

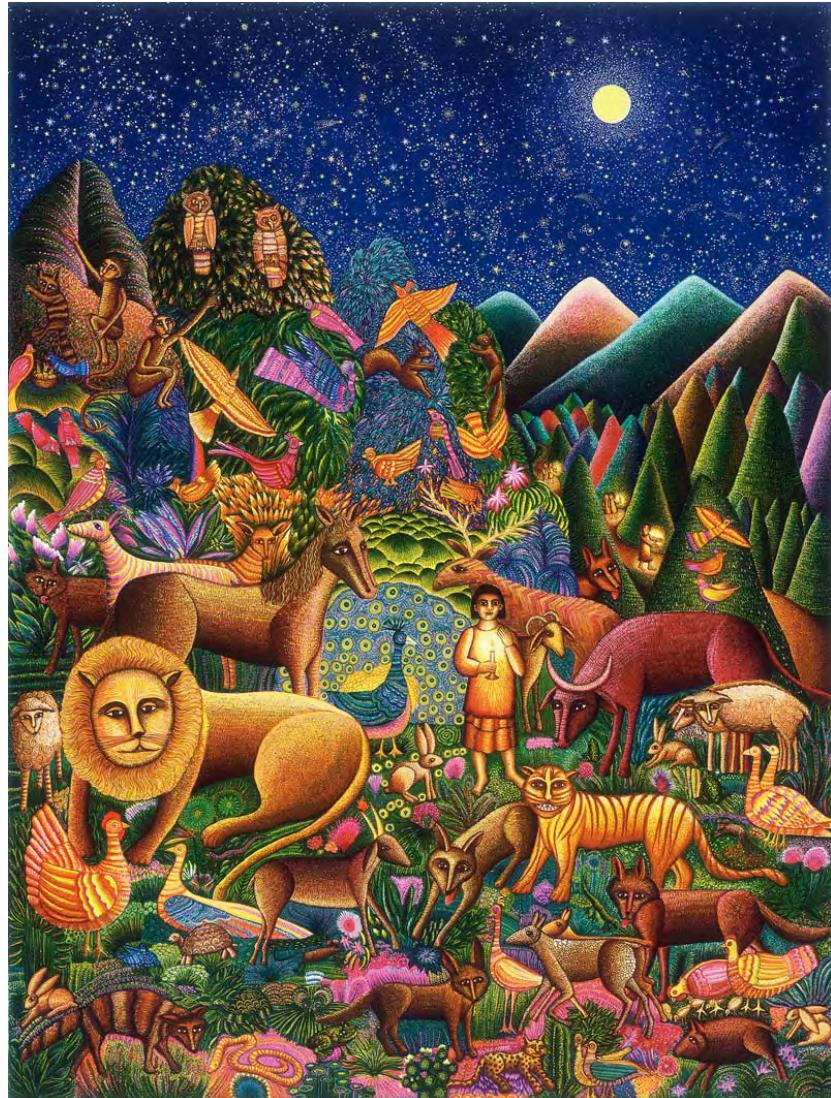
Advent Hope

by Jerry Folk

The Christian community begins a New Year on November 29, the First Sunday of Advent. One of the dominant themes of Advent is hope. For most of its history, the church has interpreted this Advent hope as the hope of entering heaven after we die. But Advent hope is the hope proclaimed by Jesus, for whose birth the Advent Season prepares Christians. The hope Jesus offers is not just hope for life in heaven after we die but hope for new life together here and now on earth. At the very heart of Jesus' ministry is the announcement that the Reign of God is breaking into this world, creating a radically new reality among us here and now. It should not be surprising that Jesus understood hope in this way, since as a Jew he was heir to the Hebrew prophets' hope for Israel and, especially in Isaiah, for the whole world.

Jesus calls all who hear and believe his message to become a community through which God's reign breaks into the world by relating to others and to all creation in the way Jesus did. That is in the way of love, which brings healing and reconciliation to the world. The Jewish idea of Tikkun Olam, which Rabbi Laurie Zimmerman explains so beautifully in this newsletter, reflects a similar hope for the world and a similar vision of humanity's calling to repair and heal this broken world.

There have always been Christians as well as Buddhists, Muslims, Jews, and atheists who lived this way of love courageously and sometimes heroically. We think of people like Martin Luther King, Jr., John Lewis, Mahatma Gandhi, Dorothy Day, or those who, like Dietrich Bonhoeffer and



Jesuit priest Fr. Alfred Delp, were martyred for their resistance to the demonic Nazi regime. But there are people like this living among us today of whom very few of us have heard. This newsletter includes stories about two groups of such people in whose courageous witness for peace we see God's reign breaking out among us. One of these groups, the peace activists who protested drone warfare at Volk Field in November 2019, is with us right here in Wisconsin. In this newsletter, we share the peace witness which one of these activists, Fr. Jim Murphy, gave in court explaining his action.



Plowshares activist Carmen Trotta, center, leads a vigil for ending the war and humanitarian crisis in Yemen at Tompkins Square Park, in New York City, on Nov. 14, 2020. Photo: Elise Swain, The Intercept

Plowshares Seven Sentenced

Excepted from an article by Elise Swain in the November 16, 2020 issue of The Intercept.

More than two years ago, Carmen Trotta and Martha Hennessy,* two of seven activists known as the Kings Bay Plowshares Seven, peacefully broke into the naval base in Brunswick, Georgia to protest the suspected nuclear arsenal housed within. Armed only with vials of their own blood, hammers, GoPro cameras, spray paint, protest banners, and whistleblower Daniel Ellsberg's book, the activists symbolically attempted to disarm the nuclear weapons located on the Trident submarines at the base. This nonviolent direct action took place on the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr.

All but one of the activists, charged with three felonies—conspiracy, destruction of government property, depredation—and misdemeanor trespassing, have been sentenced in their faith-based battle with the U.S. government over the immoral possession of nuclear weapons. Earlier in November, Trotta, 58; Hennessy, 65; along with Clare Grady, 62, were sentenced by Judge Lisa Godbey Wood. Trotta got 14 months, Grady got 12 months and one day, and Hennessy got 10 months; all were ordered to pay restitution and were given years of supervised release.

The sentencing—sending aging activists to federal prisons amid the COVID-19 pandemic—fits within the long history of the U.S. government throwing the book at people of conscience who dare to protest the bipartisan consensus that supports the U.S. military-industrial complex.

Prison is a barbaric punishment, and the

possibility of death and major illness from COVID-19 has only made incarceration all the more brutal, especially since U.S. officials have, and continue to, mishandle containing the pandemic in prisons across the country.

These activists, though, accepted the length of the sentences with grace and compassion for the less fortunate. "I'm hoping that with the amount of time that I've been given...I will be there only briefly and then...will be sent either to a halfway house or home confinement," Hennessy told The Intercept. "But there are millions of people who are trapped and contracting COVID-19 and dying in the prison system," she said. "Ninety percent of prisoners are people dealing with violence, trauma, poverty, addiction, neglect, abuse in childhood—and this is how we're treating them?"

**Martha Hennessy, granddaughter of Dorothy Day, is a main contributor to the current Pax Christi USA booklet, [Reflections for Advent & Christmas 2020](#). She marks the 40th Anniversary of the death of her grandmother on Nov. 29 with these words: "Our task of watchfulness will always be with us...My mother Tamar watched with her mother Dorothy, as my grandmother's death drew near. It was in the evening that she passed on to God, her life given over to loving the least among us...We are being scourged with war, pestilence, and famine. It has been 18 years since the destruction of Iraq and 5 years of the bombing and starving of Yemen. Our own streets are now reflecting these sins...There is nothing to do but repent in this opening moment of Advent."*

Witness for Peace

by Fr. Jim Murphy

Fr. Jim Murphy was one of seven peace activists who last year walked onto the Air National Guard Base at Volk Field, not far from Madison, wearing black veils, carrying limp dolls and posters of children killed by drones, and reading a statement. They were arrested by Juneau County officers, handcuffed, and taken to the station in Mauston, where they were cited for trespassing and released. At their trial on November 16, 2020, Father Jim Murphy submitted the following statement to Judge Stacy Smith explaining his action.

Your Honor, I would like to thank you for allowing a joint trial for myself and six co-defendants. Thank you for scheduling adequate time for us to present a case that represents our legal and moral demands to speak up for those attacked by U.S. military and CIA drones. I regret that I cannot safely be with you for this trial due to the numbers of COVID-19 cases in my community and throughout the State of Wisconsin. Please allow me to communicate the reasons for my actions on November 12, 2019, which led to the charge of trespass to land at Volk Field, Camp Douglas, WI.

I am a Catholic priest serving parishes in Highland and Montfort WI. I feel compelled to speak up about the training of military drone pilots that takes place at Volk Field. If I remain silent, I am complicit in the killing of civilians that results from the surveillance and firing of missiles from military drones.

I come to this position from guidance of the Vatican, U.S. Catholic Bishops and U.S. citizens from around our country. Msgr. Silvano M. Tomasi, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations, stated on November 13, 2014 regarding use of armed drones: "We are witnessing a certain proliferation of this technology and a growing use of it in various conflicts. The challenges are multiple and related to international humanitarian law, to human rights and to international law. The



ethical implications are not insignificant. The choice of indifference in relation to this question is counterproductive. The fact of not addressing problems at the right moment can have disastrous consequences." Archbishop Tomasi continues: "the development of complex autonomous weapon systems which remove the human actor from lethal decision-making is short-sighted and may irreversibly alter the nature of warfare in a less humane direction."

Pope Francis addressed the United Nations...on September 25, 2020 stating: "At present, we are witnessing an erosion of multilateralism, which is all the more serious in light of the development of new forms of military technology, such as lethal autonomous weapons systems, which irreversibly alter the nature of warfare, detaching it further from human agency. We need to dismantle the perverse logic that links personal and national security to the possession of weaponry."

The Catholic peace organization Pax Christi International has issued a statement on military drones. They say: "... recent studies...present significant evidence that US drone strikes have killed hundreds of civilians and injured many more. Furthermore, the 24-hour-a-day hovering by drones over communities unable to protect themselves in any way has terrorized men, women, and children; caused tremendous anxiety and psychological trauma among civilian

communities; and disrupted essential community activities... these studies suggest that US drone strikes have undermined US relationships in the region, especially with Pakistanis, facilitated recruitment to violent non-state armed groups and motivated further violent attacks. Furthermore, a serious lack of government transparency about drone strikes hampers ongoing monitoring and public accountability."

Catholic Bishop Richard E. Pates addressed the Interfaith Conference on Drone Warfare January 23, 2015 saying; "As our committee, the US Catholic Bishops' Committee on International Justice and Peace, examined what was happening in Afghanistan and Pakistan, it was hard to ignore the increasing number of drone strikes and civilians mistakenly killed by drones- members of a wedding party, a grandmother picking vegetables, shoppers at a market."

For nine years, I have joined a monthly legal witness at the gates of Volk Field. Our signs attempt to communicate the surveillance and subsequent attacks by military drones kill civilians- illegal under international law. During this time, we have addressed letters to three different commanders seeking a meeting to express our concerns. Likewise, we as citizens have

followed procedures to obtain a meeting with our members of Congress to address our legal and moral objections to military drones- without any response to a proposed discussion. The action of entering Volk Field property was far from my first effort to express my concern regarding the evil of military drones.

Peacemakers in other States with military drone training have ongoing efforts, legal and those involving arrest, to voice moral and legal objection to these vehicles that unleash weapons that cannot be recalled and thus result in the injury and death to innocent children and adults.

Now over 90 other nations have military drones. We are now threatened by lethal violence of military drones that are cheap, readily available and indiscriminate in the death they dole out. I cannot sit idly by and be complicit in use of

technology that kills in my name. It is my duty as a citizen and one who values human life to stand up and question weapons used on my behalf.

Thank you,
Fr. James H. Murphy



Economic Conference Hosted By Pope Francis

What would a global economy that puts people and the planet first look like? That's a central question more than 2,000 young economists and entrepreneurs from 120 countries are exploring at the Economy of Francesco, a three-day virtual conference centered in Assisi, Italy, and hosted by the Vatican at the invitation of Pope Francis. The conference, which began November 19, aims to formulate a new economic vision, one that deemphasizes growth and profit and prioritizes justice, equity and caring for the poor and the common planetary home.

Among the participants are Nobel Prize-winning Bangladeshi economist Muhammad Yunus, Indian physicist and environmental activist Vandana Shiva, Brazilian liberation theologian Leonardo Boff, philosopher and economist Sr.

Cécile Renouard, and economist Jeffrey Sachs, director of the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network. But the majority of participants are under age 35, tuning in from Brazil, Italy, Mexico, Spain, the United States and elsewhere across the globe.

To read more about this conference click [here](#).

"The reign of God...is already in process, is already being established (on earth). It takes place in concrete modifications of actual life."

Leonardo Boff,
An Advent Sourcebook

Jesus and Love of Enemy

by Duane Beachey



Christians all claim to follow the Bible and its teachings—some a lot more literally than others. But even the most literal, maybe especially the most literal, who take everything from Genesis to Revelation quite literally, often do not at all take literally some of the core teachings of Jesus.

For example, you can go to many churches all your life and never hear a sermon on the dangers and the temptations and evils of wealth. Yet Jesus talked about that all the time.

The Christian church has been even more intent on ignoring what Jesus had to say about loving our enemies, praying for them, and blessing them. Either it reinterprets Jesus' words as not including our nation's enemies but only personal enemies, finds other texts in the books of the Bible shared by Jews and Christians (the "Old" Testament in Christian terms) that contradict Jesus, or interprets Paul's words about the government in Romans 13 in ways that neutralize and allow us to ignore what Jesus says about loving our enemies.

One problem with thinking Jesus was only talking about personal relationships when he told his listeners to love their enemies is that he rejected the common understanding that the Messiah would lead a war of liberation to free the land of Israel from Roman occupation. Pretty much everyone around Jesus, including his own disciples and mother, subscribed to this

understanding. So, when Jesus rejected this role and told his listeners to love their enemies, the people would certainly have understood that this command included the Roman occupier.

Although Jesus rejected the role of the Messiah as a nationalistic warrior, the New Testament suggests it was an attractive temptation that followed him all the way to Gethsemane. Even on the night of his arrest he prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, "Abba God, if it is possible let this cup pass from me" but ended his prayer with the words "Not my will but yours be done." Just a little later, when Peter takes a sword to a man's ear, he rejected this temptation once and for all and accepted his cup. "Put away your sword. Those who take the sword will perish by the sword," he told Peter.

The New Testament does, indeed, see Jesus as a king, but it also makes very clear that he is a different kind of king, one who refuses to establish his rule through violence. But Jesus' kingdom is not far off in some heavenly world that awaits us at death. It is breaking in among us here and now. Jesus calls his followers to be those through whom the reign of God breaks into our world, sometimes by engaging in courageous and transformative acts of nonviolent resistance like those of Mahatma Gandhi and the protestors whose actions are described in this newsletter. He also teaches us to pray for its coming by including the petition "Your kingdom come and your will be done on the earth" in the prayer He taught us.

"My offense is that I believed in Germany and her eventual emergence from this dark hour of error and distress; that I refused to accept that accumulation of arrogance, pride, and force that is the Nazi way of life, and that I did this as a Christian and a Jesuit."

Fr. Alfred Delp, SJ

"Tikkun Olam: The Jewish Imperative to Repair the World"

by Rabbi Laurie Zimmerman



A well-known rabbinic text teaches, "Al shloshah d'varim ha-olam omed. Al ha-Torah, v'al ha'avodah, v'al gemilut chasadim—The world stands on three things: On Torah, on prayer, and on loving deeds."

Judaism teaches that it is not enough to study and pray—we are obligated to go out into the world and get involved in the society we live in, to roll up our sleeves and do loving deeds for others.

In recent years, U.S. Jews have argued that while loving deeds are an essential part of Judaism, we also need activism, social justice, and a commitment to politics. Instead of working outside Jewish tradition, we have expanded the very notion of what it means to be dedicated to Jewish spiritual and ethical teachings. We understand that generosity and compassion for those in need is crucial, but it is not sufficient in and of itself. We also have a responsibility to engage in the world of justice, to repair what is broken in our world.

Many U.S. Jews use the term tikkun olam or repair of the world to express this commitment to social justice. It dates back as far as the Mishnah, the body of classical rabbinic teachings codified around 200 C.E. It is part of the Aleynu prayer which is recited at the end of most services.

The concept of tikkun olam figures most prominently in Lurianic kabbalah, or Jewish

mysticism. In a text from the 16th century, Rabbi Isaac Luria describes the very beginning of the world when God contracted part of God's self into vessels of light which then allowed the world

to be created. The light was so intense, however, that the vessels shattered and their shards became sparks of light trapped within the material of creation. Because these vessels shattered and the light dispersed, the world contains

brokenness. A contemporary explanation of this text is that only by engaging in the work of making our world a better place can we unite these sparks of divine light and repair the world.

Some Jews are compelled to create a better world because of Jewish ethical teachings such as these. Others draw on their experience as immigrants or the children or grandchildren of immigrants in the United States over the 20th century – we grew up on stories of our families fleeing persecution and therefore must work so all people are safe.

Regardless, creating a world rooted in kindness and justice is a central Jewish teaching and a sacred obligation among many U.S. Jews of the 21st century.



Engaging the Powers and Principalities

by Frederick Trost

"Are we capable of re-formation and of engaging the powers and principalities of our time with the gospel of peace? Have we the courage to confront the lies and arrogance that mark so much of our national dialogue? Are we willing to study our texts, to bend our knees and say our prayers, to respond to the One who continues to call us to faith, hope, and love? What shall we say of the wilting of the soul and the grinding

assault on humane instincts in a society that so often appears indifferent to the contradictions of the gospel many of us learned as children? What shall we make of the descent into hell we observe taking place around us? What shall we do with the burning wish to get away from it all, to retreat to places of safety, to hide our eyes from what is now taking place in our name?"



Dr. Vincent C. Kavaloski—philosopher, author, musician, and peace activist—who died on September 20, was a member of the Interfaith Peace Working Group and a regular contributor to this newsletter. In his memory we are printing one of the last poems he wrote, *A Few Precious Things*, with which he concluded his remarks to friends and family gathered on the occasion of his retirement from Edgewood College in December 2018.

Last Lesson: A Few Precious Things

by Vince Kavaloski

There are some few precious things that death cannot destroy,
Lies cannot corrupt, violence cannot defeat, suffering cannot
overwhelm, and money cannot buy.

There are and always have been some few precious things.

What are some of these precious things?

The mighty winds of love,
The hunger for justice,
The sustaining warmth of simple kindness,
The ineffable joy of peace, and
The thirst for understanding.

There are these precious things hidden amidst the horrors
and suffering of the world.

Never let anyone, no matter how high up in status, convince
you otherwise, thereby throwing you into a desert of
nihilism and despair.

Because living deeply shows there really are these few
redeeming things:

Love, Peace, Kindness, Justice, Understanding
And they save our souls in the infinite waters of God's love.

Connect With Us

If you have questions, comments, concerns, or information about a peace-related group or event, please contact us at interfaithpeaceworkinggroup@gmail.com, by calling (608) 514-2811, or by mail to 1433 Wyldewood Drive, Madison, WI 53704.

If you want to support our work, donations can be sent to:

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