



pursuing justice, we
seek god's gift of peace.

spring 2011

Living peace

congregation of the sisters of st. joseph of peace

What's Done Can't
Be Undone
page 4

John Dear on
Nonviolence
page 8

Planting Seeds for
Nonviolent Change
page 11

growing
in nonviolence



in this issue



Living Peace is a biannual publication of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace. If you no longer wish to receive *Living Peace*, please contact Linda Hanson at lhanson@csjp-olp.org or 425-451-1770.

Copyright: Articles in *Living Peace* may be reprinted. Please include the following on reprints: "Reprinted with permission from the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace, 125 Michigan Avenue, NE, Washington, DC 20017, www.csjp.org" Please send us a copy of the reprinted article.

Jan Linley, Editor

Editorial Board

Eileen Byrne, CSJP
Susan Dewitt, CSJP
Jane Ellis, CSJP-A
Terrence Moran, CSJP-A
Coralie Muzzy, CSJP

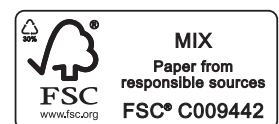
Cover Photograph

The photo on the cover was taken by Zoltan Fabian in the medieval coastal city of Dubrovnik, Croatia. He was looking for a cross in the sky that was not too balanced or severe. It was not until after he took the shot that he realized there was a bird in the center of the cross.

Design

Beth Ponticello, CEDC, www.cedc.org

- 3 Message from Congregation Leadership
by Kristin Funari, CSJP
- 3 The Power to Effect Change
by Jan Linley
- 4 What's Done Can't Be Undone – Prison Ministry
by Hilda Baxter, CSJP
- 5 All I Did Was Walk Across a Line:
Miriam Spencer, CSJP - Prisoner for Justice
by Susan Dewitt, CSJP
- 6 Growing in Nonviolence through the Immigration
Detention System
by Frank McCann, CSJP-A
- 7 Violence in Our Sacred Scriptures
by Alexandra Kovats, CSJP
- 8 John Dear on Nonviolence
- 11 Planting Seeds for Nonviolent Change
by Susan Francois, CSJP
- 12 If It Is to Be, It Is Up to Me
by Annie Welch, CSJP-A
- 13 Poverty, Violence and Healthcare
by Andrea Nenzel, CSJP
- 14 Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace Ministries
- 16 History and Roots
by Ross Fewing



Message from Congregation Leadership

by Kristin Funari, CSJP

“You are going to gather your resources and take a stand and not be afraid and become an even greater community of peace, a voice of peace, the presence of peace in our poor church, our poor country, our poor world.” (John Dear’s Address to the CSJP General Chapter 2008)

Living into the gospel of nonviolence seems a daunting task given the endemic and insidious nature of violence in our world. Where do we begin? What does it take for our hearts and minds to be broken open in order to see and live more deeply this way of peace?

Not to become paralyzed in the face of the genocide, fratricide and unimaginable physical and emotional brutality fed to us daily through the media is no mean feat. On the best of days the violence perpetrated upon our Mother Earth and the trumping of reverence for her in the name of profit and consumption is overwhelming.

Where do we find hope and direction in our desire for peace and a nonviolent world? The painful lesson of how long and circuitous our conversion to nonviolence can be was brought home to me in a recent visit to El Salvador. I was privileged to journey through relationships established over 30 years ago when our sisters first responded to an invitation to witness to peace through justice in the midst of

a civil war. There in the refugee camp of Calle Real, later in El Despertar and now in PazSalud and Centro Arte para la Paz a story of violence, struggle and unspent tears was laid before me.

I visited with families whose relationships with our sisters have spanned these many years. Their gentleness, hospitality and commitment to the common good were a sure sign of the ushering in of God’s reign. Armando and Ramon were young boys labeled “guerrillas” during that war. They bore the physical scars of wounds inflicted by armed conflict and hid the deeper ones indelibly seared into their hearts. They are reclaiming their lives of husbandry in the rich soil of Tamanique, all that they ever really wanted. Rosita, a double amputee and mother of three, lives in a remote village in a one room dwelling amidst dust, very poor soil, no running water or electricity. On the door of her home she has a small poster glued to the entrance which reads, “We are protagonists for the new hope.”

This is where nonviolence begins, deep in the recesses of our own hearts, where suffering seen through the eyes of the poor leaves us without words and calls us to embrace our vulnerability. We are called to another way and we must embrace it.

The Power to Effect Change

by Jan Linley

Violence, in its many forms, has become so much a part of the fabric of our lives and our world that it can be hard to connect the dots between cause and effect. Are the roots of violence found in poverty, injustice (economic, social, racial, environmental and political), addiction, pure evil, or all or any combination of these? It is difficult to imagine eradicating something that is now systemic. What are the flames that stoke the fires of violence and where do we find the water to douse them and nurture the seeds of nonviolence?

In this issue we look at ways to counteract violence by growing in nonviolence, a commitment the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace made at their 21st General Chapter. John Dear, who has devoted his life to nonviolence, believes we can all make a difference in the transformation from violence to nonviolence. In fact, he says, “it is the most urgent, pressing need facing each one of us.” In talking with John, he shared a number of ways to practice nonviolence. Likewise, reflecting on violence in our sacred scriptures, Sr. Alexandra Kovats offers strategies for facing into the violence in order to choose the ways of nonviolence.

Detention is inextricably—often regrettably—linked to violence and is a thread in three articles in this issue. Sr. Hilda Baxter writes about her prison ministry, Associate Frank McCann grows in nonviolence by working with

people in the immigration detention system, and Sr. Susan Dewitt tells the story of Sr. Miriam Spencer’s arrest at the age of 75 for protesting the School of the Americas.

Gandhi said we will have to begin with the children if there is to be real peace in the world. Sr. Susan Francois shows that teaching eighth graders about child labor and justice makes a difference, and Associate Annie Welch encourages second graders to make nonviolent choices using a conflict wheel, hand signals and options like “rock, paper, scissors.”

Sr. Andrea Nenzel writes about the link between poverty and violence in healthcare. In “History and Roots,” Ross Fewing, a PeaceHealth employee, takes us back to the founding of the hospital and the Sisters’ roots in nonviolence. We’ve also inserted an Examination of Consciousness in this issue which helps us practice nonviolence, and perhaps will do the same for you.

I hope you will find within these pages a place to begin or continue on the journey of growing in nonviolence. Transformative change occurs where vision and hope meet faith and action. We have only to look at recent events in the Middle East to be reminded that our thoughts, words and actions have the power to effect radical nonviolent transformation—person by person, moment by moment, deed by deed.

What's Done Can't Be Undone – Prison Ministry

by Hilda Baxter, CSJP

Trasna is an Irish word that means across or crossing place. Last year, while in transition from Provincial Leadership in our region in the United Kingdom, I experienced feelings of my own Trasna, standing at a new 'crossing place.' I felt a call to prison ministry. God's ways of guiding us while we ponder our heart's yearnings can take us by surprise, challenge and enable us to move forward in faith. Responding to this call, I volunteer two days weekly at Wormwood Scrubs High Security Prison in London. This prison accommodates over one thousand prisoners. Various faiths have chaplaincy teams and I serve on the Catholic team. My role is to visit individuals who make a request for a pastoral visit regardless of their religious persuasion.

Wormwood Scrubs building is very daunting and overpowering. First I go through a procedure at the Staff Entrance and I am given keys. I unlock many doors and gates to reach the wings, after which I have many further locked doors and stairways to negotiate before reaching the prisoners. On arrival I am pleasantly surprised to discover how 'ordinary' these prisoners appear. Over the months I have come to know a few of them and realise we have much in common. We all share the same human dignity and human frailty. Being made in the image and likeness of God they call forth my compassion, love and respect and, like me, they stand in need of the redeeming love of Jesus.

Pope Benedict, following a meeting with prisoners wrote, "prisoners easily can be overwhelmed by feelings of isolation, shame and rejection that threaten to shatter their hopes and aspirations for the future." I have found this to be true in my interactions with some of the prisoners I visit. I am the only visitor some of them have. During the limited time I have with each of them I try to listen, to hear and understand the depth of their feelings and frustrations and by so doing enable them to discover their own dignity and self-worth. Their long dreary hours in isolation in their cells can be quite devastating and distressing. Their past memories of chaotic and troubled lives and the circumstances that led to their initial offending and their incarceration often become an unbearable burden to them. Some share with me their feelings of desolation and pain arising from the guilt they now experience. Sometimes this strikes me as a form of personal violence that they inflict on themselves. I try to help them see that 'what's done can't be undone' but we believe in a God of love who is all forgiving. I encourage them to forgive themselves and start afresh. Gandhi reminds us that the practice of nonviolence calls forth the greatest courage. And this is certainly true in my experience. My encounter with them is a privileged and humbling experience, one which makes me recognise and value the gift of my own inner peace.

Through prison ministry I have become aware of the compassion and humane approach that prevails. Alongside the structure and curtailment, I have found staff to be very courteous, obliging and helpful and prisoners gentle and friendly. Perhaps it was violence that led these prisoners to be incarcerated but it seems often in the depths of their depression they find God. This to me is a wonderful manifestation that God created us and became one of us and no matter what befalls us the Gracious Divine Presence is within our reach. I hope and trust that my ministry in the prison will help me fulfil our founding spirit that "calls us to further the work of peace." (*Constitution 10*)



*"Remember those who
are in prison, as though
you were in prison with
them; those who are
being mistreated, as
though you yourselves
were suffering."*

- Hebrews 13:3

From the SOA Watch website

SOA Watch is an independent organization that seeks to close the US Army School of the Americas, under whatever name it is called, through vigils and fasts, demonstrations and nonviolent protest, as well as media and legislative work.

On November 16, 1989, six Jesuit priests, their co-worker and her teenage daughter were massacred in El Salvador. A U.S. Congressional Task Force reported that those responsible were trained at the U.S. Army School of the Americas (SOA) at Ft. Benning, Georgia.

In 1990 SOA Watch began in a tiny apartment outside the main gate of Ft. Benning. While starting with a small group, SOA Watch quickly drew upon the knowledge and experience of many in the U.S. who had worked with the people of Latin America in the 1970's and 80's.

Today, the SOA Watch movement is a large, diverse, grassroots movement rooted in solidarity with the people of Latin America. The goal of SOA Watch is to close the SOA and to change U.S. foreign policy in Latin America by educating the public, lobbying Congress and participating in creative, nonviolent resistance. The Pentagon has responded to the growing movement and Congress' near closure of the SOA with a PR campaign to give the SOA a new image. In an attempt to disassociate the school with its horrific past, the SOA was renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation in January of 2001.

www.soaw.org

All I Did Was Walk Across a Line

Miriam Spencer, CSJP-Prisoner for Justice

by Susan Dewitt, CSJP

In November, 2000 Sister Miriam Spencer

went to Fort Benning, Georgia, for the third time to join with those calling for the closure of the School of the Americas (now known as The Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation), the U.S. Army training program for Latin American military. SOA graduates include many officers known to be responsible for massacres, murders, disappearances, and repression in Latin America, and Miriam was committed to joining SOA Watch's (see sidebar) nonviolent yearly demonstration protesting this use of taxpayer dollars.



Miriam signed up to be a peacekeeper for the demonstration, and she walked across the property line at Fort Benning in company with other SOA Watch participants. Because she had received a "ban and bar" order two years earlier, she, along with 20 other protestors, faced federal trespassing charges.

At her trial, Miriam said, "I belong to the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace. The Constitutions of my community call on us to confront oppressive situations. Because of personal experience in Latin America, I feel called to confront this one."

At the age of 75, Miriam was convicted and sentenced to six months in federal prison, a sentence she began serving on August 14, 2001 in the Federal Prison Camp in Pekin, Illinois.

Looking back on those long six months, Miriam remembers the women she got to know in prison, women separated from their children except for occasional prison visits. "Our fellow prisoners were nice to us nuns because they didn't think we should be there at all." The prison corridors were noisy, she recalls, there was no privacy, and sometimes the guards were rough.

Miriam found ways to witness to peacemaking while she was in prison. In a letter written September 18, 2001, she said, "We had the news on 15 hours a day after the World Trade Center tragedy. Mrs. Johnson, who is the most kind and considerate of all the staff here had an item posted on her office window that was a violent threat issued to Osama Bin Laden, Yasser Arafat and Saddam Hussein. She asked me not to read it as it had a bad world in it – whoops...ass! I went in to see her and said the word didn't bother me, but the violence did."

Miriam remembers the CSJP community's support during her imprisonment – besides being escorted to prison by Sr. Kathleen Pruitt and welcomed out by Sr. Judy Tralnes, she got a visit from then Congregation Leader, Sr. Ann Rutan, and frequent letters from many Sisters and Associates. Recently Miriam has been rereading the more than 300 letters she got from all over the world while in prison. Her response is characteristic: "It was so helpful to get the letters, and I answered a lot of them. People thought I was so wonderful, but all I did was walk across a line."

Growing in Nonviolence through the Immigration Detention System

By Frank McCann, CSJP-A

It is exhilarating to watch the nonviolent struggle of Arab nations succeed (at this writing at least) in moving those nations towards democracy. The movement has world-wide implications just like the work of Gandhi and King.

For most of my life my experience of nonviolence has played out on this institutional, world-wide stage. I've protested wars and nuclear weapons and written hundreds of letters to congress. More recently, as a trustee of IRATE (Interfaith Refugee Action Team) & First Friends I have worked to challenge the injustice of our immigration detention system.

A few of those in detention are in the United States seeking asylum from persecution in their homelands. A still greater number, some coming legally, others without documentation, have had a scrape with the law. In addition to advocacy, our organization makes it possible for us to visit detainees one on one, something I've been doing on and off for a year and a half.

During a session of a JustFaith program called "Engaging Spirituality," a writer described the act of accompanying as "the holy practice of walking with people who were damaged and vulnerable." I began to see visits with immigration detainees as accompaniment and as a way of modeling the practice of nonviolence. Perhaps it could help the detainees overcome violence that surrounded them. Preaching nonviolence wouldn't work. I needed to invest more of my time and resources.

Troy is a 38 year old from Guyana who has been in the U.S. since he was brought here as a seven year old orphan by an older brother who eventually left him here and moved to Argentina. Because he never "legalized" his status or became a citizen, when police were called



Vigil at Elizabeth Detention Center, Ash Wednesday 2011; L to R: Frank McCann, Lorie Sullivan, Jim Peoples, Eileen McCann, Ellen O'Rourke

is final, he no longer needs to be near the courts on Varick Street in New York City. Therefore, he can be moved to a less expensive prison in PA.

I will continue to see him, although less often. Troy has expressed his gratitude for this "stranger's" outreach to him, and he says our visits changed his outlook. It has been months since Troy was in a jailhouse fight, which was once a regular occurrence. He accepts his deportation and can even find humor in being sent back to a country for which he has no memory other than his mother's early death.

I long for the day when the detention system is eliminated, and know that my visits will not accomplish that. But Troy is one man who was entombed in violence and is now free of its grip.

I have a new and deepening appreciation for how nonviolence working in individual relationships can have a powerful effect in overcoming violence, indeed perhaps that is where it must begin.

for a domestic argument for which no arrest was made or charges filed, it brought to light two petty larcenies from years ago that are enough today for deportation. I visited Troy for months, contacted family members, made calls to his representative, and accompanied him to the hearing where he was ordered deported. In the special cruelty unique to Immigration and Customs Enforcement he has just been moved to a prison in York, Pennsylvania, three hours away. Why move him? Since his deportation order

I'm still excited about what is happening in Egypt, but I have a new and deepening appreciation for how nonviolence working in individual relationships can have a powerful effect in overcoming violence, indeed perhaps that is where it must begin. Gandhi believed that the force of love would conquer violence; like a pebble cast into water, the ripples from even the smallest acts would reach far and wide.



violence in our SACRED SCRIPTURES

by Alexandra Kovats, CSJP

Last October the refrain “seek truth, make peace, reverence life...” echoed throughout our congregation. CSJP Associates and vowed members gathered in each region (the UK, the eastern US and the western US) to explore how to engage with the violence found in our sacred Scriptures with the skillful guidance of Dr. Gina Hens-Piazza, professor of Biblical Studies, Jesuit School of Technology of Santa Clara University, Berkeley, California.

As a Congregation, clearly, we are on a journey toward embracing nonviolence both personally and communally. For me, the actions of seeking truth, making peace and reverencing life call us to nonviolent ways of being and relating. Mary Lou Kowacki, Benedictine author and peace activist, states “Nonviolence can never be equated with passivity, it is the essence of courage, creativity and action.”

In her presentations, Gina clearly invited us to seek truth. She challenged us to face the many forms of violence that are present in our sacred Scriptures, including women being raped and given as war booty, or people being massacred in the name of God. How do we reconcile these ways of violence as part of inspired revelation? Many of us, myself included, have often glossed over or ignored such violent texts or in some situations have joined in the condemnation of those to whom such violence was delivered. Neither are helpful ways. Gina emphasized that the way we pray with and read Scripture is instructive of how we engage with people in our lives and with our world. Is it possible that ignoring scenes of violence in our sacred texts will also support our way of ignoring violence in our world? Will that pattern lead me to avoid facing the violence that recently happened in Tucson, Arizona resulting in killing and wounding of innocent people? Will it help us gloss over the violence that was committed in Cairo toward peaceful demonstrators? Will it numb me to violence caused by racial prejudice, poverty, homophobia or sexism? These questions continue to haunt me and lead me to deeper self-reflection. The truth is that we need to embrace the whole of our sacred Scriptures, the violence and compassion, the joys and the sorrows, the blessings and the curses. Only by facing into the violence can we choose the ways of nonviolence.

Gina also invited us to make peace with the violence in our sacred texts by offering some helpful strategies in reading the Bible. By reading these violent texts “in memoriam,” that is, by lifting up the memory of those toward whom violence

has been committed, we honor their lives. In this way, we can recognize their dignity and remember their importance. In turn, we can also hold in our hearts the people who experience similar violence today. Women and children continue to be victims of war today, not unlike in biblical times. Human trafficking that takes place today is reminiscent of stories in the Bible where the vulnerable are being exploited for gain by their oppressors.

According to Gina, another way we can make peace with the violence in sacred Scriptures is by reminding ourselves that we must find counter stories, the stories that speak against violence. We can lift up the story of Ruth and Naomi (Book of Ruth) expressive of solidarity rather than the violence of oppression. We can reflect on the story of the Syro-Phoenician woman who challenges Jesus to extend his healing beyond religious and ethnic boundaries (Mark 7:24-30). By engaging with stories from the Bible that model inclusivity, solidarity, justice and compassion we touch into the energies of nonviolence.

Finally, a couple of strategies Gina offered as a way of engaging with violence in our sacred texts call us to reverence life. She encouraged us to pay attention to the minor characters in stories that are never theirs, to the nameless women, soldiers and servants. By honoring their stories within the larger stories in which they appear, we reverence their lives.

Another strategy is minimizing the focus on the narrator of a story, who often directs our attention in particular ways. It is helpful to remember that the whole text is revelatory, and that there are many subtexts that often go unnoticed. Focusing on these sub-stories supports us in reverencing all of life. In turn, this sensitivity might also lead us to listen to the daily news differently. Often the narrator focuses on the deeds of those in power. Can we reverence all life – that of the victim as well as the oppressor? Can we hear the story in a way that includes not just the human species, but the larger community of life?

Our call to nonviolence demands that we engage with the violence found in our sacred Scriptures. Let us continue to seek truth, make peace and reverence life!

JOHN DEAR ON Nonviolence

As a Jesuit priest, peace activist, speaker and author, John Dear has devoted his life to nonviolence. He is the 40th, and most recent, recipient of the Pacem in Terris Peace and Freedom Award, which honors a person for their work in peace and justice in the world. In 2008 Archbishop Desmond Tutu nominated him for the Nobel Peace Prize. Recently, John took time from his busy schedule to talk to us about nonviolence and the urgent need for each of us to deepen our commitment to nonviolence. What follows is an abbreviated version of that conversation. To read the full interview, please visit our website (www.csjp.org).

John: We need a new language for peace. “Nonviolence” is the word that Gandhi used. Ahimsa, from Hinduism. He used it every day, and Dr. King used it every day, so I have been using this clumsy word to describe the gospel life that Jesus calls us to live.

But the word in the Sermon of the Mount is “peacemaking”—Blessed are peacemakers—which is another good word. But the problem, I find, is that everybody is for peace. The people who build nuclear weapons at Los Alamos are great peacemakers, as far as they are concerned. People at the Pentagon and the White House consider themselves peacemakers.

Obama won the Nobel peace prize and he is waging three wars.

So the word “peace” is complicated, and the word “love” has been watered down so much. But the word “nonviolence” hasn’t been and it means, right there, “No violence!” but that’s just the beginning of the definition.

LP: At the Congregation’s last Chapter, you spoke about the beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount. You’ve talked about Gandhi’s devotion to the beatitudes as well as your own. As you meditate and pray and work with them, do they bring new insights all the time and take you deeper? And if that’s so, how does that work?

John: Well, I think it’s all very simple and very difficult at the same time, this life of peace and nonviolence. I think of nonviolence as active love and truth, working for a world without war, poverty, nuclear weapons or global warming, resisting evil and making peace with everyone. That’s how I see discipleship to Jesus, too. But how do you do it?

I think this life of peace and nonviolence means daily, ideally hourly, ideally every minute, trying to make peace



with yourself, to cultivate an interior nonviolence and then from there, to go forth and to be meticulously nonviolent toward everybody and work for a new world of nonviolence.

As you go into that process, you realize that this is not just a methodology or a political practice or strategy. It’s a spirituality that takes you into a whole new understanding of God and then you come to the conclusion, which was right there at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, that God is nonviolent. So we are talking about the process of making peace with

God. I don’t know which comes first, but I do know that if you sit every day in quiet meditation and read the gospels, a certain healing happens where you are disarmed of your inner violence and given a gift of peace. A spring of peace wells up within you, and also at the same time you are getting to know who God is, that God loves you, that God is healing you and making peace with you. All of this can be politically and socially transformative.

LP: You have taken a vow of nonviolence and co-wrote a vow of nonviolence for Pax Christi. How do you keep renewing that vow?

John: I first thought of the vow of nonviolence when I made the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius, a thirty day retreat, and after reading the life of Gandhi, in January, 1983. I spent two years preparing to profess the vow and then, stupidly, woke up three weeks later, with the sudden realization that this was not the end but just the beginning! It was a terrifying moment that this was the beginning of the journey, that peacemaking, gospel nonviolence, is a life-long journey of discipleship to the nonviolent Jesus.

So if you are asking me how I nurture it and continue it, I would say there are a lot of things that I do, and that I've learned personally from peacemakers and from reading the saints. And that would include daily, quiet meditation and reading the gospel every day and participating in the sacraments. I find that that there is a lot of great stuff that the Church has given us. But I don't think it can be done without a daily, formal check-in time with the God of Peace.

You also need community, and that can mean all kinds of things, but ideally a group of people who share your values, with whom you can open up and share your hopes and joys and pain and brokenness.

Public action is also helpful. Oddly enough, if you don't join the movement, you end up sitting back watching the bombs fall on CNN. You'll give up and give in to despair. But if you join a public vigil, or get involved in your local peace group, or volunteer at that nearby shelter for the homeless, or cross the line and get arrested in a protest, actually that generates hope and keeps you going. These actions provide opportunities for you to deepen your personal nonviolence.

So I think it is possible, not only to end the evil U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, to rebuild Haiti, to give universal healthcare, and to feed the hungry, but that it's actually possible to abolish war, poverty and nuclear weapons. We have to build a faith-based global movement of nonviolence and pursue that vision with all our energies.

LP: You have been in opposition to the church at times. How do you stay with it in light of that?

John: Well, it's a daily struggle for me. I am in a lot of trouble with a lot of church authorities—the Jesuits, Bishops and people in Rome—all because I'm against war and nuclear weapons and I speak out publicly. I've been banned from speaking about the Gospel in many places. But I just keep going back to the life of Jesus. He was rejected many times. He marched to Jerusalem and turned over the tables of the money-changers and said, "We are not going to support systemic injustice anymore; we're people of contemplative prayer and peace." You're going to get arrested, tortured and killed if you do that.

I keep remembering that the whole point is to follow the nonviolent Jesus and live the Sermon on the Mount.

I think this life of peace and nonviolence means daily, ideally hourly, ideally every minute, trying to make peace with yourself, to cultivate an interior nonviolence and then from there, to go forth and to be meticulously nonviolent toward everybody and work for a new world of nonviolence.

LP: If you believe that there is evil—things we can't control—in the world, is a nonviolent world ever even possible?

John: My thought is that with the God of Peace, anything is possible. Think of the Abolitionists. For thousands and thousands of years, there had been slavery. There was absolutely no way slavery was going to end. That was unthinkable, even unimaginable. Faith-based activists began the movement. The Abolitionists lifted up a vision of equality and gave their lives to make it come true. Grassroots movements for justice and peace that are rooted in the God of Peace and in Jesus' way of creative nonviolence, in the end, always work. They are just rarely tried.

Because of the Suffragists, women got the vote. Dr. King and the Civil Rights movement helped bring down segregation. Literally billions of people in the last 30 years have been involved in hundreds and hundreds of documented grassroots movements for nonviolent change that led to nonviolent revolutions, including the fall of the Berlin Wall and Soviet Union and Mandela being released and the end of apartheid and on and on.

That keeps me going. And I meet great people all over the country and the world who model the church for me. That helps me to remember that the church is not just the institution or the administrators but the Body of Christ, the community of the nonviolent Jesus which makes peace and practices universal love. The church is made up of those who do what Jesus said, who make peace, love enemies, show compassion, and practice the Sermon on the Mount. That's what being church is about.

LP: You've said we are addicted to violence as a society and there seems to be a lot of addiction of all kinds today. Do you think they are all related?

John: In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, "Blessed are the peacemakers, they shall be called the sons and daughters of the God of Peace. Love your enemies, then you will be sons and daughters of the God of Peace who lets the sun shine on the good and the bad, the rain fall on the just and the unjust." If you look at the end of each of those sentences, we are called to be sons and daughters of the God of peace and love.

Well, we all reject that. Nobody talks about that and few dare to think about that. We say, “There is no way I could be a son or daughter of God. That’s ridiculous.” That’s a bourgeois cop-out; it lets us off the hook.

Addictions come from this problem of not knowing that we are God’s beloved—where no one believes in God, where we’re not loved, so we turn to something else to satisfy us.

Our job is to help one another discover or rediscover who we are, to claim it, to help people not to forget that they are the beloved sons and daughters of the God of Peace. As we remember that, we can be at peace with ourselves, and make peace with everyone and love universally. Once you remember that, you can begin to become sober. In all our addictions, we need new boundaries to help us be nonviolent to ourselves and others, to rely on our Higher Power, and to have a support community of love and peace. That was what the church was supposed to be about—your “Violence Anonymous” group, where you checked in, remembered who you were, repented, turned to your Higher Power, and lived new lives of nonviolence. But we are still so sick in so many ways. We have to help each other remember that God loves us and we can love one another.

LP: What if someone is being aggressive on the road and you are trying to keep calm but then you start getting angry and that ratchets up until you feel yourself becoming violent in response? How can we remain calm amidst the aggression that surrounds us all the time?

John: Staying calm is a daily spiritual practice. We try to live peacefully, nonviolently, every day in every situation, and our peaceful presence helps others to be peaceful.

So if someone attacks you, or if another car driver is aggressive to you, and you start to be violent or aggressive, you need to notice what’s going on within you, notice your first reaction. I like to be gentle with myself and ask, “OK, what’s going on here?” Then I try to move on to a second thought, to take a deep breath, to be calm and to remain peaceful. A violent response just aggravates the situation; it doesn’t work.

If you reflect deeply on your own road rage experience, it can lead to new healing. You can begin to see the other driver as a teacher who shows you your shadow side, who leads you to ask, “What’s going on here?” This can lead you to befriend yourself again and have compassion on yourself and the other person, and to look deeply at the source of your anger so that life can become a series of moments of peace to peace to even deeper peace.

LP: You have said the peace movement is just at the beginning and has a long way to go. When doctors are interviewed about diseases that are incurable, they are often asked to speculate on a timeline for a cure. This is very different, but do you envision any kind of timeline for an end to violence?

John: I think the world’s violence is getting worse and we—the United States—have brought so much death and destruction around the planet, that we’re now a global empire involved in almost every nation on the planet, so that we are guaranteeing many more terror attacks here at home. Friends of mine say that use of nuclear weapons appears inevitable as does catastrophic climate change. That’s why I say this call to disarm and become people of nonviolence is the most urgent, pressing need facing each one of us. This is the call of Jesus: to repent of our global violence and welcome the nonviolent reign of God. In biblical language, the time is now. The kairos has arrived. We all have to wake up and do this.

But I can’t speculate on the future. I know that things are getting worse. I think we’re all called to make peace, love our enemies and work for an end to war and injustice, and to teach this way of nonviolence, this vision of peace, with all our energy. We are part of a global grassroots movement of nonviolence and God is up there doing her big thing and God needs us and we need God and some of us have to give our lives for this work. That’s the way my hope is. In the end, the outcome, the future, is in the hands of the God of peace.

Gandhi was clearer about a timeline. He envisioned interim peace teams, nonviolent peace armies that would go around the world, while we work to get rid of the causes of war, which are poverty and disease, which lead to violence and genocide. Over time, we should teach nonviolent conflict resolution to every child on the planet, institutionalize it, and over time, the vision of peace will come true.

The main thing is to do our part and not to give in to despair, but to keep the vision of a new world of peace alive, to place our hope in the God of peace, and to keep walking forth on the path of nonviolence. Maybe we are just sowing seeds of peace and nonviolence; someone else will reap the harvest. I think that’s what Dr. King and Dorothy Day and Oscar Romero did. We have to carry on their work, and like them, sow the seeds of peace for a new future of peace.

More Information

Books by John Dear we recommend:

Put Down Your Sword

Living Peace

A Persistent Peace

John Dear on Peace

Transfiguration

For more information about John Dear and a complete list of his works, please visit his website at www.johndear.org

Planting **Seeds** for Nonviolent **Change**

by Susan Francois, CSJP

When we look at the great social movements of the past one hundred years, from women's suffrage to civil rights, we see the creative power of nonviolent action in the face of injustice. The "giants" of peacemaking, people like Dorothy Day and Martin Luther King, Jr., guide us on the way to peace through justice. In the end, however, the dream of nonviolent social change is made real through the everyday actions of people like you and me. In the words of sociologist Margaret Mead: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed it is the only thing that ever has."

At the Intercommunity Peace and Justice Center (IPJC), a ministry co-sponsored by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace in Seattle, Washington, we collaborate with many small groups of thoughtful, committed citizens of all ages, from "raging grannies" to young immigrant families to school children. While IPJC plants the seeds through education and resources, it is the actions of ordinary people that create change.



*the dream of nonviolent social change is made real through
the everyday actions of people like you and me*

Recently, I spent an afternoon with the eighth grade class at a local Catholic school. We talked about the global reality of human trafficking in the 21st Century, using the example of child labor on cocoa plantations in Western Africa. We explored the root causes of modern day slavery, from poverty to society's demand for inexpensive goods and exploitation of other human beings. Understandably, many of the students were upset to learn that children their age or younger were forced to harvest cocoa destined for chocolate bars for sale in the U.S. and Europe. "That makes me really sad," said one student. "We need to do something about that."

I asked the students how they could use their power to act for justice. "We could stop buying chocolate," said one. "We could buy fair trade chocolate and cut out the middleman," said another. Yes, she used the phrase "middleman" and proceeded to explain the concept of fair trade better than I could have!

We discussed various ways we could use our power as citizens and consumers to act in solidarity with the children in West Africa. In the end, each of the students wrote a letter to one of their favorite chocolate manufacturers. One student

asked the CEO of the Mars company: "How is your company going to live up to your commitment to make absolutely sure that the cocoa you used was not touched by a child?"

A few weeks later, I received a call from the teacher. She wanted me to know that the students were very excited as they'd begun to receive letters back from the chocolate companies. "We have power," one of the students had told her, brandishing his letter from Hershey. She'd also heard from some of their parents that the students were looking carefully at the products in their grocery carts, looking for the fair trade label. Lastly, she told me a story that simply made me smile.

Many of the students wait for their parents to pick them up after school at the local Starbucks coffee shop. When the teacher stopped by for a cup of coffee a week or so after I'd visited the school, the barista pulled her aside. "What are you teaching the kids these days?" she asked. "They keep giving me a hard time asking if our coffee and chocolate are fair trade." Today's eighth graders are tomorrow's leaders. No doubt they will join other thoughtful, committed citizens and change the world.

If It Is To Be It Is Up To Me!

by Annie Welch, CSJP-A

The title of this article, a quote by William H. Johnson, was the mantra and theme of our Martin Luther King, Jr. Day assembly this year. The sixth graders at Kendall Elementary, in Maple Falls, Washington, led us through a timeline of historical information on slavery, Jim Crow laws, the Freedom Riders and the Civil Rights movement under the leadership of Dr. King. King lived out the mantra, doing the difficult work of teaching, preaching, giving speeches, leading nonviolent protests, going to jail, and ultimately being assassinated for his devotion to nonviolence.

The students acted out several skits showing that making daily decisions to be respectful, use manners and invite others into our activities were actions each of us can chose to do to make this mantra become reality. Then they invited all classes to make a commitment to living out the Martin Luther King Day mantra in ways of their own choosing, and to write their commitments on paper hands that would be displayed in the entrance of our building along with a poster of the words, "If it is to be, it is up to me." It was a truly inspirational gathering.

The day before the assembly, in a discussion with my second graders while reading and learning about Martin Luther King, Jr., one little girl asked "Ms. Welch, what is nonviolence?" I thought to myself, I am so glad you asked. And so our conversation deepened. We talked about what violence is and about the recent tragedy in Tucson, Arizona when a gunman killed six people and wounded several others, including the targeted Congresswoman, Gabrielle Giffords. I reminded them that each time we solve problems in class or on the playground in a safe, respectful way, using words and not punches or unkindness, we are being nonviolent. We mentioned our "Conflict Wheel," a handout we use to give students good options for resolving disagreements. Nonviolent choices include: "Walk away or



ignore the behavior;" "Listen to each other and talk it out," "Flip a coin or do Rock, Paper, Scissors to decide." We reviewed our nonviolent signals like: Holding the hand out to indicate "Please stop," or holding up one finger to mean, "Please wait a minute," or putting the palms of both hands together and then flipping to indicate, "Let's change this behavior" or what the kids like to call, "Flip the Pancake." These can be used as alternatives to help us all handle bothersome interruptions in a respectful way. We pointed to our "Working Level" and

"Whoa and Go Zone" posters hanging around the room, reminding us that being a responsible learner helps us all to be successful. Being in the Go Zone indicates attentive listening, sitting still with hands not touching materials, not being engaged in side talk, eyes on the speaker, and no reminders are needed. Being in the Whoa Zone is quite the opposite. After our discussion, students felt proud that they were practicing nonviolence by using the choices they were being taught and felt really good about being followers of Dr. King's nonviolent teachings.

For myself, the assembly and my student's question got me thinking about our Congregation's charism, which asks us to allow our values to permeate our lives, our ministries, everything we do. Living nonviolently is up to us and is a conscious choice we must try to make each moment of our lives. Are we always successful? Heavens no, but we can always begin again, much like the gift of reconciliation. As world citizens and nonviolence practitioners, we pray for a peaceful world where all can feel safe, can be responsible for our actions, cooperate for the success of all, and treat each other with respect and kindness, not hate and violence. It does begin with me, and I hope to pass this along to my students.

"You have very truly remarked that if we are to reach real peace in this world and if we are to carry on a real war against war, we shall have to begin with children and if they will grow up in their natural innocence, we won't have the struggle, we won't have to pass fruitless idle resolutions, but we shall go from love to love and peace to peace, until at last all the corners of the world are covered with that peace and love for which, consciously or unconsciously, the whole world is hungering."

(Mohandas Gandhi, Speech at Montessori Training College, 1931)

nonviolence in healthcare: Healing More Than Physical Illness

by Andrea Nenzel, CSJP

In our Chapter commitment, “Growing in Nonviolence” we write: “We live in a society marked strongly by the violence of war, violence to people through poverty and a sense of powerlessness and alienation...” And, “The lens of nonviolence brings new insights and commitments to all aspects of our lives together. We commit to look with eyes of compassion, to relate with openness and hospitality, and to act from a center of contemplative prayer, peace and passion.”

Mahatma Gandhi said, “Poverty is the worst form of violence.” Indeed, poverty is a human rights violation perpetuated by every society. The harmful tentacles of poverty reach far and wide, touching every area of life from healthcare to education, to human dignity and basic human rights. Among the poor, the combination of higher incidences of alcohol and drug abuse and domestic violence—especially against women and children—mixed with lack of education and access to healthcare creates challenges that require creative solutions.

Certainly in the United States one of the glaring aspects of violence through poverty is the lack of access to healthcare. Catholic healthcare institutions have long been the safety net for the large number of persons who fall through the cracks of the “non-system” of American healthcare. PeaceHealth (the ministry that flows from the heritage of our Sisters’ response to the cry for healthcare in the Pacific Northwest beginning in 1890) recognized this reality and the sense of powerlessness that it engendered for those who needed this safety net care. One of the smaller PeaceHealth hospitals developed the idea of a program called Bridge Assistance (now a system-wide PeaceHealth program) which gives dignity to persons in this dilemma by issuing them a card that they present when seeking care - just like an insurance card - thus removing the stigma and humiliation of being poor.

The Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace and PeaceHealth have made it a priority to establish and operate community endeavors to help the “working poor” access needed healthcare in a manner that provides them dignity and worth. The Volunteers in Medicine Clinic in Eugene, Oregon (Sisters Monica Heeran and Anita Heeran); the Free Clinic in Longview (Sisters Anne Hayes and Rose Marie Nigro) and the Interfaith Clinic in Bellingham, Washington are examples of how PeaceHealth is addressing the violence of poverty in healthcare.

One aspect of that violence that is often overlooked is lack of voice. History has shown that it is the rich and powerful

who, for the most part, have had the sole voice in determining the rules of society and life itself. Our CSJP commitment to nonviolence demands that we work to give voice to those who for so long have had no voice. In healthcare the pattern was that the health professionals—“the powerful”—had the total voice. That world has been rapidly changing.

Certainly in the United States one of the glaring aspects of violence through poverty is the lack of access to healthcare.

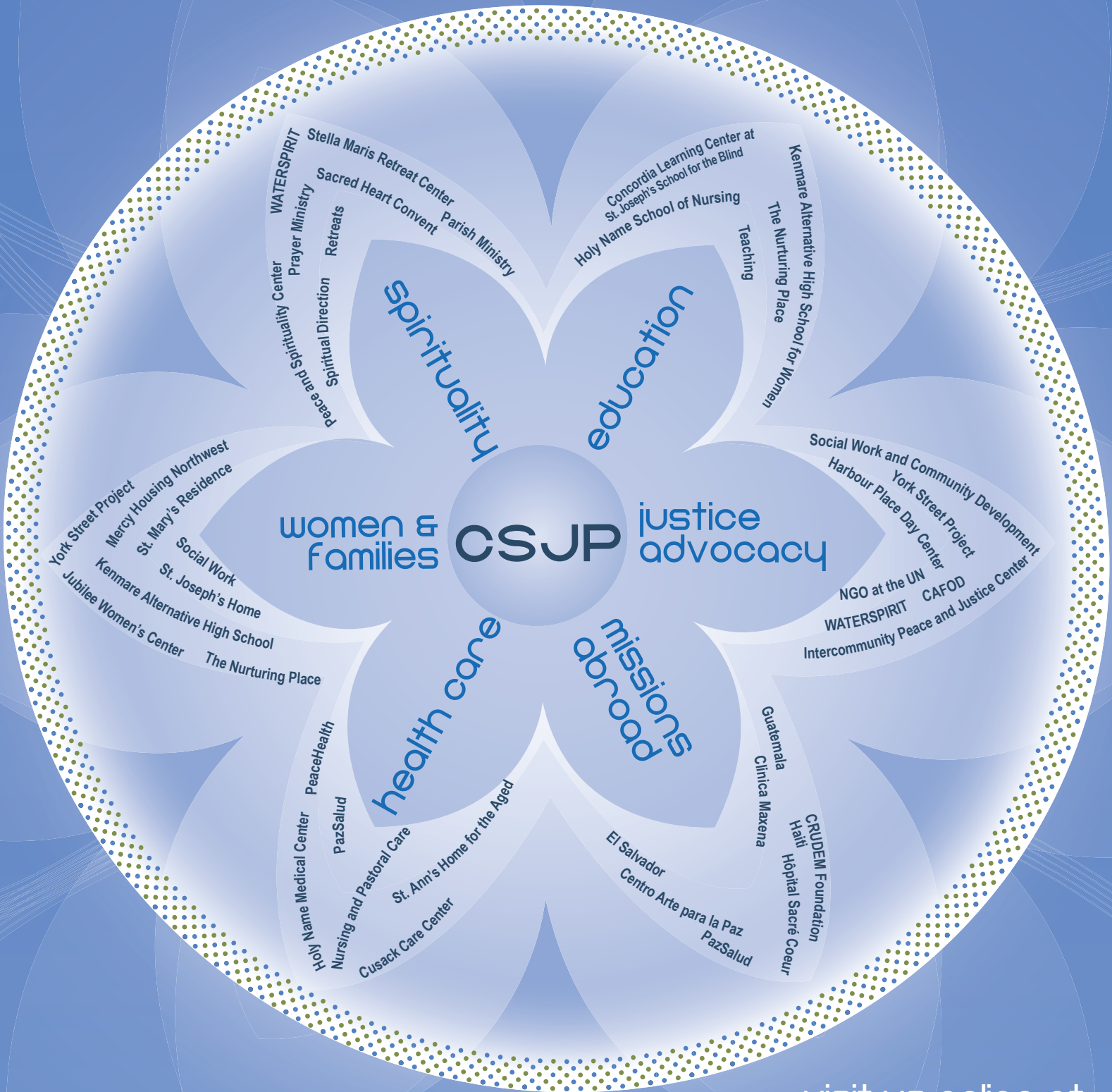
PeaceHealth responded to this aspect of violence with the commitment to recognize and value the voice of all who in any way are involved in the ministry of healthcare. That means all at PeaceHealth are caregivers - not just those who provide hands-on diagnostic and medical care, but those in food service, housekeeping, maintenance, administration and all the behind the scenes people in admitting, coding, medical records. It means recognizing and valuing the voice of the patient and family in this ministry.

One concrete expression of this “giving voice” is the encouragement and expectation that all caregivers, patients and family members will speak up when they see circumstances or actions of omission or commission that impact quality and safety. One example of this is calling to attention with a “thank you” to those who sterilize their hands upon entering/leaving a patient room or with a “reminder request” to those who fail to do so.

Another program that gives voice is “No-one Dies Alone,” developed by some of our caregivers who recognized that a growing number of people are alone—without family or friends—to be with them in this most vulnerable time of life. Now a PeaceHealth system-wide program, this response to a societal issue invites caregivers (from grounds keepers and housekeepers to nurses and doctors) to volunteer to be at the bedside of those who would otherwise die alone in our hospitals.

In these and so many other ways, the lens of nonviolence brings new insights and commitments to all aspects of our lives together and to PeaceHealth, a ministry that is imbued with our CSJP charism.

ministries of the sisters of st. joseph of peace



visit us online at www.csjp.org or follow us on facebook



we invite you to connect & participate



consider becoming a sister

Contact Sister Jo-Anne Miller, CSJP
Vocations Director
jmiller@csjp-olp.org

consider becoming an associate

Women or men who share our concerns and charism
Contact Sister Sheila Lemieux, CSJP
Formation Director
slemieux@csjp-olp.org



participate with financial support

Donate on line at www.csjp.org or use the envelope included.

request prayer support

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. —Philippians 4:6



Our Sisters and Associates pray daily for friends, supporters, all who ask our prayers and those linked with us through the Pious Union of Prayer. The original purpose of this Union was to form a network of prayer for peace in homes and in families. You may write your request on the inside flap of the return envelope insert.

learn more about us at
www.csjp.org



Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace
125 Michigan Avenue, NE
Washington, DC 20017



Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace on board the Great Northern for a trip to Seattle in the 1920s.

History and Roots

by Ross Fewing

Not long after arriving in Fairhaven, Washington, Sr. Teresa Moran, CSJP, wrote her community in New Jersey. Her letter dated 23 August 1890 offers points for reflection on nonviolence.

First, nonviolence is a way of life. It grows from our grounding in a tradition and an environment that nourishes and sustains. Sisters Teresa Moran and Stanislaus Tighe came to Fairhaven to meet a need: “The people are very anxious for a hospital” and discovered that “even the Protestants are glad to see the Sisters coming.”

The Sisters begged for funds from the people for whom they were building the hospital, meeting them where they lived and worked in the mountains, mines, and logging camps around Bellingham. Asking for money was an opportunity to meet and connect, to offer hope, warmth, and to heal the spirit.

One of their means of getting funds was the sale of \$10 hospital tickets. The ticket entitled the holder to one year’s hospital services, including doctors’ services. Later the lumber companies established a sick fund, deducting a dollar a month from their employees and giving it to the hospital for their employees’ care.

Recently, on hearing the news that a much loved and respected Sister was retiring as chaplain, a nurse in one of our hospitals said, “She allowed us to be spiritual without being religious.” No doubt that is how the miners and loggers felt. Their dignity was acknowledged and respected.

Nonviolence is born from the care and nurture of one’s own spirit thereby learning humility. Sister Teresa wrote, “We go to confession to Fr. Boulet. There is no one else . . . living alone for so many years (over 30) has made him a little peculiar in many ways but when one understands him he is very nice – he is French.” Nonviolence is the recognition and respect for the dignity of the other even if the other is, well, “a little peculiar.”

Nonviolence is born of a healthy sense of self. “Fancy two creatures like us to build a hospital, if it ever succeeds it will be by the visible power of God alone.” If one sees oneself as a child of the Creator then, like Sisters Teresa and Stanislaus, we are all God’s touch in the world.