Pax Christi USA recognizes 2008 Teachers of Peace, Eileen Egan Peacemaker Award recipients

Pax Christi USA is proud to announce that Mary Joan and Jerry Park are the recipients of this year’s Pax Christi USA 2008 Teacher of Peace Award. Each year, Pax Christi USA honors an outstanding peacemaker with the Teacher of Peace Award, in the tradition of Thea Bowman, Cesar Chávez, Dorothy Day, and Pope Paul VI. This award recognizes women and men whose lives and work exemplify the theme of Pope Paul VI’s World Day of Peace message, “To reach peace, teach peace.”

Mary Joan and Jerry are the founders and directors of Little Friends for Peace, a Mom-Dad team dedicated to teaching non-violence skills to young children with playful skill-building activities by training their adult and teen leaders. Trained as teachers and counselors, they are the parents of 6 children and founded Little Friends in 1981. They have trained thousands of children and caregivers. They are longtime Pax Christi USA members and reside in the Washington, D.C. area.

Mary Joan and Jerry will be recognized by Pax Christi USA at a special event in Washington, D.C., at the National 4H Center, on Saturday evening, September 20, 2008.

Also being honored at the event will be the Rev. Vien The Nguyen, of Mary Queen of Vietnam Church in New Orleans. Rev. Nguyen will receive a special recognition by Pax Christi USA, the Eileen Egan Peacemaker Award. The Eileen Egan Peacemaker Award is given periodically to honor a group or individual who has made a strong and extraordinary prophetic witness for peace in a time or situation of devastating violence or injustice. The award is named for Eileen Egan, one of the co-founders of Pax Christi USA, a long-time executive with Catholic Relief Services (which gives an annual Eileen Egan award for excellence in Catholic journalism) and friend to both Dorothy Day and Mother Teresa. The recipient of the Eileen Egan Peacemaker Award exhibits the same spirit which we associate with Eileen: steady courage to speak the truth of nonviolence in a world addicted to war-making, deep compassion for the victims of violence and poverty, and unshakeable perseverance to change the world for the better.

During Hurricane Katrina, Rev. Nguyen and his church gave shelter to over 500 people, primarily of Vietnamese descent living in East New Orleans. Following the storm, Rev. Nguyen has been a leader in seeking justice for the people of New Orleans, working to rebuild neighborhoods, and mobilizing his parish community to be advocates and activists in the process.

Please check the Pax Christi USA website, www.paxchristiusa.org, in the weeks to come for more information about this event.