

## **Abstracted Reference Books**

### **Kownacki, Mary Lou OSB, *The Nonviolent Moment: Spirituality for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century***

Available from Pax Christi [info@paxchristiusa.org](mailto:info@paxchristiusa.org) 814-453-4955  
Item No. 523-473 \$8

In light of our Growing In Nonviolence decrees, this book would be perfect to use alone or with a group for study, reflection and deeper action. The book is based on the Prayer that Kownacki wrote for Pax Christi to commemorate the Decade of Non-violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010. Many of us have used this prayer. The book goes through the prayer piece by piece with a meditation, poetry readings, and reflection questions to ponder or discuss, along with possible action suggestions to go deeper, if one is so led. The book can help provide a personal transformational process for re-examining a spirituality of nonviolence that is needed to heal the suffering of our times.

*Abstract provided by Annie Welch, CSJP-A*

### **Dear, John SJ, *Mary of Nazareth, Prophet of Peace***

Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, Indiana 2003

This slim book is the fruit of an Advent retreat the author gave in 2001. He looks at Mary as a prophet of peace and reflects on three glimpses of her from the Gospel of Luke to experience the power of her prayer and to model for us peace and nonviolence. Through the story of the Annunciation we encounter her as a woman of contemplative nonviolence. In the story of the Visitation we see her witness to active nonviolence, while her prayer, the Magnificat, exemplifies prophetic nonviolence.

It is a timely book for us as we are challenged to live a life of peace and nonviolence which is steeped in prayer. The book is enhanced by evocative icons by William Hart McNichols'. It is an excellent contemplative read for Advent or any other time of the year.

*Abstract provided by Alexandra Kovats, CSJP*

### **Wallis, Jim, *Cloud of Witnesses***

Orbis Books, 2005

## **Book Abstracts**

Provided for April 2010 CSGs

**Creating Just Language** , Eighth Day Center for Justice: Chicago, IL (1999)

This 54 page booklet reflects our changing consciousness about God and all our relationships. It points out exclusive and violent language that obstructs peace and raises awareness about sexist, militaristic and racist language. It provides insights about creating just language as well as examples and exercises to grow into new ways of communicating. For me, it is an essential companion for consciousness raising and practicality as we walk the way of peace and justice.

**Cloud of Witnesses**, Jim Wallis & Joyce Hollyday, eds. Revised Edition. (Orbis, 2005)

This book makes easy reading as it tells the stories of 35 historic and contemporary witnesses of peace and justice. Many of the essays originally appeared in Sojourners magazine as interviews with the witnesses (Some like St. Francis were not live interviews.) The essays are arranged in groups associated with the eight beatitudes and include favorites like Francis of Assisi (Poor in Spirit) to some contemporary voices like Joan Chittister (Pure in Heart). Most of the essays are about 20th century personalities many of whom are not well known. One of my favorites is the story of Dom Helder Camera inviting the assassin sent to kill him, in for a cup of coffee. What non-violent courage! Beyers Naude (Merciful) stood up against his fellow Reformed Afrikaners to bear witness to the truth of the Gospel-that apartheid was not a sign of God's kingdom. Sojourner Truth (Hunger and thirst for Righteousness), a plain spoken African-American contemporary of Margaret Anna was not only a vocal advocate for abolition of slavery, but a leader in the women's suffrage movement. The essays are usually less than ten pages, and the volume is full of great stories of personal courage and commitment to peace that made a difference in the lives of their contemporaries.

**Strength to Love**, Martin Luther King Jr. (Fortress Press, 1981)

This 150 page volume is a collection of fifteen of Dr. King's best sermons. According to Coretta, many people told her their lives were changed by these words first published in 1963. Not surprisingly, Dr. King brings the light of the Gospel so clearly to contemporary situations in the soaring rhetoric for which he is so famous. And while the sermons sometimes seem to be more commentary on the problems of his day, he never fails to bring the hearer home to faith in the God's divine plan. "The arc of the moral universe is long, but bends toward justice." He shares his deep theological insights. In "The Death of Evil Upon the Seashore", he reflects on the presence of evil in the world, saying that the evil is a result of our own acts, not because of God's will. That essay was particularly affirming. We hear him clearly apply the principles of non-violence to the struggles of

his life. Can you imagine responding non-violently to dogs sent to attack schoolchildren? Among the best of these best sermons were “Loving your enemies”, “A Knock at Midnight” where he talks about his insight in prayer that allowed him to calmly face the bombing of his home a few days later, and “Our God is Able.” His final essay, “Pilgrimage to Nonviolence” might be a great place to start. It is a book to keep handy to reread parts of it often.

***HOW GOD CHANGES YOUR BRAIN: Breakthrough Findings from a Leading Neuroscientist***, Andrew Newberg and Mark Robert Waldman, (Ballantine, 2009)

Doctor Waldman describes the intersections he has found in the brain between spirituality and cognitive function. Having spent years scanning the brains of Franciscan sisters whose long lives involved 30-60 minutes of meditation each day, as well as Pentecostals speaking in tongues Dr. Waldman noticed what parts of the brain were engaged, and how it improved cognitive function. He proceeded to invite an early onset Alzheimer’s patient named Gus into the study to see if the impact of forms of meditation could improve memory and cognition. And it did. After two weeks of meditating twelve minutes of a day, Gus began to show measurable improvement in his brain scan. Meditation included regulated breathing, a mantra, finger movements (which he describes as similar to running rosary beads through your fingers) and the use of soothing meditative music. After eight weeks of meditating, Gus had greater clarity of thought, more peace, and a 50% improvement in memory.

More to our charism, the writers explain how we can exercise our brain to regulate the amygdale, a primitive part of the brain which produces fear and anger. By meditating we nurture that more recently developed part of our brain (the name escapes me -I’d better increase my mediation time) which produces chemical reactions in our bodies that induce feeling of peace, serenity and oneness. In other words, through meditation, we can train our brains to create peace within us. Prayer and meditation are also high on the list of ways to exercise our brains-along with a good yawn, or an involved conversation with another person. God is not rigidly defined and creative imagination is part of the recommended therapy.

This book provided fascinating reading that offers great hope and direction for becoming more peaceful, and perhaps as a bonus, putting off some of those “senior moments” of forgetfulness.