



# The Peace Current

Pax Christi USA

The National Catholic Peace Movement

Membership Newsletter, Summer 2023

## “No Guilty Bystander,” a new biography of Bishop Gumbleton, shares the story of beloved longtime Pax Christi USA leader

This month, Orbis Books releases *No Guilty Bystander: The Extraordinary Life of Bishop Thomas Gumbleton*, a biography of Pax Christi USA’s first bishop president, written by Frank Fromherz and Suzanne Sattler, IHM. The book – its title is a twist on Thomas Merton’s self-reference as a “guilty bystander” – starts with Bishop Gumbleton’s growing awareness in the 1960s of the U.S.’s role in Southeast Asia, and then shifts to his childhood in Detroit. It covers his development as a pastor and bishop, an outspoken advocate for justice and committed activist, and a deeply faithful follower of the nonviolent Jesus.

Pax Christi USA Executive Director Johnny Zokovitch said, “[This book] perfectly captures the depth and breadth of Bishop Gumbleton’s life, witness, and profound impact on the U.S. Catholic Church and the faith-based peace and justice movement. [It] is a celebration of what authentic discipleship looks like. For anyone who wonders what it means to speak truth to power from a place of deep and abiding faith, reflecting on the life of Tom Gumbleton is the perfect place to start.”

**Order your copy of *No Guilty Bystander* at the Orbis Books, [www.orbisbooks.com](http://www.orbisbooks.com).**

In recognition of Bishop Gumbleton’s longtime devotion to Haiti, royalties from the sales of *No Guilty Bystander* will go to the Kay Lasante Health Clinic in Port-au-Prince.

### BOOK LAUNCH

## Mark your summer calendar!

*No Guilty Bystander: The Extraordinary Life of Bishop Thomas Gumbleton*

**Thursday, July 27, 2023 6:30-8:00pm**

Program & book signing at Sacred Heart Church,  
1000 Eliot St. Detroit MI 48207

Hosted by John Thorne, Pastoral Associate

#### Featured guests include:

Bishop Tom Gumbleton,  
Publisher, Robert Ellsberg,  
Co-authors, Frank Fromherz  
and Suzanne Sattler, IHM

#### Music provided by:

Keir Ward, Minister of Music  
Sacred Heart and St. Elizabeth  
Catholic Parishes

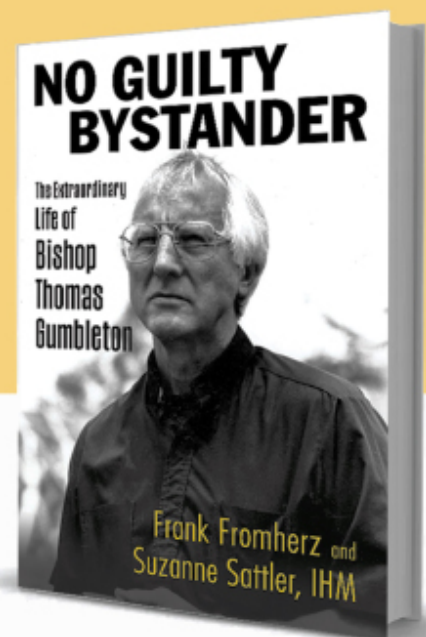
Book will be available at the launch  
and at [www.orbisbooks.com](http://www.orbisbooks.com)  
in June 2023.

#### LIVE STREAM THE EVENT

[www.sacredheartdetroit.com](http://www.sacredheartdetroit.com)  
Click *Live Stream* then select  
July 27, 2023

Call (734) 693-3743 for more info

Royalties from book sales will go to  
Kay Lasante Health Clinic in Haiti



All are welcome to attend the book launch celebration, Thursday, July 27, 6:30-8:00 PM, Sacred Heart Church, 1000 Eliot Street, Detroit, MI; the event will be livestreamed on the Sacred Heart website, [www.sacredheartdetroit.com](http://www.sacredheartdetroit.com).



## Pax Christi USA National Staff

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## The enduring, evolving challenge of peace

By Nancy Small, Pax Christi USA Ambassador of Peace

*In May, we commemorated the 40th anniversary of the publication of the U.S. Catholic bishops' pastoral letter, The Challenge of Peace: God's promise and our response, which focused on nuclear disarmament and peace. Below is a reflection written by Nancy Small, a Pax Christi USA Ambassador of Peace and former national coordinator, on this anniversary. Read Nancy's piece in its entirety on the Pax Christi USA website.*



...Forty years [after the publication of *The Challenge of Peace*], the nuclear arms race as a moral issue has been placed on the back burner for many, replaced by more pressing issues. School children no longer practice “duck and cover” drills in the event of a nuclear missile attack. They practice active school shooter drills instead.

Yet the pressing issues we face today are influenced by the continued possession and possible use of nuclear weapons. When our nation unleashed the power of nuclear weapons in the abhorrent attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, we did the unimaginable. A nation that had relied on nuclear weapons as a deterrent crossed the threshold of nuclear destruction. We did the unconscionable, giving ourselves license to kill on a lethal level never before known to humankind.

It's no coincidence that the only nation on earth that has used nuclear weapons is also the only nation on earth that spends explosive amounts of money on national defense, more than the next seven nations combined, according to the National Priorities Project.

Several generations have grown up under the shadow of the bomb, shaped by the mentality that we have a license to kill. This mentality flies in the face of our national motto “In God We Trust.” Our nation trusts not in a nonviolent God but in gods of metal fashioned into hideous nuclear weapons and horrifying conventional weapons. “The arms race is one of the greatest curses on the human race,” wrote the bishops in their peace pastoral. “It is to be condemned as a danger, an act of aggression against the poor, and a folly which does not provide the security it promises.” (Cf: Pastoral Constitution, #81; Statement of the Holy See to the United Nations, 1976).

On this 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *The Challenge of Peace*, the U.S. Catholic bishops have issued no anniversary statement. Yet several U.S. church leaders have spoken powerful words that surpass the sentiments voiced by the bishops in their peace pastoral, amplifying the voice of nonviolence at a moment when it truly needs to be heard.

One of the strongest voices is that of Archbishop John Wester, whose 2022 pastoral letter *Living in the Light of Christ's Peace: A Conversation Toward Nuclear Disarmament* urges the promotion of nonviolence rather than the proliferation of nuclear weapons. “If [Jesus] rebuked James and John

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for wanting to call down fire from heaven,” wrote Archbishop Wester, “He certainly rebukes us for having done it and preparing to do it again...Nuclear weapons are not the will of the nonviolent Jesus, and it is time that we took His rebuke seriously. If we listen, we can hear Jesus’ voice crying out today: Stop building nuclear weapons, do not prepare for nuclear war, dismantle your nuclear weapons, and welcome God’s reign of universal love and peace.”

Speaking about the publication of this pastoral letter, Pax Christi USA Bishop President John Stowe reinforced the immorality of the possession of nuclear weapons, stating, “We should all heed his voice and contribute to the process of disarmament through practicing nonviolence in our daily lives and advocating the end of nuclear weapons.”

On May 15, Archbishop Wester, who leads the Santa Fe diocese where more money is spent on nuclear weapons than any other diocese in the nation, joined his voice with Seattle Archbishop Paul Etienne, who leads the diocese with the most deployed strategic nuclear weapons in the nation, in a poignant letter written to the G7 leaders. Together with Archbishop Nakamura of Nagasaki and Bishop Shirahama of Hiroshima, they urged the G7 leaders to move concretely toward global nuclear disarmament. “We believe today’s new nuclear arms race is more dangerous than the first arms race, given multiple nuclear actors and the advent of new cyber and hypersonic weapons and artificial intelligence,” they warned while urging “the need to eliminate the threat of nuclear weapons, prevent a new nuclear arms race,

and avoid the ultimate catastrophe that is potentially civilization-ending nuclear war.”

In a monumental speech at Notre Dame in March, Cardinal Robert McElroy spoke about the intent of the U.S. bishops when they issued *The Challenge of Peace* and the situation we face 40 years later. “[T]he 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,” he noted.

Cardinal McElroy then reached beyond nuclear deterrence and spoke of the need for nonviolence to be the dominant way of engaging worldwide conflict at this moment in time. “It is a moment marked by ‘the need to fundamentally renew and prioritize the claim of nonviolent action as *the* central tenet of Catholic teaching on war and peace,’” he emphasized. “If one were asked in 1983 to state what framework stood as the central point of reference for the Church on armed conflict,” he said, “they would have correctly answered: the just war theory. If we are asked today to answer that question, we must answer: comprehensive nonviolence.”

Cardinal McElroy credited Pope Francis as the foremost church leader in “construct[ing] a framework for Catholic teaching on war and peace that places nonviolence rather than the just war-ethic as the dominant prism through which to evaluate decisions in situations of deep conflict.” (excerpts from “*Our New Moment: Renewing*”

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## **Pax Christi USA offers webinar on 40 years of *The Challenge of Peace***

On May 24, Pax Christi USA hosted a webinar on 40 years of *The Challenge of Peace*. Moderated by Pax Christi USA national council member Josephine Garnem, the panel included Dr. Lisa Sowle Cahill of Boston College, Pax Christi USA’s bishop-president Bishop John Stowe, OFM Conv., and Donna Toliver Grimes, a Pax Christi USA Ambassador of Peace who works for the USCCB’s Catholic Campaign for Human Development and the Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church. The speakers shared about the history and context of *The Challenge of Peace*, how it has been integrated into the U.S. Catholic Church, and how it connects to our life today. A recording of the webinar, plus links to additional related resources, are available on the Pax Christi USA website.



## *Nancy Small, continued from page 4...*

*Catholic Teaching on War and Peace*” by Cardinal Robert McElroy, March 1, 2023) These extraordinary statements become even more so when we look closely at the words Cardinal McElroy chose. He spoke of “*renewing* [emphasis added] the claim of nonviolent action as *the* [emphasis in original] central tenet in Catholic teaching on war and peace. This suggests that nonviolence is and has been the central tenet in Catholic teaching on war and peace. This represents a sea change from the Church’s long-standing support of the just war theory. His call to comprehensive nonviolence as the preferred response to armed conflict today raises the Church’s nonviolent teaching to a new level.

The dominant prism of nonviolence of which Cardinal McElroy spoke is fashioned from the fervent call of Pope Francis to embrace the nonviolent teachings of Jesus. “To be true followers of Jesus today includes embracing his teaching about nonviolence,” wrote Pope Francis.

Pope Francis understands that the embrace of nonviolence leads to the evolution of nonviolence. He is calling for this evolution in the heart of every Christian and in the soul and substance of the Catholic Church. He is urging nonviolent evolution that begins with individual

interactions on a personal level and reaches as far as international actions on a political level. Pope Francis calls for nonviolence to “govern how we treat each other as individuals, within society and in international life. In the most local and ordinary situations and in the international order, may nonviolence become the hallmark of our decisions, our relationships and our actions, and indeed of political life in all its forms.”

Pope Francis calls us to make “active nonviolence our way of life.”

Amplifying the pope’s call to active nonviolence, Cardinal McElroy noted the promotion of nonviolent action as a more prominent force around the world. “The challenge,” he said, “is for Catholics to reinforce that.”

This is the challenge of our times, the challenge of peace that Pax Christi USA is uniquely poised to accept. Why? Because this challenge is also our choice, a choice we have been making as a movement for more than 50 years. It is a choice we make day to day and sometimes moment to moment. Each time we choose active nonviolence, we activate its power to transform our world. We show that nonviolence is persuasive, not passive. Each time we

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## **Pax Christi leaders urge G7 to address threat of nuclear weapons**

In mid-May, leaders from the G7 nations (Canada, France, U.K., U.S., Japan, Germany, and Italy) gathered in Hiroshima; the location was chosen deliberately by Japan’s Prime Minister Fumio Kishida to express Japan’s commitment to peace and its opposition to nuclear weapons.

In preparation for the summit, Pax Christi USA Executive Director Johnny Zokovitch and Bishop President John Stowe, plus other Pax Christi leaders in the U.S., joined Pax Christi sections from around the world in signing a letter to Prime Minister Kishida, commending him on choosing Hiroshima as the venue for the summit and encouraging him in his use of the summit to urge the G7 leaders to address the continuing threat to the world posed by nuclear weapons.

The letter points out that the G7 summit is a strategic opportunity for leaders to build on previous declarations, particularly those made at the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference in August 2022, and reminds them of Pope Francis’ declaration in Hiroshima in 2019 that not only is the use of nuclear weapons immoral but also the very possession of them. It suggests that the G7 meet with atomic bomb survivors in Hiroshima; resolve to adopt collective, verifiable steps to reduce nuclear arsenals; cooperate with states-parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in providing victim assistance and environmental remediation for people harmed by nuclear weapons; and pursue and set a common deadline for the elimination of all nuclear arsenals.

Find a link to read the entire letter on the Pax Christi USA website.



choose nonviolence, we accept the challenge to make the power of nonviolence more prominent in our world.

“We are called to be peacemakers, not by some movement of the moment,” wrote the bishops in their peace pastoral, “but by our Lord Jesus.” Pax Christi USA has never been a movement of the moment. We have responded to the call of Jesus as a movement that engages the moment with the endurance of gospel nonviolence and the energy that flows from a community of disciples who experience the conversion made possible through nonviolent commitment.

So let us accept anew the challenge of peace we face at this moment, living in the hope expressed by the Catholic bishops in the closing words of their peace pastoral. “Let us have the courage to believe in the bright future and in a God who wills it for us – not a perfect world, but a better one...”

A better world built on a bedrock belief in nonviolence, and a bolder Church naming nonviolence as foundational to the Catholic faith.

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## Solidarity for human rights in the Philippines

On May 1, as the world commemorated International Workers’ Day, President Biden welcomed to the White House Philippine President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr., son of former dictator Ferdinand Marcos, Sr. The timing of this meeting between the two presidents highlighted the urgent need to uplift the voices of people in the Philippines who continue to experience human rights violations.



Representatives of the International Campaign for Human Rights in the Philippines, BAYAN USA, Pax Christi USA, and more were present for a vigil and rally outside the White House. Pax Christi USA staff members Lauren Bailey and Judy Coode led the participants in a prayer litany (above).

In preparation for the event, 117 faith communities signed an ecumenical letter to Biden urging him to “heed the voices of the oppressed” and halt military aid and support the Philippine Human Rights Act.

On May 25, Pax Christi USA staff members Michelle Sherman and Roxana Bendezú were panelists in an online report-back hosted by the International Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines, which had organized the delegation earlier this year in which Michelle and Roxana participated.

On May 31, Pax Christi USA hosted a webinar with speakers BAYAN USA, BAYAN Philippines, and the National Council of Churches in the Philippines who shared about the current state of advocacy for human rights in the Philippines, suggestions for how to get involved, and strategies for action.

### Follow the work of Pax Christi USA’s working groups:

*Palestine • Nuclear disarmament • Indigenous solidarity • Bread Not Stones • Gun violence*

Working groups help guide and resource the work of Pax Christi USA on a particular issue. They are made up of people within or connected to Pax Christi USA who have some expertise or passion on a particular issue and can resource our engagement on that issue as-needed and as defined within our annual General Plan. Keep an eye out on the website and in your email as we further develop our working groups in order to have greater impact in creating a world that is more peaceful, more just and more sustainable.

# On the line: Updates from local, state and regional chapters

**Pax Christi Michigan** held its 41st annual state conference on April 15 with featured guest Alex Mikulich. The overarching theme was “White Christian Nationalism: A clear and present danger” and sessions included topics such as “Decolonizing faith and society” and “Engaging dark night: Toward contemplative transformation in Sophia-Wisdom.” The conference also included an award ceremony where Michelle Sherman of Pax Christi USA was given the Young Peacemaker Award and Mike and Carmen Kelly (right, with Fr. Fred Thelen) were given the Purple Ribbon for Peace Award.



**Pax Christi of Stark County (Ohio)** held a gun violence program on April 19. Featured speakers were Angela Dodson and Annette Finley, who spoke about why they work for gun violence prevention. Annette shared about the Be SMART framework which promotes responsible gun ownership in order to reduce the deaths, injuries, and trauma that can result when a child or teen is able to access a gun. Angela talked about her involvement with the Gun Violence Survivor Network and Everytown for Gun Safety. The chapter held a mini-retreat on May 6, led by Fr. Ed Keck.



On April 16, **Pax Christi Little Rock** participated in the ninth annual ecumenical Pilgrimage for Peace (left). Sherry Simon of Pax Christi Little Rock wrote, “This event ... memorializes those killed at the hand of violence each year in Pulaski County. The theme this year came from Honorine [Uwimana]’s poem ‘Say Their Names.’ Honorine graciously allowed us to read her poem as part of the memorial. We had over 125 people at the service and the Pilgrimage is growing every year.”

As the Golden Rule Sailboat made its way up the East Coast, Pax Christi communities took part in the journey. On April 29, the boat visited Baltimore where **Pax Christi Baltimore** co-sponsored an interfaith service that blessed the sailors. The boat headed north where **Pax Christi New Jersey** and **Pax Christi Long Island** (right) were able to partner with Veterans for Peace and other organizations for several events from May 19-21, with engaging speakers, panel discussions, and music.



**Pax Christi Florida** held a statewide membership meeting on May 17. The primary focus of the gathering was to speak about Florida’s political climate and how the Pax Christi community is called to respond.

*Welcome to our newest chapter!* **Pax Christi Triangle North Carolina** formed earlier this spring, and kicked off its activities by joining in a May 13 public witness in Raleigh in support of Palestinian liberation (right).

On May 6, **Pax Christi Metro DC-Baltimore** hosted Bob Shine of New Ways Ministry for a presentation on anti-LGBTQ+ laws and Catholic peacemaking. LGBTQ+ people, particularly those who are transgender or nonbinary, face increasing oppression today in both civil society and the church. Witnessing to Gospel nonviolence requires that we respond to such unjust and dehumanizing policies, laws, and actions targeting



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LGBTQ+ people. The presentation examined the present climate, as well as explained how Catholic peacemakers can act for LGBTQ+ equality based on our commitments to social justice.

**Pax Christi Metro New York** honored its 2023 Peacemakers at Xavier High School on June 4: Young Peacebuilder Wendy Hernandez Higarede of Cristo Rey High School, Br. Tom Egan, Prof. Kevin Ahern, and the Kings Bay Plowshares 7. Musical entertainment was provided by the Filthy Rotten System with help from Finn Ahern, Kevin's 8 year old son (left).

For more news on members, partners, local groups, campus chapters, religious communities, state and regional chapters, as well as a calendar of upcoming events, check out the Pax Christi USA website.

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## Campus engagement with Pax Christi USA

In February and March, Johnny Zokovitch was the guest speaker for the “Soup for the Soul” Lenten Series at **Saint Louis University** (St. Louis, MO). These events featured a simple meal and reflections on peacemaking in a broken world.

In March, Pax Christi USA staff members Lauren Bailey and Michelle Sherman visited **Lewis University** (Romeoville, IL) where they spent time with students, staff, and faculty to share insights on active nonviolence and offer Pax Christi information. They were joined by Pax Christi USA Ambassador of Peace Tom Cordaro.

In March, the Center for Social Concerns at the **University of Notre Dame** held a three-day conference, “Justice sown in peace,” to commemorate the 60th anniversary of *Pacem in Terris*. Keynote speakers included Pax Christi USA Teachers of Peace Marie Dennis and Sr. Helen Prejean; Marie, who serves as senior director for Pax Christi International’s Catholic Nonviolence Initiative, spoke on “Gospel nonviolence: The heart of Catholic teaching on peace” (left). Sr. Annie Killian, OP, Public Humanities Postdoctoral Fellow at the Medieval Institute at Notre Dame and member of the leadership team of Pax Christi USA Young Adult Caucus (PCYAC) and Michelle Sherman also attended.



During Holy Week in early April, staff and students from the campus group Du-Peace and Justice from **Loras College** (Dubuque, IA) visited the Pax Christi USA office while they were in Washington, DC. They spent time with staff members Lauren Bailey and Judy Coode and National Council member Josephine Garnem (right).

In late April, Michelle Sherman served as a panelist in a roundtable discussion on “What is a peacemaker today?” with juniors, seniors, and the Religious Studies faculty at the **University of Dayton** (Dayton, OH).



# Save the dates!

## **Beyond violence: Creating a culture of peace**

August 12-13, Chicago

Drawing thousands of participants from across the continent and the globe, the Parliament of World Religions will meet in August in Chicago on the theme “human rights and its global ethic.” Taking advantage of this gathering, a working group of peace-focused organizations and faith leaders has planned a pre-conference meeting entitled “**Beyond violence: Creating a culture of peace,**” with the hope that this will provide space for the next iteration of peace work to emerge. That emergence invites us to imagine creating templates for regional convenings, new research collaboratives, cross-pollination of concepts, skills and resources, and appropriate infrastructure for ongoing and strategic movement support.

- Email Cassandra Paschall (cpaschall@cvg.org) of Cure Violence Global (CVG) with “yes,” “I hope to,” or “I have a question” if your local group is interested in being part of this effort. If yes, please let CVG know if you prefer meeting at a place closer to the O'Hare Airport or in the Chicago Loop (closer to downtown).
- Kindly reply as soon as possible to ensure you will receive new information as it becomes available.

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## **The annual Catholic Nonviolence Days of Action**

September 21-October 2

Find resources on the CNI page on our website to plan an event in your community.

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## **Catholic Nonviolence Initiative Fall Series: The intersection of nonviolence and care for creation**

Mondays, October 2-30, online

Last fall, a five-part series of online sessions on the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative (CNI, a project of Pax Christi International) was accessed by more than 30 professors and 250 students from Catholic universities across the United States. (Recordings of these sessions are available at <https://cniseries.info>.)



In October, a second series, organized by Pax Christi USA's Michelle Sherman, David Mueller of Casa Esther Catholic Worker (Omro, WI), and Eliane Lakam of DC Peace Team and the Pax Christi Young Adult Caucus, will be offered with a focus on the climate crisis, a primary concern for most students. The series will explore the connection between violence and the environmental crisis, with the understanding that an effective response to this crisis requires nonviolent solutions and strategies.

The sessions will be offered each Monday in October, 7 PM Eastern:

- October 2: Theological foundations of environmental justice
- October 9: The multifaceted nature and realities of environmental violence
- October 16: The ecological impact of military spending and war
- October 23: Young Catholic climate activists on the frontlines of advancing nonviolence
- October 30: Mobilizing for a *Laudato Si'* and nonviolent future: Hope for radical ecological conversion and collective liberation.

The series is designed for university students, staff, and faculty, but the recordings and study guides will be available to all. Check the Pax Christi USA website in the coming weeks for more information.

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## **Called to Be Peacemakers retreat**

October 7, 2023, 10:00 AM-12:00 PM Eastern

Stay tuned for more information on a special virtual retreat from Pax Christi USA and the Bergamo Center for Lifelong Learning. Participants will reflect on *Pacem in Terris* and peacemaking today, and will be led through prayer, reflection, and action by leaders in Pax Christi USA and artisans of peace.