

The Common Good

Taking a Preferential Option for the Poor

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The Insanity of Nuclear Deterrence

Rob Green

In 1968, I was a 24-year-old Lieutenant in England, navigating strike jets from an aircraft-carrier. Judged one of the four best crews, my pilot and I were given the honour to be a nuclear crew, with a top-secret security clearance. The buzz intensified when we were told what a huge responsibility this was. We were being entrusted with playing a part in the last-ditch defence of Great Britain.

Our target was a Soviet military air base outside Leningrad, formerly St Petersburg. After planning how to attack it, we were ordered not to discuss it. We obeyed, and proudly celebrated initiation into this elite within an elite.

After a few years I switched to navigating anti-submarine helicopters. Our slow lightweight torpedoes could not catch Soviet nuclear submarines; so we were given a nuclear depth-bomb. Unlike a strike jet, my helicopter was too slow to escape the detonation. I realised that this would be a suicide mission. When I complained, my leaders reassured me we probably would never have to use it; besides, I didn't want to cut short a promising career, did I? I fell silent; but doubt set in.

In 1978, my silence was rewarded as a newly promoted Commander in the Ministry of Defence in London, assisting an Admiral responsible for advising on nuclear policy. Mrs Thatcher became Prime Minister, and she wanted Trident, the new American nuclear-armed missile system launched from huge but militarily useless submarines.

I applied for redundancy. My application was approved one week into the 1982 Falklands War between Britain and Argentina. I had to stay on until after we won, and I had handed over my job running the 40-strong intelligence team in the command bunker on the outskirts of London.

That war was a close-run thing. Some of our



Rob Green presented this TEDx talk to a Christchurch audience in December.

ships were sunk, and colleagues killed. If an aircraft-carrier or troopship had been taken out, we could have faced defeat. What would Mrs Thatcher have done? Before the war she was the most unpopular British Prime Minister in history. With her political career at stake, her popularity soared and she became the Iron Lady.

After I left the Navy, I was reliably informed that there had been a top secret contingency plan to move the patrolling British nuclear-

armed submarine within range of Argentina. This raised for me the nightmare of a desperate British leader with nuclear weapons, and the shameful possibility of our submariners being ordered to commit a pointless war crime. After all, British nuclear weapons had not deterred Argentina's President General Galtieri from invading the Falklands. With victory in his grasp, would a nuclear threat have even been believed, let alone worked?

Nuclear deterrence

My support for nuclear deterrence collapsed with the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War. I now know that nuclear deterrence is an ineffective, unlawful and utterly immoral strategy for the prevention of nuclear war.

First, does it in fact prevent war? Just because World War III has not yet broken out doesn't mean nuclear deterrence has prevented it.

Arch-rivals India and Pakistan are into a nuclear arms race despite a common border. They naively believe that this is their path to security and greatness. Blind faith in nuclear deterrence has emboldened both sides to launch provocative military actions into disputed Kashmir several times. So despite the fact that each side is armed to the teeth with nuclear weapons, the risk of war between them has increased.

Second, for it to be credible, nuclear deterrence



must never fail. This requires demonstrating the capability, plans and determination to use nuclear weapons.

Third: is nuclear deterrence a rational strategy? After all, initiating a nuclear attack against a nuclear-armed opponent will probably be suicidal. And a rational opponent knows that nuclear retaliation means no more than pointless revenge. Unlike the aftermath from conventional war, nuclear war would leave a vast radiated wasteland and medical catastrophe for any survivors.

In 1962, the Soviet Union placed nuclear-armed missiles in Cuba, targeting the United States, in retaliation for United States missiles placed in Turkey. US President Kennedy threatened the Soviets with nuclear attack because he didn't know those Soviet missiles were nuclear-armed with Soviet operators ready to use them.

The US, Middle East and Asia

Nearly thirty years later, in 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait. Speaking to 20,000 anti-war protestors in London, I warned that if Saddam Hussein was personally threatened, he could attack Israel with conventionally-armed Scud missiles and become the Arabs' champion. If

Who are we?

Members of Te Wairua Maranga Trust, which publishes this paper, have since August 1989 been operating as a community following a Catholic Worker spirituality. We view the Treaty of Waitangi as our nation's founding covenant. We try, however inadequately at times, to live the Sermon on the Mount and its modern implications. We operate three houses of hospitality in Christchurch named after Suzanne Aubert, Joseph Cardijn and Thomas Merton. We offer hospitality to people in need either on a temporary or more permanent basis. We have a continuing outreach to a number of families offering friendship and support. We promote non-violence and a 'small is beautiful' approach to life, practise co-operative work and peacemaking, focus on issues of justice, support prison ministry, help create intentional communities, and try to practise voluntary poverty and personalism.

We engage in regular prayer and we also celebrate a liturgy every Wednesday at 6:00 pm at the Suzanne Aubert House, 8A Cotterill St, Addington, (off Poulson St, near Church Square), followed by a shared meal. Anyone is welcome – phone Francis, 338-7105.

We do not seek funding from traditional sources. We hope to receive enough to keep our houses of hospitality open and our various works going. Catholic Worker houses do not issue tax receipts since they are running neither a business nor a church social agency. We invite people to participate personally and unconditionally. Should you wish to make a regular contribution, you may do so through our Te Wairua Maranga Westpac Trust holding account (number 031703-0036346-02). Donations may also be made to **Te Wairua Maranga Trust, Box 33-135, Christchurch.** *The Common Good:* Editor: Jim Consedine - jim.conse@xtra.co.nz; Layout - Barbara Corcoran - burkespass@gmail.com

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a Scud attack caused heavy casualties, Israel's leader would come under massive pressure to respond with a nuclear strike on Baghdad.

A week after I spoke, Israelis learned that their nuclear deterrent had failed. Thirty-nine Scud attacks from Iraq miraculously caused few casualties. The US rushed more anti-Scud missile defences there, and congratulated Israel on its restraint.

Which brings me to the ongoing crisis in northeast Asia, custom-built to showcase nuclear deterrence. Mad, bad North Korean leader Kim Jong-un is portrayed as the new Hitler, but with nuclear weapons. So Donald Trump declares that if the United States, 'is forced to defend itself or its allies, it will have no choice but to totally destroy North Korea.' That makes Trump little better than Kim.

The United States claims to provide a so-called 'nuclear umbrella' protecting allies South Korea and Japan. But if deterrence fails, they become targets, while the US mainland would be relatively untouched. So nuclear deterrence for them is actually more like a sieve.

A Hopeful Future

But all is not lost! More and more people are realising how ineffective and inexcusable this strategy is and are starting to do something helpful about it.

On 7 July 2017 in New York, I witnessed 122 United Nations member states successfully negotiate a treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons. No surprise that the three leading guardians of nuclear deterrence - the United States, Britain and France - led a boycott of the treaty negotiations, furiously protesting at the irresponsibility and naivety of those 122 supportive states.

There's more good news. This year's Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, which played a key role mobilising public and political support for the treaty.

Most importantly for my successors in the Royal Navy, this treaty strengthens the stigma against nuclear deterrence. The main difference between military professionals and terrorists is that military professionals need to act within the law. That is why chemical and biological weapons are not recognised by military professionals as weapons at all - they are indiscriminate terror devices, which have been outlawed and abolished. Yet nuclear weapons are far worse.

For all these reasons, nuclear deterrence is no more than a repulsive, unlawful protection racket used as a counterfeit currency of power. It is hugely profitable to the corporate arms industry. The power elites of the nuclear-armed states are in denial that their game of nuclear chicken really does risk survival of us all.

But the tide of history is at last turning towards justice. It is time for all of us to step up and end the threat to humanity and the planet from this irresponsible hoax holding us all hostage.

Rob Green, a friend of the Christchurch CW, is a full-time peace campaigner and works at the Disarmament and Security Centre in Christchurch.

Editorial 1 Possession of Nukes Immoral

This past year has been a momentous one for those who take seriously the Church's Social Teachings on justice and peace. In January, Pope Francis issued the first comprehensive statement on nonviolence from the Church in history, highlighting the nonviolence of Jesus and calling on the Church to re-evaluate its approach to violence in all its forms, including war and both structural and domestic violence.

In a ground-breaking World Day of Peace letter in January, he stated emphatically, 'to be true followers of Jesus today also includes embracing his teaching on nonviolence. We need to make active nonviolence our way of life.' In it he quotes Pope Benedict XVI, 'the gospel command to love our enemies is the *magna carta* of Christian nonviolence. We must respond to evil with good and thereby break the chain of injustice.'

Mid-year, at the Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, the Vatican unequivocally stated, 'Now is the time to affirm not only the immorality of the use of nuclear weapons, but the immorality of their possession, thereby clearing the road to nuclear abolition.' This was a clear break with previous major statements from previous popes including John Paul II and Benedict XVI. The Vatican subsequently played a very important role in the recently negotiated Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, and was one of the first of 122 countries to sign it. Pope Francis called the signing 'historic'. The nine nuclear powers declined, calling the treaty 'naïve.'

Then came the decisive move. On Armistice Day, 11th November, at an international conference called by the Vatican which brought together 11 Nobel laureates, top officials from the UN and NATO, diplomats, experts in nuclear weapons and the disarmament process, scholars, activists and representatives of bishops' conferences, Pope Francis and the Vatican ruled out the acceptability of possession of nuclear weapons under any circumstances. They

unequivocally condemned 'the very possession of nuclear weapons as immoral and against Church teaching.'

As participant, San Diego Bishop Robert McElroy, said: 'The Church must be a voice in the world constantly pointing humanity toward the path of nonviolence and the logic of peace. Too often, we acquiesce in the tolerance of weapons, threats and war, concluding that the logic of war can at least hold evil at bay. But ultimately, it is the logic of war which, once unleashed, invites evil into the core of our world, our nations, and our hearts.'

This decision is a ground-breaking shift in Catholic dialogue with the world on issues of war and peace, calling us all to a conversion of heart. It is clear. It is unequivocal. We need to change our thinking from 'reliance on weapons of war to the construction of weapons of peace. ... The power of nonviolence, once relegated to the category of romantic idealism, has emerged as a potent force for social transformation and the building of lasting peace.'

In December, a stellar year was crowned for the disarmament movement with the awarding of the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize to the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons.

This shift in Church teaching during 2017 should sharpen our focus on the importance of peace-making to Christian belief and practice. It is central to who we are as Christians and Catholics. It also creates a major challenge to modern parish life. On this issue, Christian teaching is at odds with the prevailing culture of our time. But it begs the question: where is the education in parishes regarding these important matters? Where are the parish justice and peace groups? Where are the homilies on these issues?

All sobering thoughts for a New Year facing nuclear instability.

—Jim Consedine

Editorial 2 I don't want to lift children out of poverty!

I want to pose the question: how do we change the political language we use to make our messages more powerful.

Labour have persisted with the language of 'lifting children out of poverty' with the passage of the Families Package before Christmas, and while the actual changes they've made are good, it's a missed opportunity for re-framing how we talk about poverty and how we get people to think about welfare and community in a different, much more progressive way.

I've been thinking more about how we should have framed our messages this past election year, and I've realised something pretty significant. I don't want to lift children out of poverty. Because poverty isn't a hole in the ground, which a few errant kids fell into by accident. Why weren't they watching where they were going? Can't they just get themselves out again?

Poverty is enforced, not freely chosen

What if poverty wasn't a hole in the ground? What if we talked about poverty as violence? Not inevitable. Not accidental. A deliberate act, committed by human beings who hurt others for their own gain. What if we talked about poverty as a scam? Greedy con artists stacking the deck in their own favour and stealing everyone else's cards

In either case, it's a choice they've made, to profit and rule by robbing other people of options. Offering nothing but starvation wages and windowless garages to live in.

What if we talked about poverty as a wall. Something built by people – CEOs, right-wing politicians, the 1% – to trap everyone else and deny us freedom to live our lives. What if we said: those people demolished the things we built together – state housing,

social welfare, health, education – and used the rubble to block our path.

What if we said: we're going to tear that wall down, all of us, together. What if we realised there isn't one wall, there are multiple walls, and some people have more than one standing in their way, and we have a moral duty to destroy every single one of them, not just the ones that affect us personally?

I don't want to lift children out of poverty. Because I will not treat the deliberately-created, wilfully-engineered exploitation of other human beings as a natural phenomenon. A blameless boo-boo. An opportunity for abstract debate about whether the role of government is to throw a rope down or tell them to pull themselves out of the mess they got themselves into.

I want us to disarm the people who are hurting children by forcing them and their families to be poor. I want us to expose the fraud. I want us to break down the walls of poverty which have been constructed so a greedy few can hoard the profits of others' labour.

We cannot offer solutions without naming the

Editorial 3 Ten rules for addressing beggars

In recent years, under our unjust economic system, the gap in New Zealand between the poor and the rich has grown and housing has been priced beyond many families. An obvious consequence is that poverty and homelessness



have increased exponentially and the number of people begging on the streets has exploded. A just society with economic and social structures built with the Common Good as their foundational principle, would eliminate the need for begging. Here are some rules to help people when they meet someone begging.

1. Give or don't give. But always look the person in the eye who is asking, greet them, and maybe add, 'sorry I can't help today,' or 'here you are'. Always show respect. No one wants to be a beggar.
2. If you do give, remember it is a gift and the person is free to do with it whatever he or she wants. We don't decide the gift's destiny. Consider it your 'street tax'.
3. If you don't give, that is OK. Street people expect most people not to give. What they want above all else is to be shown some respect. If you feel unsafe or the person is being aggressive or threatening, leave the area and don't give.
4. Sometimes give more than you are being asked for. If someone asks for a dollar, give them five – just for fun! Don't be frightened to be generous. That's soul food.

problem. But we've got it all backwards. The problem isn't poverty. It's greed. The villains aren't the stupid people who jumped down the poverty hole. It's the greedy. The rich. The neoliberal mad scientists who created poverty in a lab and sent it out on a dark and stormy night to menace innocent villagers.

The solution isn't lifting children out of poverty. It's tearing poverty down.

The political Right don't want to have this conversation. They are very happy for us to keep talking about poverty as an abstract phenomenon. They love how much time we spend trying to nail them down to one specific, simple, objective measurement of poverty. They want us to keep saying poverty is a hole, so they can keep saying that it's not the government's job to give people free rope to climb out of it.

Let's stop playing their game.

—Stephanie Rogers, (abridged)

Stephanie's link – bootstheory.nz

5. If you regularly see people begging, set a limit on your giving. Once that has been reached, respond to anyone who asks, 'I have given out already what I give each day. Sorry.' Never be abusive.

6. There are people begging who aren't always

homeless. They are simply poor for whatever reason. We can assess them but not judge. So again, give or don't give, but treat everyone with respect (cf Rule #1)

7. Feeling awkward or uncomfortable is OK when you see someone begging. It means you have a conscience and some compassion. Don't be embarrassed or afraid.
8. Resist all efforts to ban beggars and the homeless from certain areas. We need to be see our society as we really are, not a sanitised version. This is soul fuel for the wider community!
9. Consider volunteering with an organisation that works with people on the streets offering food, shelter, medical care etc. You will get to know some really interesting people, and they will get to know you.
10. If you really want to help people who are housing deprived, then advocate for housing for all homeless people and support organisations who do so. Write letters! Speak out! Become a voice!

—Peter Gathje/Jim Consedine

Nonviolence on Manus Island

Behrouz Boochani

For many months, the refugees living inside Manus prison had to endure extraordinarily oppressive conditions orchestrated by the Australian government. During this time, the Department of Immigration used various strategies in order to force refugees out and transfer them into three new camps: East Lorengau, Hillside and West Haus. They announced 31 October 2017 as the deadline for refugees to leave the place.

That date signalled the beginning of extreme force and dictatorship. The government believed 31 October would be the date its vision would become a reality and its plans would be put into practice. When this date arrived, 600 refugees refused to transfer to the new camps. Instead, the situation transformed into a humanitarian crisis that lasted 22 days.

Nonviolent Resistance

From the standpoint of one operating at the core of the resistance for this long period of time and privy to everything that was happening inside the prison and the details of the resistance, I think the only thing that helped us persevere for the long stretch of time was our dedication to principles of humanity and human values.

In the community meetings we held every day at 5pm, we stayed true to the principles of love, friendship and brotherhood. There was nothing greater for us than respect. There was nothing greater for us than equality and camaraderie.

Throughout these three weeks, the gates were completely open and anyone could leave the collective resistance at any moment. They were totally free to go to the new camps and acquire food and water. We were particularly committed to the following point: no one had the right to reproach another for leaving us. In fact, we all had to thank anyone who left the community because they stood with us for as long as they were capable, and we were all grateful for that.

Sometimes, during this period, we smuggled into the prison a limited amount of food in the dead of night, and this food would be distributed equally among the prisoners. This principle also applied to the dogs that live among us: we factored them in. In our meetings we were adamant about the fact we had to show even more compassion to these dogs than before. Feeding them was imperative. These principles applied to the sick, too; we cared for them now more than ever before.

The refugees were able to re-envision their personhood when suppressed by every form of torture inflicted on them and when confronted by every application of violence. According to its own logic, and consistent with the character it has moulded itself into, the detention regime wanted to manufacture a particular kind of refugee with a particular kind of response. However, the refugees were able to regain their identity, regain their rights, regain their dignity. In fact, what has

occurred is essentially a new form of identification, which asserts that we are human beings.

Re-imaging Ourselves

The refugees have been able to reconfigure the images of themselves as passive actors and weak subjects into active agents and fierce resisters. The concept of the refugee as a passive actor was an ideal instrument in the hands of power and could be exploited by Australia's political machinations; it formed the refugees into something that could be manipulated and leveraged for the Australian government's own purpose.

The refugees have established that they desire to exist only as free individuals. They desire only an honourable existence. They have been able to refashion the image of themselves as the 'Other'. We have reshaped the understanding of us as politically inept into projecting an image of who we are. Our resistance is the spirit that continues to haunt Australia. Our resistance is a new manifesto for humanity and love.

Our resistance and the three weeks of hardship we endured produced a new perspective and method that was remarkably transformative, even for us incarcerated within Manus prison. We learnt that humans have no sanctuary except within other human beings. Humans have no felicitous way to live their lives other than to trust in other humans, and the hearts of other humans, and the warmth within the hearts of other humans.

Our resistance enacted a profound poetic performance. This persisted until the moment we were confronted with the extremity of the violence. We found that the baton-wielding police had killed one of the dogs we had adopted into our community. At that moment, we descended into sorrow and wept, in honour of its loyalty, its beauty, its innocence.

A price to pay

Our resistance was an epic of love. Resistance in its purest form. A noble resistance. An epic constituted by half-naked bodies up against a violent governmental. All this violence designed in government spaces and targeted against us has driven our lives towards nature, towards the natural environment, towards the animal world, towards the ecosystem.

Ultimately, they beat us down and with violence put an end to our peaceful protest. But I think we were able to communicate our humanitarian message to Australian society and beyond. This sentiment is what all people, whether in Australia or elsewhere, need more than anything else these days.

Behrouz Boochani is a Kurdish journalist from Ilam in Iran held on Manus Island for 4 years. He wrote this piece (abridged) for the Australian weekly, The Saturday Paper, 9 December 2017.

Around the traps

Our annual Christmas dinner was celebrated at the Suzanne Aubert CW under additional awning provided by Maria and her family, Chiara, Carolina, and Joel, who stopped by to help prepare the food and put up the awning. Supervised by our well-known chef Tony, they were joined in the preparations by Sr Judith, Tui, Natalie, Raewyn, Angela, Suzanne, and our master carver Jock. About 50 gathered for the feast and thoroughly enjoyed the company and the day, despite it reaching 31 degrees. Patrick, Francis and Jim provided music during breaks. Many took home leftovers for Boxing Day.

Annual Appeal – once again we have had a wonderful response to our annual appeal with 80 people responding and a final figure of \$12025 being achieved. We have an annual budget of \$23 500, so the balance is usually made up from CW people and others who contribute during the year. So a hearty thank you!

Three Strikes Law to Go – We were delighted to see that the new government signal within its first 100 days their intention to abolish the infamous ‘three strikes’ law.’ In a sane balanced society, this should never have been on the law books in the first place. Officially called the Sentencing and Parole Reform Act 2010, ‘three strikes’ (based on American baseball terminology) was gifted as a sop to ACT as part of the Coalition deal. We railed against it at the time, headlining our front-page article, ‘Is Three Strikes Sinful’ (CG53, Pentecost 2010) and arguing it clearly was. ‘Allowing governments to get away with legislation like ‘three strikes’ and expanding the prison system to house a new influx of prisoners is wicked. It wastes millions of dollars of precious resources and simply panders to the private fear-mongering of ACT and the punitive tendencies of many other MPs.’ It is to National’s shame they allowed it to pass. We had no need to follow America’s horrendously unjust sentencing practices to provide justice here. We will be glad to see it go.

Congratulations - On 17th November 2017 in Kerkrade, the Netherlands, Irish Columban missionary, Fr. Shay Cullen received the prestigious 2017 Martin Buber Plaque Award in recognition of his internationally acclaimed work on human rights undertaken through the PREDA Foundation, which he established in the Philippines in 1974. The Preda Foundation was founded to help abused children in the Philippines and has been going for more than 40 years. He was presented with the award during the annual International Festival of Dialogue - EURIADÉ. Shay Cullen has featured in *The Common Good*, for many years writing on the Philippines. He is an amazing man!

We were delighted to see our full Parihaka story (CG83) including the Crown apology highlighted on Columbus, Ohio’s CW website (see lambcatholicworkerlouisiana.blogspot.co.nz). Talk about sowing seeds and modern technology!

GCSB Spy Budget – The New Zealand GCSB budget is a whopping \$159 million for financial year

2017-2018. Based on previous years’ budgets, we can expect it to cost taxpayers even more than that. Last financial year, the budget was estimated to be \$119.5 million, but the actual cost was \$145 million plus. Wow!!

Peace Researcher 54, November 2017

Dirty Work by Private Spies – Private investigators have been used by major oil companies to spy on NZ Greenpeace staff, volunteers and supporters on a daily basis over many years. Information leaked to Greenpeace revealed that their employees and volunteers had been followed, photographed, and profiled by the unscrupulous investigation agency **Thompson and Clark**. These private citizens followed Greenpeace people to their homes, tailed them in their personal time, and breached their privacy in what the organisation terms completely unacceptable ways. They claim that it was foreign oil companies, Anadarko and Statoil, who were behind the surveillance and it was carried out with the knowledge of the NZ Government.

Greenpeace, 10 August 2017.

Grand larceny at Christmas – On Christmas Eve, with demonic irony and no shame, President Trump signed into law the tax breaks the US Senate had earlier passed, tax cuts for the rich that would add \$1.5 trillion to the national debt and take more than \$2 trillion from programs for low-income people. ‘Ironic and demonic’ in that it was eve of the feast of the birth of Jesus, ‘who came to bring news to the poor.’

We condemn this legal but unconscionable theft of these billions of dollars from the poor to aid the already wealthy and major corporations. Interfaith leaders from all major religious denominations and faiths, including the US Catholic Bishops Conference, had earlier protested on Capitol Hill, to call attention to the enormous harm the Republican tax bill would cause to poor and middle-income Americans. So-called Evangelical Christians and fundamentalist Catholics, driven not by faith but by an ideology of greed, self-entitlement and contempt for the poor, got the Bill across the line by the narrowest of margins. One wonders what bible they read! Any notion that the Republican Party has any social conscience left is surely in tatters. ‘Where I come from’, said one senior pastor, ‘this is called ‘the wealthy pimping the poor’.

NCR, Dec 2017

Corporate giants, including Pfizer and Coca-Cola, have said they’ll give the windfall from the US tax cuts to their shareholders, not to their workers. The tax bill will also repeal the individual health insurance mandate, which experts say will cause insurance premiums to skyrocket. The Congressional Budget Office estimates 13 million Americans are projected to lose their health insurance. Experts estimate Trump will personally benefit from a tax cut of up to \$15 million a year and counting.

-- Democracy Now, 12/21/17

Easter

It is good
to be in darkness
where visions have fled
and dreams are stilled.

For there,
where only silence
and emptiness live
the soul sleeps,
resting,
until the breath of God
stirs in the shadows,
beckoning life.

And then,
having absorbed the darkness'
we rise, healed and renewed,
to face and embrace the world's
pain
with mercy and compassion

—*Edwina Gately*

autumn leaves

as rustic foliage caresses the wall
signalling the last days of autumn

huge grape leaves, chilled yet warming
stunning in their finery

play one last tune
in the crisp sunlight

which filters through craggy vines
retired now for winter rest

a spell-binding visual array
deep crimson tinged with gold

fanning into wild greens
anchored by veins outstretched

embracing the cosmos
creates a Passover candelabrum

victory over death
Christ present in the dying

—*Jim Consedine*

A New Year's Gift

My gift to you is always a story; something to think about more than once; something to keep your mind alive and touch your soul so that you can see life fresh and leaping once again.

There is a story from the Desert Fathers and Mothers about a young monk who asked one of the holy men of the desert why it is that so many people came out to the desert to seek God and yet most of them gave up after a short time and returned to their lives in the city.

The old monk responded: 'Last evening my dog saw a rabbit running for cover among the bushes of the desert and he began to chase the rabbit, barking loudly. Soon other dogs joined the chase, barking and running. They ran a great distance and alerted many other dogs. Soon the wilderness was echoing the sounds of their pursuit but the chase went on into the night.

After a little while, many of the dogs grew tired and dropped out. A few chased the rabbit until the night was nearly spent. By morning, only my dog continued the hunt.'

'Do you understand,' the old man said, 'what I have told you?'

'No,' replied the young monk, 'I don't. Please help me with it.'

'It is simple,' said the desert father. 'My dog saw the rabbit!'

The gift? A reminder to keep our souls focused on the important dimensions of life, on the purpose for which we have been born, on the gifts we are meant to give to others as life goes by. Otherwise we simply drift through life: one minute attracted by this; at another moment confused about what we're doing. Over the long haul, then, we become pilgrims without purpose, looking for what can't be found.

—*Joan Chittister OSB*

Can a CW be a Ploughshares witness?

Michele Naar -Obed

There has been much recent debate in the Catholic Worker as to whether Ploughshares actions are a legitimate form of CW action. My understanding of the Catholic Worker is that it is a movement of autonomous communities and individuals who agree to live by certain tenets and principles and at least try to incorporate the three pillars of a program as suggested by Peter Maurin. Those pillars are to provide houses of hospitality, clarification of thought and the agro-university, learning on the land. Further, we attempt to study and follow the aims and the means of the CW and we recognize the Sermon on the Mount as our manifesto.

Our Catholic Worker website states, *'Today 240 Catholic Worker communities remain committed to nonviolence, voluntary poverty, prayer, and hospitality for the homeless, exiled, hungry, and forsaken. Catholic Workers continue to protest injustice, war, racism, and violence of all forms.'*

A Ploughshare witness is a highly spiritual action meant to bring to life Isaiah's prophecy, *They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, their spears into pruning hooks, nation shall not wage war against nation, nor shall they study war anymore.* Is 2:11. This, if we believe that Isaiah was in fact a prophet, was God's direction given to us through his mouth. When any of us participate in a Ploughshare action, we are bringing God's words into life. That's the bottom line.

The Ploughshare action is an attempt to follow our Judeo-Christian teachings, upon which Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin based our principles and precepts. There is nothing in that prophecy that says we must meet some kind of effectiveness quota, nor does it say we have to divulge all the details to everyone that is mildly curious, nor does it say we have to worry about how the weapons producers might respond to such an act.

So who gets to decide that someone's attempt to follow God's command is Catholic Worker sanctioned? Who gets to say that the only acceptable acts of nonviolent resistance are simple trespass and non-cooperation? And who gets to decide what level of effectiveness needs to be met to be worthy of recognition?

Is the conversion of former US Attorney General Ramsey Clark to non-violence not enough? What about former US General Lee Butler, former Commander-in-chief US Nuclear Forces 1991 – 94, and now a committed peacemaker? Or the young sailor who saw the leaflet from the Jubilee Ploughshare East action and went to the Quakers for help to become a conscientious objector? And if that isn't good enough, what about the German judges who left the bench to convert the intermediate nuclear missiles into ploughshares? Or Judge Miles Welton Lord, who in the US chastised the



real criminals, the Sperry Software Corporation for its work in nuclear weapons development with computer software? The fact is, we have no idea how many hearts or minds have been changed by the over 100 acts of 'beating the swords of our time into ploughshares'.

Supporting Ploughshares

As to the charges that the acts have been done in secrecy, that the acts cannot be done by ordinary people, that the acts might cause a security guard to do harm to the person or persons carrying out the act, or that physically converting these weapons is an act of violence, I propose that the accusers look at the life and example of Jesus. He knew when to be open with his followers and when not, and he knew with whom he could be open. In part he protected his followers until they also were ready to face the consequences of their actions.

Anyone who wants to support a Ploughshare action and can accept the consequences of the action is welcome to know the details. If you can't, then why would you want to know the details? Jesus told his followers that in order to be a disciple they were to pick up their cross and follow him. There was nothing extraordinary about his ragtag bunch of followers. They were fishermen, tax collectors, doctors, housewives, mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers. And what are we who have answered the call to enact Isaiah's prophesy but a bunch of ordinary human beings who are willing to pick up the cross and follow him to the end? And maybe, just maybe, the question of effectiveness can be answered that in doing so, we also bring to life the Resurrection. I'd say that is pretty effective. Jesus didn't alter the course of his actions in order to save Pontius Pilate from making the decision to kill him.

I submit that the issue here isn't whether the Ploughshare action is Catholic Worker or not. It is more about betrayal. Jesus was born to bring God into the world. Many people, including some of his followers had their own expectations of what he would do. They cheered him on and marched with him in the streets. But in the end, he was betrayed by some of his followers and by the masses. By human standards, he was a failure, ineffective to say the least.

We are so sorry if our Ploughshares actions don't meet the expectations of all CWs. But many of us ploughshares activists are also Catholic Workers. In the end it is God who will judge us.

Michele and her husband Greg Obed have been CWs and Ploughshares activists for over 30 years. They have collectively served years of jail time for Ploughshares witnesses over those years.

Report from Israel Women Wage Peace

Margaret Ingram Melamed

We were all different – women in all kinds of hats – religious hats, sun hats, Muslim headscarves and hijabs, caps; women in all kinds of clothes – singlets, long dresses, short shorts, long shorts, dresses of all lengths; women in all kinds of shoes – barefoot, sandals, sports shoes, hiking boots. We were women waging peace!

‘We will not stop till there is a political agreement’ is our slogan so that ALL women can join – Jewish, Muslim, Christian, secular, observant, whoever. We can all agree there is no future in a violent, military solution.

We women do not believe we have to come up with The Solution to be taken seriously here in Israel-Palestine. All our politicians have that responsibility and power and need to sign a Peace agreement. We say that any agreement must promote not only peace but also freedom, democracy, equality and security for all

This approach understands that the fear, mistrust and hate in our region is partly because we never really have a chance to get together with one another. So that is a big part of Women Wage Peace – just to let women wander around and meet one another and listen to music and speeches and talk, eat and dance together

Three years ago Women Wage Peace began to have events in different places during the Jewish Holidays of Pessach and Succot because they are times when there are several consecutive days of public holiday. It's not ‘walking all the way to Jerusalem’ which is impossible for most women anyway, apart from security considerations. But stopping at different places for events and short marches is a feasible model. This leads to One Great Big Push to Jerusalem where thousands can come together.

In October, special buses from all over the region were organized to go to the main events in the desert by Jericho at midday and then in Jerusalem itself in the evening.

There were thousands of women at the meeting point and we went by buses a few kilometres into the desert. Those who came individually just hopped onto the special buses with spare seats. It was all fifty shades of beige and sand and it felt like the middle of nowhere (in a good way). We gathered in a gigantic tent and listened to welcome speeches and then 5000 women, led by a group of drummers, walked about a kilometre to three even bigger tents (100m x 50m) called **The Peace Camp of Hagar and Sarah** (Gen 16). They were open marquee tents, so breezy, and with a cooling system of high-pressure, fine mist-generating thin hose winding through the whole area. There were large tanks of drinking water, enormous mats covering the sand and hundreds of great big cushions.

I wandered about and talked to so many women.

Women had bussed from the Palestinian Authority (Bethlehem, Hebron/Khalil, etc), Arab villages and towns as well as cities, towns and kibbutzim all over Israel. Everyone made great efforts to communicate, share food and chatter in all the languages – Hebrew, Arabic, English. So much eye contact, so many nods and smiles, singing, dancing, holding hands and speeches. Individual women from many overseas countries were there too and were called up to the stage and their country's name was announced. There were about 5% men there too – true allies who appreciated the special character of a women's movement while helping with things that needed doing. There was a terrific band and they would sing a line and we would all sing it back, dancing all the while.

There was a ‘washing line’ where we could ‘peg’ little drawings, poems, etc. I put up a card from the Sisters of Compassion with a not-too-obvious cross, a picture of Suzanne Aubert, a map of Aotearoa New Zealand and abstract sea and koru designs.

At the end we had a Prayerful Affirmation with everyone holding hands. It was along the lines of peace in ourselves, between individuals, the sense of human wholeness that would surely come from the ending of our conflict and the crucial role of women in overcoming the male intransigence that has got us into this mess.

I came home with the feeling of having met some of the ‘sheep of the other flock’. *‘I am the Good Shepherd. I know my own sheep and my own sheep know me. You need to know that I have other sheep in addition to those in this pen. I need to gather and bring them too. Then it will be one Shepherd and one flock.’* (John 10:14-16).

I can hardly describe the feeling of looking wide-eyed into the eyes of women from all over who were looking equally wide-eyed into mine. ‘So that's what you look like on the other side of The Fence! I am really here! You are really here! See...we are making peace!’

Margaret Ingram Melamed, a CW originally from NZ, is living in a kibbutz on the Sea of Galilee and was on the October 2017 peace march.

2018 CW Calendar Heroes of Peace

Once again, the New Zealand CW has produced a beautiful calendar. Outstanding lino-cut features include the Parihaka Ploughmen, James K Baxter, Sophie Scroll, Jesus of Nazareth, Gordon Briggs and seven others.

Email for a copy:
forrestandbird@tutamail.com.

Cost – koha

Six Peace Pilgrims guilty



Tim Webb 'beats a sword into a hoe'.

Six Queensland-based CWs were found guilty early December of wilful damage to a war memorial. The jury took just half an hour to finalise their deliberations. They found the six Peace Pilgrims guilty of entering a Pine Gap prohibited area on 29 September 2016.

Margaret Pectorious, 56, Jim Dowling, 60, Tim Webb, 22, Franz Dowling, 20, Paul Christie, and Andy Paine, 22, all argued that they felt morally bound to highlight the murderous role the Australian Government's Pine Gap spy-base plays in global terrorism. Fines from \$1250 to \$5000 were imposed.

The Crown had called for imprisonment as the only appropriate sentence in the circumstances, although Michael McHugh SC pointed out that imprisonment can take different forms, such as suspended sentences with various conditions. However, for the older offenders, Margaret Pectorious and Jim Dowling, given their long history of similar offending, Mr McHugh argued for actual time to be served, most particularly for Mr Dowling

who, he said, 'to use a colloquialism, is on the street and will continue to offend'.

The younger members of the group might be susceptible to rehabilitation he suggested. However, they gave little indication in their submissions that this would be so. They each defended their actions as principled. Andrew Paine said he had nothing to say on contrition. Tim Webb referred to the 'insatiable blood lust of the Commonwealth of Australia'.

The youngest, 20-year-old Franz Dowling, concluded his submission to the court with a quote from Dorothy Day, a key figure in the Catholic Worker movement and a practitioner of civil disobedience, whom he described as 'the greatest woman who ever lived.' She repeatedly taught, 'Our problems stem from our acceptance of this filthy, rotten system.' Franz said he could not be a slave to human laws as long as those laws were able to be broken at whim, resulting in the slaughter of innocents.

CW website

Leading articles from the first 20 years of

The Common Good

Alternative funerals

Restorative justice

Other theological issues

www.catholicworker.org.nz

Funeral Choice

A Catholic Worker project

Cheaper alternatives to consumer
funerals

www.funeralchoice.co.nz

Parata Street,
Waikanae 5036
Dear Jim,

I have very much appreciated receiving copies of *The Common Good*, and have read each issue with considerable interest. It was good to see your editorial No 2 of the Advent 2017 issue. A *Consistent Ethic of Life* has been an important document from the NZ Catholic Bishops Conference. May God continue to empower your pen,

With all very warm best wishes,

+ *Cardinal Tom Williams*

Archbishop Emeritus of Wellington.

417 Roberts Avenue,
Syracuse, N.Y. 13207
Hello Jim,

Mary and I really enjoy *The Common Good*. I was not aware of the small Taranaki settlement, Parihaka, highlighted in your latest edition. What a wonderful witness of active non-violence hidden for so long.

Getting publicity for such events of history is difficult. Such happenings tend to get wiped off the map of history. Few know of the life of Ben Salmon, one of four only US Catholic conscientious objectors in World War I. Ben was sentenced to death by the military for his refusal to kill. His crime was his belief that the non-violent teaching of Jesus was based on love, not killing. He believed that no war could be just. That is now official Catholic teaching 100 years later!

Ben suffered physical torture and emotional abuse during his 2.5 years in a military prison at Fort Leavenworth, including 4.5 months in solitary confinement. His health deteriorated and he never really recovered. Eventually he ended up in the criminally insane wing of a hospital before being released in November 1920.

We have launched the www.bensalmon.org website to promote his beatification, and would appreciate your support.

Peace and joy and love,

Dick and Mary Keough

Center for Non-violent Education and Action
'Ola'a (Kurtistown),
Hawai'i

Aloha Jim and CW,

Greetings from the Pacific. Hope you are well. Mahalo for the solidarity of your paper, *The Common Good*. Here in Hawaii, the area of 133,000-acre US military bombing base in the centre of Hawaii Island is named *Pohakulo*, which translates to mean 'the land of the night of long prayer.' That site has now been bombed for more than 75 years with more than 16 million live-rounds fired annually. Such desecration of the sacred *aina* is hard to imagine. Our efforts to stop the bombing continue. Indeed, it's a night of long prayer and a commitment to never give up.

Here at *Malu 'Aina* we have been planting food and sharing with people in need for 37 years now. We have been joined by two wonderful new workers, Adham Iwashita and Ruth Aloua, who have committed to the cause. Your support keeps us from being discouraged. We breathe together and pledge never to give up.

With gratitude and aloha,

Jim Albertini

New Windsor,
Auckland 0600

Dear Jim and friends,

Received *The Common Good* today – excellent as always. Particularly impressed with your measured response to concerns to correspondent Dave Holland re neo-liberal economics. Refreshing in the light of nine years of denial of these issues by the outgoing government.

Incidentally, our clan maintained the only Catholic seminary in Scotland during the times of the troublesome English. Located at Glen Livet, we celebrated the 300th anniversary of its founding last year. No longer in use, the legend remains alive! Likewise, the whiskey!
Blessings to all for Christmas and 2018,

Don G. Matheson.

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The Common Good

Te Wairua Maranga Trust
 Box 33-135
 Christchurch 8244
 New Zealand



We frail humans are at one time capable of the greatest good and, at the same time, capable of the greatest evil. Change will only come about when each of us takes up the daily struggle ourselves to be more forgiving, compassionate, loving and above all, joyful, in the knowledge that by some miracle of grace, we can change as those around us can change too.

—Mairead Corrigan Maguire, Nobel Peace Laureate, 1976