PCUSA Nonviolence Workshop Inspires High School Director

by Kathleen Quiazon, Director of Mission and Ministry at Notre Dame High School, San Jose, CA

Sr. Patricia Chappell, Executive Director, and Sr. Anne-Louise Nadeau, Director of Programs, of Pax Christi USA led the Spirituality of Nonviolence Workshop at the Notre Dame High School Leadership Conference. This conference at Emmanuel College in Boston, Massachusetts brought together students, educators and Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur from all over the country. This second annual gathering aimed to foster student leadership under a common commitment to the charism of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur and their foundress, St Julie Billiart, who envisioned people “with hearts as wide as the world.” In the twenty-first century, this commitment is exemplified by the seven Hallmarks of a Notre Dame de Namur Learning Community which speak of the Catholic invitation to live the Gospel with an emphasis on human dignity, justice, peacemaking, and community.

Mindful of this vision, Sr. Patty and Sr. Anne Louise laid groundwork for their workshop by reflecting on the Hallmarks before engaging students in the spirituality of nonviolence. From this place, see Nonviolence page 7
Dear Companion on the Journey,

We welcome you to our Summer 2017 Peace Current which features the theme: “Spirituality of Nonviolence and Peace Making.”

In our current US culture, it is clear that the road to nonviolence and peacemaking is a life-long journey and not a single demonstration, march, prayer vigil, letter to the editor, or even a heartfelt prayer. This journey is a process, and it is a daily invitation to be transformed from the inside out and a commitment to nonviolent actions for the sake of the Gospel and for God’s people.

The articles in this issue focus on diverse peacemakers who are daily becoming more aware of the gifts and challenges of developing an authentic and genuine spirituality of nonviolence.

We ask you to pray especially for the young people and emerging adults who so want to be a part of social change and who, at times, become disheartened at the magnitude of the challenge and the call to peacemaking. They need the steadfast hope of all in our Pax Christi USA community.

Peace of Christ,

Sr. Patricia Chappell, SNDdeN
Executive Director
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Below: Sr. Patricia Chappell teaches group of high school students at the Spirituality of Nonviolence workshop. Right: Students pose with Sr. Patricia and Sr. Anne-Louise after the workshop.
Student Reflections of the PCUSA Nonviolence Workshop

Part of the Solution or the Problem?
by Chloe Kretschmar, Mount Notre Dame High School, Cincinnati, OH, Class of 2019

When we arrived in Boston, the morning with Sister Patty and Sister Anne-Louise was what we had been expecting. We did not know it yet, but that was the kind of discussion we wanted….the information that we all needed. No one, however, expected such momentum to come out of two Sisters who had – up until the unforgettable “Good Morning everybody!” Sister Patty so eagerly gifted to us – remained quiet at the back corners of the room.

Nonviolent conflict resolution is something that this world needs desperately, and this generation is not blind to that. Our childhoods remain on the same timeline as some horrific instances and for as long as we can remember people have done their best to ensure that we are completely guarded from them. Our knowledge of the world has faced attempted manipulation for the purpose of keeping us blind to the scary world in which we live. It is of course no fault of theirs – it makes sense to want to protect us. We, however, are going to be either the next solution or the next problem. Sister Patty and Sister Anne-Louise know this. There is no question that the words spoken that day struck a chord with everyone, whether it was the tales of a childhood squabble or the breakdown of what violence really is. The most impressive aspect, though, was their understanding of it all and their dedication to giving us the tools we need to face it. Whether we are in a group project, in a meeting, or out in the world facing physical violence, we can use what we learned to bring each other closer to the path that Jesus has so gently asked us to walk.

Opportunity to Build Community
by Vincent DiNatale, Notre Dame Cristo Rey, Lawrence, MA, Class of 2019

Thinking back to the retreat at Emmanuel College this summer, it was quite amazing. When we first arrived at the college for the Notre Dame Conference I was nervous about those next three days and what it would be like.

This retreat, to my surprise, opened my eyes and showed me how the other Notre Dame schools were different yet, have something in common. During the retreat, I learned about the 1804 Society, which other Notre Dame schools had, and how Emmanuel also had its own 1804 Society on campus too.

I learned about conflict resolution and active nonviolence in one of the workshops which was presented by Sister Patricia Chappell and Sister Anne-Louise Nadeau, who were from Washington D.C. and part of Pax Christi.

Also, at the retreat we talked about different leadership styles and even created ideas on how we, with the other Notre Dame schools, can stay connected. One of my favorite parts of this retreat was when each group had to make a skit of St. Julie in a hypothetical situation.

In all, this retreat developed my leadership skills and showed me on how to work together, whether it was ice breakers or workshops. This retreat was a wonderful experience for me and was truly unforgettable.
In our modern nuclear era, it has become extremely important for all religions to publicly respond to the moral questions of the use of nuclear weapons, using religious texts that were written in a time when nuclear weapons did not exist.

“…the use of nuclear weapons and Islam are not compatible…”

Most Muslim scholars agree that the use of nuclear weapons and Islam are not compatible, and especially as a first-attack. While the acquisition of nuclear weapons as a deterrent might be justifiable under conditions of an imminent nuclear threat, their actual use would be virtually impossible to justify using classic Islamic principles considering the indiscriminate deaths that would occur, especially amongst women, children and the elderly, as well as the widespread damage to the environment, animal life, and any existing structures already in use. Exposure to the radiation of nuclear bombs can also alter the DNA of humans, plants and animals, and everything in the kill zone is destroyed immediately.

There are numerous times when the Prophet Muhammad is known to have made statements similar to, "Do not kill a decrepit old man, or a young infant, or a child, or a woman" (Sunan Abu Dawud, Book 14, Number 2608). A famous quote that clearly makes nuclear weapons and Islam incompatible comes from Abu Bakr, the first Caliph and successor to Prophet Muhammad. In a speech to the Muslim army before the opening of what is now Syria in 632 CE, he states: “Do not commit treachery or deviate from the right path. You must not mutilate dead bodies. Neither kill a child, nor a woman, nor an aged man. Bring no harm to the trees, nor burn them with fire... Slay not any of the enemy's flock, save for food. You are likely to pass by people who have devoted their lives to monastic services, leave them alone.”

There are also very strict Rules of Engagement in Islam, most of which would NOT be compatible with a nuclear bomb attack:

- The opponent must always have started the fighting.
- It must not be fought to gain territory.
- It must be fought to bring about good - something that Allah will approve of.

see Muslim Perspective page 7

Picture of the Quran by Free Pictures 4K, flickr.com
When Secretary of Defense Mattis was serving in the Iraq war he told a group of local leaders “I come in peace.” Then, in the very same breathe he told them “If you ---- with me I will kill you all” (http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/05/29/james-mattis-a-warrior-in-washington).

While Mattis’s language was explicitly violent, the “I will kill you all” approach is the bread and butter of Washington DC’s foreign policy. To avoid the graphic imagery, it hides under a different name: deterrence.

There is great bipartisan agreement in Congress and the White House that we should be seeking “peace through deterrence.” Let us examine for a moment the values and principles behind deterrence and ask ourselves whether these are values we want to embrace.

Above all, deterrence culture values complete control. The core principle is a standing lethal ultimatum against every living soul. Our military leaders are so fervently dedicated to these principles that they will not feel satisfied until everyone has a personal drone following them 24/7 and threatening to shoot them. Even if such a world had no international armed conflict, could it ever be at peace? Of course not.

“Peace through deterrence” is an inherent oxymoron. It should be considered an absurdity, as nonsensical as “friendship through blackmail.” It is as wrongheaded and disturbing as “love through threats,” or “consent through force.”

So, let us abandon deterrence and all that it stands for. What then are we left with? What values should be fundamental to our quest for a world free from war and the threat of war? I won’t pretend to offer an answer, but I would like to share one value we should learn to embrace: Vulnerability.

Perhaps the most striking example of the power of vulnerability is the story of Jesus. The quintessential image of Jesus is the quintessential image of vulnerability, arms spread wide, life blood flowing out his wrists, and not so much as a muscle flexed in retaliation. We are told that Jesus had the power to command the very storms of the sky and the waves of the sea, yet he allowed himself to be captured and killed by a handful of Roman soldiers.

On that day it may have seemed like Jesus was the loser and the Roman Empire, the greatest military force in the world, was the clear victor. However, two thousand years later the Roman Empire has crumbled into dust while the message of Jesus is alive and well. By making himself physically vulnerable Jesus made himself and his movement spiritually, morally, and practically indestructible. A generation after James Mattis threatened to kill a collection of Iraqi leaders, the endless war in the Middle East rages on. My whole life I have watched our country try to win a war on terror through deterrence. We have tried to make fewer people hate us by killing the people who hate us. My whole life I have watched this strategy fail, again and again. Deterrence has proved itself incapable of bringing peace. Let us try then, a new approach. Let us seek peace through vulnerability.

Replacing Nuclear Deterrence Policy with Vulnerability
by Jamie DeMarco, Campaign Manager, Maryland Clean Energy Jobs Initiative

Picture by Christopher Adams, flickr.com
Welcome to Our New National Council Members

Through elections and council appointments, six new members are joining the Pax Christi USA National Council. They are Brian Ashmankas, Gerry Lee, Mary Kate Small, Barbara Michelle Sherman, Robert Shine, and Veronica Fellerath-Lowell.

It is very exciting to have these new members joining the work of the national council, and we look forward to their ideas, visions, and energy as we continue working towards peace and justice in our world.

Welcome to Our New National Council Members

[Images of the new council members]

National Council Members at Hiroshima Prayer Vigil

Nonviolence

students were introduced to the lexicon and behaviors of conflict, definitions of violence, and how to confront those realities through active nonviolence. Sr. Patty challenged the students saying, “How you deal with conflict will test how you stand with the Hallmarks.”

Sr. Patty and Sr. Anne-Louise asked us to consider how conflict holds the potential for good when we embrace active nonviolence and other Gospel strategies to remain in right relationship with others. As a Notre Dame educator, I recognize that students are eager to make social change possible and need the knowledge and skills to realize that potential. Through the workshop, I witnessed my students explore how the interactions they have with peers, parents, and teachers are in fact a springboard for further transformation in our communities. If they can be advocates of peaceful and active nonviolence in these settings, then their ability to stay true to the Hallmarks will enable them to create the social change we dream of.

In this next school year, our community will explore the civil rights movement and its implications for today’s changing landscape. No doubt, these lessons on nonviolence from Sr. Patty and Sr. Anne-Louise will contribute to our conversation and influence how we, the Notre Dame San Jose community, can reflect that spirit of justice and peacemaking amidst the cultural, religious, and socio-economic diversity of the Bay Area and the innovative fervor of Silicon Valley.

Muslim Perspective

- Every other way of solving the problem must be tried before resorting to war.
- Innocent people should not be killed.
- Women, children, or old people should not be killed or hurt.
- Enemies must be treated with justice.
- Wounded enemy soldiers must be treated in exactly the same way as one’s own soldiers.
- The war must stop as soon as the enemy asks for peace.
- Property must not be damaged.
- Poisoning wells is forbidden. The modern analogy would be chemical or biological warfare.

Al-Ghazali, a famous 12th-century theologian, believed that these moral prohibitions could only be lifted if the Muslim community was at risk of complete destruction from an outside aggressor. Thus, in order to even justify the use of nuclear weapons, the Muslim community must have already been attacked by nuclear weapons by an aggressor, and then be threatened with complete annihilation: “The Law of Equality applies. If then anyone violates the prohibition against you, (then) you transgress likewise against him. But fear Allah, and know that Allah is with those who restrain themselves” (Quran Chapter 2:Verse 194). However, retaliation must be no more than the original harm suffered: “If you (believers) have to respond to an attack, make your response proportionate, but it is best to stand fast” (Quran Chapter 16:Verse 126).

In the current state of international politics we are ultimately faced with an out-of-control arms race, especially between the super-powers “whereby strong states dominate the world order irrespective of the rules of international law” (Reiter, 57).

It is essential for people of faith to come together and counter this arms race by first being aware of the threat and its capacity to destroy the world as we know it and by having these conversations in our communities. Faith leaders need to be the voice of reason and the compass of morality in a broken world. As Martin Luther King once said: “We must learn to live together as brothers or perish together as fools.”
Order New Advent Reflection Booklet by September 21

We present to you this year’s Advent reflection booklet, "The Work of God’s Hands" by Rachel Schmidt and Robert Shine. This reflection booklet makes us aware that God is the potter, and we are the clay. The reflections are daily reminders that all will be restored to peace if we allow our Creator to shape us and this world into the work of God’s hands.

All reflections are based on the daily Scripture readings for December 3 - 25 plus the Feast of the Holy Innocents, the Feast of the Holy Family, the Solemnity of Mary, and Epiphany.

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“The Work of God’s Hands” Sneak Peak

An excerpt from the 2017 Advent reflection booklet - available for pre-order through September 21, 2017.

Saturday, December 9
Isaiah 30:19-21, 23-26, Matthew 9:35-10:1, 5, 6-8

“While from behind, a voice shall sound in your ears: ‘This is the way; walk in it.’” Isaiah 30:21

Never does God leave us; never are we abandoned. Yet, how easy it is for us to forget that God will show the way. “Ask and you shall receive” is a great Jesus quote, but I have to be reminded that it’s not “ask and you shall receive what you want.” An attachment to the things that we want is not necessarily what is best for the world nor is it God’s plan. Musician Sheryl Crow has a song with the line “it’s not having what you want...it’s wanting what you’ve got.” Do we want what God has to give us?

If we can let go of what we think is best for us, and listen to the whispers that say, “This is the way; walk in it,” then we will find the way. The way is here, the way is now, and God is showing us the way right now. Are we listening? Did we listen but reject God’s whispers because it doesn’t meet our expectations? What God has for us is what we need to find our way in life. We better start taking the wisdom of Sheryl Crow to “want what we've got,” because God is clearly giving us the things that we need. God takes care of us. Are we willing to believe the “voice that sounds in our ears” has our best interest at heart?

Have you ever had a “crisis” in life that turned out to be a blessing? What would have happened if you had embraced this unsettling moment as a time to grow rather than something to be victimized by?