

CENTERINGS



a quarterly publication of the 8th Day Center for Justice

My Home Town This Earth

**Mitsuye
Yamada**

Imagine there is a future
where a tight ring of peace
like Saturn's collar
holds us all in
and there is no
space for war.

Imagine there is a future
where my home town
this earth
is no longer
an experimental station
for nuclear wars.

Imagine there is a future
where our psychic Geiger counters find
no clicking nightmares in the air

where no child
sees its mother's image
in pieces of charcoal
buried in the ground
where she was buried

where no mother cries
over her child's coffin
killed at war
killed in the war
killed by hate
killed by hunger

I lay my aging woman body
on this ground
spread eagled
reaching to four points
of our common future
our shared pasts
and remember



we must make a future
for those for whom survival only
is not enough
we must make a future
for those so bereft in mind and spirit
they cannot imagine there is a
future.

Imagine there is a future
for eyes
watching us here
watching us now
through the wrong end of a telescope.*

** Photo from Apollo 17-NASA web site; poem by Mitsuye Yamada (in Camp Notes and Other Writing, Rutgers University Press, 1998). Reprinted with permission of the author. Mitsuye, an Adjunct Professor in Asian American Studies at the University of California, Irvine, read the poem at the recent funeral of her brother Michael Yasutake, an Episcopalian priest and peace activist in Chicago. During WWII, he and his family were placed in a Japanese American camp in Idaho.*

Le Carré's moral outrage burns brightly

Our world that God so loves much has changed since electronic communication moves messages faster than people can walk to their neighbor's house after supper to chat. In our world called to conversion, those who organize messages for love challenge those who organize messages for profit.

8th Day Center for Justice has always been organized for systemic change. When I was working in the Catholic School system, I really didn't have much attention leftover to get a handle on how the world has changed since the dawn of electronic communication. I didn't realize how my daily experiences were part of a rapidly changing world.

Now that I work at the 8th Day Center for Justice, I have learned new language both for those who organize for love and those who organize for profit.

Sometimes I wished there were a crib sheet making sense of some of the players, to say nothing of the relationships among them.

Reading *The Constant Gardener* by John Le Carré (Scribner, New York, 2001) was very helpful to me. In a single story so much was made so clear. While the novel purports to be fiction, the story is set in real time against real world situations. A certain pharmaceutical company typifies today's globalization. Some coin the term "corporatization." Read about how this company wields more power for profit than govern-

ments wield power to care for their constituents. Read about the universities co-opted in their research by the company. Meet the third world distribution centers that act like gangsters with a fancy marketing firm.

The characters on the dark side of this story might really be fictitious, however, the story is not. Electronic communication has fostered mergers in media, food production, energy distribution and weapons production. Such huge cor-

porations have larger annual budgets than most of the world's nations. They are organized to provide profit for their shareholders and wealth for their managers, by any means necessary. Through political contributions and old-fashioned muscle they organize environments favorable to their corporate expansion.

Tactics for resistance used at 8th Day would have helped the story's protagonists.

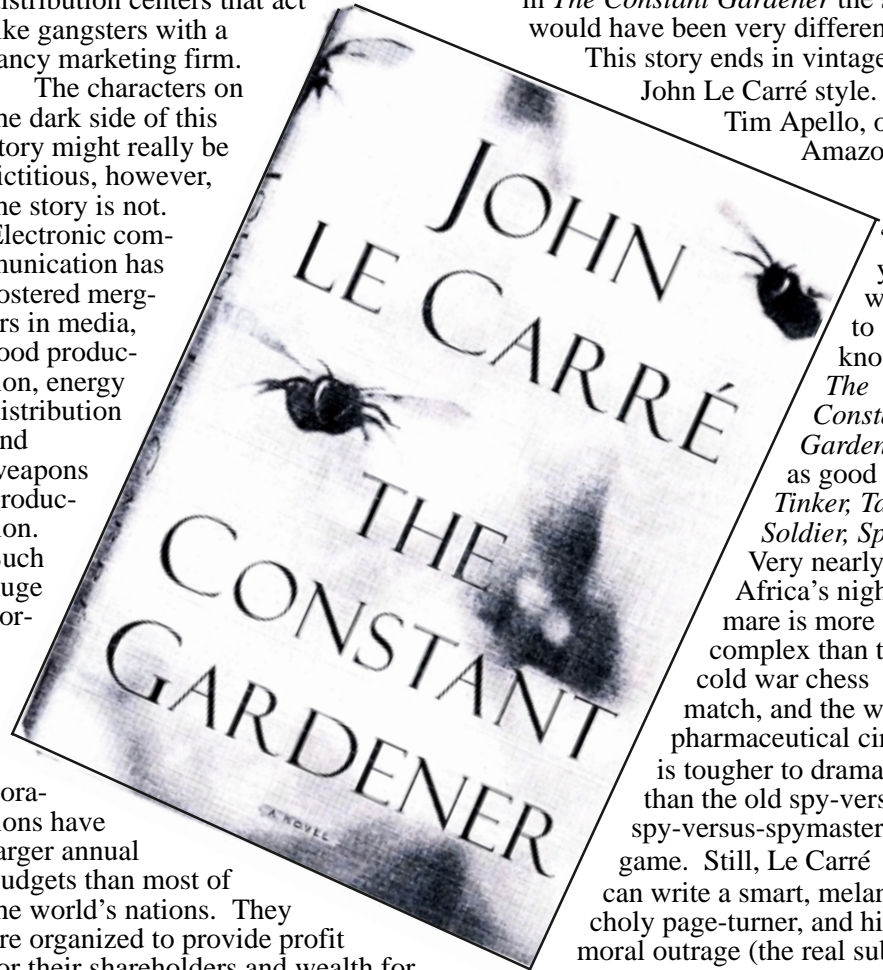
When a community of resistance forms around an issue, the whole community carries the story. Each member of the community contributes his/her energy and gifts in support for each other member and in opposition to the powerful alliance. The discernment of the faith inspired community contributes focus and synergy to the efforts of the whole.

Maybe you have heard the term "Lilliputian strategy." It refers to an entire

Christy Lytle, CSA town working together to tie down a giant. Had there been communities of resistance dealing with the fictitious pharmaceutical company in *The Constant Gardener* the story would have been very different.

This story ends in vintage John Le Carré style.

Tim Apello, of Amazon.



com says, "But you want to know if *The Constant Gardener* is as good as *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*. Very nearly. Africa's nightmare is more complex than the cold war chess match, and the world pharmaceutical circus is tougher to dramatize than the old spy-versus-spy-versus-spy-master game. Still, Le Carré can write a smart, melancholy page-turner, and his moral outrage (the real subject of his books) burns as brightly as ever."

Dorman T. Shindler of *The Denver Post* also reviewed the book.

He says, "If parts of the plot or denouement of *The Constant Gardener* sometimes seem a bit pat, they are overshadowed by serious concerns (the fallibility of political institutions, corporate greed and Africa's precarious future), which Le Carré addresses within the story line; and by his unflinching ability to mix a finely paced plot with beautifully written prose. "It is always a pleasure to see a master of the craft performing at the peak of his powers." □

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Time to examine “collateral damage”

Mary Ellen McDonagh. BVM

Since 1374 “collateral” has meant that which is aside from the main subject, line of action or purpose of something. In the nuclear era, “collateral damage” has been a euphemism meaning the destruction of people, cities and resources as a result of nuclear fallout, imprecise targeting or plain error. The “megadeaths” -- millions of deaths -- that “collateral damage” may entail are not represented in this term. (*Wordsworth Book of Euphemism* by Judith S. Neaman and Carole G. Silver. Wordsworth Editions, Hertfordshire, 1995. Page 353).

Collateral damage, in euphemistic Pentagonese came into its own during daily press briefings to describe the overkill of conventional warfare of the Gulf War in 1991. (From *Slang: the authoritative topic-by-topic dictionary of American lingo* from all walks of life by Paul Dickson. Pocket Books, 1990, 1998. “Pentagonese: Fort Fumble Speaks” chapter. Page 281-282).

Isn't it time we give a human face to a term deliberately designed to sound otherwise? Isn't it time we really think about the term and what it implies?

According to a New York Times poll following September 11, 58 percent of Americans support going to war “even if it means many thousands of innocent civilians may be killed..” Can we really accept that, both morally and strategically, knowing that such deaths simply create more?

There are many unintended consequences of war, collateral damage being one of them, so many that the CIA invented a phrase to describe what happens when short term wartime decisions come back to haunt those who made them: “blowback.”

Consider that Osama bin Laden received training while fighting the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. During the “cold war” the U.S. government did not consider his fanatical religious views antithetical to “civilization.” At the time, the CIA considered them valuable weapons in the fight against communism. Though not directly, CIA funding, training and weapons made their way to Islamic rebels in Afghanistan. Only later did it turn out that all that money did more than repel the Soviets, it created a sense of invincibility in the

rebels: a form of collateral damage.

But of course, there was more. The U.S. presence in Saudi Arabia (bin Laden's native land) during the Gulf War became a symbol of imperialism for many Muslims, while to the U.S. military, these new “enemy” armies seemed just more unfortunate collateral damage.

Thus the meaning of the term can extend well beyond even literal death. Consider the long term environmental damage of the use of depleted uranium (du) during the Gulf War and NATO conflict in the Balkans: as du seeped into water and soil and bodies to create a harvest of leukemia among the most vulnerable.

Consider the many unemployed the world over who have lost jobs due to the collateral damage of September 11. Consider the UN estimated death of 5,000 children monthly in Iraq as a result of US/UN imposed sanctions.



Picasso's mural of Guernica has been seen as the symbolic painting of the horrors of war. It depicts fascist bombs striking the Spanish town of Guernica in April, 1937. Sudden and wanton killing is presented in flat, clearly outlined, yet agonizingly cut off shapes. They overlap, meet, change places, and they are all grey, white and black. Picasso used art to oppose injustice. To see death in the light is to give continuity to discontinuity -- we see it with living eyes. And, Picasso has put a bulb made by humankind into the eternal sun, right near the lamp over the stricken horse. Also, in its form, there is organization that something larger than cruelty and violence is at work. (Tennessee Tribune, Nov. 18-24, 1999).

Consider the thousands of Afghani civilians killed by U.S. bombs. Consider all those who might benefit from programs that could be funded by the largess funds spent on weaponry. Consider the “accidental” bombing of a Red Cross hospital with a clearly marked roof.

Are we really ready for more? If not, then we, as people of faith who value the web of life, surely have a responsibility to face up to damage already incurred and take action to prevent more death. □

Government represses dissent

Emile Schepers

Following September 11, draconian anti-terrorism legislation in the USA Patriot Act was rammed through Congress and signed by President Bush on October 26 -- and there is more in the pipeline. President Bush has now signalled the repressive tack the government is taking by his announcement that non-citizens accused of involvement in terrorism may be tried by special secret military courts.

For some years, the government has been preparing to repress social movements, largely on the left, that it saw as threatening its economic and social policies.

In 1996, the Clinton administration, colluding with the Republicans in both houses of Congress and pushing aside the objections of moderates, enacted two pieces of repressive legislation: the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act and the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act.

These two laws:

- Make it a crime to provide even humanitarian aid to organizations the government chooses to call "terrorist."
- Allow legal immigrants to be deported on the basis of "secret" evidence that neither the accused nor their lawyers are allowed to see.
- Make it outrageously difficult for prisoners sentenced to death to appeal their sentences to federal courts. (This is a key factor in the Mumia Abu-Jamal case).
- Cut off immigrants from many services paid for by their tax dollars.

Patriot Act Expands Policies

The USA Patriot Act expands on these policies against immigrants and dissenters:

- Immigrants can now be detained for up to seven days without being charged with a crime, and deported based on mere suspicion that they have terrorist ties.
- Immigrants can be held in prison indefinitely without a trial under certain circumstances, for example, if the government is trying to deport them and their country of origin refuses to take them back.
- The government can declare certain organizations, foreign or domestic, to be terrorist, and then any material aid to such organizations, even if it supports only legal, charitable activities, constitutes a criminal felony and entails a stiff prison sentence.
- The government has "sneak-and-peek" rights when it claims to be investigating terrorism -- [agents] can go into a person's home or office based on a secret warrant without telling the person. This creates a danger of planted evidence and frame-ups. Sneak-and-peek searches have been legal since 1978, but now secret searches can be used for criminal prosecution.

■ The government can use "roving wiretaps," which means [it] can get authorization to listen in to any phone [authorities] assert a person, who is being investigated "might" use, even if that entails listening in on many other people's conversations.

■ The government has greatly expanded ability to spy on one's e-mail and to do surveillance of the internet web sites a person visits.

■ Colleges and universities are now required to provide detailed information to government security agencies on all non-citizen students, including those studying on student visas and those who are permanently residing in the United States.

■ If the government finds that the judge of the local jurisdiction where a person it is investigating in relation to terrorism lives will not issue a warrant, it can search the whole country for a judge willing to issue one.

■ The CIA is now authorized to spy on people within the United States, and there will be much more sharing of information among the CIA, FBI, INS, National Security Agency, grand juries, and local police.

Further Legislation Proposed

The USA Patriot law may not be the last one passed as part of the "war against terrorism." There are calls for a national identity card and even more crackdowns on the foreign-born. There is a bill in Congress to ban all students from seven countries the U.S. claims sponsors terrorism. Yet, none of the terrorists who committed the crime of September 11 was from any of these countries.

There is a huge risk that such laws would be used to try to break up protest movements by labor unions, anti-globalization forces, civil rights groups and environmental organizations.

In Illinois, State Attorney General and gubernatorial candidate Jim Ryan promoted his own "Illinois Comprehensive Anti-Terrorism Bill," which in some ways goes even further than the federal legislation. For example, under Ryan's bill, even actions that "endanger property" will be classified as terrorism as long as their intention is to pressure the government or sway public opinion. These actions would be considered "Class X Felonies" and carry mandatory sentences for 20 years to life.

There is a huge risk that such laws would be used to try to break up protest movements by labor unions, anti-

globalization forces, civil rights groups and environmental organizations.

Nobody disagrees that certain things, such as improved airport security, need to be done to prevent terrorism. However, the establishment press is not asking if the draconian legislation might be aimed at suppressing dissent and protest movements against government policy rather than preventing terrorism.

Role of the Press

Prior to September 11, there was a mounting movement against corporate globalization and sweatshop exploitation; a real, if cautious, turn to the left by the labor movement; and strong protest movements on topics ranging from immigrants' rights to police brutality. In the wake of September 11, all of these movements have been silenced. But the social conditions that produced them have not disappeared; they will arise again. Now the government is using the shock and fear of the American people to give itself the power to crush these legitimate protests.

How has the American press responded? A number of newspapers, including the *Chicago Tribune* and the *New York Times* have editorialized that the administration is going too far. But in general, press reaction to this assault on civil liberties has been inadequate, thanks to insufficient critical analysis and ignorance of history.

In reporting the possible use of military tribunals to try foreign terrorists, few media outlets looked in depth at the underlying assumption of this move by the government.

The hanging of Major Andre during the Revolutionary War and the execution after World War II of Japanese General Tomoyuki Yamashita, both as the outcome of military tribunals, were cited as precedents in some of the

press stories, without mention that both acts were considered travesties of justice by many people at the time and even today.

Now the government is using the shock and fear of the American people to give itself the power to crush these legitimate protests.

Statements by Attorney General John Ashcroft and Vice President Dick Cheney clearly show that they see due process as an advantage for guilty people and not what it is supposed to be -- a fundamental right and a mechanism to protect the innocent from false accusation and wrongful conviction. They think there should be two sets of rules: one for citizens like Timothy McVeigh and another for people who are not U.S. citizens.

This bodes ill for the people who will be brought before the military tribunals and for the rights of everyone in America. □

Emile Schepers is the Coordinator of the Chicago Committee to Defend the Bill of Rights. This article originally entitled, "The Government Targets Dissent" appeared in Chicago Media Watch, Winter 2001.



Sister Dolores Brooks, OP
August 12, 1928–January 22, 2002

Dolores Brooks, OP 8th Day Center Staff Member 1987-2001 Died January 22, 2002

As friend, colleague and pursuer of justice par excellence, Dolores' life and work at 8th Day left an indelible mark at the Center. The Book of Wisdom has apt words:

“She hasten[ed] to make herself known in anticipation of people's desires . . . Those who watched for her at dawn were not disappointed, for they found her waiting at the gates . . . For to people she is an unfailing treasure. . .”

Dolores was an “unfailing treasure” to 8th Day, to her Sinsinawa Dominican Sisters, to the Dominican Fathers/Brothers of the Central Province whom she represented, and to family and friends across the country.

She made herself “known” to presidents and CEO's and was forever “anticipating” the desires of others.

The endless list of all who loved and were loved by this “treasure” have indeed been touched by God.

Dolores Brooks, OP, Presenté.

Continuing the Dialogue

War and violence do not create right relationships

8th Day Center for Justice

On September 12, 2001, the staff issued a statement in response to the previous day's violent, tragic events. (1) We named such events as a result of systemic violence and noted that such violence included the economic and military policies of the United States. Regrettably, within three weeks, the United States chose a violent, military response which has continued in the ensuing months and threatens to escalate daily.

In the first document, we expressed grief for the many thousand killed in our land and for their loved ones. Now, we must add to the victims of violence those killed in Afghanistan. We hold the web of life sacred; the needless death of even one person on planet earth diminishes all the rest of us.

In its Vision Statement, 8th Day Center writes, "The spirituality of justice calls us to envision a world of right relationships . . ." We strongly believe war and violence (physical, environmental and economic) DO NOT CREATE RIGHT RELATIONSHIPS. Thus, in the spirit of continuing the dialogue, we offer this document which comments on the current "War on Terrorism" through the lens of nonviolence and through that of the Just War Theory. Finally, we offer several nonviolent alternatives focused on ending a cycle of violence. (See also second document which the result of a Social Analysis Day on Dec. 6, 2001 attended by staff and several Board members). (2)

I. Through a Nonviolent Lens

The staff members of 8th Day Center for Justice believe in actively living nonviolence. We say this not simply because nonviolence is an honorable personal choice, but because it is wise public policy. Violence begets violence in an unending cycle. Historically, active nonviolence was the primary response of the Church during its first three hundred years. Thus, today we ask, "Why is nonviolence always resigned to the realm of individual conscience and not placed squarely in the public realm as the responsibility of nations?" Nonviolence is the primary lens through which we examine our relationships to social structures.

Violence has not been a stranger to America. Street gangs abound, the murder rate is the highest of any industrialized country, and economic violence in the form of hunger and homelessness affects one out of every six children. Nevertheless, the events of September 11 caused the country as a whole to consider violence in a new way. Americans began to join powerless people the world over filled with anger over the insanity of violence. Along with others, we at 8th Day have long asked hard questions. And so we ask, "Why is it that we Americans have not realized how the United States has contributed to the cycle of violence both domestically and internationally? While we at 8th Day recognize that certainly the U.S. is not the only perpetrator of violence in the world, it refuses to acknowledge the devastating effects of its domestic and foreign policies and its role as the disproportionate congregate of wealth and resources for the world.

Dom Helder Camara, deceased former Bishop of Recife, Brazil, suggests that violence does not take place in a vacuum, but is frequently a response to violence previously perpetrated, thus creating an endless cycle. He describes this cycle of violence as starting with *oppression*, manifested by hunger, poverty or the domination of the many by the few. This leads to *rebellion*, which occurs when the oppressed retaliate with violence. The cycle is completed with *repression*, in which a governing minority attempts to maintain a status quo. Repression is usually responsible for causing a new state of oppression, thus causing violence to spiral in an endless cycle. (3)

Therefore, we cite the following examples of U.S. domestic and international actions that we feel contribute to perpetuating a cycle of systemic violence, systemic referring to social structures such as economic, military, and political.

First, the U.S. exerts undue influence over those institutions controlling the globalized economy -- the World Trade Organization, the World Bank and IMF, and the G-8 summit. Their policies have impoverished many worldwide. According to a 1999 report from the World Bank, "Globalization appears to increase poverty and inequality . . . The costs of adjusting to greater openness are borne exclusively by the poor, regardless of how long the adjustment takes."



Second, strategic U.S. military bombings in the Middle East have been ongoing for the last two decades. This includes the U.S. led 11-year embargo against Iraq, the cause of the death of over 500,000 children, and exacerbated by the nearly daily bombings of Iraq which have taken place since 1993.

Third, the U.S. supports Israel's 35-year occupation of Palestinian land, an occupation maintained with U.S. weapons and in violation of U.N. resolutions. Additionally, the U.S. quietly acquiesces to Israel's possession of nuclear weapons, even though U.N. resolutions call for the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

Fourth, U.S. allies such as Israel and Turkey are allowed to invade other nations and oppress minorities within their borders while other nations are savagely attacked for doing so.

Fifth, the U.S. does not accept accountability for its own human rights violations and snubs the international community when it is brought to task. This includes the current contempt the U.S. has for the international community regarding its treatment of Afghani prisoners.

Sixth, the presence of thousands of Western, non-Muslim troops in close proximity to Islam's holy cities of Mecca and Medina, is seen as heretical by many Saudi Arabians and as a prop for an illegitimate or non-representative government.

Seventh, the already gargantuan defense budget of the United States, which President Bush has requested be increased by an ADDITIONAL \$48 billion for FY 2003, should be spent on domestic needs of those who are poor: affordable housing, job training and other education, food programs, health care, etc. While we have concentrated on U.S. actions in the Middle East, other examples of U.S. contributions to the cycle of violence are numerous including sanctions against Haiti, Plan Colombia, and its refusal to sign the Landmine Ban and Kyoto Protocol treaties.

II. Through a "Just War" Lens

Many people believe, in conscience, that the U.S. was unjustly attacked on September 11, and therefore has a right to a violent, military response. In such a case, a clear distinction must be made between a just cause and a just war. Even if one believes they have a just cause for responding militarily, such a response must be held to the ethical and moral standards of the just war theory.

The Just War Theory

The just war theory presumes that war is evil and should therefore be avoided, and if war cannot be avoided, it must at least be limited. While this tradition was intended to restrain Christian participation in war, today it is used by governments to support their war efforts.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* enumerates strict conditions for a "just war" which require "rigorous consideration." These conditions must be applied at "one and the same time" (cf. nos. 2302-2317).

1. Just Cause -- the damage inflicted by the aggressor on the nation or community of nations must be lasting, grave, and certain.
2. Last resort -- all other means of putting an end to it must have been shown to be impractical or ineffective.
3. Probability of Success -- there must be serious prospects of success.
4. Proportionality -- the use of arms must not produce evils and disorders graver than the evil to be eliminated. The power of modern means of destruction weighs very heavily in evaluating this condition.
5. Discrimination -- there must be a distinction between combatants and noncombatants. (While the *Catechism* considers discrimination to be of secondary importance, most just war theorists consider it essential.) (4)

Thus, we dare to ask whether the U.S. War on Terrorism and the U.S. military action and bombing in Afghanistan meet these criteria? (The following questions are based on "Challenging Times Require Prophetic Actions", by Scott Wright, *Catholic Peace Voice*, Winter 2001).

In terms of *just cause*, to what extent is a broad-based, long-term war on terrorism legitimate self defense?

In terms of *just intent*, to what extent is this war limited by the objectives to bring to justice those responsible for the crimes of September 11?

Even if there is a *probability of success*, at what cost is it achieved?

In terms of *proportionality*, the aim of the war is presumably restoring peace and security, but are these not also being undermined by the actual and even potential suffering of destruction caused by the war? At what point in the war is this criterion violated? How many civilian deaths can be tolerated? How many prisoners executed? When and where do we stop? Isn't the death of one person one too many?

Was this really a *last resort*? Bombing began a scant three weeks after September 11 and in that time the U.S. failed to negotiate with the Taliban, even when they offered to turn over Osama bin Laden to an Islamic court in another country. Contrast this response with the extraordinary diplomatic efforts on the part of the United States to resolve conflict between India and Pakistan, efforts that were not used with Afghanistan.

Finally, we should be honest in admitting that the aim and result of war is not necessarily peace but victory. Any victory won by violence necessarily justifies the violence that won it, and leads to further violence. If we are serious Christians, must we not conclude that we need something new to replace our perpetual "war to end war"?

III. Nonviolent Alternatives

The “just war” theory outlined above has been used and abused to justify far too many wars. The “War on Terrorism” should not turn us to this theory, but to a deeper consideration of what it means to be nonviolent, to be a peace maker. Thus, we offer for consideration the following steps toward a just peace. We hope they will stimulate further reflection and discernment. (These steps are drawn largely from “A Catholic Community Responds to the War: Living with Faith and Hope,” 12/17/01 <http://orbita.starmedia.com~maryknoll/index.html>).

1. Cease military action against Afghanistan and any other country. Stop using the “war on terrorism” to justify all manner of domestic and international agendas, political, economic and military.
2. End all sanctions against Iraq.
3. Stop all arms shipments to the Middle East. Pressure Israel to cease the occupation of Palestinian territories as a prelude to a just peace process. Remove U.S. forces from Saudi Arabia, site of Islam’s holy sites.
4. Establish an energy policy devoted to reducing oil consumption, which is the root of world-wide injustice and U.S. military action especially in the Middle East.
5. Call upon Congressional representatives to resist the climate of fear threatening our rights and liberties by defending the Constitution of the United States.
6. End censorship in any form and under any pretext as has been evidenced, at least, by the major networks in their refusal to accurately report civilian casualties in Afghanistan. Provide alternative reliable sources of information. Make civilian casualties in Afghanistan as real to us as are the U.S. casualties.

“ Why is nonviolence always resigned to the realm of individual conscience and not placed squarely in the public realm as the responsibility of nations? ”

7. Eliminate the international debt of other countries as a starting place for rectifying the extreme disparities inherent in the world community.

8. Place these events in the larger context in which they occur – massive poverty, discrimination and unjust global economic system. Establish a commission to study the grievances which lie at the root of such attacks using broad consultation. Use international networks of Catholic institutions, religious and missionary communities, world-wide dioceses, along with the larger faith community and non-governmental organizations as valuable resources for important information and faith-based judgements regarding local situations across the globe. Listen to the voices of the marginalized, those who are poor, and the victims of war and injustice whom our colleagues in faith accompany. Call upon all of these resources as our partners in study and discernment, and particularly in service of stopping a spread of U.S. military action to other countries.

9. End religious justification as a tool of warfare. Review and reevaluate Catholic responses to September 11 and the bombing. Make the voice of the church community a principle voice toward peaceful avenues to conflict resolution and the achievement of justice for all.

10. Convene forums throughout the faith community to discern and chart a new Catholic paradigm to replace Just War Theory. It is time for churches to use their collective wisdom to explore the models of nonviolence in more deliberate ways. Gene Sharp’s classic three volume work, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*, which presents 198 pragmatic alternatives to war and civil disturbances through the centuries, including Nazi Germany, provides a good starting point. Pax Christi–USA, which strives to create a world that reflects the Peace of Christ by exploring, articulating and witnessing to the call of Christian nonviolence, is another. The lives and testimonies of countless others in the civil rights movement, struggles in Latin America, Asia, Africa, and elsewhere provide other examples. It is time.

Conclusion

Once the above steps have been taken, we can begin the process of abolishing war as a violent response to violence. As we continue to live through these difficult times, we wish to proclaim our firm commitment to the nonviolence of the Gospel, which demands of us rigid adherence to love and truth. We also affirm our commitment to seeking right relationships in which all creation is seen as sacred and interconnected. In such a world all people are equal and free from oppression, have a right to a just distribution of resources, and live in harmony with the cosmos. In continuing the dialogue, we have attempted to hold to these mandates.

Notes

1. *Centerings*, Fall 2001, p. 8. and www.8thdaycenter.org/091301.html.
2. *Centerings*, Winter 2001, p. 7.
3. Dom Helder Camara, *Spiral of Violence* (Danville, New Jersey: Dimension Books, 1971.)
4. See also *Centerings*, Winter 2001, p. 6.

Faithful Dissent: a process for women religious

Kathleen Desautels, SP

A candle-light is a
protest at midnight.
It is a non-conformist.
It says to the darkness,
“I beg to differ.”
(*Samuel Rayan, India*)

There is a long history in religious life when matters of conscience caused individuals and/or congregations to “beg to differ” or dissent from church authority. Many of the journals of religious institutions recount the conflicts that not a few foundresses had with their local ordinary in the early years in this country. In recent times the conflicts that Jeannine Gramick, SSND, Joan Chittister, OSB and Christine Vladimiroff, OSB, the Erie Benedictine Prioress, have had with Vatican officials are all too familiar.

The common thread among these stories is the love each Sister has for the church, the concern for the women in their respective religious communities, and their desire to promote the mission of the gospel, as they understand it.

In 2000 the 8th Day Center for Justice established a “Women’s Rights in Church and Society” issue group made up of both Board and staff members to specifically address the human rights violations and systemic injustices in the Roman Catholic Church. In the course of our reading, reflection, and conversations over the following year and a half, we came to recognize the necessity at times for a collective prophetic voice of Religious Congregations that might include faithful dissent. The result of our discussions prompted us to prepare a process to assist in dialogue regarding this issue.

Raising Questions

The group began its work by raising questions: What is it that justice demands of women in the Church today? What does our prophetic role as women/women religious call us to? What cultural expectations of women religious keep us from speaking out against wrongful interference by church authority? How are women, and in particular, religious women acculturated in terms of conflict?

Next, we attempted to identify some of the barriers to dissent - personal loss/emotional feelings of loneliness; questions about tax exempt status; other economic/development considerations; canonical issues - constitutions of the congregation; fears of disappointing senior sisters in our congregations, clergy friendships; different spiritualities being expressed within one’s congregation; embarrassment of having to stand alone, to name but a few.

Naming some of these barriers prompted more questions: What moves us out of fear? What are experiences in my life of being “silenced” or having unilateral power or

power-over used against me? What personal choice did I make at that time? How did I respond? Did I swallow the abuse or seek counsel? How does one know when to take an injustice done to one person and make it a public issue?

History of Dissent

In researching the topic of conscience, the history of dissent in the Church suggests that a healthy institution leaves room for differences to be aired. Some favored quotes emerged from our reading:

Karol Cardinal Wotyla in 1969 (Pope John Paul II) said: “The structures must not only allow the emergence of the opposition and give it the opportunity to express itself, but also must make it possible for the opposition to function for the good of the community.”

Bishop John Heaps, from Australia, said: “Dissent is the prophetic move by people, who genuinely love the Gospel and the Church to offer responsible alternative ways of preaching the Good News to the World of our time. ... The faithful person must dissent when well informed conscience is in conflict with law...”

Phil Kilroy, RSCJ: “Dissent is what healthy people do when the institution no longer serves their legitimate spiritual needs.”

To assist the committee in its efforts, Lyn Osiek, RSCJ, a biblical scholar teaching at CTU and author of *Beyond Anger*, was invited to give a presentation entitled: “Dissent in the Lives of Women Religious.” This talk was later video taped for use as part of 8th Day’s process. Lyn traces the evolution of prophetic dissent in Christianity beginning with Jesus. There are two kinds of dissent, says Lyn, “from anger and alienation or from prophetic insight and hope.”

Lyn ends her 40 minute presentation by talking about collective conscience, how religious congregations can be prophetic in these times. She suggests several ways for women religious to address the concern:

- Educate yourselves about formation of conscience and other such issues.
- Know your facts. What passes for church teaching often is not.
- Know your levels of authority of persons and pronouncements.
- Don’t expect understanding from those who represent guardianship of institutions.
- Don’t expect that dissent will be without cost.
- Don’t expect that you personally will see resolution or vindication.
- Constantly balance the cost of taking risks against a congregation’s founding charism. Maybe taking risks is why a congregation was founded.

Thus, the committee invites readers to organize a group of women in their congregation or pastoral setting to participate in this process that provides a safe space for dialogue on this important issue. The time is right.

See the flyer announcing the process on page 10. □

“Dissent is what healthy people do when the institution no longer serves their legitimate spiritual needs.” Phil Kilroy, RSCJ

8th Day Center for Justice

Women's Rights in Church and Society Committee

Church Dissent and Women Religious

WHY: There is a long history in religious life when matters of conscience caused individuals and/or congregations to dissent from authority. “Dissent happens,” says Lyn Osiek, RSCJ “when conscience and public order are in conflict.”

Women Religious have for centuries dissented by quietly circumventing the church regulation and at times were compelled by circumstances to go public with their disagreement. What were the steps that aided the Sister or the Sisters together in making the decision to act? Conflict will come again. How will we respond in such a way to bring about right relationships – within the Congregation, within the Church-at-large?

The process, “Church Dissent and Women Religious” is designed to provide an opportunity and a safe environment to have a thoughtful dialogue on this sensitive issue of how to remain faithful both to one’s conscience and to the Institution. It is an effort, in the words of Martin Luther King, to build up the “beloved community,” within the Religious Congregation, as well as for the common good of the Universal Church. The time is right.

WHAT: The process is designed to provide a way for Sisters to discuss the topic of faithful dissent within the Church. Elements of the day include

- Discussion on individual conscience and collective conscience relative to Church issues today – recalling stories of conflict with Church authority of many women religious foundresses
- Conversations concerning the obstacles to dissent by women
- Video presentation by Lyn Osiek, RSCJ, a biblical scholar from Catholic Theological Union, on the topic “Church Dissent and Women Religious”
- Discussion on the responsibilities of the Congregation to its members regarding dissent and the responsibilities of members to the Congregation
- Steps a Congregation might want to include in deciding to take an issue from a private to a collective public action

WHO: The process is designed for women religious, but can be readily adapted for men religious, parish committees or interested persons in the Catholic Church.

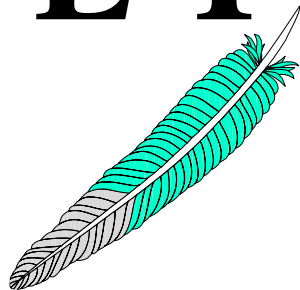
HOW: For those interested in having a team from 8th Day Center’s Women’s Rights in the Church and Society Committee to facilitate the three and a half hour session, please call or e-mail the Center for more information. The process can be adapted for any number of participants.

Women’s Rights in Church and Society Committee
8th Day Center for Justice
Phone: 312/641-5151 – Email: 8thday@claret.org

DOVETALES

★ Award

The Sisters of St. Joseph, TOSF were honored with the Brother James Miller Award from the LaCrosse, WI Diocese for their efforts around social justice in Central America.



★ Invitations

8th Day Center is continuing its weekly silent prayer vigils at the Federal Building in downtown Chicago each Tuesday morning which began September 18. We have published a new leaflet each week (available upon request). We invite other groups to take similar actions in their local communities.

The Center wishes to thank those, who by contributing to a memorial fund, supported the work of Dolores Brooks in which she invested so many years of her life. With their generosity they are encouraging the next generation who “collaborate in the struggle to provide the critical alternative voice to the systems that suppress human community and environment and to work for the structural changes which will hasten the arrival of a more just world.”

Contributions to the memorial are still being accepted. Please identify your donation for this purpose and send it to the 8th Day Center for Justice, 205 W. Monroe #2W, Chicago IL 60606-5013.

★ Did you know?

Three-fourths of the U.S. Senate and half of the House benefited from Enron cash.

If the \$379 military budget proposed for FY2003 passes, the Pentagon will be spending: \$1.04 billion a day; \$43.3 million million every hour; \$722,222 every minute. Blink your eyes for a second and \$12, 037 disappears.

\$379 billion is more than 50 times as much as the United States spends on international food and assistance, and 47 times what it spends on everything the Environmental Protection Agency does. It is more than the entire economy of Australia and roughly nine times Russia’s entire national budget. (*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Jan. 31, 2002).

According to the Center for Defense Information, the proposed \$396 billion Pentagon package exceeds that of the next 25 nations combined. If one converted the budget into silver dollars and stacked them one on top of the

other, it would make a stack 690 thousand miles high. That’s roughly three times the distance to the Moon and enough to circle the Earth 27.5 times.

★ Cows for peace

Heifer International came up with a unique solution to a volatile problem. In the 1997 Albanian war, more than 500,000 weapons were stolen from from military depots by civilians. The army had promised the United Nations that it would find and destroy them.

Heifer International, known for its programs that deliver food and income-producing animals to millions of poor families offered to help the Albanians by suggesting a swap. For every three weapons turned in, a family will receive a pregnant Holstein dairy cow. See www.heifer.org.

★ Endorsers sought

Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-OH) is sponsoring HR3616, the Space Preservation Act of 2002 which calls on the U.S. to ban all research, development, testing and deployment of space-based weapons. If passed, it would require the U.S. to enter negotiations toward a World Treaty to Ban Weapons in Space. We urge all to contact their congresspersons. To endorse or for more information, see www.space4peace.org.

Subscribe to 8th Day e-mail Bulletin

If you want to receive these Bulletins, send your name and e-mail address to: 8thday@claret.org. In the subject line write "Bulletin."

Creating Just Language

Creating Just Language is an 8th Day publication. Kay Ashe, OP, reflects, "Just language -- language that reflects our changing consciousness about God, the universe, ourselves, class, gender relations, race, disabilities, and violence -- is essential if we are to overcome the injustices and hatred that obstruct peace, equality and harmony we long for." Copies are \$5 including postage for 1-9 copies and \$4 for ten or more copies. This is a valuable resource in these tenuous times.

Visit our web site for more resources: 8thdaycenter.org

A subscription to 8th Day *Centerings* is available for \$15 per year or \$25 for two years. To subscribe, send a check payable to 8th Day Center for Justice at the address below. Additional donations to further our work of social justice are appreciated.

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