



SFO National Peace and Justice Commission

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Newsletter

October 2004

Dear Friends,

This is the first newsletter produced by the present members of the National Peace and Justice Commission. We hope you will find it interesting. We decided to set aside the important and serious questions of the day for this one issue. Instead, we tell you something about ourselves. What we have written will give you a better understanding of who we are and why we are so committed to the pursuit of peace founded on justice. Knowing who we are might encourage you to read what we write about peace and justice from a Secular Franciscan perspective in the future.

Each one of us on the National Peace and Justice Commission and one former member of the Commission has written an article. Father David shares with us a reflection for Thanksgiving. Ray and Jo-Ann Hardwick of St. Francis Region tell how they understand their SFO Peace and Justice mission that has occupied them for the last twenty-five years. Patricia Mulligan of Lady Poverty Region, who works in the difficult field of prison ministry, lets us know that not all of her work is serious and grim. Theresa Egan of St. Margaret of Cortona Region brings a personal message that will resound for all of us. Terri Leone of St. Katherine Drexel Region describes a peace project she created for her region. I tell you about some of the forces that nurtured my passion for social justice.

Read our contributions. Then respond to the writer if you wish to do so. After the National Ministers' meeting we will post the newsletter on our part of the Nafra webpage, so that the members of your fraternities can read it.

May the peace of St. Francis be with you always,

Carolyn Colburn, sfo
National Peace and Justice Commission, Chair

We give thanks O God

By Father David Moczulski, OFM
Spiritual Assistant to the National Peace
and Justice Commission

What is it in your life that you are most thankful for this year? I ask the question at the beginning of this short article to provoke some thought. There are the obvious things in life for which we, somewhat automatically, express our gratitude to God – the gift of family, friends, perhaps some sense of economic security. But is this the sort of thanksgiving that we, as followers of St. Francis are asked to speak of before God and others?

For me, Francis is asking something more. Francis beckons me to look a bit deeper into my life and to find within myself something more, something deeper.

The whole of creation was the cause of Francis' proclamation of thanksgiving. As one who proclaimed the reconciling message of Christ, Francis saw the world and all that is in it as the cause of joy. For Francis, it was a chance to recognize the face of Christ in everyone that he met.

As I write this brief article, we are in the midst of the presidential campaign. The constant rhetoric reminds me of how necessary it is for us as Franciscans to bring forward another message. The messages we are hearing do not evoke in me a sense of wanting to build unity; they provoke a sense of frustration and disunity. The grassroots Christian movement "Sojourners" makes available

a bumper sticker that reads: "God is not a Republican, nor a Democrat." No one can claim the exclusive marketing rights to God's blessing.

This season of Thanksgiving evokes in me a sense of the gratitude I need to have for all that God is for me—the blessings and the challenges of life. To praise God equally for the people in my life who are friends and companions and for the people who call me to stretch myself to respect the differences of others.

In the gospel of Matthew Jesus says that where your heart is so is your treasure. I ask myself, and ask you, this Thanksgiving season to examine where your heart is. What is it that you were thinking about when you woke up this morning? As you went about your day, what was on your mind? As you lay in bed before drifting off to sleep, what were you thinking of? My friends, those thoughts are your treasures.

When Francis proclaimed the goodness in the entire created world, he made the world his treasure. The world mirrored his God, and Francis saw it is good. Look around your world today. If you do not recognize God present there, reflect in your own heart on the good God. God is present in the world around. Democrats, Republicans, Green Party members, Independents and the like. God is there.

Remember to vote this November.
Remember to give thanks not only on
Thanksgiving Day, but every day.

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How I See the Peace and Justice Ministry

By Ray Hardwick s.f.o.
Regional Peace and Justice Chair,
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What do I see that I am called to do as a Regional Peace and Justice Chair and a member of the National Commission? First, I am called to put my body where my mouth is and to do what I say I believe as a Catholic Christian who follows in the nonviolent footsteps of Jesus and Francis.

Second, to share whatever insights I have as a Secular Franciscan who has engaged in social justice issues and peace movements for the past 25 years of my 42 as a SFO.

Third, to exhort my sisters and brothers, through talks at fraternity meetings, area meetings, etc. To speak of the ways of nonviolence and peacemaking. To make them aware of the seven principles of Catholic social teaching and what they imply in the issues of abortion, death penalty, war, hunger, voting, legislative advocacy, domestic violence, health care, homelessness, homosexuality, cloning, stem cell research, ecology and euthanasia, to name a few.

I am not called to impress my personal opinions on my sisters and brothers, but to share the message of the gospel and Catholic social teaching. The Bishops of the World in the Synod of 1972 said, "...the preaching of social justice is constitutive to the preaching of the Gospel." In other words you aren't sharing the Gospel if you fail to share

on the social justice teachings that are in there.

I know the issues listed above are issues that have polarized our order and our church. Brothers and sisters, taking sides over which issue is paramount and nonnegotiable is nonproductive. According to Catholic social teaching they are all paramount and nonnegotiable. So where does that leave us in our spiritual/social/political lives? We cannot work on all the issues with the same intensity and effort or we will burn out or kill ourselves. What we should do is work on the issue(s) and area(s) where, after prayerful discernment, we hear the voice of God calling us. Spend the majority of your time and effort there along with your like-minded sisters and brothers in your own fraternity and region, your own parish and diocese. And, of course, you don't do this to the detriment of your family or your job. Those are the primary responsibilities we have as disciples of Christ: putting God first, then family and job. The energy you have left you put into where God calls you to serve.

After having done that, remember that all of the other issues that your brothers and sisters are working on are just as important and are worthy of any support you can give. Let us always remember this, Jesus, Francis and the Church call us to work for the common good. As Fr. Richard Rohr, OFM has written, "The common good is the totally common good and leaves none of our sacred cows protected in the pen. If the kingdom is absolute, all else is relative."

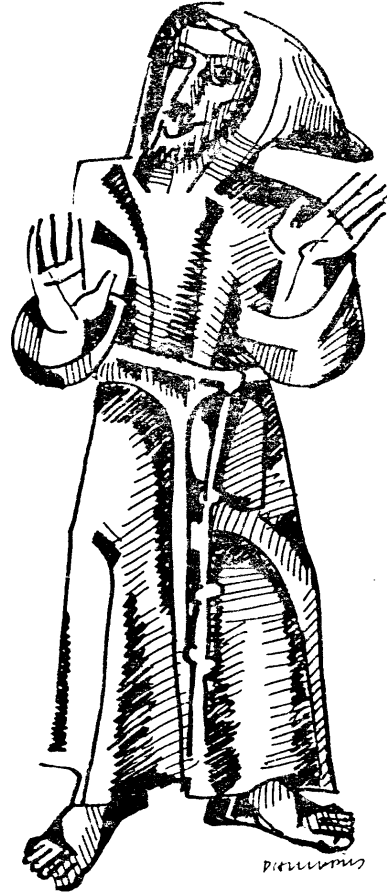
(Near Occasions of Grace—Orbis Books)

We are called by Jesus to build the Kingdom of God. In other words to bring about the Reign of God not only in our lives, but also in the lives of those around us. In a world that says, "We have no need of God," we are to be salt to flavor our sphere of influence, light to those around us, to be leaven in the dough of humanity. If we continue to argue among ourselves over which life/religious/social issue is more important, more worthy of support, we will lose credibility with those we are trying to witness to and stunt our own efforts to help bring about a society where God reigns..

We all want to see a society where God is loved honored and adored. Our squabbling among ourselves over which issue is most important diminishes our influence in our world. Presenting a united front calling for all the issues to be of supreme importance will strengthen our voices and our efforts.

That's what I believe, what do you believe?

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A Bridge of Peace

By Jo-Ann Hardwick, s.f.o.
Member of the National Peace and
Justice Commission

I would like to share with you, my sisters and brothers, what I see as my ministry in the Peace and Justice area. My husband Ray and I serve together on the National Commission, and Ray is the Regional Peace and Justice Chair for St. Francis Region. Ray's and my passion is the Peace and Justice ministry which is God's calling and not just our own. So I am with him wherever he goes to give talks to fraternities or other gatherings of Seculars and at our parish gatherings, also.

I believe God has called me to be a bridge of peace to my brothers and sisters who seem to be moved out of their comfort zone when Ray or I speak on social justice and Catholic social teaching. It seems that unless we are talking to peace and justice ministry people exclusively, it raises the hackles of those who still believe in war as being just, and that the deaths of over 12 million people a year from starvation, is not as important as the over 1 million killed in abortion in this country, etc. This is not a place I would choose to stand in, because I see the divisiveness those issues of importance to different people causes. It seems to occur every time you talk on Catholic social teaching because some are unaware of the totality of that teaching of the Church—of the importance of all the issues, not just some.

The Holy Spirit is present in each of us, and has called me to be a bridge of peace in these times of division. The

words are given to me to say and I have seen peace return into the community. Then we can go on and explain in full the totality of Catholic social teaching which is taken from the Gospels.

My question is why won't we give peace and justice a try, not only in prayer, but by our own Franciscan lives by becoming peace to one another in our home, our fraternity, our Church and the world?

After Ray is done with his part, I always speak of what is dear to my heart, which is the elderly in our fraternities, and in our parishes. About how we should reach out in our fraternity to our elders who have gone before us and blazed many a trail so we can follow in comfort. You can help them always in your prayers, but we need to go out and serve them in the skilled care facilities or their homes. We should form groups to clean their houses for them by doing the things they can no longer do. Then there's dishes and laundry that might need washing. Or maybe working in the yard, mowing the lawn, pulling weeds, etc. How often do our elder members need a ride to the meeting and no one offers to take them? If they are in skilled care facilities then one, two or three should visit them on a bi-weekly basis at a minimum. Then the next time some others should go, so that everyone in the fraternity who can will visit within a few months. You will be blessed beyond your expectations when you share with the elders of the SFO, as you are doing the will of God in your service to them.

May the peace that enveloped Francis be yours, my sisters and brothers.

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Saturday Night in Prison

By Patrician Mulligan, SFO
Member National Peace and Justice
Commission

We sing with gusto and frequently during the retreat at one of the state prisons in Pennsylvania. We all enjoy the singing. But last year, when the thirteenth Metanoia retreat was looming, I was looking for something more to give it a little different flavor--some spice if you will.

Costumes or disguises of any kind are forbidden items in a prison, so after much prayer to the Holy Spirit for enlightenment, I received permission from the prison to include scarves on my list of items to be cleared. With help from my family and friends, I could have supplied a boutique.

Saturday evening, the end of a very long day, seemed like a good time to see how creative we could be. "Obstacles to a Life of Grace" was a talk given earlier by the priest director. So "obstacles" might provide a touch of entertainment for us. I enlisted the help of two handsome men in their mid twenties to act out one of the obstacles which would break the ice for the others. "Sure," they said, "we role play all the time in our sessions here."

That evening no one in the room had a clue about what was going on when the two fellows quickly took charge and started sliding tables and chairs around. In a flash, as if they waved a wand, they slid the retreat team's table and chairs into another spot, and presto, we had a bar. One of the inmates assumed a

new identity as he deftly set up the bar with Styrofoam cups, a pitcher of water and a couple of water bottles. With a hand towel draped over his arm and bar talk flowing, he poured his new customer a drink--and then another one. On the third drink the inmate barfly said, "I'm not sure about that, wait a minute until I ask my friend. "Hey, Marie," he yelled, "come here a minute." And in walks Marie.

For a few seconds there was dead silence and utter shock, and then the laughter nearly raised the roof. Some of the guys laughed until tears ran down their cheeks, some held their sides and a few rolled off their chairs. Beautiful Marie was the hit of the evening with her scarf skirt tied at each hip to allow it to fall gracefully front and back. The scarf sash, however, did not flatter the pot belly waistline, but the light orchid feather boa around her neck and over her chest was smashing. A white cotton mop head simulated her long flowing tresses, and most of all, the big Irish grin on the face of our recovering alcoholic and one of the oldest prisoners in the institution, told all of us that he was well pleased with himself.

The Holy Spirit will not be outdone in generosity or anything else, and he certainly did himself proud that night. Marie was a smash hit.

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Reflections of An American Princess

By Theresa Egan, s.f.o.
Regional Commission Chair, St.
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Member National Peace and Justice
Commission

When my daughters were young children, they often complained to me about what they saw as a personal injustice. When I tried to clarify the situation, the response was always, "But that's not fair!" And then I'd have to remind them that life isn't fair.

Often, I reflect on the "fairness" of my life, especially after seeing, hearing, or reading about cruelty, violence, starvation, etc. in some part of the world. My first reflection is always about my good fortune to be born in a country that affords one a high quality of life. Then, I'm grateful that my mother tongue is English. It may not be the most beautiful language, but at least I don't have to struggle through all its irregularities of spelling, pronunciation and grammar.

So here I am, living in comfortable surroundings that are safe, and that shield me from the elements. I drive a nice car, and I am able to travel to foreign countries where I learn more about other lives. And then I often become uncomfortable. Why? Because life isn't fair!!!!

Those that are suffering through killings, rapes, and starvation in the Sudan should be able to enjoy their quality of life in their villages, raising their children, and making a living.

Or what if I had been born a Christian in one of the Christian villages in Palestine? What once was a fairly tranquil life has become one of incredible hardship. My children would have to walk hours to school (if there wasn't a curfew on) because of the many roadblocks (and harassment by Israeli soldiers) and walk through challenging terrain because the good roads are only for the Jewish settlements. And the poverty level is quite apparent, with unemployment over 60%.

These are just two examples of how "random" the inequities of life can be. While we should all be incredibly grateful for all we have (and I don't mean "things"), are we participating in some way to make life a little more livable for others?

There are many resources for doing this...two being Catholic Relief Services and the Catholic Near East Welfare Association. Let us not harden our hearts...we are all members of the Body of Christ. And for that we are most grateful. Peace.

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“World Peace” through “Conversion of Sinners”

By Terri Leone, SFO
Regional Peace and Justice
Commission, Chair
St. Katherine Drexel Region

I believe everyone is familiar with the song, “Let There Be Peace on Earth” & one of its lines that ends with “and let it begin with me”. While I firmly believe “World Peace” begins with me (& you), I also believe it shouldn’t stop there. Organizations & “Systems” need to change also, developing more just policies towards members & persons served. Pope John XXIII told us in *Pacem in Terris* that Peace is based on “four pillars: love, justice, truth & freedom”. Each of us “wears several hats” - are involved in different relationships (child, parent, spouse, etc.) & in different organizations (SFO, parish, place of work, community, etc.). We need to become peacemakers in each of these arenas. We need to become more aware of the injustices in these arenas & try to correct or to make “the powers that be” aware of these injustices & suggest ways to overcome or correct the injustice.

Two fraternities with whom I am involved have agreed to participate in a project we are calling, “World Peace through Conversion of Sinners”. Since Friday is the “traditional” day of penance, we have chosen Wednesdays as our day of penance for this project. While the type of “penance” is up to the participant, it is suggested that the penance combine prayer &

action. It is also suggested that it help us to grow individually and that it help make the world (our immediate world of workplace, community or such & our nation or “the world”) a more peaceful place. We need to experience “brotherhood” - become “our brothers’ keeper”.

Suggestions: Do you feel strongly about one or two “respect life” issues? What can you do about it locally? If it has a national or international component, what can you do to influence that? Choose a phrase from “The Peace Prayer” or the “Prayer for a Peaceful Spirit”, e.g. “where there is injury, pardon” or “to accept suffering rather than inflict it” - how can I/you implement this today? Since pride/egotism was the “original” sin, how can I “fast from” or forego my will today? How can I make someone else feel important? You might want to work on one of the “four pillars” above. How can I be more loving today - or more truthful - or more just? How can I make someone feel “freer”?

Be forewarned! Temptations & failures will come but do not be overcome by them. Acknowledge the failure & start over again - and again - and again.

“Share the Vision... - ...Share the Journey!”.

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Memory of An Election Past

By Carolyn Colburn, sfo
National Peace and Justice
Commission, Chair

All of us have memories of elections past that come back to us every four years. No matter what our political party, or whether our chosen candidates won or lost, each election left a distinct impression. I am old enough to remember quite a few. Not all with equal clarity, but one stands out in my mind as an election I will never forget.

The first election that I remember was 1932, that's right, 1932. I was five years old at the time, but the election so consumed the people in our little town of Effingham in southern Illinois, that none of us have forgotten it. The reason, of course, was the depression. Those of you born long after, for whom it is only a page in a history text, cannot understand what it was like. There were no jobs. The unemployment rate was 25%. There was no government funded social safety net for anyone. The unemployed had only their family, their friends, and their church to help them out. The fierce proud streak in Effingham's German immigrants and children of German immigrants made giving help a complicated dance.

I learned the steps of the dance from my mother. We lived across the street from St. Anthony's Church. My mother had the use of the family car during the day, so she was the logical person to bring the things that people needed to them. Many afternoons she loaded the car with donated clothes and non-perishable food items. We went from house to house according to the list she had. At each house the same, or

almost the same, conversation took place.

"People have been leaving clothes and other things at the church. Father doesn't know what to do with them. He thought that you might be able to help us by taking a few things."

"Oh, no thanks. We're doing just fine. There are lots worse off than we are."

"I know you're doing fine, but Father thought you might be able to help us out. Why don't you come out and look at what I have."

"Well, alright."

We would go back to the car and the two ladies would sort through the things. The other lady would agree to help us by taking a few clothes that would fit her family and possibly some canned goods. When we left Mother would say, "Thank you so much. We really appreciate your help."

The lesson I learned at this young age was to love your neighbor and respect your neighbor's pride.

As the first Tuesday of November approached even the young children could feel the tension. This was especially true for me because we had in our house the only radio on our block. Every time FDR spoke on the radio during the campaign our house was overflowing with neighbors and friends. I remember the sound of his voice and its power to calm. For the next twelve years FDR would be the only president I would know, remaining permanently lodged in my heart and mind.

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**SFO National Peace and Justice
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“Peace is an enterprise of justice. At the root of war, and in particular of terrorism, a type of armed aggression which we are sadly experiencing in our present age, we find serious grievances that are yet to be addressed by the international community: injustices suffered, legitimate aspirations frustrated, abject poverty, discrimination, intolerance, and exploitation of multitudes of desperate people who have no real hope of improving their lives. Such injustices incite violence, and every injustice can lead to war.”

Archbishop Celestino Migliore, the Holy See's permanent observer to the United Nations Address delivered to the UN General Assembly meeting in New York September 29, 2004