of my life is the vow of nonviolence. The real burden of my life is the thought of being without conscience, without voice, without a sense of obligation, without the strong defense of trust.

Oh, true, the vow will not be easy. It means I must be a peaceful peacemaker. It means I must turn every moment of ridicule into resurrection. It means I must learn to love what does not love me. It means that I must make a clear distinction between being assertive and being aggressive. It means that, like Gideon, I must go forth without an army in a culture where John Wayne is king, Rambo is Mister Everyman, and Al Capone got respect.

And will it work? Well, it worked in India for Gandhi. It worked in Selma for Martin Luther King. It worked in the Philippines for Cory Aquino. And it worked for the third graders of St. Veronica's School when I went there as a child. Every year we all got up in church and recited the Pledge of the Legion of Decency, promising that we wouldn't go to sleazy movies even if it meant we would never see another film on Saturday afternoons in our entire lives. And it affected the film industry: they had to categorize their films and they had to provide what we wanted or face ignominious defeat at the hands of the third graders of the world. I trust that it can work again.

Imagine a world whose third graders and ushers and teachers and fathers and college jocks vowed never to use violence again to achieve their ends. Vowed not that they would be passive, just that they would be nonviolent. Imagine the strength of the challenge.

Well, sixteen of us are going to start, without waiting for Shultz and Brzezinski and Reagan.

Perhaps I'm wrong. Perhaps it won't be effective at all. But the old woman has taught me a lesson for life. For me, at least, it is better to bear the burden of being ineffective than it is to bear the burden of being unconscionable.

Joan Chittister, OSB, is prioress of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie. Reprinted by permission of the National Catholic Reporter, P.O. Box 41981, Kansas City, MO

### Reflection

1. Could you identify with any of these struggles, any of the questions, expressed in "The Burden of Nonviolence"?
2. Can you think of other instances where nonviolence has "worked"? How important is the question, "Will it work?"

Scripture: Luke 12:49-50

I have come to light a fire on the earth. How I wish the blaze were ignited! I have a baptism to receive. What anguish I feel till it is over!

1. Can you explain Jesus' anguish? Can you identify with it?
2. Can nonviolence be the spark that ignites the fire on the earth? Explain. What would such a world be like?

## The Burden of Nonviolence

1. Reflect on the Scripture passage, Luke 12:49-50. How might this Scripture influence your life?
2. Having reflected on the various aspects of nonviolence, what are some implications of nonviolence in your own life, in the Church, in the nation, in the world?

# Notes and Reflections



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