

THE CATHOLIC RADICAL



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

June/July 2023

Price: For whatever it's worth.

Zaporizhzhia Peace Project

by Claire Schaeffer-Duffy

I slept poorly the night before my departure to Ukraine. That evening, I realized what I had forgotten to pack: an umbrella, a second pair of shoes, vitamins, and books. Always books. Kathy Kelly, a veteran traveler to war zones, had advised

Protection Project, an innovative peace initiative that seeks to engage unarmed civilians in the establishment of a no-fire zone around the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP), the largest nuclear power plant in Europe.



Hands of protection over Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant

ascertaining my blood type, “in case something happens.” But the nurse at my health clinic was clueless, so at 9 p.m. I found myself frantically perusing medical records on MyChart.

“Go to bed,” my husband Scott called from the back bedroom.

It was well after 11:00 p.m. before I finally lay down. An irritating nasal drip, along with a raging bout of fear and self-doubt, kept me awake. Why vault myself into a distant, troubled country? I wondered. Why not stay home and wallow in the love of grandchildren who earlier that evening clasped my waist with such uninhibited affection when we said our farewells? Why this persistent restlessness?

Several weeks earlier, I had decided to join a small, exploratory team traveling to Ukraine on behalf of the Zaporizhzhia

Located on the southern bank of the Dnipro River, the plant sits on the war's frontline. Russian forces seized the facility on March 5, 2022, installed troops and weaponry there, and in October, declared the southern region of the Zaporizhzhia Oblast (district) part of the Russian Federation. The plant's six nuclear reactors are currently shutdown; the big worry is the waste stored on site – some 50 tons of plutonium, according to Russian physicist and engineer Oleg Bodrov, an amount that can generate 50,000 times the radioactive contamination produced by the atomic bomb the US dropped over Nagasaki, Japan. In the past year, the ZNPP has endured heavy shelling with each side accusing the other. The attacks, which have damaged vital power lines

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Renewing Catholic Teaching on War & Peace

Robert W. McElroy

Editor's Note: The following are excerpts from an address given by the cardinal of San Diego on March 1, 2023 at Notre Dame University.

This year marks the sixtieth anniversary of *Pacem in Terris* and the fortieth anniversary of *The Challenge of Peace*, the American bishops' pastoral letter on questions of war and peace.

...Written in the shadow of the Cuban Missile Crisis, *Pacem in Terris* arose from a conviction that the church must speak forcefully to the question of peace from its rich tradition, but must also do so with a profound attention to the signs of the times.... Pope John placed the threat of nuclear weapons vividly in front of the world and proclaimed “in this age of ours, which prides itself on its atomic power, it is irrational to think that war is a proper way to obtain justice for violated rights.”

...*The Challenge of Peace* ...presented both the tradition of non-violence and the legitimate use of military means to defend human rights as authentic expressions of Catholic faith designed to attain the same goal: the comprehensive protection of humanity under attack. And the pastoral letter consistently presented defensive war as a last resort throughout its analysis.

Perhaps most importantly of all, *The Challenge of Peace* addressed the crisis

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War & Peace

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of nuclear confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union, as well as the wider questions of nuclear proliferation. The bishops proclaimed that the combination of nuclear threats and the prevalence of conventional war in the world using highly advanced weapons systems had created a “New Moment” that demanded the specific application of Catholic teaching on war and peace....

Our New Moment

We too, stand in a new moment. As a consequence, three major shifts in Catholic thinking are taking place. The continuation of wars among nations and within societies, enlisting devastating weapons and resulting in countless deaths, have pointed to the need to fundamentally renew and prioritize the claim of non-violent action as the central tenet of Catholic teaching on war and peace. The atrophying of the just war framework as an effective constraint on war or pathway to peace calls the Church to redesign its moral framework for permitting war in dire circumstances. And the failure of nuclear deterrence as a “step on the way to nuclear disarmament” has produced a situation where we are facing the breakdown of the arms control regime and the possibility of the use of tactical nuclear weapons....

The Centrality of Non-Violence

Ever since *Pacem in Terris* was written, every successive pope has pointed to the moral depravity of war. Pope John proclaimed that “it is hardly possible to imagine that in an atomic era, war could be used as an instrument of justice.” Pope Paul VI journeyed to the United Nations to plead with the world, “No more war. War never again.” Pope John Paul II taught that war is never an appropriate way to settle disputes among peoples: “It has never been and it will never be.” Joseph Ratzinger chose the name Benedict to tie his entire pontificate to that of Pope Benedict XV, who tried to end all war.

But it is Pope Francis who has utilized the trajectory of all of these statements

to construct a framework for Catholic teaching on war and peace that places non-violence rather than the just war-ethic as the dominant prism through which to evaluate decisions in situations of deep conflict. In *Fratelli Tutti* he writes: “We can no longer think of war as a solution, because its risks will probably always be greater than its supposed benefits. In view of this, it is very difficult nowadays to invoke the rational criteria elaborated in earlier centuries to speak of the possibility of a just war. Never again war.”

Francis is even clearer in his elaboration on the horrific nature of war:

Every war leaves our world worse than it was before. War is a failure of politics and of humanity, a shameful capitulation, a stinging defeat before the forces of evil. Let us not remain mired in theoretical discussions, but touch the wounded flesh of the victims.

Let us look once more to those civilians whose killing was considered collateral damage. Let us ask the victims themselves. Let us think of the refugees and the displaced, those who suffered the effects of atomic radiation or chemical attacks, the mothers who lost their children, and the boys and girls maimed or deprived of their childhood.... In this way we will be able to grasp the abyss of evil at the heart of war. Nor will it trouble us to be deemed naïve for choosing peace.

The charge of naivete traditionally leveled against advocates of non-

violence has been gravely diminished in its legitimacy in recent years through a series of studies of real-world conflicts. Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephan’s book **Why Civil Resistance Works** used quantitative analysis from a wide variety of conflicts within and among nations.... Their demonstration that non-violent resistance can often be significantly more effective than armed defense in achieving the sustainable vindication of human rights in the forms of conflict that have emerged as the dominant military confrontations of our day lends tremendous strength to the proposition that the Church should place non-violent resistance at the center of its theology of war and peace....

Extreme Cases

...But does the Church have an ethic which is able in the present day to navigate the moral choices that Ukraine and its allies must make in repelling the

Russian invasion? The just war tradition would typically occupy this space in Catholic thinking.... But... the tradition is weak in two crucial areas of moral choice.

The first is the moral requirement to actively and strenuously seek peace, even if it means making significant concessions. Warfare expands war aims rather than reducing them. The just war tradition does not include a realistic set of moral criteria for seeking war termination.... If the war in Ukraine falls into protracted stalemate,

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Vol. 39, No. 6

THE

June/July 2023

CATHOLIC



RADICAL

Published on 100% eucalyptus, paper every two months by:

The Saints Francis & Thérèse Catholic Worker Community

52 Mason Street, Worcester, MA 01610

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Founded in 1933 by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, the Catholic Worker is a lay movement serving the poor while denouncing injustice and proclaiming peace. We are not tax exempt. We rely entirely on the generosity of our supporters to meet our expenses. We welcome volunteers, letters, poetry, articles, artwork, and donations.

Books Instead of Websites

reviewed by Scott Schaeffer-Duffy

Crazy Horse: The Strange Man of the Oglalas

by Mari Sandoz, University of Nebraska, Press, 1961.

Michael Marek, of the Dallas Catholic Worker, sent me a sixty-two-year-old paperback copy of **Crazy Horse: The Strange Man of the Oglalas**.

Amazon is selling new editions of the book now with this description:

“Crazy Horse, the military leader of the Oglala Sioux whose personal power and social nonconformity set him off as ‘strange,’ fought in many famous battles, including the one at the Little Bighorn. He held out boldly against the government’s efforts to confine the Sioux on reservations. Finally, in the spring of 1877 he surrendered, one of the last important chiefs to do so, only to meet a violent death. Mari Sandoz, the noted author of **Cheyenne Autumn** and **Old Jules**, both available as Bison Books, has captured the spirit of Crazy Horse with a strength and nobility befitting his heroism.”

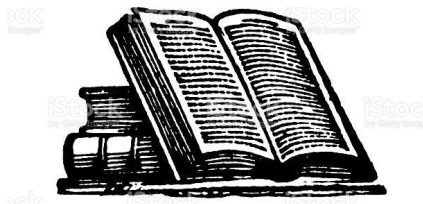
As someone who was introduced forty years ago to the history of Native Americans in the Midwest by Dee Brown’s masterpiece **Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee**, I expected Sandoz’ book to be a tough read, but was pleasantly surprised by her non-vitriolic writing style, as if the story was told by one of Crazy Horse’s peers. Sandoz immerses her readers in a precious world view without ignoring its drawbacks. She lays blame for the ultimate expulsion of the Oglalas from their ancestral land mostly on whites, but also on Natives enticed by alcohol and bribery. She recognizes that jealousy and grudges played as much a role in Crazy Horse’s betrayal as did the insatiable greed of white settlers and businessmen.

Based on extensive interviews with Natives who knew Crazy Horse, Sandoz depicts a modest person who loved his daughter so deeply that her passing affected him in ways that transcended the disregard women still face in too much of the world

today.

I was also impressed that, when Crazy Horse decided to embrace peace, he stood by his principles despite treachery from white negotiators and envious Native rivals. Crazy Horse had integrity and wisdom. It’s a tragedy that he was murdered. Imagine the good he might have accomplished if more people had trusted him.

I am so glad this book is still in print. Ω



Living in the Company of Jesus

by Philip Harak and G. Simon Harak, SJ, Cascade Books, 2022.

The authors of **Living in the Company of Jesus** open their introduction with “Each Christian should answer the question Jesus posed to his disciples in the Synoptic Gospels: ‘Who do you say I am?’”

In a time when many self-proclaimed Christians champion war, guns, racism, sexism, environmental destruction, and corporate greed, this is certainly a crucial question to answer at the outset. Indeed the authors write: “To say that Jesus teaches a way of nonviolent love of friends and enemies and to say that Jesus is God incarnate, and to say that Jesus is risen from the dead, is to say only what the Gospels say. It is also to say what most people, and perhaps most Christians, will not say.”

In the first chapter, the book gives a wonderful, anti-sexist depiction of the Immaculate Conception, a doctrine which the writers say was too often mistakenly used to put Mary on a pedestal way out of reach. Philip tells us, “Patriarchy cannot exist in God’s kingdom....Tradition does not necessarily produce truth, nor does a majority’s opinion.”

Simon’s fluency in Greek and Hebrew helps dispel many common biblical

misconceptions.

Unfortunately, Simon died in 2019, but I am grateful that his brother Philip completed the book. At one point he asks an excellent question, “Why are Catholic laity and almost all ordained not following Pope Francis’ clear redirection towards Jesus’ nonviolent means? He urged that we ‘make active nonviolence a way of life... [and reasserted that] the name of God cannot be used to justify violence.’”

Chapters are comprised of brief scriptural reflections followed by questions for further discussion. **Living in the Company of Jesus** is a treasure for spiritual growth. A variety of vital issues receive interesting, non-condescending treatment. The book made me ponder, smile, and at least once, brought tears to my eyes. Ω

Welcome!

Make Yourself at Home

by Vincent M. Bilotta, PhD, 2022

Vincent Bilotta broadens the Catholic Worker conception of hospitality from a duty to those in need into a way of being toward every guest in all of our homes. He draws marvelously on personal experience growing up in a large Italian family.

In this deeply personal and intelligent book, the author reminds us how hospitality is the quality that makes us feel comfortable in unfamiliar surroundings. He says, “Hospitality is a disposition; it is a particular way of being that welcomes another and invites that other to make themselves at home in order to rest and be themselves.” He reminds us that “Welcoming is a way of being present to another.... A welcomer invites the guest to experience dignity, worth, and value in her presence. Her welcoming face calls the guest to experience aliveness, pleasure, and joy.”

Disposition, gestures, food, drink, and physical space all play a role in hospitality. The author died recently, but his generous spirit lives on in this book. Ω

Authentic Love

by Julia Occhiogrosso

My first year in Las Vegas yielded a lesson which still to this day, thirty-seven years later, holds sway on my decisions as a Catholic Worker. After four years at the Catholic Worker in Los Angeles, I arrived in Las Vegas fresh from as strong a Catholic Worker formation experience as there had ever been in the movement. In the early eighties, while I was in community at the Los Angeles Catholic Worker, the community went through a few years of turmoil where we could not arrive at consensus on even the simplest of issues. These troubled and uncertain times catapulted some of the community into a seemingly mad search for the Catholic Worker “truths.” We were certain that there was a right way to do voluntary poverty, community, nonviolence, Catholicism, Personalism, Works of Mercy, etc. At twenty-five years of age, I arrived in Las Vegas with all the correct dogma to uphold in my quest to create the perfect Catholic Worker community.

Then came Rose. She was a social worker from Los Angeles who was retiring, heard about my venture to Las Vegas, and wanted to join in supporting the effort. When I spoke to her on the phone, I was sure to remind her to just bring her essential possessions, which certainly precluded her request to bring her crock pot. When she arrived at the front door, I was stumped by her appearance. She did not look like a Catholic Worker. She was wearing heels, outfitted in a dressy pants suit and lipstick! She smiled broadly as she stepped over the threshold, while I tried hard to resolve the incongruence of the scene.

Rose was helpful and cared for our guests with kindness. She laughed a lot and filled our days with joy.

Then came the afternoon when she returned from a visit to Los Angeles with her crock pot. An argument ensued as I challenged her defiance of the Catholic Worker value of voluntary poverty. We escalated into a screaming match. She began to cry, and I felt confused and

conflicted.

I went into my room to pray and recalled the words of scripture: **If I give away everything I have to feed the poor but do not have love, I have gained nothing.**

This insight, which penetrated my heart in that moment, was strong and formative. Even in my young confusion, I sensed that arguing about the crock pot had nothing to do with the Gospel call to love. Indeed, in



this case, it negated it. My youthful fervor to stay true to the radical Catholic Worker principles was a cover for my need to be in control and to have an “authentic and esteemed Catholic Worker house.”

This experience has been a touchstone many times over the years. Even when I act out of the strongest ideals, I recognize that my perspective is limited by my unconscious needs and brokenness. It is in moments of conflict and division that I am vulnerable to fall into the trappings of my brokenness. At the Catholic Worker, living in community, in hospitality houses, and practicing the works of mercy creates a petri dish for these moments. I seem to have a multitude of opportunities, whether with my spouse, guests, or volunteers, to ask the question, “What would be the

most loving response in this moment?”

Here I am not speaking of a sentimental, warm, fuzzy, make-everything-okay love, but rather a love strong enough to forfeit my need to be admired, to be right, to be needed, or to be in control. A love that is strong enough to die a little in the exchange. And if necessary, a love that can say no to the violence and injustice of another while holding an internal stance of care at the same time.

Whenever I am graced to even move toward this type of love, I feel in a way that I am being healed. I am growing in my capacity to trust the emptiness of letting go of my ego needs if only for a few seconds and to allow myself, if briefly, to be held in the embrace of the Great Love. I will never tire of the lessons of love; indeed, they are what entice and sustain me in the Catholic Worker adventure. Ω

Love

“Love is a combination of care, commitment, knowledge, responsibility, respect, and trust.”

Gloria Jean Watkins

author of: **Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism**

“Being married is like having somebody permanently in your corner. It feels limitless, not limited.”

Gloria Steinem

journalist, activist, feminist

“It’s important to marry somebody who is your equal and to be with somebody who wants you to win as much as you want them to win.”

Michelle Obama

attorney, author, wife of Barack Obama

“We cannot love God unless we love each other...”

Dorothy Day

journalist, author, co-founder of the Catholic Worker Movement



Ade Bethune

When was I hungry?

by Jim Consedine

With drizzle setting in,
wind growing colder
returning home, Holy Week
feeling prayerful

In the dying light I see him
hanging around my garage
picking up butts, food scraps
scattered about the bus stop

ducking my head, I drive in
lest he recognize me.

I am needing food, a hot drink
he's wet, hungry, ragged
I'm tired and in a hurry
he has time oodles of time to spare
I study books on Christian faith
he's illiterate.

Later I plan to share a Eucharist
to be nourished by Christ
he doesn't need to
he is Christ. Ω

The Wink

by Scott Schaeffer-Duffy

“So many bodies,” the coroner said,
“We dug a mass grave in the lot.”
He showed us the corpse of a newly-wed,
one of many recently shot.

I always thought curfews were moments of pause
when danger prevailed in a place.
I never imagined they could be the cause
of an army's greatest disgrace.

A walk to get food, a glimpse through the blinds
meant putting your life in their hands.
A sniper can shoot you with guns of all kinds
without reasons, ifs, buts, or ands.

The closure lasted for weeks at that time.
Scarce was the water and food.
Our peace team determined that this was a crime
we could not condone or collude.

So, we ventured onto the deserted street,
under a puny white flag,
with bottles of water and things to eat,
for each home a similar bag.

Not a thing stirred outside save an Israeli tank,
Ramallah, a ghost town, not city,
like an inmate afraid of being killed with a shank
then left there to die without pity.

It's then that I saw him, alone in his yard
planting a fruit tree, I think.
At risk of drawing a deadly card,
he smiled and gave me a wink.

I don't know his name but cannot forget
how fearless and calm he did seem.
I think of him now when I want to fret,
and know that we all need to dream. Ω



Editor's Note: In 2002, after 30 Israelis were killed by a Palestinian suicide bomber, Israel's military invaded Ramallah, Nablus, Tukarem, Qalquilia, Bethlehem, and Jenin, resulting in widespread destruction, 497 Palestinian deaths, and an eight-week curfew. This photo was taken by the author.

Letters

Thanks for the “words of wise women” in *The Catholic Radical* for Women's History Month. There are many suffrage quotes that support non-violence and oppose abortion and war. I would love to provide those to you for March 2024.

Meanwhile, I cut out the pictures and great quotes, clipped them together to

enclose from time to time with a letter, or when I pay a bill, or make a donation.

Thank you for spreading the message this way.

**Carol Crossed
Rochester, New York**

Hello There!

... “Wow,” these mass shootings seem endless!!!

**Clifford Smith
San Quentin, California**

Peace Project

(Continued from Page 1)

needed to energize the cooling system and prevent nuclear meltdown, prompted Rafael Grossi, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to negotiate access for rotating teams of IAEA inspectors to monitor the ZNPP.

“We are living on borrowed time when it comes to nuclear safety and security at the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant,” he said after a recent visit to the ZNPP. “Unless, we take action to protect the plant, our luck will run out sooner or later with potentially severe consequences for human health and the environment.”

Grossi has yet to realize a de-militarized zone around the facility. His efforts, however, captured the attention of Dr. John Reuwer, a retired Emergency Room physician and board member of the international organization World Beyond War. John, who has years of experience serving on domestic and international peace teams, marveled at what he called the “miracle” of the IAEA monitors. With no training in unarmed civilian protection (UCP), they were working unarmed in a war zone to protect their fellow human beings. He wondered if cohorts of volunteers, well-trained in UCP could assist in the effort.

Since January, the Zaporizhzhia Protection Project (ZPP) has been training some twenty Americans and internationals in the skills of UCP. In early April, John, Peter Lumsdaine, a peace advocate from Washington state, Charles Johnson of Chicago Peace Action, and I traveled to Ukraine on the project’s behalf. Our mission? To meet with Ukrainians living in proximity to the nuclear power plant and hear their views on non-military methods for preventing disaster.

I was nervous about the trip. The newspapers kept reporting of an impending spring offensive, and our proposed itinerary took us into Marhanets, a town located across the Dnipro River from the ZNPP

and 10 kilometers from the war’s frontline.

“I may not travel beyond Kyiv,” I told my colleagues.

During the week I spent in Ukraine with the ZPP team, we interviewed, formally and informally, more than twenty Ukrainians—faith leaders, journalists, a soldier, civil servants, townspeople who stayed in Marhanets despite its frequent



Ukrainian peace activists K, S, and Yuri Sheliashenko in Kyiv

shelling, and residents who fled a city after Russian tanks rolled through. For much of a morning, an earnest Protestant pastor in Dnipro toured us through his native city pointing out the Menorah Center, the biggest Jewish cultural center in Europe, the greenways and new amusement park along the riverfront, and the apartment building cut in half by a Russian missile on an afternoon in January. As a Christian, the pastor knew he must forgive the Russians, but he did not trust them. Nonetheless, he was touched that people from far away were concerned about the safety of Ukrainians living within the vicinity of the ZNPP. Ukrainians had never considered the plant dangerous, until now, he said. “Somebody must be thinking about this. If the plant is bombed, it will be a big tragedy.”

In Zaporizhzhia, an industrial city located 80 miles from the power plant, we conducted hours of back-to-back interviews in a hotel Ukrainian and American movie stars once frequented. Over dinner, we listened to the story of our translator Alexandr Pavlov, a man who embodies this war’s horrible divisions. Born in Ukraine, he spent more than twenty years studying and working in Russia, his parents’ homeland. “The Russians are good people;

they have a beautiful culture,” he said. After Russia invaded, Alexandr sided with Ukraine, even though he knew there are no innocents in this war. He has reported from the front lines as penance, he said, for what Russia, his cultural homeland, has done.

During our first days in Kyiv, the fear I felt so acutely in Worcester diminished. The neighborhood of our hotel, with its bustling coffee shops and shiny Apple store, gave little evidence of the war. (John and Charles would observe its devastation on their return trip.) Or perhaps my fear quieted because of time spent with Ukrainian pacifist Yuri Sheliashenko, and K and S, a young couple interested in nonviolence. Together, the three represented Kyiv’s tiny peace movement. They had lived through a hard winter of shelling and black-outs, and still they carried on. Courage is contagious.

I had heard that with the exception of the poor and elderly, most women and children fled Marhanets. “And that’s one reason why I am afraid to go there,” I told Yuri.

“But there *are* women living in Marhanets!” he said. Several facilitated our awkward meeting with Marhanets young deputy mayor. Of course the town had a safety plan in the event of nuclear accident, he said, but to avoid panic, they were not going to broadcast it on every lamp post. Marhanets’ protocol included the distribution of potassium iodide to every resident, an evacuation route with busses at the ready, and a siren, distinct from the one used for shelling, that would wail incessantly. Initially bristly, the deputy mayor became more curious as our conversation progressed. Did we have a step-by-step plan for improving the town’s safety, he wanted to know.

During the team’s first day in Marhanets, G., our driver, and Natalya, our translator, showed us the Palace of Culture, the soccer stadium, the town schools, and old Ostrovsky Park. Even in its ghostly state, the place was beautiful. I could easily imagine teens loitering near the open-air dance floor, or young families enjoying

the ice cream stand beside the summer stage. Chestnut trees were just beginning to bloom. In the spring, their blossoms are as big as candles, Natalya told me. “Chestnut trees, grapes, apricot trees, we have everything in Maharnets,” G said.

In 1987, radioactive contamination from a meltdown at the Ukrainian nuclear power plant in Chernobyl generated an exclusionary zone of one thousand square miles, an area that remains uninhabitable for humans. An accident at the ZNPP could result in a zone six times larger. Seen from the lens of Google Earth, such a swath of destruction might appear as a dark patch on the landscape. Touch down into that place and the preciousness and variety of the loss become apparent. Gone, of course, would be the humans with their courage and fears, the sooty cities and towns, the fish in the Dnipro River, the chestnut blossoms, the grape vineyards, and the apricot trees. All are worth preserving.

As of this writing the ZPP, a non-partisan endeavor, is preparing to send an exploratory team to Russian-controlled areas to hear from people there on ways to protect the plant. For more info, see:

<https://worldbeyondwar.org/zap/>

A Good Step

Massachusetts State Representative Mary Keefe notified us that she helped raise the \$300 threshold for felony theft, cited in Scott Schaeffer-Duffy’s “Theft and Murder,” to \$1,500. Ω

War & Peace

(Continued from Page 2)

this deficiency will become even clearer.

Another major deficiency in the just war framework is its lack of attention to the moral obligations of other nations in minimizing a military conflict.... We are now in a situation where a small nation is fighting heroically to defend itself, while the surrounding major military and economic powers supply enough weaponry and economic support to sustain the Ukrainians but not so much that it might trigger catastrophic action by Russia. This is a moral minefield for which the just war tradition cannot provide a map....

The Specter of Nuclear Weapons

A final element of the new moment for Catholic teaching on war and peace in which we stand concerns the morality of possessing nuclear weapons.

The relationship of the imperative to eliminate nuclear weapons and the realities of deterrence have framed Catholic teaching for the past sixty years. Consistently, the Church has demanded that nuclear weapons be removed from the face of the earth. This element of Catholic doctrine has never changed.

But the treatment of deterrence—and how it conditions the moral imperative to eliminate nuclear weapons—has shifted dramatically since the issuance of *Pacem in Terris*....

Pope Francis views nuclear deterrence

not as a source of peace, but a destabilizing element in the international system that creates a false sense of security, encourages the proliferation of nuclear weapons, threatens the environment, and robs from the poor. As a consequence, at a conference at the Vatican following the passage of the international Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, Pope Francis categorically condemned the possession of nuclear weapons as morally illicit.

Discerning the implications of this dramatic shift in Catholic teaching constitutes one of the central tasks for theologians, bishops, policy makers, and committed Catholics who work in the area of ethics and nuclear weapons. On this issue, the successive moral positions of the Church regarding deterrence and possession have all been consciously framed as interim ethics in anticipation of a better moment. How can we realistically contribute in God’s grace to bringing that moment to reality?

Drew Christiansen and Carole Sargent’s splendid book **Forbidden: Receiving Pope Francis’ Condemnation of Nuclear Weapons** points powerfully to the comprehensive moral discernment and action which can forge within the Catholic community a realistic yet passionate framework capable of creating, sustaining and expanding a coherent pathway to advance the consistent Magisterial call to eliminate nuclear weapons....

Archbishop John Wester of Santa Fe has provided a complementary pathway to advance a nuclear free world. Rooted in a profoundly spiritual conviction that nuclear arms simply must be eliminated, he has begun wide conversations in the ecclesial and public policy communities in the very state where the bomb was born and where nuclear technology is vital to the state economy. Archbishop Wester’s conviction was ignited in Hiroshima, and it shares the same unswerving drive that characterized Saint John Paul II’s statement at Hiroshima: “Our future on this planet, exposed as it is to nuclear annihilation, depends on one single factor: the world must make an about face. May we all be part of initiating that about face.” Ω

Catholic Worker Calendar



START THINGS AGOING

Edward Hopper

June 14—Claire on Ukraine: Please join us a slide presentation on her April trip to war-torn Ukraine. 52 Mason Street. Refreshments to follow. 7 PM.

June 25—Sing-a-long: Pop, folk, and activist songs led by Worcester’s phenomenal musician, Dan Burke. Outside, weather permitting. 52 Mason Street. Refreshments to follow. 2:30-4 PM.

June 7 & 21, July 5 & 19 — Evening Prayer: Please join us for prayer & Taizé chant. 52 Mason Street. Refreshments to follow. 7 PM.

Mason Street Musings

At this writing, Republicans are refusing to approve an increase in the US government's debt ceiling unless Democrats agree to a work requirement for most people seeking government aid. For as long as I can remember, conservatives have characterized the poor as lazy people living the high life on the backs of taxpayers.

Truth be told, during my year and half at Saint Benedict's Catholic Worker in Washington, DC, I experienced the first days of each month as a nightmare of drunkenness, but not because people used government checks to live the high life. Those checks were insufficient to afford any thing worthwhile, like an apartment.

I met an old man though who went out each day looking for work. His mantra was "Work gives dignity." Unfortunately, perhaps due to his mental health problems, he never found a job and, in despair, jumped off a bridge to his death.

Here at Saints Francis & Thérèse Catholic Worker, I have known some

homeless people who worked the system to avoid work, but many more who



Ade Bethune

either wanted to support themselves through work or sought government aid

as a life raft to help them to shore.

Many Christians are quick to point out that Saint Paul said, "If a person will not work, he or she shall not eat." Paul called everyone "to settle down and earn the bread they eat." Although it sounds simple, the axiom is complex in a society where the minimum wage is not a living wage and racism and sexism exclude many from avenues to wealth.

When my grandfather talked about the Great Depression, he stressed that, much of the time, there was no work to be had, but he praised the Civilian Conservation Corps, a government-funded work program that did so much good. I have hiked on hundreds of trails the CCC blazed in national forests and seen dams they built. Maybe, rather than requiring work, we could offer public service jobs to those who would take them.

All four of our current guests value work. One is working full-time as a chef and should soon be on his own, another works part-time restoring gravestones, and the other two are prevented from work by complicated circumstances. They would jump at the chance to work.

I heard on National Public Radio recently that meaningful work adds years to a person's life expectancy. A job can be drudgery, but a vocation is deeply satisfying. Folks who retire often find that days full of recreation fast become boring. Because of this, I am a huge proponent of a liberal arts education, something that gives young people a broad knowledge of the possibilities for their lives, helping them, not only to make money, but to become the holy person God created them to be.

Our political discourse would benefit from a determination to help everyone find meaningful work, rather than to require it in a dysfunctional economy where some earn easy billions and others scramble for pennies.

God bless all of you who see Christ in those with need. Thank you for helping us to lift up those whom we can. It's blessed work we are grateful to do. Ω

Scott

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