

# Gospel Peacemaking

Pax Christi  
Northern California

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## Tools for Peace

by Sharon Ellison, author of *Taking the War Out of Our Words*

Every day people refer to being “at war” or “at peace” within themselves, in relationships, within communities and among nations. Although many of us have found ways to live more peacefully, it is still a challenge that can be daunting, whatever our level of intelligence, integrity, and commitment. Even those of us who want to live together in harmony look at world history and can be discouraged by the never-ending violence.

I have spent my entire life searching for answers about why we have so much needless pain and violence in our world. I finally found an answer that made sense to me: I believe we have been using the “rules of war” as the basis for human conversation. It doesn’t work to use the rules for one activity for a completely different activity—we can’t play golf with a bowling ball.

A motto in war is “To be open is to be vulnerable, and to be vulnerable is to be weak.” In war, we use defensive maneuvers to protect ourselves as we fight for power to achieve our goals.

Using such rules when we talk to each other is clearly counterproductive. When we hide our vulnerability, we can never be fully honest; our defensiveness alienates us even from those we love; power struggle becomes progressively destructive. Even in our own internal conversations, we often go through cycles of blaming and defending ourselves. Our system of communication literally and systemically creates and accelerates conflict.

Using these rules, there is no peace unless everyone “cooperates.” The person who doesn’t “cooperate” is often seen as having the greatest power. Thus, it becomes easy to slide into feeling victimized by others when we can’t “get” their cooperation.

Imagine this scenario: “Honey, shall we go out to dinner at the new Thai restaurant?” Our spouse or partner says,

“Well, we said we’d stick to the budget.” We respond, “I know, but it’s been a stressful week—we need to relax.” He or she stays firm, “I think we need to stick to our decision this time.” Suddenly we blurt, “You are just a couch potato—you never want to do anything!” I decided my idea was better than your idea. Second, I started to see your attitude as “a danger” to my plan. Third, I justified verbally attacking you.

Ironically, this kind of common scenario at home follows the same pattern hate groups use—a process that involves seeing some other group of people as being morally or intellectually inferior and, simultaneously, being a danger to society—“taking our jobs,” or “corrupting our children.” Then they justify attacking that group’s members.

How can we go out into the world and work to create peace with the greatest degree of effectiveness when we are still using the “rules of war” in our own lives? In fact, I still hear people talking about “fighting for peace.” When I do training for groups who are working toward social change—to create a just world—people are often shocked when they realize that even trying to convince others to agree can throw us into instant power struggle.

Audre Lorde said, “You can’t dismantle the Master’s house by using the Master’s tools.” I believe that if we want to create peace, we must shift away from a model of communication that is built on a foundation of defensiveness and, instead, use a paradigm for communication that gives us the ability to stay open, free to speak with integrity, compassion, and power, regardless of what others do or say.

Once I had the revelation that we have been using the “rules of war” as the basis for communication, I began to systematically develop a new paradigm, which I call Powerful Non-Defensive Communication. This process consists of shifting away from old concepts for how to use our power by being more transparent.

We ask questions with no agenda but curiosity. We give feedback and express our reactions subjectively, telling our own story so others can hear us without feeling judged. We set clear boundaries without trying to control which choices others make. Doing so, we move away from being manipulative and controlling, while protecting ourselves well. A welcome side effect is that others are likely to drop their defenses—often instantly—opening the door to shared wisdom. I look forward to a day of exchanging ideas and practicing these non-defensive skills with your Pax Christi community.

When we recognize that defensiveness damages us far more than it protects us, we can learn to communicate in life-changing ways. Bringing together our willingness to show our vulnerability with a commitment to being honest can create a kind of alchemy that fuels our efforts to heal, to work toward justice, to bring peace.

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*Sharon Ellison will be the speaker at our October 13th Pax Christi Fall Event presenting her method, Powerful Non-Defensive Communication. Please see the enclosed flyer. We hope you will be able attend.*

### INSIDE

- Live Nonviolently..... p. 2**
- Travel with the Turtle..... p. 2**
- NonViolent Communication... p.3**
- PC Communities..... p.3**
- Foreigners..... p. 4**
- Iraq, Congress, Bishops & You.. p.5**
- Chapters’ News..... p.5**
- SOAWatch..... p.6**
- Contact Info..... pp. 7-8**
- PND Communication Flyer.. Insert**

## Learn to Live More Nonviolently!

by Ken Preston-Pile

In working with Pace e Bene Nonviolence Service for almost eight years now, I continue to learn on a daily basis how to live more nonviolently. Through practicing nonviolence in the Pace e Bene community and in my daily life, I take small steps each day towards being more nonviolent. These aren't always easy steps, or as Ken Butigan says, sometimes it's two steps forward and one step back, but it's the daily commitment and practice that matters.

Pace e Bene (Italian for "Peace and all good," a greeting used by St. Francis of Assisi) was started in Las Vegas by the Fr. Louie Vitale and others as an agency of the St. Barbara Province in 1989. Pace e Bene's vision is dignity, peace, and justice for all. To realize this vision, our mission is to foster a just and peaceful world through nonviolence education, community-building, and action.

Over the years Pace e Bene has offered nonviolence trainings and retreats to hundreds of groups across the United States and several other countries, including many

Pax Christi groups. We also produce many books and curricula in nonviolence that individuals and groups can use to assist them in their nonviolence journeys.

Our mission and work overlap with Pax Christi since both organizations are grounded in Christian peacemaking and both have principal commitments to nonviolence. We are also both committed to working against violence in all its forms and at all levels, including personal, interpersonal, and social-structural. Both groups are committed to the spirituality of nonviolence, as well as nonviolent action for social change. Both are committed to anti-oppression in all of its forms, including anti-racism. A key difference between the groups is Pax Christi organizes campaigns on many social justice issues, while Pace e Bene focuses in training in nonviolence to assist groups working on those justice issues.

Pace e Bene works with many national groups, including Pax Christi, School of Americas Watch, Call to Action,

Franciscan Friars of Holy Names Province, Fellowship of Reconciliation, Methodist Board of Church and Society. Some local contexts and partners Pace e Bene works in include a prison ministry for men in San Quentin State Prison and women in Federal Correction Institution, Pleasanton, CA; Congregations Organizing for Renewal, a faith-based (PICO) community organizing group based in South Alameda County.

Pace e Bene has a year-long training program to help people deepen their nonviolence journeys and to become certified as nonviolence trainers with Pace e Bene. One participant from last year's program said, "The Pace e Bene Engage program is the best training program I have ever experienced."

Our website, [www.paceebene.org](http://www.paceebene.org), is a great resource about nonviolence and the work we are doing. For more information or to schedule a nonviolence training for your group, contact Ken Preston-Pile at 510-268-8765, [kenpreston@paceebene.org](mailto:kenpreston@paceebene.org).

### *Traveling with the Turtle: A Small Group Process in Women's Spirituality and Peacemaking* by Cindy Preston-Pile and Irene

Woodward, Oakland, CA: Pace e Bene Press, 2006, 283 pp.

Review by Jean Molesky-Poz

*Traveling with the Turtle*, a group process manual co-authored by Cindy Preston-Pile and Irene Woodward, considers "women's experiences of violence and conflict and habitual response to them," so women can learn "concrete ways of making peace that are practical, creative, inclusive, and nonviolent." This work emerges from years of group process reflective work with *Engage: Exploring Nonviolent Living*, a program of Pace e Bene Nonviolence Service. The authors, in solidarity with women and men who are working to end violence against women, have created a manual which not only facilitates groups to examine personal, communal, and global issues of anger and violence, but more, to recognize and engage creative sources for nonviolent social change. *Traveling with the Turtle* is based on the premise that women's spirituality is a powerful force for peacemaking.

*Traveling with the Turtle* is more than a book. It is a process developed by women

for women. The process is comprised of thirteen two-hour sessions. The first two sessions introduce women's spirituality and explore empowering images of the Divine. The other eleven sessions, are organized in four parts: Part I Power-Within, helps claim one's own strength; Part II, Power-With, explores familiar responses to conflict and violence, as well as creative, nonviolent ways of making peace; Part III, Community-Power, considers how to build inclusive communities; and Part IV Sisterhood, honors social change movements initiated by women, and guides the group to develop and carry out a nonviolent action. Appropriately, the final chapter is a celebratory ritual, commissioning members "to go forth."

Each chapter, which formats a session, is guided by meticulously thought-through organization: the goals of the session, a suggested timed agenda, a list of materials needed, and suggested preparation for the

facilitators. Truly the authors' work as experienced educators, group facilitators, and organizers shines forth so that they have provided a seamless template for intended facilitators and participants. Each session is structured with an opening ritual or prayer, then various methods to explore women's spirituality and peacemaking: sharing in pairs, small and large group reflection, creative imagination exercises. Throughout participants are encouraged to express themselves in a variety of ways. Between sessions, participants engage in a specific life practice, journal, and reflect on specific readings.

Not only is the focus deliberate and the process finely honed, but integrated throughout the text are over seventy informative, thought-provoking readings, like Sue Monk Kidd's "The Feminine Wound," Thich Nhat Hanh's "Creating True Peace," Winona LaDuke's "The Indigenous Women's Network: Our Future, Our Responsibility;"

**cont'd. on p. 3**

# Nonviolent Communication – A Transformation of Life

by Anne Carey

One of my favorite books is *The Long Loneliness*, the autobiography of Dorothy Day. She writes with great passion and transparency of her long association with Peter Maurin and the beginnings of the Catholic Worker Movement. Summing up the life work for peace, nonviolence, racial justice, and the cause of the poor in which Day was engaged, she says, “It just came about. It just happened.”

That is how I think of the Monday morning NVC group: it just happened. About a year ago Lisa Striebing, a member of Pax Christi Burlingame, asked Silvia Chiesa to help form a group to explore the principles of nonviolent communication. In January, about a dozen of us, mainly from Pax Christi and the Declaration of Peace, began to meet every two weeks to study and practice what for us was almost a new language. We have worked our way through the basic textbook, *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life*, and a companion workbook with many exercises, scenarios, and suggestions for role-play.

A few words from the founder of the Center for Nonviolent Communication, Marshall Rosenberg, begin to describe what happens in nonviolent communication:

*“Nonviolent Communication (NVC) is sometimes referred to as compassionate communication. Its purpose is to strengthen our ability to inspire*

*compassion from others and to respond compassionately to others and to ourselves. NVC guides us to reframe how we express ourselves and hear others by focusing our consciousness on what we are **observing, feeling, needing, and requesting.***

“We are trained to make careful observations free of evaluation, and to specify behaviors and conditions that are affecting us. We learn to hear our own deeper needs and those of others, and to identify and clearly articulate what we are wanting in a given moment. When we focus on clarifying what is being observed, felt, and needed, rather than on diagnosing and judging, we discover the depth of our own compassion. Through its emphasis on deep listening—to ourselves as well as others—NVC fosters respect, attentiveness and empathy, and engenders a mutual desire to give from the heart. The form is simple, yet powerfully transformative.”

This all sounds pleasing, and it's only when we start trying to put it into practice that we become aware of the great challenge that NVC presents to our learned forms of relating to others. Although we don't ordinarily think of the way we talk as “violent,” the words we use can and do lead to hurt and pain for others as well as for ourselves. When we speak with the language of moralistic judgment (“He's prejudiced”), denial (“You made me feel

guilty”), or demand (“Clean your room or else”), we put others off and we block our own capacity for compassion and giving. One of the early learnings of NVC is how deeply ingrained are these life-alienating ways of communicating.

Because NVC is so challenging, it has been essential to work on it in a group. It's too difficult to do so by oneself. Our Monday morning group has been a valuable setting for practice. We're now on our second journey through the textbook and workbook, trying to go deeper into the NVC process. We have been together long enough for some trust to have developed. We are committed to keeping our sharing within the group. So it's becoming a safe place to be vulnerable, to bring our personal NVC challenges and attempts, and to ask for help.

Most of all, we are becoming aware that NVC is so much more than just a technique to be acquired. It is a transformation to which we must open ourselves, really a conversion we must undergo. Becoming nonviolent in communication, as in attitudes and actions, is clearly going to be a lifelong process. And, in the words of Dorothy Day, “It all happened while we sat there talking, and it is still going on.”

## Turtle Review, cont'd from p. 2

charts as “The History of the Goddess” or “Gender Violence Worldwide Throughout the Life Cycle;” and practical embodied exercises as “Fingerholds to Manage Emotions,” or “CARA: The Four-Step Process for Nonviolent Engagement.”

This book can be highly recommended to groups of women, of any age, who want to explore their experiences of violence and anger, see the connection to the world we live in, and who want to change their own lives and the world we live in. To order *Traveling with the Turtle*, visit [turtle.paceebene.org](http://turtle.paceebene.org) or call 702-648-2281. For information on retreats, contact us at [turtle@paceebene.org](mailto:turtle@paceebene.org).

Jean Molesky-Poz, Ph.D. teaches in the Religious Studies Department, Santa Clara University and is author of *Contemporary Maya Spirituality: The Ancient Ways Are Not Lost* (2006). This review was published in a more complete version in *Sequoia: News of Religion and Society*, Fall 2006.

## Assistance for Pax Christi Communities

Jim McDonald

As you know, Pax Christi USA is very active in exploring, articulating and witnessing to Christian nonviolence in all of the United States. It sends regular newsletters to all members: laity, bishops, priests, deacons and parishes. There are also Pax Christi regions in most of the U.S. and Local Organizing Movements in many communities. Our region is Pax Christi Northern California (NorCal). It covers from our northern border with Oregon to northern Monterey and northern Fresno dioceses. We are very active, but like all organizations, could use more active people. There are also Pax Christi Communities that welcome more people. Communities (a.k.a. chapters) are a group of Pax Christi members and other friends who meet on a regular basis to pray, study and act for peace with justice. They embrace Pax Christi

USA's Statement of Purpose and priorities.

Pax Christi communities may be - city or county-wide, parish-based, religious congregations or campus-based. Often groups need help getting started, renewed, or evolving. Our Regional Pax Christi is here to help local communities in this way.

If you are interested in starting a Pax Christi community, please contact me or one of the members of the Regional Council listed on the mailing page of this newsletter. If you are willing to help groups in your area to get started, please let us know that, too. Thanks.

Peace and Justice,  
Jim McDonald  
Outreach - S.F. Archdiocese

# "I Was a Foreigner and You Took Me In" (Mat. 25:35)

by Louis Facchino, Pax Christi Burlingame

The Catholic position on immigration is clear. It is clear in Scripture and it is clear in the Church's social justice teaching.

This position was presented at a Pax Christi Northern California seminar on Peacemaking and Immigrant Rights, held in February 2007, at St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Burlingame, California. The Church's compassionate and just teaching on this hotbutton topic was explained by both Bishop Gabino Zavala, President of Pax Christi USA and auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, and by Father Anthony McGuire, Pastor of St. Matthew's Catholic Church in San Mateo and Facilitator of the joint Pastoral Letter concerning Migration by the Catholic Bishops of Mexico and the United States.

Bishop Zavala and Father McGuire addressed the five principles of the Mexico-U.S. Bishops' pastoral letter, *Strangers No Longer* (<http://www.usccb.org/mrs/stranger.shtml>). Persons have a right to remain and find employment in their homeland. No one prefers to leave the country in which one grew, is familiar with culture and customs, has family and friends, and speaks his/her native language. But when social upheaval or widespread unemployment and underemployment exist, one's first obligation is to care for the family. Persons have a right to migrate to support themselves and their families. This right is a natural, human right. It is what is called an inalienable right, one that arises from human nature and is not conferred by a government. Nor can a government abrogate or deny the exercise of an inalienable right. Although the bishops' statement acknowledges that sovereign nations have a right to control borders, such a sovereign right is always trumped by the natural right of a human being to escape war, social upheaval, or abject poverty. The call to welcome the foreigner flows from our obligation to honor the natural human rights of migrants. Refugees and asylum seekers should be protected and the human dignity and human rights of undocumented migrants should be respected.

These are principles that form the basis for Justice for Immigrants, the Catholic Campaign for Immigration Reform. Although Congress could not agree on a humane immigration policy, the Church's promotion of these principles continues.

The seminar on Peacemaking and Immigrant Rights also included a panel of speakers who discussed the plight of immigrants. Jose Artiga of the SHARE foundation which is active in human rights issues in El Salvador told us of the effects of

legislation in the United States that principally favors business instead of the working class, of the denial of immigrant workers' right to organize, and of the displacement of persons in various Latin American countries due to free trade policies. Catherine Cusic of Unite HERE explained the very real difficulties of food service workers who are dismissed for union organizing activities and for "no match" of their social security records with those of the Social Security Administration at a time when there were no federal regulations requiring such firings. Christopher Martinez of Catholic Charities addressed and dispelled some of the myths about immigrant workers, showing that undocumented immigrants do pay taxes in excess of national expenditures on public services, and that they are not taking jobs away from Americans. The Reverend Phil Lawson of the Interfaith Coalition for Immigrant Rights explained the New Sanctuary Movement which gives support and prophetic hospitality to undocumented migrants who have American born children. The movement declares openly that individual churches give sanctuary to carefully selected immigrants, whose names are made public, in order to keep families united when one or both parents are undocumented but their children are U.S. citizens. The most famous of these is Elvira Arellano, a Mexicana who has lived at a Chicago Methodist church for a year, and whose son, Saul, is an 8 year old American citizen. Elvira's arrest and deportation on August 19, 2007, has sparked protests by immigrant rights activists across the nation.

What strikes me most profoundly from the Pax Christi conference and from the events happening in our country during these past months is the call to welcome the foreigner. Such a welcome is due not only to those who come here with legal documents, but also to those who arrive fleeing persecution, war, and abject poverty, for whom there is not time nor opportunity to follow the prescribed legal requirements for entry into the United States.

Here are some steps that we can take to welcome the foreigner:

1. Learn about one's own family immigration history. Understanding the harsh conditions of the country of origin of our immigrant forbearers, the hardships of the crossing to arrive here, and perhaps anti-immigrant prejudices encountered once here. If we understand our family's experience of immigration, we are more likely to compassionately welcome today's migrants.
2. Change the dialogue about immigrants. Eliminate the use of demonizing vocabulary.

"Illegals," "invaders," "scofflaws," "criminals," "welfare seekers," "anchor babies," "wetbacks" are examples of words that suppress the humanity of those who come here without documents. Demonizing language was used a century ago for immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe, China, and Mexico who came here legally. Similar trends today hide the fact that immigrants are human beings with human dignity. Refusal to use such terms and a willingness to point out to others in a humane way that humane words can be used to describe human beings are ways of responding to the call to welcome the foreigner. We will be met with the retort, "What part of the word 'illegal' don't you understand?" Answering, "I need to remember and fully understand that we are talking about human beings, people whose permanent humanity is of higher value than changeable civil laws, and I'd like to ask you to join me in this value" would be one way of changing the dialogue.

3. Dispel the widely circulating myths about immigrants. Commonly circulating myths include those that make it appear that the majority of undocumented immigrants receive welfare, drain our economy, swell the prison population, commit violent crimes. Even the estimate of 12 million undocumented persons is likely a number inflated by those who oppose a just and humane immigration policy. For some facts, consult the Southern Poverty Law Center: ([www.splcenter.org](http://www.splcenter.org)) or the "facts & figures" link of the Justice for Immigrants website (<http://www.justiceforimmigrants.org>)

4. Educate others about the difference between rights arising from natural law and those granted by civil law.

5. Oppose oppressive legislation and advocate for an immediate moratorium on detentions and deportations of undocumented persons during this interim period of no comprehensive and just national immigration policy. Support measures to receive greater numbers of Iraqi refugees who are fleeing violence and who have been cooperating with Coalition Forces as guides and translators.

6. Support immigrant rights organizations such as the Immigrant Solidarity Network ([www.immigrantsolidarity.org](http://www.immigrantsolidarity.org)); the Interfaith Coalition for Immigrant Rights ([www.icironline.org](http://www.icironline.org)); the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights ([www.nnirr.org](http://www.nnirr.org)).

7. Inform yourself about the hate campaigns of nativist groups. Read Deepa Fernandes' book: *Targeted: Homeland Security and the Business of Immigration*. See the research of the Center

(cont'd on p. 5)

## Iraq, U.S. Officials, Catholic Bishops and You

by Silvia Chiesa

On July 3, 2007, fourteen Members of Congress including Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro (CT-03) and Congressman Tim Ryan (OH-17) sent a letter to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) calling on the Bishops to increase their involvement in efforts to end the war in Iraq. In the letter, which was sent to Bishop William S. Skylstad, President of the USCCB and Bishop Thomas Wenski, International Justice and Peace Committee Chair, the Members of Congress asked for a meeting with representatives of the USCCB to discuss ways that Congressional Members and the clergy can work together to mobilize public action to end the war. (To see a copy of the letter available on the internet go to [http://www.house.gov/delauro/press/2007/July/Catholic\\_Iraq\\_07\\_03\\_07.html](http://www.house.gov/delauro/press/2007/July/Catholic_Iraq_07_03_07.html).)

Bishop Wenski responded to Congressman Ryan that prior to the Iraq war, the USCCB, "in solidarity with Pope John Paul II, repeatedly raised grave moral questions about military intervention in Iraq... Sadly many of the tragic consequences we and others had feared have come to pass... For more than a year and a half our Conference has called for a 'responsible transition' and withdrawal in Iraq... Our nation's military forces should remain in Iraq only as long as their presence contributes to a responsible transition. Our nation should look for effective ways to end their deployment at the earliest opportunity... Our Bishops' Conference is in communication with your office to explore the best way to move forward." (To see a copy of the letter available on the internet go to <http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/2007-07LtrtoMembersonIraq.pdf>.)

Pax Christi USA is a co-sponsoring organization of *Catholics for an End to the War in Iraq* along with Network-A National Social Justice Lobby and Catholics United whose website is hosting A Catholic Petition to End the War which can be found at <http://www.catholicsforanend.org/>. The petition will be delivered to elected leaders in Washington. Please consider, 1) signing on to this petition and contacting and speaking with your members of Congress, 2) contacting your bishops, pastor and parish clergy to explore ways of reaching fellow parishioners and Catholics in your area, 3) writing to your local and diocesan newspapers urging fellow Catholics and fellow citizens to, a) stand in support of an immediate and responsible end to the Iraq war, and b) ask our nation's leaders to commit to diplomacy, reconstruction, and responsible withdrawal of U.S. troops.

## News from Chapters & New Website

### Pax Christi Mariposa - Jean Giedt

We organized as a Pax Christi group about 2 years ago, and meet monthly (except November & December) at St. Joseph's Church in Mariposa, usually on a Friday from 4 until 6 pm. We actively encourage members from the Mariposa community. We open with a prayer. The first hour of our meeting is designated for either a speaker or study. We are currently studying from the Pax Christi packet on Globalization. Speakers are invited when more information in a particular area is needed - examples: a) our concern about military recruitment in the High School led us to invite

### Foreigner, cont'd from p. 4

for a New Community ([www.newcomm.org](http://www.newcomm.org)) and the Southern Poverty Law Center.

8. Welcome individuals. Be patient with an immigrant's broken English, show respect for cultural customs, attire, and "foreign" values, many of which, like solid family values, dedication to hard work, unity and community building, are those which we want to see strengthened in our own country. To ask an immigrant about how his or her family is doing, how is their health, are they with him or waiting back in the home country missing him, these are caring questions which signal our openness and concern. To say to a busboy or maid or construction worker, "You seem to be working very hard. Thank you. Welcome to our country," is a simple and direct way of welcoming. If the immigrant is from Latin America, he or she will feel that "mi casa es tu casa."

the Principal and the school counselor of our local High School to speak with us. This resulted in more students being given the opportunity and encouragement to visit Junior Colleges, Colleges and Universities; b) concern over Home Health Care Workers prompted us to invite a County Supervisor to answer questions in that area, and resulted in one of our members joining a County Board concerned with aging; c) a Vietnam war veteran who has worked extensively with vets with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) spoke to us, and just recently a Clinical Psychologist came and gave us more information on PTSD; d) on August 16th an Assistant Professor in the Humanities Department at Dominican University specializing in Islamic studies will speak to interested parties in the community. This information night was planned to give us an opportunity for a better understanding of Islam and the dynamics currently in play. Areas of concern are suggested by our individual members. The second hour is for our business meeting.

This October we are planning our third annual "Bethlehem Bazaar". We sell Fair Trade items and "gift animals" from Heifer Project and encourage Christmas shopping. Out of the Bazaar has come an interest in the problems of Globalization. We have also invited Fr. Ken Weare (an expert on Globalization) to speak to the Community. We are looking forward to the NCPC October event- "Taking the War Out of Our Words."

### Pax Christi Burlingame – Silvia Chiesa

Our community meets monthly,

usually on Monday, from 7:30-9:30 P.M. We begin with Lectio Divina on one of the upcoming Sunday scripture readings. We then engage in study. We just recently finished *From Violence To Wholeness* by Pace e Bene Nonviolence Service and are now doing the three-session *Called to Something New: Small Group Process Booklet for "A Peoples' Peace Initiative"* available from Pax Christi USA. Several of our members belong to a NonViolent Communication practice group. Our Pax Christi group has agreed to endeavor to employ the method. Several of our members also join with Declaration of Peace-San Mateo in a Fasting for Peace on Thursday witness from 4:00-6:00 P.M. in front of Rep. Tom Lantos' office. We are also co-sponsors for a Pace e Bene Nonviolence workshop on September 15<sup>th</sup> from 9 to 5 at College Heights Church in San Mateo and for an upcoming Peace Rally and March on Friday, September 21<sup>st</sup> at 6:00 P.M. beginning and ending in Central Park in San Mateo. All are welcome to join us. For more information on the September events go to <http://declarationofpeace-smc.org/>. You may also e-mail [burlingame@paxchristinorcal.org](mailto:burlingame@paxchristinorcal.org).

*Please e-mail news from your chapter for our next newsletter.*

### New Website Under Development

Pax Christi Northern California has a new website under development. The web address will be [www.paxchristinorcal.org](http://www.paxchristinorcal.org). If there is some information or link that you would like to see on the website, please e-mail [silvia@paxchristinorcal.org](mailto:silvia@paxchristinorcal.org) with your recommendation. Thanks.

# School of the Americas Watch Update

by Bob Nixon, SOAW Oakland/Berkeley

This year the School of the Americas Watch has evolved from an organization that is working for Latin Americans to an organization working with Latin American sisters and brothers. Certainly many, many have been doing the latter for years, but for the organization, it has happened in a profound way.

The School of the Americas (SOA), in 2001 renamed the "Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC)," is a combat training school for Latin American soldiers, located at Fort Benning, Georgia.

Initially established in Panama in 1946, it was kicked out of that country in 1984 under the terms of the Panama Canal Treaty. Former Panamanian President, Jorge Illueca, stated that the School of the Americas was the "biggest base for destabilization in Latin America." The SOA, frequently dubbed the "School of Assassins," has left a trail of blood and suffering in every country where its graduates have returned.

Over its 59 years, the SOA/WHINSEC has trained over 60,000 Latin American soldiers in counterinsurgency techniques, sniper training, commando and psychological warfare, military intelligence and interrogation tactics. These graduates have consistently used their skills to wage a war against their own people. Among those targeted by SOA graduates are educators, union organizers, religious workers, student leaders, and others who work for the rights of the poor. The most notable victim was Archbishop Oscar Romero, but hundreds of thousands of Latin Americans have been tortured, raped, assassinated, "disappeared," massacred, and forced into a refugee life by those trained at the School of Assassins.

At the 2006 Vigil at Ft. Benning, there were many more activists from countries south of our border taking part, honoring their dead, speaking out for the living and for an end to the US military involvement in their countries. "No mas, no more!" And as we all gathered there in Georgia, old and young also gathered in cities throughout Latin America to call for the closing of the "School of Assassins" both because of the atrocities its graduates are now perpetuating, as well as what they have done in the past.

Much of the impetus for this surge has come from the very successful Latin American Initiative co-led by Fr. Roy Bourgeois and Lisa Sullivan. This year they, along with Carlos Mauricio, Linda Panetta, and other Northern and Southern citizen-diplomats, visited human rights groups, defense ministers, high level officials and presidents. The purpose was to describe the history, the mission of the School of the Americas (WHINSEC), its impact on their countries, and to suggest that the countries' leaders withdraw their troops from the institution.

They met with human rights and political leaders of Bolivia, Uruguay, Argentina, Ecuador, Peru, Chile, Colombia, Panama, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Costa Rica and Mexico. In most cases, there was no need to describe the SOA as they had experienced the torture and death of family and friends at the hands of or the orders of the graduates. So far four countries: Venezuela, Costa Rica, Argentina and Uruguay have decided that they will no longer send their soldiers or police to the SOA to be trained. Other countries are also considering ending relations with the SOA. We will continue this citizen diplomacy and consensus building work in the years to come.

Here at home in the House of Representatives we came within 11 votes of cutting off funds for the SOA. If six representatives changed their vote, the SOA would have lost its student funding (scholarships). The bill to close the SOA will come up in the spring and we will need a massive grass roots effort of calling, faxing and visiting representatives to win that vote. We are the closest we have been in the seventeen year struggle to close the school. California representatives could close it. Switched votes in the San Joaquin Valley and Southern California could close it. We can and need to do it.

A recent criminal investigation into the Colombian Army's Third Brigade, has prompted the arrest of thirteen high ranking officers accused of providing security and mobilizing troops for Diego Montoya (alias "Don Diego"), the leader of the Norte del Valle Cartel and one of the FBI's 10 most-wanted criminals.

**Two former instructors of the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (SOA/WHINSEC) are among the thirteen. Colonel Quijano, a former commander of Colombia's Special Forces, and Major Mora Daza, taught "peacekeeping operations" and "democratic sustainment" at WHINSEC in 2003-2004.**

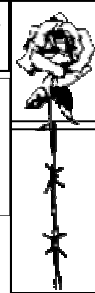
**Over HALF of the thirteen military officials implicated in the drug cartel protection ring attended the U.S. Army School of the Americas and/or its successor institute, the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation.**

This November 17-19 we will gather again at the gates of Ft. Benning in Columbus, Georgia. Last year over 20,000 came, prayed, taught, listened, remembered and vowed to continue to work non-violently to close the SOA and change our countries military policy and practices toward our brothers and sisters in Latin America. If you haven't been there for the annual Demonstration, Teach In and Vigil we invite you to come and join us this year for this profound weekend. It is an experience of deep hope, a life changer.

Please also join in the spring legislative work of phoning, faxing and calling legislators to close the SOA. Through grass roots involvement we can leverage all of the work that has gone before and close this institution. We feel that this year provides the best opportunity we have had since the SOA Watch began.

Most of the information you need is on the web site [www.soaw.org](http://www.soaw.org) providing background information, legislative history, logistics for the November Vigil and more. If you have other questions you can contact me at [robertnixon@mindspring.com](mailto:robertnixon@mindspring.com)





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**HELP NEEDED! We need people to serve on the Pax Christi NorCal board. If you can help advance our charism of nonviolent peace, please contact Silvia Chiesa, [silvia@paxchristinorcal.org](mailto:silvia@paxchristinorcal.org), 650-344-3520.**

**Reminders:** If you've forgotten, please remember to send in your dues to Pax Christi USA.  
Please let us know if you have a Pax Christi group/chapter/community that meets and is not listed, above. Thanks.  
**F.Y.I.:** According to our most recent list, Pax Christi Northern California includes the dioceses of Sacramento, Santa Rosa, Stockton, Oakland, San Francisco, San Jose, Northern Monterey and Northern Fresno, 1,350 members, parishes, religious communities, Catholic schools or other member organizations, about 1,200 lay women and men, over 60 women and men religious, over 45 priests and deacons, and 5 bishop members.



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**Violence Ends Where Love Begins.**