

To Wake the Nation: Nonviolent Direct Action for Personal & Social Transformation

by Tom Cordaro

Introduction

“When I bring the sword against a country, and the people of this country select one of their number to be their watcher, and the watcher seeing the sword coming against the country, blows the trumpet to warn the people. Anyone hearing but not heeding the warning of the trumpet and therefore slain by the sword that comes against them, shall be responsible for their own death... But if the watcher sees the sword coming and fails to blow the warning trumpet, so that the sword comes and takes anyone, I will hold the watcher responsible for that person’s death, even though that person is taken because of their own sin.” – Ezekiel 33:1-4, 6

As a people of faith, being formed by the Word of God, we have a special responsibility to read the signs of the times in order to discern what God is doing in the world today. We also have an equally important responsibility to proclaim that discerned word to the nations.

The leaders of our nation seem intent on solving the problems of our world through violence. The vision they offer is that “might makes right.” The violence that the people of our nation experienced on September 11 we in turn inflicted on the people of Afghanistan. Our leaders promise us that peace and security are only achieved through military power.

Millions in our nation go without adequate shelter and healthcare. Children go hungry and our schools are deteriorating. The ranks of the unemployed grow. At the same time, corruption among the leaders of our largest corporations is rampant and the CEOs responsible get richer while the working class loses their pensions, their life savings and their jobs. The Bush administration ignores the social and economic ills of our country while at the same time funneling obscene amounts of money into weapons manufacturing for programs like a missile defense shield and mini-nukes. The words of Martin Luther King, Jr., still ring true: “A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.”

What is the call of the church in such a situation? How do we keep watch and sound the alarm? How shall we wake the nation and ourselves to the encroachment of death?

In the tradition of the great biblical prophets we can offer word, symbol and action to convey to the nations the emotions of a God who knows what time it is, a God who desires that we choose life over death. In our history as church, this ministry of word, symbol and action often takes the form of nonviolent direct action. What follows is a primer for those who want to explore the ministry of nonviolent direct action for personal and social transformation.

What is Direct Action?

For the purpose of our discussion we will define direct action as any public act done for the purpose of influencing public policy and/or articulating or challenging social, religious and political values. Some examples of direct action include passing out leaflets, participating in a public prayer vigil, holding signs on a picket line, collecting signatures on a petition, marching in a demonstration or risking arrest by breaking a civil law.

When thinking about direct action, different emotions may begin to surface. We are all familiar with newspaper stories and television scenes of public demonstrations. What seems to characterize these events is their tendency to cause conflict and tension. This is because those who engage in direct action want to change the way things are, and many of us do not like to be challenged to change – even if we agree with the aims of the group doing direct action.

In his *Letter from the Birmingham Jail*, Martin Luther King, Jr., wrote, “Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community... is forced to confront the issue. It seeks to so dramatize the issue so that it can no longer be ignored.”

As we contemplate our possible participation in direct action, we need to deal with many issues. One of the most important questions is: “How can we ensure that the conflict we cause by our action is creative and not destructive?”

The Importance of Nonviolence

Nonviolence properly understood is more than a tactic or strategy for political change. It is a way of life that draws the individuals committed to it and the people and institutions it is aimed at into a process whereby personal and social transformation can take place.

Peggy Scherer, a former member of the New York Catholic Worker, states, “The many manifestations of violence stem from the powerful judging who is to live and under what circumstances. If we oppose what is violent, we must also reject the greed, deceit, injustice and judgment on which it is based. Self sacrifice, honesty, justice and respect for all people, even if we disagree with them, even if we challenge their actions, must mark our efforts. I think about these things because it is all too clear that the roots, if not the fruits, of violence are not only in the Pentagon . . . but are also in all of us.”

Nonviolent direct action is not a strategy for winning. It is an invitation to search for the truth. There is an old Chinese proverb which states that there are three truths: my truth, your truth and the truth. Those engaged in nonviolent direct action attempt to speak their truth with conviction while at the same time being open to the truth of the other. The goal of nonviolent direct action is not to win over the other person but to win the other person over.

This desire for the other’s good is so strong in nonviolent activists that they are willing to suffer the abuse of others without the desire to strike back. The Pax Christi “Vow of Nonviolence” puts it this way:

“I vow to carry out in my life the love and example of Jesus... by accepting suffering rather than inflicting it; by refusing to retaliate in the face of provocation and violence; by persevering in nonviolence of tongue and heart; by living conscientiously and simply so that I do not deprive others of the means to live; by actively resisting evil and working nonviolently to abolish war and the causes of war from my own heart and from the face of the earth.”

The power of this type of nonviolent action was best articulated by Martin Luther King, Jr., when he addressed his racist opponents saying, “We will match your capacity to inflict suffering with our capacity to endure suffering. We will meet your physical force with soul force... We will soon wear you down by our capacity to suffer. And, in winning our freedom, we will so appeal to your heart and conscience that we will win you in the process.”

There is still much to be learned about the power of nonviolent direct action. In the mid-1980’s, Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen of Seattle said, “Today (W)e know as little of the power and methods of nonviolence as we knew of the power of the atom a century ago. I believe the power of nonviolence is in its depths an infinite power because it is based on love, the love of an infinite God.”

The Role of Nonviolent Direct Action in US History

Another stumbling block in discerning the call to nonviolent direct action is the popular notion that it is the tactic of fringe groups who do not believe in the democratic process or American values. Part of our problem in understanding the role of nonviolent direct action, and in particular nonviolent civil disobedience, is that we have an inadequate understanding of our own history in the United States.

Far from being the tactics of unpatriotic fringe groups who have no regard for the democratic

process or American values, nonviolent direct action and civil disobedience have played an important role in shaping our American values and expanding our democratic process to include all people.

One need look no further than the birth of our nation to see how the tactics of nonviolent direct action and civil disobedience have played an integral part in shaping our nation. The signing and publishing of the Declaration of Independence was an illegal act of treason.

Probably one of the most celebrated acts of civil disobedience of that time was the willful destruction of private property in the Boston Harbor. We know it as the Boston Tea Party. There were many other forms of direct action which helped the colonies break away from the British Empire, including boycotts, demonstrations, leaf-letting and noncooperation with government officials.

Other significant events that helped shape our understanding of justice, freedom and democracy in this country include the underground railroad for runaway slaves in the 1850's; the union movement of the 1890's - 1950's; the free speech movement and the women's suffrage movement of the early 1900's; the civil rights movement of the 1930's - 1960's; the antiwar movement of the 1960's-1970's, and the environmental and anti-nuclear movements of the 1980's and 1990's. In fact, a strong argument could be made that every significant advance in our evolution as a democracy has come about through social movements employing the tactics of nonviolent direct action. The Supreme Court once ruled that blacks were only 3/5th human. The Abolitionist Movement challenged that assumption. The law once asserted that women could not handle the responsibility of voting. The Suffrage Movement challenged that assumption. The law once asserted that workers had no rights in the work place. The Labor Movement challenged that assumption. The law once demanded that blacks sit at the back of buses. The Civil Rights Movement challenged that assumption. In recent history, the Environmental Movement has worked to pass laws to assure that we have clean water and air. Movements today around issues of globalization and nuclear weapons are raising important questions about the direction of our nation and the practice of democracy.

In each case, campaigns of direct action--some involving civil disobedience--challenged the values and laws of the land by appealing to a higher sense of justice. These campaigns had the effect of moving the whole society to a clearer understanding of justice, freedom and democracy.

As we can see, nonviolent direct action does have its place in our society. In fact, nonviolent direct action is as American as apple pie. It is a part of our heritage that we should celebrate and remember.

The Biblical Roots of Nonviolent Direct Action

Because of the cultural influences we bring to our reading of scripture, we seldom recognize the political nature of God's saving action in the Bible. In our culture there is an attempt to make clear distinctions between the sacred and the secular. We have been taught that economic and political issues are part of the secular world and spirituality and personal behavior are part of the sacred world. And because of our tradition of separation of church and state, we believe that the secular and the sacred should not mix.

On the other hand, the authors of our scriptures did not hold such sharp distinctions. For most of them, the political was spiritual. Their faith had political, social and economic consequences. In this light, we can see emerging from the scriptures a long and illustrious tradition of nonviolent direct action and civil/religious disobedience.

The first act of civil disobedience recorded in scripture was the refusal of the Hebrew midwives to kill the male offspring of Hebrew mothers. It was out of this act of resistance that the model of all faith-based nonviolent direct action was born.

Moses is the prototype of the faith-based resister in the Hebrew scriptures (Old Testament). His early flirtation with violent revolution (the killing of the Egyptian [Ex. 2:11-14]) gave way to nonviolent direct action as he and Aaron made their way to the court of Pharaoh to demand the liberation of the Hebrews. The exodus march out of Egypt represents nonviolent direct action on a large scale.

Following in the tradition of Moses, many of the Old Testament prophets used nonviolent direct

action — including street theater — to call the nation to repentance. One of the most colorful prophets and a master at using symbols and street theater was Ezekiel. In Ezekiel, chapter 4, God instructs him to build a model of Jerusalem and lay siege to it. God also instructs him to lie on his left side and then his right side for 390 days. These symbolic acts prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem and the number of years that Israel had sinned. At another time Ezekiel packs his bags and walks through the streets of the city as if going into exile; then he digs a hole through the city wall to symbolize the exile of his people (Ez. 12). The next time you feel silly or uncomfortable with using symbols at a demonstration, meditate and pray over the book of Ezekiel.

The Christian scriptures (New Testament) are also filled with examples of nonviolent direct action. One of the reasons we don't see Jesus as a nonviolent resister is because we sometimes concentrate so much on what he said that we forget to look at what he did.

Jesus told his disciples that he was going to Jerusalem to confront the religious and political rulers (Mk. 10:32-34). He entered into the Holy City in an unauthorized provocative public demonstration which directly challenged the legitimacy of Rome and the Sanhedrin (Lk. 19:32-39). He later returned to the Temple and engaged in civil/religious disobedience by destroying private property and challenging the religious and economic power of the leaders (Lk. 19:45-48). It was at that time that they decided to do away with him. He was later arrested, tried for treason and was executed as a subversive.

It was God who then intervened decisively by raising Jesus from the dead, thus becoming an outlaw. Resurrection was illegal! The state had Jesus put to death and the burial vault was closed with the Roman seal. When the state puts you to death, you are supposed to stay dead. With the breaking of that seal, God became an accomplice in the greatest escape of all time.

The history of the early church is filled with stories of nonviolent direct action and civil disobedience. The apostles themselves often came into conflict with the authorities (Acts 4:1-31; 5:17-42, 16:19-20; 17:6-9, Thes. 2:17-18), showed ambivalence toward the secular court system (I Cor. 6:1-11) and were quick to clarify their ultimate allegiance when the governing powers were encroaching: "We must obey God rather than humans" (Acts 5:29).

For those who point to Peter and Paul's teaching regarding submission to all authority, it is important to remember that both of them were imprisoned and executed by the state.

In early church history, the very act of celebrating the Eucharist was considered treasonous, and the public declaration of faith, "Jesus Christ is Lord," was considered a capital offense.

The Role of Community

Nonviolent direct action is most effective when it is the expression of a community and not just the sentiments of like-minded individuals. It is through discernment in community that we can separate the wheat from the chaff of our personal motivations for taking part in nonviolent direct action. It is through the discipline of community that we come to understand the lies of the dominant culture — whether it be its addiction to military violence, its acceptance of widespread poverty and homelessness as normative, or its worship of unrestrained free trade — and articulate an alternative vision for the human family.

The most powerful acts of nonviolent direct action are those that are the expression of people living in community seeking to do justice. As Peggy Scherer writes, "Through embracing a life where people are more important than things, my personal perspective has changed. Living at the Catholic Worker House in New York, I come into daily contact with victims of rampant injustice. This shows me a human face of the injustice I oppose. My need to act comes from the heart; the urgency of the situation is no longer academic, and silence is more clearly a luxury. Civil disobedience and other efforts signify a continuation of my work rather than a break in my routine."

Community also becomes an indispensable source of support for those engaged in nonviolent direct action. Peace and justice lone-rangers don't last long. The prophetic tasks of word, symbol and action are the realm of a faith community, not an individual.

The Power to Transform: A Ministry of Healing and Hope

The prophetic community tells it the way it is, and they tell it the way it can be. The goal of nonviolent direct action, as employed by people of faith, is first to help people see what is really happening and secondly to offer an alternative vision for the future that gives people hope.

The institutions of the dominant culture preach that the way things are is the way things have always been and the way things will always be. Their message is that the institutions and the status quo are forever. While they may tolerate some reform, they close the door on anything genuinely new. As institutions they manage reality in order to keep expectations in check and keep genuine hope under lock and key.

When they use the language of hope, it is in order to deny the reality of their own demise. Even in the face of obvious decay and disintegration, the institutions of the dominant culture cling to the belief that they will last forever. These institutions demand total allegiance and tribute from the people. Rewards are given to some; the others are kept in line through a combination of fear and cultivated ignorance.

It is in this false reality that the prophetic community of nonviolent direct action acts to break the spell. The community's actions expose the decay of the institutions and the lies that keep the people from seeing the truth. Just as in the process of death and dying, described by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, the prophetic community uses word, symbol and action to break through the numbness and denial of the people. As they become more successful, they will be confronted with the anger, bargaining and despair that are part of the process.

It is important to realize that the community not only invites others into this process, but it too moves through denial, anger, bargaining and despair. Although this process is painful and is often a source of conflict, it is absolutely necessary in order to confront the lie of "forever."

It is at this point that the prophetic community of nonviolent direct action can offer its alternative vision as a source of hope. Again using word, symbol and action, the community shares its vision for a future freed from the "forever" of the dying institutions. As Walter Brueggemann states in his book *The Prophetic Imagination*, "The task of prophetic imagination and ministry is to bring to public expression those hopes and yearnings that have been denied so long and suppressed so deeply that we no longer know they are there." As before, the community not only invites others into this process, it also enters into it.

In order for the hope to be real, it must be grounded in the original vision and values that were once entrusted to the decaying institutions but have now become tools of control. At its core, the struggle between the dominant institutions and the prophetic community is over the language and symbols of this original vision.

In speaking of this ministry of healing and hope, A.J. Muste, a founding member of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, once wrote, "Precisely on that day when the individual appears to be utterly hopeless, to have no choice, when the aim of the system is to convince them that they are helpless as individuals and that the only way to meet regimentation is by regimentation, there is absolutely no hope save in going back to the beginning. Human beings, the children of God, must assert their humanity and son/daughter-ship again. They must exercise the choice which no longer is accorded them by society... they must create again. They must understand that these naked human beings are the one real thing in the face of the machines and the mechanized institutions of our age. They, by the grace of God, are the seed of all the human life there will be on the earth, though they may have to die to make that harvest possible."

Word, Symbol and Action

As stated before, the prophetic community ministers to the people through word, symbol and action. How does this relate to nonviolent direct action?

For Catholics and other Christians who have a sacramental and liturgical tradition, word, symbol and action have a special meaning. In our sacramental life we understand that word, symbol and action

have the power to transform. It is word spoken over bread and wine, which is then shared and eaten, that makes Eucharist a source of grace. It is word and water which is poured that makes baptism sacramental.

Nonviolent direct actions that have the power to transform are those that choose word, symbol and action carefully. In this sense, nonviolent direct action becomes a form of liturgy where people are called together to share a word and to participate in a symbolic action which points to a truth greater than the act itself.

The word may be from scripture or a contemporary source. It might even be gesture or dance. The symbol might be light, water, soil, plants, blood, or bread and wine. The actions are chosen to point to the power of the symbol. It is light held aloft, water poured forth, soil turned over, plants uprooted or put in the ground; it is blood spilled or bread and wine shared.

The most powerful acts are ones that say only what is necessary for people to understand the symbol and the action. Multiplying words only detracts from the power of symbolic action. A well planned nonviolent direct action is like a well planned liturgy. It creates a space for conversion to take place.

To Break the Law

Nonviolent civil disobedience, the intentional breaking of a civil law, is one of the most dramatic forms of direct action. Its power comes from the willingness of the practitioner to endure suffering and directly confront the institutions of law that give legitimacy to injustice. Often, in these actions, the activists themselves become word, symbol and action.

The law is a very powerful symbol in our culture. It is not only a means of keeping the peace, it is also our way of enshrining commonly held values. When the law confers legitimacy on an activity by making it legal or by giving it protection under the law, it also confers moral legitimacy on it – even if this is unintended.

When nonviolent civil resisters break a law that protects an unjust activity or institution, they are making an appeal to law in this broader sense. In his statement to a jury in 1975 after committing civil disobedience at a Trident Submarine base, scripture scholar and activist Ched Myers said, “Civil disobedience, far from being irrespective of the law, is by definition an appeal to law; in its most profound sense, an appeal to law to question itself. It is an attempt to demand a dialogue about the legal, lawful and moral context of law.... The law is not purely a mechanical entity.... To consider defendants’ actions merely according to narrow legal definitions is to trivialize these proceedings, to trivialize law and the true meaning of rule by law.”

Civil disobedience, while a powerful tool for personal and social transformation, should not be done lightly. Martin Luther King, Jr., wrote from his cell in the Birmingham jail, “One who breaks an unjust law must do so openly, lovingly and with a willingness to accept the penalty. I submit that an individual who breaks a law their conscience tells them is unjust, and who willingly accepts the penalty of imprisonment in order to arouse the conscience of the community over its injustice, is in reality expressing the highest respect for the law.”

Effectiveness and Faithfulness

There is a saying within the faith-based peacemaking community that we are called to be faithful, not effective. What this means is that people involved in direct action need to be careful not to measure their success in the world’s terms. A faith-based peacemaker is more concerned with being faithful to the gospel than with being politically successful.

In our all-consuming desire to rid the world of injustice there is a great temptation to use unjust or violent methods to try to bring about change. It is easy to forget that our coworkers and even our opponents are humans who are capable of being hurt and resent being manipulated or humiliated.

It is also very easy to get trapped into thinking that our media image is more important than our message. We can fall into the trap of the numbers game – thinking that the more people we can get to

participate, the better our action.

Being number one is important in our culture. Americans love a winner, whether it be in war, football or peacemaking. But as long as our goal is to “win,” we cannot create the space – physically, emotionally, spiritually or psychologically – for conversion to take place.

While it is true that we are called to be faithful, not effective, it is also important to realize that this issue is often used as an excuse for not dealing with the very real concerns about how our actions are perceived by others. We cannot hide behind the cloak of faithfulness in order to escape the very tough issue of effectiveness.

In dealing with effectiveness it is important that we have a common understanding of what we mean. The best biblical definition can be found in Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians:

If I speak with human tongues, angelic as well, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong, a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and, with full knowledge, comprehend all mysteries; if I have faith great enough to move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. Love is not jealous, it does not put on airs; it is not snobbish. Love is never rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not prone to anger; neither does it brood over injuries....

As we can see, the issue of effectiveness is intimately connected to the issue of love. When faith-based peacemakers speak of effectiveness, they ask: “How can I best love God, myself and my neighbor?” The goal of biblical effectiveness is conversion.

When we fail to consider the effect that our actions may have on others, we risk the possibility that our actions will be nothing more than moral posturing and personal catharsis – a clanging cymbal.

At the same time, we must not let our concern with how we are perceived paralyze us into inaction. Many times it is not what we do but the attitudes that we carry with us that destroy the effectiveness of our actions. We cannot always be sure that the people we direct our nonviolent action to will like or respect us. We can, however, be sure that the way we act will show that we love and respect them.

This is a question of effectiveness. We love and respect others not because we are certain of our own righteousness. We love them because, with the grace of God, it may lead to conversion – for them and for us. At the bedrock of every nonviolent direct action is the belief in the capacity of people – even our opponents – to respond to the love of God at work in us. If we do not believe in our hearts in this capacity for conversion, our nonviolent actions will be a mockery and a sham.

An Examination of Conscience

When considering taking part in a nonviolent direct action, it is wise to start out with prayerful reflection. An examination of conscience is a useful way to sort out our various motivations and cultivate nonviolent attitudes.

1. In taking part in this action am I showing respect and love for those to whom my action is directed? Do I see this action as a contest in which I hope to win or an opportunity for mutual conversion? Do I see a need for change in myself as well as in those to whom this action is directed? Is this action being planned in such a way that people will be invited to rethink their position, or will it harden their hearts?

2. Do I use suffering, rather than love, to prove the righteousness of my cause? As Thomas Merton reminds us, “What matters then is not precisely what the sacrifice costs us, but what it will contribute to the good of others and the church. The norm of sacrifice is not the amount of pain it inflicts, but its power to break down walls of division, to heal wounds, to restore order and unity.”

3. Have I set up a hierarchy of deeds that makes nonviolent direct action the test of gospel faithfulness?

Do I hold others and myself to a moral code which measures faithfulness in terms of arrest records and time served? Am I more interested in building an impressive resistance resume than with seeking personal and social transformation?

4. Do I seek to punish or humiliate when I act, or do my attitudes and actions speak of the need for mutual repentance? Am I prepared to hear the truth of those who disagree with me or am I more concerned with being heard?

5. God calls us to take on responsibilities. However, do I fail to act because of responsibilities and duties that are more my creation than God's call? In his *Book of Uncommon Prayer*, Dan Berrigan, SJ, writes, "...because 'law' is a cover for my lawlessness / not the freedom you offer / and 'duty' gets along with my deviousness / and 'obligation' is hand in glove with my laxity / and 'responsibility' is a cover for childishness. / So I carry about these heavy absurd words, a beast's burden / because in fact I wish to be burdened, / dread to be free / which is to say, I dread to be your friend and brother/sister."

6. Do I use the excuse "that's just not my thing" to avoid dealing with my fears and anxieties regarding nonviolent direct action?

Counting the Cost

There are personal costs involved with nonviolent direct action, just as there are costs with being faithful to the gospel. Jesus talked about counting the cost when he reminded us,

If anyone comes to me without turning their back on father and mother, spouse and children, brother and sister, indeed their very selves, they cannot be my follower. Anyone who does not take up their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. If one of you decides to build a tower, will you not first sit down and calculate the outlay to see if you have enough money to complete the project? You will do that for fear of laying the foundation and then not being able to complete the work; for all who saw it would jeer saying, "That one began to build what they could not finish" (Luke 14:26-30).

The power of nonviolent direct action comes from the fact that our very personal yet public action affects others in such a way that they cannot avoid dealing with the issues we raise. Every community we belong to will be touched by our witness. This source of power is also part of the cost. We may appear to be acting on our own, but we bring with us a number of communities when we take part in nonviolent direct action: some come willingly, others unwillingly. Some will be moved by our courage; others will react in horror at our brash irresponsible behavior.

It is very natural for all sorts of emotional reactions to take place. Whenever you act publicly on your strongly held beliefs, you may become a lightning rod in the communities you belong to. Close friends and family may shun you or feel uncomfortable around you. Casual acquaintances may be drawn into deep friendship with you. Although conflicts may be inevitable, they need not be destructive. Conflict can be creative and can lead to further conversion.

The way we handle the various reactions to our action may determine the amount of good fruit it will bear. Whenever possible, try to speak with loved ones and friends about your action beforehand so you can explain what you are trying to do. Take special care to spend time with children. They will often be the most confused and frightened.

Recognize that friends and family may need time in order to accept the change that you are bringing into their lives – sometimes uninvited. It is important to allow loved ones to be where they are and lovingly accept their denial, anger, bargaining and despair. Always be ready to talk about your activism, yet respect their silence and let them know that no matter what, your love for them will not change.

For those contemplating nonviolent civil disobedience, there is the added cost of possible trial, sentencing and jail time. Dealing with the judicial system can be very threatening. There are many issues that need to be considered which we cannot get into at this time, the most important being jail time. Jim Forest writes regarding the threat of prison, “Nor is there anything all that special about jail. It isn’t a nobler place to be than all sorts of other places. Whatever others may think, you aren’t really a hero for being there. It is another place where people live, a special kind of ghetto. But it is profoundly valuable to be there if that is where God wants you and if going there is a consequence of being faithful.”

Freedom

When we are honest with ourselves we realize that we know much more of the truth than we are willing to act upon. There are many things that keep us from doing all that we feel God calls us to. There are a million very good reasons for not engaging in nonviolent direct action and only one good reason for doing so. That one reason is because it needs to be done. We do it because we are convinced that it is the right thing to do.

Whatever you decide about your participation in nonviolent direct action, let it be done in freedom – not fear. The scriptures tell us that freedom is the ability to do what we know is right, regardless of the consequences. Everything else is just one of many forms of slavery which masquerades as freedom. If we know in our heart the right thing to do, and for whatever reason we fail to do it, to that extent we are slaves. And every time we lie to our heart, a part of what makes us human dies. Freedom means being able to choose nonviolent direct action and being able not to choose it.

There is nothing wrong with being afraid. It is a normal and healthy response to danger. It is what we do with our fears that determines whether or not we act as free people. It is through prayer and honest discernment in community that we can act in freedom. Whatever we do, let it be in God’s name. Remember, joy is the most infallible sign of the presence of God.

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Appendix

Resources on Christian Nonviolence and Nonviolent Direct Action from Pax Christi USA

The Nonviolent Moment: Spirituality for the 21st Century, by Mary Lou Kownacki, OSB. Offers a personal and transformational process for reexamining our own and our collective spirituality of nonviolence. \$15.00

Love Beyond Measure, by Mary Lou Kownacki, OSB. Insights on the spirituality of nonviolence. \$15.00 (bound); \$8.00 (spiral)

Our Prayers Rise Like Incense: Liturgies for Peace, edited by Cindy Pile. Public prayer services and liturgies for all occasions, including nonviolent direct action. \$25.00

Just Peace: A Revolution in Progress, compiled by Mary Fritz, SSJ and edited by Robert Keeler. Nine essays by scholars, theologians and activists moving the debate from the “just war” theory to a theology of peacemaking. \$15.00

Words of Peace. Five separate, pocket-sized booklets, each containing words of peacemakers, \$2.00 each.

- *Selections from the Writings of Dorothy Day*

- *Selections from the Writings of Daniel Berrigan, SJ (Vols I and II)*
- *Mary Evelyn Jegen on Benevolent Living*
- *Selections from Martin Luther King Jr.*
- *Thomas Merton on Nonviolence*
- *Gerard Vanderhaar on Personal Nonviolence*
- *And others. . .*

Nonviolence in Christian Tradition, by Gerard Vanderhaar. The nonviolent tradition from early Christian pacifism to modern times, \$1.00

The Fire of Peace, edited by Mary Lou Kownacki, OSB. Prayers for all occasions, including nonviolent direct actions, fasting, etc. \$12.00

Prayer, Study and Action Resource Packets on Globalization, Military Spending, Capital Punishment, Consumerism, and other issues. Prices vary.

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