



# PEACE

Connections



## THREADS OF A NONVIOLENT FUTURE

2023 marks the 60th anniversary of Pope John XXIII's landmark encyclical letter "*Pacem in Terris*" ("*Peace on Earth*"), year two of the Second Vatican Council, and 40 years since the U.S. Catholic Bishops' watershed pastoral letter "*The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response*."

*Pacem In Terris* ✿ Vatican II ✿ The Challenge of Peace ✿ The Catholic Nonviolence Initiative



The world was suddenly jolted into the atomic age on August 6 and 9, 1945 when the United States dropped nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan. Father George Zabelka was the Air Force chaplain for both missions. He came to recognize that he had denied the very foundations of his faith by lending moral and religious support to the bombings. In 1985, Fr. Zabelka confessed, "All I can say today is that I was wrong. Christ would not be the instrument to unleash such horror on his people. Therefore no follower of Christ can legitimately unleash the horror of war on God's people."

In fact, most Catholics paid scant attention to the moral disconnect between Catholic theology and "obliteration bombing," the deliberate targeting of civilian areas in major cities conducted by both sides during World War II. Such widespread disregard for the "jus in bello" requirement of Catholic just war theory – forbidding intentional, direct attacks on civilians – contributed to tacit approval by many Catholics of the atomic bombings. The "Cold War" and the nuclear arms race, particularly after the Soviet Union detonated its first atomic weapon in 1949, led to growing acceptance of such weapons by American Catholics, who ardently opposed Communism.





Under the nuclear cloud and the absurd military doctrine of “mutually assured destruction” (MAD), the survival of humankind was threatened like never before in history. As Thomas Merton observed in 1961, “It does not even enter our minds that there might be some incongruity in praying to the God of peace, the God who told us to love one another as we are loved by God, who warned us that those who took the sword would perish by it, and at the same time annihilate not thousands but millions of civilians and soldiers, women and children, without discrimination. Only love can exorcise the fear that is at the root of war.”

In “***Pacem in Terris***,” published April 11, 1963, **Pope John XXIII** comprehensively addressed the moral vacuum of the nuclear arms race. He stated: “Justice, right reason, and the recognition of {our} dignity cry out insistently for a cessation to the arms race. The stock-piles of armaments which have been built up in various countries must be reduced all around and simultaneously by the parties concerned. Nuclear weapons must be banned. A general agreement must be reached on a suitable disarmament program, with an effective system of mutual control.” Further, “Everyone, however, must realize that, unless this process of disarmament be thoroughgoing and complete, and reach {our} very souls, it is impossible to stop the arms race, or to reduce armaments, or - and this is the main thing - ultimately to abolish them entirely. Everyone must sincerely co-operate in the effort to banish fear and the anxious expectation of war from {our} minds. But this requires that the fundamental principles upon which peace is based in today's world be replaced by an altogether different one, namely, the realization that true and lasting peace among nations cannot consist in the possession of an equal supply of armaments but only in mutual trust.” In October 1962, less than eight months before his death, Pope John convened the **Second Vatican Council**. The Council's final document (December 1965) was “*Gaudium et Spes*” (“Joy and Hope”), reflecting John's vision of engagement with the world outside the Church. “*Gaudium et Spes*” is particularly notable for its support of conscientious objection, its condemnation of modern “scientific weapons” with their “massive and indiscriminate destruction,” and “any act of war aimed indiscriminately at the destruction of entire cities ... along with their population.” Twenty years later, the U.S. Catholic Bishops would refer to both “*Pacem in Terris*” and Vatican II extensively in their own milestone document.

Another vital “thread” in the direction of nonviolence was the **U.S. Catholic Bishops’** May 1983 Pastoral Letter, “**The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response.**” The bishops – many of whom had been awakened to peace and social justice by Vatican II - decided in late 1980 to develop a study of war and peace in the nuclear age. It was a time fraught with



peril, following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, and the election of Ronald Reagan, who had promised to accelerate the buildup of U.S. nuclear forces – and did so. The composition of the committee formulating the letter – including both Bishop Tom Gumbleton of Pax Christi USA and Archbishop John O'Connor of the Military Vicariate – led to a certain amount of compromise. Ultimately, the bishops affirmed the Church's historic "just war" teaching, while stressing that it begins with "a presumption against war." At the same time, the bishops introduced (to many Catholics perhaps for the first time) the Church's rich tradition of nonviolence. The letter condemned "offensive war of any kind," and held that "strictly conditioned" nuclear deterrence is morally acceptable only "as a step on the way toward progressive disarmament." The letter stated that "decisions about nuclear weapons ... involve fundamental moral choices. In simple terms, we are saying that good ends (defending one's country, protecting freedom, etc.) cannot justify immoral means (the use of weapons which kill indiscriminately and threaten whole societies). We fear that our world and nation are headed in the wrong direction." And, addressing the heart of the matter from a Gospel perspective, "The whole world must summon the moral courage and technical means to say 'no' to nuclear conflict; 'no' to weapons of mass destruction; 'no' to an arms race which robs the poor and the vulnerable; and 'no' to the moral danger of a nuclear age which places before humankind indefensible choices of constant terror or surrender. Peacemaking is not an optional commitment. It is a requirement of our faith. We are called to be peacemakers, not by some movement of the moment, but by our Lord Jesus." The pastoral letter was remarkable in many respects. As Ronald Musto points out in "The Catholic Peace Tradition": it went through three drafts and intense debate inside and outside the Church; it produced a revolution in American Catholic thinking on war and peace; and, it was the first attempt at a synthesis of and compromise between the "just war" and nonviolent traditions within Catholic history. In addition, it was a product of American bishops, in the only nation that had used nuclear weapons in war, and an administration that was prepared *to fight and win a nuclear war*.



Without Catholic Social Teaching, and in a special way "Pacem in Terris," Vatican II, and "The Challenge of Peace," it is difficult to imagine the emergence of the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative (CNI). The CNI began, with the consent of Pope Francis, in 2016. It "affirms that active nonviolence is at the heart and vision of Jesus, the life of the Catholic Church, and the long-term vocation of healing and reconciling both people and the planet." Thus, the CNI calls us back to the nonviolence of Jesus, a message that is abundantly clear throughout the Gospels. As peacemakers from around the world gathered in April 2016 for the initial CNI conference, they were greeted by a message from Pope Francis including these words: "The ultimate and most deeply worthy goal of the human community is the abolition of war. In this vein, we recall that the only explicit condemnation issued by the Second Vatican Council was against war."



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We close with two reflections. The first is from the 93-year old Austrian nonviolent activist Hildegard Goss-Mayr, who John Dear called, in 2009, the greatest living peacemaker. "We confess that for centuries, our church, the people of God, has betrayed this central message of the gospel many times and participated in wars, persecution, , oppression, exploitation and discrimination." Mairead Maguire, Nobel Peace Laureate from Northern Ireland, speaking at the April 2016 conference, said:

***"I think that churches have a tremendous opportunity at this point in history, to turn around our history and to declare our vision of a demilitarized, peaceful world, which is what we long for. And if the churches give that kind of visionary, prophetic leadership, the people are ready for it. All over the world, people are ready for it.***

***We've had enough of war, of killing each other, destroying. People are ready for the vision if we can articulate it from the heart of Rome, through the church, through an encyclical on nonviolence and peace. It's going to be a long, long work, transforming a cultural mindset. This is historic, we're turning history.***

***But we can do it!"*** - by PCM Chair Bod Podzikowski on behalf of the PCM State Council



### The **NO GUILTY BYSTANDER** Book Launch

July 27, 2023 in Detroit, Michigan

Featuring Bishop Tom Gumbleton and authors  
Suzanne Sattler, IHM and Frank Fromherz





# Taking a Step Closer to Jesus: The Journey of Bishop Tom Gumbleton

*by Robert Ellsberg*

On Thursday, July 27, hundreds of people gathered at Sacred Heart Church in Detroit to celebrate Bishop Tom Gumbleton and the publication of his biography, **No Guilty Bystander: The Extraordinary Life of Bishop Thomas Gumbleton**, written by Frank Fromherz and Sr. Suzanne Sattler. **Robert Ellsberg, publisher of Orbis Books, spoke at the event. His comments from that evening are here, reprinted with his permission:**

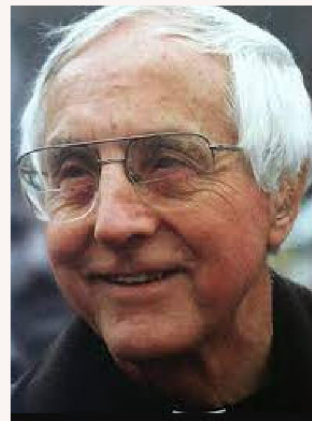


I first met Bishop Gumbleton in the late-1970s. . . . I know it is hard for you to believe I am that old. But back then I was young. I was the managing editor of the Catholic Worker and Bishop Gumbleton had invited me to Detroit to speak at a conference on peace. My assigned topic was “Youth and the Arms Race.” For the first and last time in my life, I found myself the designated voice of my generation. I don’t remember what I said—I’m sure it was not very memorable. But what I remember was Bishop Gumbleton’s humility and kindness, his deep commitment to peace, and his evidently genuine interest in listening to what this “youth” had to say.

I was not raised in the Catholic Church. My introduction to Catholicism at that point was largely by way of Dorothy Day and Daniel Berrigan. And so I assumed that Bishop Gumbleton was a pretty typical bishop! I had a lot to learn. My confidence in Bishop Gumbleton and his fellow bishops was soon confirmed by their work on “The Challenge of Peace,” the historic pastoral letter on nuclear war, which for a short time encouraged speculation that the Catholic Church was on its way to being a “Peace Church.” But before long that high-water mark of Catholic social teaching in this country was relegated to the past. The arms race continued unimpeded, the Doomsday Clock of the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists continued to tick closer to midnight.

Some of you knew my father, Daniel Ellsberg, who died last month. He was greatly inspired by the peace pastoral, which he studied carefully—acknowledging its limitations, yet encouraged by hope that this would mark a start rather than an endpoint of the discussion. Just a few years ago he asked me, “What are the odds that the bishops today could once again take up the question of nuclear war?” I said: zero. But that’s a long story. Yet it makes one wonder about that crossroad, and what the church in this country might look like if it had taken a different path—that is to say, if Bishop Gumbleton had represented as I once imagined, a more typical bishop.

There is a movie in which a character played by Al Pacino says he has reached a crossroad in his life, and he always knew the right path, but without exception he didn’t take it, because, as he says, the right path “was too damn hard.” Bishop Gumbleton has faced many crossroads in his life. And often the right path





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was the harder one. And yet without exception he always followed what he believed was the right path, not the safe one, not the one that would ensure his own comfort or advancement.

Yesterday I was giving a talk about Dorothy Day and someone asked if I agreed with all her positions, all her choices. I said probably not. But I said the striking thing about Dorothy was not that she was necessarily correct in every choice or decision—she was not endowed with infallibility!! But with every decision she examined her conscience, and she was guided by what she thought was right, what she believed was the way of Jesus, and there was no daylight between what she said, what she believed, and the way she lived. I believe the same is true of Bishop Gumbleton.

That is not to say he has always been right. If that were true, it would mean he was incapable of growth or conversion, and what is clear is that Bishop Gumbleton's whole life has been a long story of conversion, of always striving to go deeper in the call to be faithful.

And in that story of conversion his world seemed to grow steadily larger, rooted in his city and his local parish—but always expanding to encompass new causes, new continents, new communities of people who were left out or forgotten, until his parish seemed to encompass the whole world: as wide as the community of saints and peacemakers and fighters for justice, both living and dead.

And what I find most inspiring about him is not that he has all the correct answers in advance—but that he is always listening, always willing to grow, to change his mind, always willing to take one new step on a path that is uncertain, even at the risk of his reputation, his status, even his physical safety, if that takes him one step closer to Jesus. How different the church would be if we could say that those qualities make him a typical bishop.

I remember Jon Sobrino, the Jesuit theologian from El Salvador, reflecting on the difficulties for Rome in recognizing Romero as a saint. Because, he said, that would mean that bishops should be more like Romero. And he said, every indication was that the Vatican, in those days, did not want more bishops like Romero. By the same token, for much of the past forty years, one could safely assume that the Vatican did not want more bishops like Bishop Gumbleton.

But maybe we are at another crossroad. I have been very moved by the distinction that Pope Francis makes between what he calls a laboratory faith and a “journey faith.” A laboratory faith, he says, is “a compendium of abstract truths,” all determined in advance. Such a faith can be inflexible—ill prepared to deal with the messiness of life or the nature of reality. Presuming to know

all the answers in advance, a lab faith may leave us impervious to the surprising promptings of the Holy Spirit. 🌸





# Pax Christi Michigan Members Greet the “Golden Rule”



Around the state, at her various docking places, members of Pax Christi Michigan met with the crew of the *Golden Rule* as she sailed the Great Lakes, spreading a message of peace and resistance to nuclear war.

In 1958, four Quaker peace activists sailed the *Golden Rule* toward the Marshall Islands in an attempt to halt atmospheric nuclear weapons testing. The crew was arrested, causing an international outcry, and raising public awareness of the dangers of radiation.

After being sunk in a gale, members of Veterans for Peace and the Quaker Community took five years to restore her to her original glory. The *Golden Rule* now sails for a nuclear-free world and a peaceful, sustainable future.

She arrived in Detroit on Sunday, August 13th and on Monday, Plowshares Pax Christi members welcomed her and her crew at William Milliken State Park and Harbor in downtown Detroit.

Unfortunately, the Detroit Harbor Master was not terribly cooperative, so groups interested in seeing and boarding the boat were prevented from doing so. The *Golden Rule* Captain, Kiko (from Hawaii), and First Mate, Steve (from Okemos), did allow PCM Chair Bob Podzikowski and his wife, Jane, to enter the gated area and board the boat as they were the first to arrive. As more folks began to gather, they all had to do so outside the gates. First Mate Steve provided a verbal history of the *Golden Rule*. Bob and Jane had brought along a couple signs, which were in turn given to the two crew members and taken to Lansing for their next presentation.

On Tuesday, two additional crew members visited Lansing, where Pax Christi Lansing members received additional historical information on the boat's past and future adventures.

After the presentation in Lansing, the *Golden Rule* sailed to Traverse City. Pax Christi members again were present to cheer the crew and their mission on.

For additional information on this peacemaking effort, go to

<https://vfpgoldenruleproject.org>. Learn how YOU can become involved!



As cold weather closes in, join us for these wonderful presentations.

Beginning December of 2023, and going through March 2024, Pax Christi Michigan will again host our monthly Winter Workshop series with some of the most prophetic teachers of our time. Join us on the Second Thursday of the Month at 7pm Eastern time for thought-provoking insights and ideas for taking action. Watch for all the details and how to register: We'll be posting the information soon!



*Coming Soon!*  
**Winter Workshops**  
*featuring*

 Carlos Martinez Environmental Justice	 Andrea Pierce Native American Justice	 John Thorne Racial Justice	 Mary Anne Perrone Immigrant Justice
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**Watch our website for dates and presentation titles!**



**STS. SIMON & JUDE**

Pax Christi Michigan was sad to learn that Sts. Simon & Jude in Westland - Our State Conference home for many years - is being closed by the Diocese.

Our sincere love and appreciation to Fr. Gerry Bechard, Peace Seekers Pax Christi, and the Ushers Club, all of whom made us feel so welcome for so many years. We will truly miss you!





## LOCAL GROUP HAPPENINGS

### **Plowshares Pax Christi Vow Renewal**

Plowshare Pax Christi members reported having a wonderful evening renewing their annual vow of nonviolence. We've done so every year (even 2020, over Zoom) since 1987. They were at CARES of Farmington Hills, which bought the property where their parish, The Servant Church of St. Alexander, was formerly located. CARES is a very nice food pantry.



Here's how they line up:

Jim and Maureen Prest; Mary and Dave Power; Carolyn Shalhoub; Danielle Mulka; and Bob Podzikowski.

### **Pax Christi West Michigan News**



Pax Christi West Michigan has had a complete resurgence of their local group, with an average of approximately 25 attendees per meeting. Pictured is their meeting on July 16th with Mary Hanna, Pax Christi Michigan State Coordinator, which was well attended and well received. Since then, their meetings have only grown as they add dynamic speakers and discussion topics. Congratulations on all your great organizing, PCWM!

# Reflection and Renewal ...for the long haul



PAX CHRISTI MICHIGAN CELEBRATES...

## Our 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Retreat!

### "Conversations with Fr. Dave"

**PLAN NOW** to join us for our **29<sup>th</sup> Annual PCM Retreat**, October 20<sup>th</sup> through 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023. We will once again gather at the beautiful Maryville Retreat Center in Holly, MI. Please be sure to register soon! Our Retreat Facilitator will be **Fr. Dave Buersmeyer**, co-founder of *Strangers No Longer*. A more complete bio can be found on the Pax Christi Michigan website (where you may also register, if you choose)!



**October 20<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023**

Maryville Retreat Center

**Register by October 4th! Go to:**  
**[www.paxchristimi.org/retreat-2023](http://www.paxchristimi.org/retreat-2023)**



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#### PCUSA/PCM Membership JOIN or RENEW NOW!

I believe that "peace is possible" and want to join Pax Christi USA – also giving me regional membership in Pax Christi Michigan:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_  
State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_

The regular membership fee for Pax Christi USA is \$40 per year—more if you are able—or whatever you can afford. We rely on the generosity of our members. Please consider enclosing a membership contribution to Pax Christi USA for:

\_\_\_\_\$40 \_\_\_\_\$50 \_\_\_\_\$100 \_\_\_\_\$500 \_\_\_\_other  
At this time I can only contribute \_\_\_\_\_

#### Check any of the following:

\_\_\_\_ I would like more information about joining or starting a local group in my area or school.

\_\_\_\_ I would like more information about the Parish Sponsorship Program.

**MAIL TO:** Pax Christi USA  
415 Michigan Ave. NE, Suite 240  
Washington D.C. 20017

#### State Council:

- State Coordinator and IT: Mary L. Hanna (Laingsburg)
- Chair: Bob Podzikowski (Oak Park)
- Secretary: Marianne Bernard (Clarkston)
- Treasurer & Assistant Coordinator: Pat Valaer (Lansing)
- Council Members: MaryAnne Perrone, Ed Lorenz, Marilyn Lorenz, Jim Rauner, Kim Redigan, and Fred Thelen.

#### Pax Christi Michigan...

- Meets the 4th Saturday of January / April / July / October from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Any PCM member may attend as a non-voting participant. ©
- Working committees include: Finance, Membership, and Technology.
- If you are interested in attending a meeting or serving on the State Council, please let us know, or contact us if you have any other questions.

