

Living Water Retreat October 17-18 Invites College Students, Day-Trippers

The retreat was mistakenly scheduled for October 14-15 in the last newsletter. See flyer for details on full weekend participation.

Recognizing the importance to youth today of creating a spiritually fulfilling, socially just, and environmentally sustainable human presence on earth, PCM is offering college students its Saturday, October 17th Awakening the Dreamer Pachamama Alliance retreat program for only \$30, lunch included. Others may attend Saturday, with lunch, for \$40.

The program will be led by Alistair Lough and Patricia Proulx-Lough, facilitators in the US Transition movement. The Pachamama movement grew out of an appeal by the Achuar Amazon people to preserve the rain forests and for a global vision of sustainability and equity for all.

Registration and full payment should go to Mary Ellen Quinn, 91 Baker Road, Winterport, ME 04496 no later than October 1. She may be reached at memquinn@peoplepc.com and 223-4992. For more information, contact Denise Dreher at 286-9747 or Bill Slavick at 773-6562.

PCM Council: To Address Militarism; Elections, Planning To Follow Retreat

At Pete Sirois's suggestion, Pax Christi Maine's Madison Council meeting September 13th focused on militarism as PCM's primary challenge in 2009-2010: abolish nuclear weapons and counter sophisticated military recruiting to provide fodder for our national imperial adventures. We would continue in the struggle against climate change.

With President Obama's support, the time is ripe to abolish nuclear weapons and PCM should provide the Christian perspective in that effort. Maine Veterans for Peace and ROSC (Larry Danziger) have been working to counter the multi-million dollar recruiting campaign which, it was recently revealed, benefits from Pentagon electronic snooping into jobless teen-agers lives to learn more about them than their parents know!

The poorly attended spring Assembly in Portland occasioned postponing the Assembly and Council elections until following the retreat Sept. 17-18. Each group should choose its representative beforehand. Get candidates' permission for nominations at large. Council members should be committed to attend the two meetings per year.

The Council discussed the need to recruit young members, appealing to their interests and modes of activism. All should seek to interest younger Catholics in Pax Christi.

International Day of Nonviolence prayer service, Sacred Heart/St. Dominic, Portland, at 7 p.m. Oct. 7

St. Francis Day at Agape, Hardwick, MA October 3

This issue offer, in order, two analyses of present challenges, a judgment, a witness, and four calls to action.

Signs of the Times

Stop Begging Obama To Be Obama And Get Mad—Chris Hedges

September 14, 2009

The right-wing accusations against Barack Obama are true. He is a socialist, although he practices socialism for corporations. He is squandering the country's future with deficits that can never be repaid. He has retained and even bolstered our surveillance state to spy on Americans. He is forcing us to buy into a health care system that will enrich corporations and expand the abuse of our for-profit medical care. He will not stanch unemployment. He will not end our wars. He will not rebuild the nation. He is a tool of the corporate state.

The right wing is not wrong. It is not the problem. We are the problem. If we do not tap into the justifiable anger sweeping across the nation, if we do not militantly push back against corporate fraud and imperial wars that we cannot win or afford, the political vacuum we have created will be filled with right-wing lunatics and proto-fascists. The goons will inherit power not because they are astute, but because we are weak and inept.

Violence is a dark undercurrent of American history. It is exacerbated by war and economic decline. Violence is spreading outward from the killing fields in Iraq and Afghanistan to slowly tear apart individuals, families and communities. There is no immunity. The longer the wars continue, the longer the members of our working class are transformed by corporate overlords into serfs, the more violence will dominate the landscape. The slide into chaos and a police state will become inevitable.

The soldiers and Marines who return from Iraq and Afghanistan are often traumatized and then shipped back a few months later to be traumatized again. This was less frequent in Vietnam. Veterans, when they get out, search for the usual escape routes of alienation, addictions and medication. But there is also the escape route of violence. We risk creating a homegrown *Freikorps*, the demobilized German soldiers from World War I who violently tore down the edifice of the Weimar Republic and helped open the way to Nazism.

The Afghanistan and Iraq wars have unloaded hundreds of thousands of combat troops, suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder or major depression, back into society. According to a joint Veterans Affairs Department-University of San Francisco study published in July, 418,000 of the roughly 1.9 million service members who have fought in or supported the wars suffer from PTSD. As of August 2008, the latest data available, about a quarter-million military veterans were imprisoned on any given day—about 9.4 percent of the total daily imprisoned population, according to the [National GAINS Center Forum](#) on Combat Veterans, Trauma and the Justice System. There are 223,000 veterans in jail or prison cells on an average day, and an unknown number among the 4 million Americans on probation. They don't have much to look forward to upon release. And if any of these incarcerated vets do not have PTSD when they are arrested, our corrections system will probably rectify the deficiency. Throw in the cocktail of unemployment, powerlessness, depression, alienation, anger, alcohol and drugs and you create thousands, if not tens of thousands, who will seek out violence the way an addict seeks out a bag of heroin.

War and conflict have marked most of my adult life. I know what

prolonged exposure to industrial slaughter does to you. I know what it is to confront memories, buried deep within the subconscious, which jerk you awake at night, your heart racing and your body covered in sweat. I know what it is like to lie, unable to sleep, your heart pounding, trying to remember what it was that caused such terror. I know how it feels to be overcome by the vivid images of violence that make you wonder if the dream or the darkness around you is real. I know what it feels like to stumble through the day carrying a shock and horror, an awful cement-like despair, which you cannot shed. And I know how after a few nights like this you are left numb and exhausted, unable to connect with anyone around you, even those you love the most. I know how you drink or medicate yourself into a coma so you do not have to remember your dreams. And I know that great divide that opens between you and the rest of the world, especially the civilian world, which cannot imagine your pain and your hatred. I know how easily this hatred is directed toward those in that world.

There are minefields of stimulants for those who return from war. Smells, sounds, bridges, the whoosh of a helicopter, thrust you back to Iraq or another zone of slaughter, back to a time of terror and blood, back to the darkest regions of your heart, regions you wish did not exist. Life, on some days, is a simple battle to stay upright, to cope with memories and trauma that are unexplainable, probably unimaginable, to those seated across from you at the breakfast table. Families will watch these veterans fall silent, see the thousand-yard stare, and know they have again lost these men and women. They hope somehow they will come back. Some won't. Those who cannot cope, even by using Zoloft or Paxil, blow their brains out with drugs, alcohol or a gun. More Vietnam veterans died from suicide in the years after the war than during the conflict itself. But it would be a mistake to blame this on Vietnam. War does this to you. It destroys part of you. You live maimed. If you are not able to live maimed, you check out.

But what happens in a society where everything conspires to check you out even when you make the herculean effort to integrate into the world of malls, celebrity gossip and too many brands of cereal on a supermarket shelf? What happens when the corporate state says that you can die in its wars but at home you are human refuse, that there is no job, no way to pay your medical bills or your mortgage, no hope? Then you retreat into your private hell of rage, terror and alienation. You do not return from the world of war. You yearn for its sleek and powerful weapons, its speed and noise, its ability to abolish the lines between sanity and madness. You long for the alluring, hallucinogenic landscapes of combat. You miss the psychedelic visions of carnage and suffering, the smells, sounds, shrieks, explosions and destruction that jolt you back to the present, which make you aware in ways you never were before. The thrill of violence, the God-like power that comes when you can take a human life with impunity, is matched against the pathetic existence of waiting for an unemployment check. You look to rejoin the fraternity of killers. Here. There. It no longer matters.

There is a yawning indifference at home about what is happening in Iraq and Afghanistan. The hollow language of heroism and glory, used by the war makers and often aped by those in the media, allows the nation to feel good about war, about "service." But it is also a way of muzzling the voices that attempt to tell us the truth about war. And when these men and women do find the moral courage to speak, they often find that many fellow Americans turn away in disgust or attack them for shattering the myth. The myth of war is too enjoyable, and too profitable, to be punctured by reality. And so these veterans nurse their fantasies of power. They begin to hate those who sent them as much as they hate those they fought. Some cannot distinguish one from the other.

As I stared into the faces of the men from A Gathering of Eagles on Saturday at a [protest](#) calling for the closure of the Army

Experience Center in Philadelphia, I recognized these emotions. These men had arrived on black motorcycles. They were wearing leather jackets. They had lined up, most holding large American flags, to greet the protesters, some of whom were also veterans. They chanted "Traitors!" at the seven people who were arrested for refusing the police order to leave the premises. They sought vindication from a system that had, although they could not admit it, betrayed them. They yearned to be powerful, if only for a moment, if only by breaking through the police line and knocking some God-hating communist faggot to the ground. They wanted the war to come home.

It is we who are guilty, guilty for sending these young men and women to wars that did not have to be fought. It is we who are guilty for turning away from the truth of war to wallow in a self-aggrandizing myth, guilty because we create and decorate killers and when they come home maimed and broken we discard them. It is we who are guilty for failing to defy a Democratic Party that since 1994 has betrayed the working class by destroying our manufacturing base, slashing funds to assist the poor and cravenly doing the bidding of corporations. It is we who are guilty for refusing to mass on Washington and demand single-payer, not-for-profit health care for all Americans. It is we who are guilty for supporting Democrats while they funnel billions in taxpayer dollars to sustain speculative Wall Street interests. The rage of the confused and angry right-wing marchers, the ones fired up by trash-talking talk show hosts, the ones liberals belittle and maybe even laugh at, should be our rage. And if it is not our rage soon, if we continue to humiliate and debase ourselves by begging Obama to be Obama, we will see our open society dismantled not because of the shrewdness of the far right, but because of our moral cowardice.
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A former New York Times foreign correspondent, Hedges is author of War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning and Empire of Illusion.

Signs of the Times
Living in a Culture of Cruelty:
[Democracy as Spectacle](#)

Henry A. Giroux, truthout/Perspective 9/2/09

Under the Bush administration, a seeping, sometimes galloping, authoritarianism began to reach into every vestige of the culture, giving free rein to those anti-democratic forces in which religious, market, military and political fundamentalism thrived, casting an ominous shadow over the fate of United States democracy. During the Bush-Cheney regime, power became an instrument of retribution and punishment was connected to and fueled by a repressive state. A bullying rhetoric of war, a ruthless consolidation of economic forces, and an all-embracing free-market apparatus and media driven pedagogy of fear supported and sustained a distinct culture of cruelty and inequality in the United States. In pointing to a culture of cruelty, I am not employing a form of left moralism that collapses matters of power and politics into the discourse of character. On the contrary, I think the notion of a culture of cruelty is useful in thinking through the convergence of everyday life and politics, of considering material relations of power - the disciplining of the body as an object of control - on the one hand, and the production of cultural meaning, especially the co-optation of popular culture to sanction official violence, on the other. The culture of cruelty is important for thinking through how life and death now converge in ways that fundamentally transform how we understand and imagine politics in the current historical moment - a moment when the most vital of safety nets, health care reform, is being undermined by right-wing ideologues. What is it about a culture of cruelty that provides the conditions for many Americans to believe that government is the enemy of health care reform and health care reform should be turned over to corporate and market-driven interests, further depriving millions of an essential right?

Increasingly, many individuals and groups now find themselves living in a society that measures the worth of human life in terms of cost-benefit analyzes. The central issue of life and politics is no longer about working to get ahead, but struggling simply to survive. And many groups, who are considered marginal because they are poor, unemployed, people of color, elderly or young, have not just been excluded from "the American dream," but have become utterly redundant and disposable, waste products of a society that no longer considers them of any value. How else to explain the zealotry in which social safety nets have been dismantled, the transition from welfare to workfare (offering little job training programs and no child care), and recent acrimony over health care reform's public option? What accounts for the passage of laws that criminalize the behavior of the 1.2 million homeless in the United States, often defining sleeping, sitting, soliciting, lying down or loitering in public places as a criminal offense rather than a behavior in need of compassionate good will and public assistance? Or, for that matter, the expulsions, suspensions, segregation, class discrimination and racism in the public schools as well as the more severe beatings, broken bones and damaged lives endured by young people in the juvenile justice system? Within these politics, largely fueled by market fundamentalism-- one that substitutes the power of the social state with the power of the corporate state and only values wealth, money and consumers -- there is a ruthless and hidden dimension of cruelty, one in which the powers of life and death are increasingly determined by punishing apparatuses, such as the criminal justice system for poor people of color and/or market forces that increasingly decide who may live and who may die.

The growing dominance of a right-wing media forged in a pedagogy of hate has become a crucial element providing numerous platforms for a culture of cruelty and is fundamental to how we understand the role of education in a range of sites outside of traditional forms of schooling. This educational apparatus and mode of public pedagogy is central to analyzing not just how power is exercised, rewarded and contested in a growing culture of cruelty, but also how particular identities, desires and needs are mobilized in support of an overt racism, hostility towards immigrants and utter disdain, coupled with the threat of mob violence toward any political figure supportive of the social contract and the welfare state. Citizens are increasingly constructed through a language of contempt for all noncommercial public spheres and a chilling indifference to the plight of others that is increasingly expressed in vicious tirades against big government and health care reform. There is a growing element of scorn on the part of the American public for those human beings caught in the web of misfortune, human suffering, dependency and deprivation. As Barbara Ehrenreich observes, "The pattern is to curtail financing for services that might help the poor while ramping up law enforcement: starve school and public transportation budgets, then make truancy illegal. Shut down public housing, then make it a crime to be homeless. Be sure to harass street vendors when there are few other opportunities for employment. The experience of the poor, and especially poor minorities, comes to resemble that of a rat in a cage scrambling to avoid erratically administered electric shocks."

A right-wing spin machine, influenced by haters like Rush Limbaugh, Glenn Beck, Michael Savage and Ann Coulter, endlessly spews out a toxic rhetoric in which: all Muslims are defined as jihadists; the homeless are not victims of misfortune but lazy; blacks are not terrorized by a racist criminal justice system, but the main architects of a culture of criminality; the epidemic of obesity has nothing to do with corporations, big agriculture and advertisers selling junk food, but rather the result of "big" government giving people food stamps; the public sphere is largely for white people, which is being threatened by immigrants and people of color, and so it goes. Glenn Beck, the alleged voice of the common man, appearing on the "Fox & Friends" morning show, calls President Obama a "racist" and then accuses him of "having a deep-seated hatred for white people or the white culture." Nationally syndicated radio host Rush Limbaugh unapologetically states that James Earl Ray, the confessed killer of Martin Luther King Jr., should be given a posthumous Medal of Honor, while his counterpart in right-wing hate, talk radio host Michael Savage, states on

his show, "You know, when I see a woman walking around with a burqa, I see a Nazi. That's what I see - how do you like that? - a hateful Nazi who would like to cut your throat and kill your children." He also claims that Obama is "surrounded by terrorists" and is "raping America." This is a variation of a crude theme established by Ann Coulter, who refers to Bill Clinton as a "very good rapist." Even worse, Obama is a "neo-Marxist fascist dictator in the making," who plans to "force children into a paramilitary domestic army." And this is just a small sampling of the kind of hate talk that permeates right-wing media. This could be dismissed as loony right-wing political theater if it were not for the low levels of civic literacy displayed by so many Americans who choose to believe and invest in this type of hate talk. On the contrary, while it may be idiocy, it reveals a powerful set of political, economic and educational forces at work in miseducating the American public while at the same time extending the culture of cruelty. One central task of any viable form of politics is to analyze the culture of cruelty and its overt and covert dimensions of violence, often parading as entertainment.

Underlying the culture of cruelty that reached its apogee during the Bush administration, was the legalization of state violence, such that human suffering was now sanctioned by the law, which no longer served as a summons to justice. But if a legal culture emerged that made violence and human suffering socially acceptable, popular culture rendered such - violence pleasurable by commodifying, aestheticizing and spectacularizing it. Rather than being unspoken and unseen, violence in American life had become both visible in its pervasiveness and normalized as a central feature of dominant and popular culture. Americans had grown accustomed to luxuriating in a warm bath of cinematic blood, as young people and adults alike were seduced with commercial and military video games such as "Grand Theft Auto" and "America's Army," [\[8\]](#) the television series "24" and its ongoing Bacchanalian fête of torture, the crude violence on display in World Wrestling Entertainment and Ultimate Fighting Championship, and an endless series of vigilante films such as "The Brave One" (2007) and "Death Sentence" (2007), in which the rule of law is suspended by the viscerally satisfying images of men and women seeking revenge as laudable killing machines - a nod to the permanent state of emergency and war in the United States. Symptomatically, there is the mindless glorification and aestheticization of brutal violence in the most celebrated Hollywood films, including many of Quentin Tarantino's films, especially the recent "Death Proof" (2007), "Kill Bill" 1 & 2 (2003, 2004), and "Inglorious Bastards" (2009). With the release of Tarantino's 2009 bloody war film, in fact, the press reported that Dianne Kruger, the co-star of "Inglorious Bastards," claimed that she "loved being tortured by Brad Pitt [though] she was frustrated she didn't get an opportunity to get frisky with her co-star, but admits being beaten by Pitt was a satisfying experience." This is more than the aestheticization of violence, it is the normalization and glorification of torture itself.

If Hollywood has made gratuitous violence the main staple of its endless parade of blockbuster films, television has tapped into the culture of cruelty in a way that was unimaginable before the attack on the US on September 11. Prime-time television before the attacks had "fewer than four acts of torture" per year, but "now there are more than a hundred." Moreover, the people who torture are no longer the villains, but the heroes of prime-time television. The most celebrated is, of course, Jack Bauer, the tragic-ethical hero of the wildly popular Fox TV thriller "24." Not only is torture the main thread of the plot, often presented "with gusto and no moral compunction," but Bauer is portrayed as a patriot, rather than a depraved monster, who tortures in order to protect American lives and national security. Torture, in this scenario, takes society's ultimate betrayal of human dignity and legitimates the pain and fear it produces as normal, all the while making a "moral sadist" a television celebrity. The show has over 15 million viewers, and its glamorization of torture has proven so successful that it appears to have not only numbed the public's reaction to the horrors of torture, but it is so overwhelmingly influential among the US military that the Pentagon sent Brig. Gen. Patrick Finnegan to California to meet with the producers of the show. "He told them that promoting illegal behavior in the series ... was having a damaging effect on

young troops." The pornographic glorification of gratuitous, sadistic violence is also on full display in the popular HBO television series "Dexter," which portrays a serial killer as a sympathetic, even lovable, character. Visual spectacles steeped in degradation and violence permeate the culture and can be found in various reality TV shows, professional wrestling and the infamous Jerry Springer Show. These programs all trade in fantasy, glamorized violence and escapism. And they share similar values. As Chris Hedges points out in his analysis of professional wrestling, they all mirror the worse dimensions of an unchecked and unregulated market society in which "winning is all that matters. Morality is irrelevant.... It is all about personal pain, vendettas, hedonism and fantasies of revenge, while inflicting pain on others. It is the cult of victimhood."

The celebration of hyper-violence, moral sadism and torture travels easily from fiction to real life with the emergence in the past few years of a proliferation of "bum fight" videos on the Internet, "shot by young men and boys who are seen beating the homeless or who pay transients a few dollars to fight each other." The culture of cruelty mimics cinematic violence as the agents of abuse both indulge in actual forms of violence and then further celebrate the barbarity by posting it on the web, mimicking the desire for fame and recognition, while voyeuristically consuming their own violent cultural productions. The National Coalition for the Homeless claims that "On YouTube in July 2009, people have posted 85,900 videos with 'bum' in the title [and] 5,690 videos can be found with the title 'bum fight,' representing ... an increase of 1,460 videos since April 2008." Rather than problematize violence, popular culture increasingly normalizes it, often in ways that border on criminal intent. For instance, a recent issue of Maxim, a popular men's magazine, included "a blurb titled 'Hunt the Homeless' [focusing on] a coming 'hobo convention' in Iowa and says 'Kill one for fun. We're 87 percent sure it's legal.'" In this context, violence is not simply being transformed into an utterly distasteful form of adolescent entertainment or spectacularized to attract readers and boost profits, it becomes a powerful pedagogical force in the culture of cruelty by both aligning itself and becoming complicit with the very real surge of violence against the homeless, often committed by young men and teenage boys looking for a thrill. Spurred on by the ever reassuring presence of violence and dehumanization in the wider culture, these young "thrill offenders" now search out the homeless and "punch, kick, shoot or set afire people living on the streets, frequently killing them, simply for the sport of it, their victims all but invisible to society." All of these elements of popular culture speak stylishly and sadistically to new ways in which to maximize the pleasure of violence, giving it its hip (if fascist) edginess.

Needless to say, neither violent video games and television series nor Hollywood films and the Internet (or for that matter popular culture) cause in any direct sense real world violence and suffering, but they do not leave the real world behind either. That is too simplistic. What they do achieve is the execution of a well-funded and highly seductive public pedagogical enterprise that sexualizes and stylizes representations of violence, investing them with an intense pleasure quotient. I don't believe it is an exaggeration to claim that the violence of screen culture entertains and cleanses young people of the burden of ethical considerations when they, for instance, play video games that enabled them to "casually kill the simulated human beings whose world they control." Hollywood films such as the "Saw" series offer up a form of torture porn in which the spectacle of the violence enhances not merely its attraction, but offers young viewers a space where questions of ethics and responsibility are gleefully suspended, enabling them to evade their complicity in a culture of cruelty. No warnings appear on the labels of these violent videos and films, suggesting that the line between catharsis and desensitization may become blurred, making it more difficult for them to raise questions about what it means "to live in a society that produces, markets, and supports such products." But these hyper-violent cultural products also form part of a corrupt pedagogical assemblage that makes it all the more difficult to recognize the hard realities of power and material violence at work through militarism, a winner-take-all economy marked by punishing inequalities and a national security state that exhibits an utter disregard for human suffering. Even the suffering of children, we must note, as when govern-

ment officials reduce the lives of babies and young children lost in Iraq and Afghanistan to collateral damage. Tragically, the crime here is much more than symbolic.

The ideology of hardness and cruelty runs through American culture like an electric current, sapping the strength of social relations and individual character, moral compassion and collective action, offering up crimes against humanity that become fodder for video games and spectacularized media infotainment, and constructing a culture of cruelty that promotes a "symbiosis of suffering and spectacle." As Chris Hedges argues: "Sadism is as much a part of popular culture as it is of corporate culture. It dominates pornography, runs . . . through reality television and trash-talk programs and is at the core of the compliant, corporate collective. Corporatism is about crushing the capacity for moral choice. And it has its logical fruition in Abu Ghraib, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and our lack of compassion for the homeless, our poor, the mentally ill, the unemployed and the sick."

Bailouts are not going to address the ways in which individual desires, values and identities are endlessly produced in the service of a culture of cruelty and inequality. Power is not merely material, it is also symbolic and is distributed through a society in ways we have never seen before. No longer is education about schooling. It now functions through the educational force of the larger culture in the media, Internet, electronic media and through a wide range of technologies and sites endlessly working to undo democratic values, compassion and any viable notion of justice and its accompanying social relations. What this suggests is a redefinition of both literacy and education. We need, as a society, to educate students and others to be literate in multiple ways, to reclaim the high ground of civic courage, and to be able to name, engage and transform those forms of public pedagogy that produce hate and cruelty as part of the discourse of common sense. Otherwise, democracy will lose the supportive institutions, social relations and culture that make it not only possible but even thinkable

Church Accountability: Diocesan Priest Criticizes His Bishop's Leadership

Thomas C. Fox, National Catholic Reporter, Sept. 15, 2009

Father Michael J. Gillgannon, a widely respected missionary priest of the diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph, has written an open letter to his bishop, Robert W. Finn, taking strong exception to his leadership.

"You appear to me and many priests of my generation who lived the Spirit filled days of Vatican II," wrote Gillgannon, "as one whose task is to reverse the changes of that great event. You have given the impression that your changes were for the sake of a narrow 'orthodoxy' which seems to imply that the bishops and priests and laity before you were not orthodox."

Ordained in 1958, Gillgannon began his career in campus ministry in 1962 at Western Missouri State University. In 1966, he served on the advisory committee of the U.S. Catholic Bishops' Conference for the post-Vatican II reorganization of Catholic Campus Ministry in the United States. Since 1974, he has worked as a missionary in La Paz, serving as pastor of San Antonio Parish, as episcopal vicar of the Eastern Deanery of La Paz, and as national chaplain for Bolivian Campus Ministry. . . .

September 11, 2009

Dear Bishop Finn,
Greetings from Bolivia. I am enjoying good health and, with no complications from the altitude, I am able to help in a variety of ways as I continue to serve the people here in the Archdiocese of La Paz, Bolivia. I was sorry we did not have an opportunity for conversation in Kansas City as you were quite busy and I was very low on energy after my cardiac operation.

I recently received the notice from Father Ernie Davis of the diocesan

Priests' Retreat at the Lake of the Ozarks this September. Father said you will be a presenter and will share your Episcopal experience, "your vision, your leadership and your relationship with the priests". I wish that I could be there with you and my brother priests but that is not possible.

Bishop Finn, I would like to share some thoughts with you (and other priests and committed Catholic friends) on some common concerns. Of course, our most common concern is our love for Jesus and his Church as the People of God seeking the freedom and salvation of the entire human family in its search for human fulfillment in God.

My recent experience in Kansas City reading articles, watching television, and seeing visitors during my convalescence left me saddened about the deep divisions in our country and our Church. But denying or covering over our differences will not resolve them. Only frank and sincere dialogue with real changes will bring us to a new unity, the Eucharistic unity bequeathed us by Jesus.

So I speak my concerns to you, Bishop, in that spirit. You have made many changes in the diocese since you came with a particular agenda. You appear to me and many priests of my generation who lived the Spirit filled days of Vatican II as one whose task is to reverse the changes of that great event. You have given the impression that your changes were for the sake of a narrow "orthodoxy" which seems to imply that the bishops and priests and laity before you were not orthodox.

In the last few years you have totally changed the diocesan lay formation center (terminating its quite competent teaching team) which was a model for the country as begun by Bishop John Sullivan and continued by Bishop Boland. You have made Ave Maria University and its theological school the only source of lay formation in the diocese though there are many other national sources available on a theological continuum from conservative to liberal, all within Catholic orthodoxy (I know various priests have written to you with their doubts about that). You give the impression you are not working from a pastoral model of unity with respect for diversity, a more traditional Catholic practice, but from an ideological desire for a narrow uniformity and an even narrower spirituality.

More recently, however, I have been deeply concerned by your pastoral document, co-authored with Archbishop Naumann, on health care in the United States. Many priests and laypeople have wondered about your applications of the principles of Subsidiarity and Personal Responsibility. 47,000,000 citizens in the world's richest country are without health care. The national arguments for change have been going on for years. We cannot leave those poor without care. Your document seems to say the poor must fend for themselves and take better care of themselves. It seems to say "private" care is more responsible as opposed to "government bureaucracies". Would you be meaning government administered "Medicare" and "Medicaid"? Would you be counseling Catholics to leave those programs for private programs?

Traditional Catholic Social teaching has always praised the noble task of government and responsible political actors to protect and promote the "common good". The government is not the enemy of the people. It is the servant or so I was always taught in Catholic schools and seminaries. Are you suggesting a change in that teaching? Are you presenting a debatable political application, your point of view, as the only practical application of Catholic Doctrine? Thoughtful Catholics can and will disagree privately and publicly and be in full communion with the Roman Catholic Church. Or have I missed something in the American Bishops several statements over years on the role of conscience and principles in public debate?

Is it not the case that every private insurance plan "limits" its providers and limits coverage if one takes another "option", or has a costly sickness? So only the very rich are truly "free" to choose to pay for all treatment options with costly personal insurance policies provided by their employer or paid from their personal wealth. I was particularly conscious of all this

since February as I had the most serious sickness of my life. I could never have paid for my care without Medicare and our diocesan priests' insurance plan. [45,000 die in the U.S. annually for lack of health insurance.]

Living and working in the poverty of Bolivia for 35 years I constantly see the economics of health care and the public "common good" as basic to all debates and laws about universal health care coverage in any country and with any government. Without the economic solidarity of the common good written into law the poor and marginalized will always be left out.

Another problem of concern is the pastoral document on the 2008 elections you authored. You, Bishop, and many bishops of your generation, seem to be proposing a one-issue public dialogue on political candidates and platforms which deny the Catholic Tradition of social teaching on a wide range of issues expressed in the Seamless Garment social teachings of Cardinal Bernardin and his generation of prelates. And which I was taught in the seminary of the '50s and later in the documents of Vatican II. Later when some 60 or so Catholic Bishops of your generation condemned the new president on pro-life issues you failed as teachers. Your style and your strategy finds resonance with only a small segment of the Church and the wider American public you would like to influence. You may think of yourself and the others as defending human life by speaking the "truth" to power but you seem to most of us as pushing your own political agenda and not the wisdom of Catholic teaching. And worse, you give the impression that those who disagree with you are opposed to the defense of life.

How pro-life have you been on Iraq and Afghanistan? Have you questioned the new American practice of hiring the poor and the marginalized without other job opportunities as mercenaries to fight and die in our wars? Meanwhile, ending the draft system (which I favored in the Vietnam conflict) has come to mean middle and upper-class families (mostly white) need not fear their children will have to interrupt their lives to die in an unwise and unjust war. Americans can forget patriotism or that we are even in a war as seemingly, by common professional and political agreement, our wars will no longer be presented in their bloody violence in our news medium. Have you formed Catholic consciences on war and armaments and national defense budgets?

What about national and personal wealth and its responsible uses? What about race and class and urban and suburban ghettos taken for granted in our society and in our educational systems? The list of American social problems continues to challenge the richness and amplitude of Catholic Social Teachings for solid, reasonable, humane applications for the common good of all our citizens.

We have many wonderful values in our Church and in our country. But our civil and ecclesial divisions and the acerbic and accusatory tenor of our dialogues could end our acceptance of others and respect for difference. Particularly when ideologies replace reasoned pragmatic, but ethical, solutions. You do not have a coherent or compelling vision of Church teaching or of pastoral strategies that can convert people and change their attitudes and actions. That is why your leadership, and that of many other American Bishops, is questioned so deeply. Our church is more divided among leadership and faithful than at any time in my life of 76 years, and 51 years as a priest. We have to ask ourselves why so many Catholics are leaving the Church. Are they sinners? Or searchers? A search to which our in-house quarrels have not responded.

So let us continue to dialogue and reason together from our common values and principles looking for the best social and pastoral solutions to the problems of our country and our Church. And, as always, let us pray for one another, our Church, and our country. May God bless and guide you in your difficult role as pastor and teacher.

Sincerely yours in Christ,
Rev. Michael J. Gillgannon

Personal Accountability

FRANZ JÄGERSTÄTTER:

Letters and Writings from Prison

Erna Putz, ed. Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY, 2009.

Reviewed by Anna Brown in *The Catholic Worker*, Sept. 2009

In his introduction to *Franz Jägerstätter: Letters and Writings from Prison*, Jim Forest writes that even though Franz Jägerstätter "would certainly do what he could to preserve his life for the sake of his family, [he firmly believed] self-preservation did not make it permissible to go and murder other people's families." Jim Forest asks how it is that someone "so unimportant," a relatively uneducated farmer, could see so clearly while those holding positions of leadership in the Catholic Church or in the Austrian government of the Nazi era were utterly blind. Perhaps, it is not simply a matter of seeing clearly; the message of Jesus in the Gospels, after all, is strikingly clear. What sets Franz Jägerstätter apart is not only his ability to see clearly but also to act upon his insight and to actually pay the ultimate price for his refusal to join the Nazis.

Accompanying Franz Jägerstätter in his astonishing witness was his wife, Franziska, who recalled: "In the beginning, I really begged him not to put his life at stake, but then, when everyone was quarreling with him and scolding him, I didn't do it anymore... If I had not stood by him, he would have had no one."

Reading Franz Jägerstätter's *Letters and Writings from Prison*, I discovered, was the literary equivalent of walking into a burning building. I, like the Catholic prelates and Austrian officials, wanted to flee while my hide was still intact. At other points in my reading, however, tears would flow down my face as I found it harder and harder to turn away from the truth of his insight and actions.

During these moments, I recalled a passage from Plato's *Republic*: "We must be persuaded by the better argument." At first glance, this statement may seem rather pedestrian, something a first year philosophy student would dutifully write down in a notebook, dredge up for the final exam and then forget. Of course, there is so much more in this statement than is revealed at first glance. Namely, that we are to come to insight by means of persuasion and not by violent force. More so, when we come upon such insight, we are to respond metabolically, which is to say, we are to change our lives and commit our entire being to this insight.

In a letter to his wife on August 8, 1943, the day before he was executed, he wrote, "Do you believe that all would go well for me if I were to tell a lie in order for me to prolong my life?" The lie that Franz Jägerstätter refers to is an oath of loyalty to Hitler. Had he signed the oath--and it was placed upon a table in his jail cell each day until the day of his death--he would most likely not have been executed. In March of 1943, Franz contemplated giving his consent to serving as a military medic which, like his signature to the loyalty oath, may have preserved his life. Though he seems to have changed his mind about this type of service in July of 1943, his wife is of the belief that the military, in their desire for total control, denied even this work to Franz. At issue was his refusal to pledge his total obedience to Hitler. His was a metanoic response to the "better argument."

Included among Franz and Franziska's remarkable letters and Franz's writings are pictures of Franz and his family. One of them, taken in April of 1943, shows his three toddler-aged daughters, Rosalia, Maria and Aloisia, each holding an Easter basket and standing behind a large, homemade sign that read, "Dear Father, come home soon." By all accounts, he was a devoted and loving father. The Jägerstätters' joyful marriage, though tested in a fiery cauldron of heartbreaking circumstances, was steadfast and deeply loving. In a letter from prison that he wrote to Franziska on their seventh wedding anniversary, Franz recalls, "When I look back and observe all the good fortune and the many graces that have come to us during these seven years, I see that many things often border on being

miracles."

There is simply no getting around the agonizing consequences of Franz Jägerstätter's choice not to join the Nazis. Not only did his family lose an exemplary husband and father, they also lost a provider (the bulk of the family's labor-intensive farm work was picked up by Franziska and her elderly parents), any monetary compensation or food subsidies that were given by the Nazi government to compliant military families, and their civic reputation. In his introduction, Jim Forest recounts an interview given by Franziska to Gordon Zahn: "... she described with composure her last meeting with Franz in Berlin three weeks before his execution, but she broke down in tears while describing the subsequent behavior of her neighbors. Few offered the help she so badly needed after Franz's death." [See *In Solitary Witness*, Gordon Zahn's definitive biography of Franz Jägerstätter-Eds. Note.]

In an essay that he wrote in 1942, "On Today's Issue: Catholic or National Socialist," Franz Jägerstätter recalls a dream that he had in January of 1938. Those familiar with the life of Franz Jägerstätter know this as the "train dream." The value of reading about it in *Letters and Writings from Prison* is getting its full account through Franz Jägerstätter's own vivid telling, his interpretation, and his analysis of the political and religious situation within which the imagery of the dream may be contextualized.

"I saw [in a dream] a wonderful train as it came around a mountain. With little regard for the adults, children flowed to this train and were not held back. There were present a few adults who did not go into the area. I do not want to give their names or describe them. Then a voice said to me, 'This train is going to hell.' Immediately, it happened that someone took my hand, and the same voice said to me; 'Now we are going to purgatory.' What I glimpsed and perceived was fearful. If this voice had not told me that we were going to purgatory, I would have judged that I had found myself in hell."

For Franz Jägerstätter, the train symbolizes National Socialism with all of its sub-organizations and programs (the National Socialist Public Assistance Program, Hitler Youth, etc). As he puts it, "the train represents the National Socialist Volk community and everything for which it struggles and sacrifices." He remembers that just prior to having this dream, he had read that 150,000 young Austrian people had joined Hitler Youth. He recounts, sadly, that the Christians of Austria had never donated as much money to charitable organizations as they now donated to Nazi party organizations. He realized that it wasn't really the money that the Nazis were after, it was the souls of the Austrian people: You were either with the Führer or you were nothing. Upon this realization, Franz Jägerstätter writes, "I would like to cry out to the people aboard the National Socialism train: 'Jump off this train before it arrives at your last stop where you will pay with your life!'"

His admonition to "jump off the train" is one that must be heard and acted upon, perhaps never more so than today. In his recent meditation on Franz Jägerstätter's life, Father Daniel Berrigan urges that we not become complacent in these "post-Hitler" times: "To speak of today; it is no longer Hitler's death train we ride, the train of the living dead. Or is it? The same train. Only, if possible (it is possible) longer, faster, cheaper. On schedule, every hour on the hour, speedy and cheap and unimaginably lethal. An image of life in the world. A ghost train still bound, mad as March weather, for hell. On earth... Despite all fantasies and homilies and 'States of the Union' urging the contrary. Today, a world of normalized violence, a world of standoff, of bunkers and missiles nose to nose, a world of sub-human superpowers and the easy riders. The train beats its way across the world, crowded with contented passenger-citizen-Christians."

Franz Jägerstätter's 1942 admonishment is accompanied by rather stunning verses of compassion for those who have decided to board the "train to hell." His compassionate remarks are directed particularly to the Austrian clergy who capitulated to the Nazi regime: "I am not throwing stones at our bishops and priests. They are human beings of flesh and

blood as are we... Perhaps, too, they were too little prepared to take on this struggle and to decide for themselves whether they wanted to live or to die... Would not our hearts shake (as theirs must have) if it were to come about that we would have to appear before God's judgment seat and be accountable for a decision that would affect so many other human beings?"

In this essay he suggests that we not judge, but instead pray for the well-being of those we are tempted to criticize. In one of his last essays, however, he reminds the Catholic leadership that it is better to face the loss of church buildings, for example, than the loss of its people's faith. He also wonders whether "priests are of much help to us if they must remain silent when they should be speaking out?"

In one of the close to two hundred brief reflections composed between May and August of 1943, Franz Jägerstätter writes, "Love as the outer-wear is the 'uniform' of Jesus' disciples. His disciples are known by their love." Like Dorothy Day, Franz Jägerstätter understood that our ability to love one another is all that matters.

I think here of a conversation that I had last summer with a young man in the Israeli Defense Forces who had been sent to stop our work rebuilding a Palestinian home which had, in prior weeks, been demolished by Israeli civil and military authorities. The young man eventually asserted that he did not want to do what he had been ordered to do, but since he was "wearing a soldier's uniform" he had no choice. I was deeply appreciative of this soldier's revelation but I also knew that despite such an admission, it was more than likely that the demolitions of Palestinian homes would continue, as they do even now. What would it take, I wondered, to "disrobe" our soldiers--indeed each one of us--so that we might be better able to put on the garments of love? For Franz Jägerstätter, it was impossible to be a soldier for Christ and a soldier for the National Socialists simultaneously. At the same time, he did not condemn individual soldiers who were "ordered to do what they were doing upon pain of death for an act of disobedience." Our imperative is to love God and to love neighbor, not to judge neighbor.

Further, we must each see how we have contributed, by our tax dollars, for example, to the situation the soldier finds himself in. As Franz Jägerstätter puts it in relationship to his own time: "Did National Socialism simply fall on us from the sky? I believe that in response we need not waste many words. Whoever was not asleep the last one hundred years knows well enough how and why everything has come about."

Franz Jägerstätter: Letters and Writings from Prison is a must-read for the nonviolent activist. Better put, and more in line with Franz Jägerstätter's own way of being in the world, it is a "must-act" book. In the final months of his life, Franz Jägerstätter wrote, "I perceive that many words will not accomplish much today. Words teach, but personal example shows their meaning People want to observe Christians who have taken a stand in the contemporary world, Christians who live amid all of the darkness with clarity, insight, and conviction, Christians who live with the purest peace of mind, courage and dedication amid the absence of peace and joy, amid the self-seeking and hatred."

On the morning of August 9, 1943, Franz Jägerstätter was awakened at 5:30 am and told to get dressed. He was driven to the Berlin-Brandenburg prison where he was executed at 4:00 pm that same day. Upon awaiting his execution, he was accompanied by Father Albert Jochmann, a priest who asked if he wished to read from the Bible. Franz Jägerstätter, who had devoted much of his life to Bible study, denied the offer, saying that it would only distract him from the intensity of his prayer. Father Jochmann marveled at his prayerful equanimity in the face of death. He later told a community of Austrian nuns, "I can only congratulate you on this countryman of yours who lived as a saint and has now died a hero. I can say with certainty that this simple man is the only saint I have ever met in my lifetime."

Franziska Jägerstätter recalls that she felt an "intense personal communion" with Franz at 4:00 pm that day. The feeling was so strong that she marked the time and date in a journal not knowing, at the time, that Franz was executed at that exact moment. His ashes, which she received in 1946, were buried on August 9th in St. Radegund's cemetery, just outside the walls of their parish church.

Though I have recommended this book as a "must read/act" book for nonviolent activists, there may be those who question whether or not this is a book only for Catholic peacemakers. Given the Church's beatification of now Blessed Franz Jägerstätter in October 2007, this is certainly a book that is much needed for the retrieval, renewal, affirmation, and amplification of the Catholic Church's work for justice and peace. It will also serve to challenge the Church and its members deeply to renounce warfare and embrace nonviolence, the way of life exemplified by Jesus. Finally, it will serve to remind Catholics of the richness of their own sacramental, liturgical and communal gifts.

The Jägerstätters were a family who had committed themselves fully to the life of the Church by serving within their parish, by keeping to the fasts and Holy days of the Church calendar, by attending Mass and through daily prayer. Letters and Writings from Prison, with its emphasis both on "traditional" and "radical" Catholic values and practices, could also be read in parish communities that are looking for ways to find common and fruitful ground among its conservative and progressive parishioners, its just-war theorists and its pacifists. This is also a book, however, that would encourage those belonging to a faith tradition other than Christianity to plumb the depths of that tradition and find the same richness within. It is self-evident that at the table of love and nonviolence, there is room for everyone.

During his lifetime, Franz Jägerstätter did not enjoy, for the most part, the support of the Catholic hierarchy or community. As Jim Forest notes, "Franz Jägerstätter was a solitary witness. He died with no expectation that his sacrifice would make any difference to anyone... beyond his family and community, his death would go entirely unnoticed and have no impact on the Nazi movement or hasten the end of war... Who would remember or care about the anti-Nazi gesture of an uneducated farmer?"

Whether we are rooted in a faith tradition or not, the solitary witness of Franz Jägerstätter certainly points to the need for self-reflection and action: What does it mean to be human? Why do I act in the way that I do? Do my actions serve to harm or to uplift life? Am I living in a way that serves the work of peace and nonviolence?

Nonviolence is a way of life and in this regard, the Franz Jägerstätter well runs deep. Prior to the "large act" of his beheading, he, in the tradition of St. Thérèse of Lisieux, well demonstrated "the little way" of nonviolence in the world. When another cell-mate suffered from hunger, he shared his meager portion of bread while declaring "a cup of coffee is enough for me." He was mindful of the human penchant to "give many more death blows with our tongues than with our hand" and counseled discipline and prayer when the temptation to slight another verbally arose.

In a letter sent to Franziska in March of 1943, Franz Jägerstätter wrote, "Dear wife, I wish to ask something of you. Would it be possible to put some pieces of edelweiss in the next letter? A cell mate here requested that I get him some edelweiss. He is a young Frenchman who was condemned to death a few weeks ago. He would like to send edelweiss to his beloved as a farewell gift. She loves flowers." In this selfless request, Franz and Franziska Jägerstätter show us that every moment is the right moment to serve and to love on another. Blessed Franz Jägerstätter, pray for us.

**SOA Watch Leader Fr. Roy Bourgeois
Scorns Honduras Coup, Church Sexism**

Fr. Roy Bourgeois, the Maryknoll missionary who has led the School of the Americas Watch campaign to close what is now called the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation for 19 years charged U.S. complicity in the Honduras military coup that ousted the country's elected president in a three-day Maine tour this week. He also scored Roman Catholic Church leadership with sexism in denying ordination to women. Pax Christi Maine was the lead sponsor of the tour.

While the U.S. Ambassador to Honduras insisted that he knew nothing of coup plans, Bourgeois reported that supporters of democracy in Honduras are convinced that the CIA was behind the coup and that the Oscar Arias negotiations promoted by U.S. Secretary of State Hilary Clinton were designed to stall return of the elected president until November elections. He suggested that the Honduras coup is an effort to reverse the sea change in Latin American politics in countries no longer beholden to U.S. dictation. Four, he noted, have stopped sending officers to WHINSEC.

At the end of Portland, Farmington, Orono, and Belfast talks, Bourgeois insisted that denial of Roman Catholic Church ordination contradicts St. Paul's rejection of any inequality in the Christian community in favor of continuance of centuries of patriarchy.

Bourgeois observed that the men Jesus "chose" to be apostles all hid in fear behind locked doors after the Crucifixion and that it was Mary Magdalen who was "chosen" by God to witness the Resurrection, the central event in the Church, and to announce it to the apostles--who would not believe her. Denying ordination to women is sexism, he emphasized.

Fr. Bourgeois was excommunicated last fall for giving a homily at the ordination of a Catholic woman to the priesthood. He protests that he is following his conscience and that Church sexism is a sin. (As Maureen Fiedler points out in *Rome Has Spoken*, early Church history contradicts Vatican claims that it is not authorized to ordain women: women presided at house Eucharists. An ordained priesthood emerged only in the third century; the Pontifical Biblical Commission finds no Scriptural objection.)

John XXIII Declared Health Care a Right

In *Pacem in Terris* 40-odd years ago, John XXIII answered Cardinal Justin Rigali and several U.S. bishops who have declared that health care is not a natural right: "[Humans have] the right to live. [They have] the right to bodily integrity and the means necessary for the proper development of life, particularly food, clothing, shelter, medical care, rest, and finally, the necessary social services. In consequence, [they have] the right to be looked after in the event of ill-health, disability stemming from . . . work; widowhood old age. . . ." Notably, European bishops and conservative politicians there, e.g. Margaret Thatcher, have never challenged single-payer health care.

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An idle mind is . . .

Proposed Pax Christi Maine Statement **Justice for Palestinians**

It is long past time for the People of God everywhere and for all Americans to acknowledge the reality in Palestine and to address its injustices:

In 1897, the Zionist movement, infected with eastern European and Jewish tribalism and the same romantic nationalism of blood ties to the land that produced Hitler and despairing of assimilation in the wake of the Dreyfuss affair and eastern European pogroms, determined to establish an exclusively Jewish *heimatland* in Palestine by forcibly evicting its 90 % majority Arab population. Abetted by British colonialism, which promised that homeland; encouraged Jewish immigration, organization, and military preparations, and refused to recognize any Palestinian Arab organization or allow Palestinian arms, the Zionists then terrorized the British when they balked at further assisting Palestinian displacement.

U.S. pressure for United Nations partition, contrary to the UN Charter's espousal of self-determination, provided the Zionists their major opportunity: they effected much of the Zionist design in 1947-48, assassinating the UN mediator who sought to stop hostilities and allow Palestinian refugees to return home, taking political control of 78 per cent of Palestine, cleansing 750,000 Palestinian Arabs--75 per cent of Palestine's Arab population, confiscating 68.5 per cent of Palestinian real estate, and denying refugees' right of return contrary to international law and their commitment to gain United Nations entrance and recognition.

Pax Christi Maine deplores the Zionist enterprise, essentially racist in denying Palestinians the basic rights and privileges the immigrant Zionists claimed for themselves. The preemptive 1967 war and Occupation initiated a long third phase of land, home, and water confiscations; home demolitions; illegal settlements; deadly state terrorism; wrongful imprisonment of hundreds of thousands and torture of thousands; frustration of commerce and agriculture, destruction of infrastructure, and denial of access to health, education, and religious institutions and livelihoods through construction of the confiscation wall, checkpoints, road blocks, denial of timely access to health care, and a system of settlements and Israel-only highways that seriously disrupt Palestinian travel and choke commerce, confiscating almost half of East Jerusalem and much of the West Bank and denying Palestinian Arabs living outside of Jerusalem access to their cultural center. Israel has now confiscated half of the territory it did not hold in 1948, making prisoners of those remaining. Palestinians have been systematically denied sovereignty, freedom, security, and human dignity.

We deplore all of the violence in Palestinian history since 1897--the violent Jewish pursuit of emptied land and Palestinian resistance and protests of their displacement and subjugation with suicide bombings and rocketing directed at civilians.

We deplore our government misuse of our wealth and compromise of our good name in its provision of intelligence and both offensive weapons and illegitimate weapons to Israel--aircraft, phosphorous bombs, D.I.M.E. bombs, and cluster bombs, which assistance Israel has repeatedly used illegally in attacks on Palestinian civilians contrary to the terms of the gift or sale of those weapons.

We deplore our government's provision of funds for Israel's confiscation wall, settlements, for repression and its ubiquitous UN vetoes to make Israel's abuses possible and prevent accountability.

We deplore and condemn our government's and media's whitewashing of Israeli criminality and the pressure supporters of Israeli racism bring on government and the media with immunity from media and government criticism--and politicians' acquiescence.

We especially deplore and condemn the craven silence of the Roman Catholic hierarchy—local, national, and international, before 62 years of Zionist denial of the human dignity of millions of Palestinians, presumably in fear of losing their present limited access to the holy places in Palestine, hoped for greater access, or of being called anti-semitic. This silence is like that in Germany and the Vatican in the Nazi era, initially to protect their precious concordat as if it took precedence over human life. For Palestinian human dignity they risk nothing. It is as if Palestinians have no dignity, no right to self-determination, no right to homeland or homes, no right to any security, no right to food, health care, even life, while Israel, a colonial usurper, brutally pursues absolute security and more land at their expense—as if we have no moral responsibility.

We likewise deplore and condemn the Christian right's aberrant theological justification for denial of human dignity to Palestinians, who were among the earliest Christians and whose claim to love of neighbor obviously transcends pursuit of baseless speculations about the end time and violent efforts to hasten it.

As Christians, we call for justice for Palestinians—for an end to the Occupation, for use of illegal and immoral settlement housing and enterprises built on stolen land to house Palestinian refugees, for grant to refugees of their right to return to their homes and land to the degree possible and compensation for losses; for equal rights for Arab citizens of Israel in a genuinely democratic state (not an ethnocracy), and for reparations to replace all infrastructure Israel has destroyed or damaged in its acts of subjugation.

We stand foursquare against callous dismissal of the elemental human rights of Palestinian refugees, the large majority of Palestinian Arabs, rights confirmed by international law, as if time, convenience, might, and denial of any responsibility for Israel's ethnic cleansing crimes have nullified any Palestinian claim to justice.

All of this would fall far short of justice, but Palestinians and the Arab world have indicated a readiness to forfeit Palestinians' right to the greater part of what was taken from them. In the face of that generosity, it is obscene for Israel and U.S. administrations to demand that Palestinians acknowledge Israel's right to any of what it has unlawfully taken. It is time for the human community to insist upon that smaller measure of justice that cannot justly be denied the long-suffering Palestinians. It is past time for the Catholic hierarchy to give prophetic leadership to the People of God in that effort, to end the grave scandal of its silence.. In view of the hierarchy's abdication of responsibility, it is long past time for the People of God to provide that prophetic leadership themselves. It is time for all men and women of good will to demand of our Congressional representatives and the federal administration justice for Palestinians, the justice that, only, will make peace possible—to demand and to work for justice firmly, relentlessly, without ceasing, until justice arrives.

--Submitted by Bill Slavick

