

May 2016

Dear Friends,

Daniel Berrigan, SJ, priest, poet, activist, and friend of the Catholic Worker, died on Saturday, April 30. I first met Dan 16 years ago, when I was living in New York as a Jesuit Volunteer. Dan lived in the “98th street community,” a wonderful and eclectic community of those Jesuits who couldn’t quite be made to fit into one of the dozens of Jesuit institutions in New York. We called them the misfit Jesuits, and of all the Jesuit communities in New York, we felt most drawn to them, and they to us.

We loved Dan because at 78, he taught us what it meant to live, and to confront the powers of death with the power of a life lived joyfully. I remember the day he invited us to join him on a visit to the New York Stock Exchange on Wall Street. There, he took out his copy of the Rite of Exorcism, and to our delight began a public exorcism of the NYSE. Clearly, he was not a very good exorcist, but he was an excellent priest, and remained faithful till the end to his vocation of serving the Gospel.

He is perhaps best remembered for his participation in the Catonsville draft board raid, when he, along with his brother Phillip Berrigan, David Darst, John Hogan, Tom Lewis, Marjorie Bradford Melville, Thomas Melville, George Mische, and Mary Moylan, removed draft cards from a local draft board office, and destroyed them with homemade napalm to protest the war in Vietnam.

An excerpt from the Catonsville 9 statement, which Dan wrote, reads:

“Our apologies, good friends, for the fracture of good order, the burning of paper instead of children, the angering of the orderlies in the front parlor of the charnel house. We could not, so help us God, do otherwise.”

The Catonsville 9 cut through the propaganda and rhetoric surrounding the Vietnam war to ask a very simple question: why is it a crime to burn draft cards with napalm, and *not* a crime to burn women and children with the same?

There is always a disarming simplicity in the message of those who witness to truth. It is wrong to kill innocent women and children. It is good to use our resources to feed, shelter, and educate the poor, rather than to kill black and brown people around the world. We must be willing to suffer violence, but never to inflict it on others. The truth is not complicated; it is the web of lies, deceptions, and cover-ups that distort the truth and promote war that are complicated.

Today, peace activists around the world suffer in jails and prisons for asking the same questions. As I write, three fellow Catholic Workers from California have begun their 2- to 4- month sentences in federal prison for trespassing at Vandenberg Air Force Base last August. Jeff Dietrich, David Omondi, and Dennis Apel walked across the line at Vandenberg on the 70th anniversary of the Hiroshima bombing with a banner declaring “Hiroshima: Never Again.” Like the Catonsville 9 action, the question their witness evokes is simple: why is it a crime to speak out against nuclear weapons, and not a crime to deploy Inter-Continental Ballistic Missiles capable of destroying the entire planet?

The Catonsville 9 statement ends, “In a time of death, some men - the resisters, those who work hardily for social change, those who preach and embrace the unpalatable truth - such men overcome death, their lives are bathed in the light of the resurrection, the truth has set them free.” Certainly Dan can be counted among those who, long before their biological death, had already overcome death by means of the truth.

The question is, what about the rest of us? Will we, even once in our lives, use the precious gift of freedom God has given us, to stand for truth? Or will we simply remain “good citizens,” obedient and unquestioning subjects of an empire that has not stopped making war since it’s founding, and thereby abdicate our freedom and squander our gift?

Peace,

Fumi on behalf of
the San Jose Catholic Worker community



Catholic Workers speak out for peace on the 70th anniversary of the Hiroshima bombing last August. **Dennis Apel** (far left), **Jeff Dietrich** (3rd from left), and **David Omondi** (2nd from right) are currently serving federal prison sentences for their witness.

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Return Service Requested

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Make checks payable to Casa de Clara Catholic Worker or donate online at www.sjcw.org

- **Food** in any amount. The best **drop-off times are Wednesday and Friday mornings**. In addition to providing meals for guests at Casa de Clara, we operate a neighborhood food distribution program twice a week.
- **Cleaning Supplies: white vinegar, borax, baking soda, laundry detergent** (for high efficiency machines)
- **Used cars.** San Jose is a tough city to get around on public transit, and our homeless friends can always use a working vehicle. When we are able, Casa de Clara helps out with insurance and gas.
- **Update on Showers to the People!** As of this printing, we have \$32,000 in the bank, with more pledged. Anything we raise above our goal of \$45,000 will go towards operating costs. We expect to order our shower trailer soon, and to be operational by August or September. Thank you for your overwhelming support! Stay tuned for updates. To volunteer, email andrew@sjcw.org.

Casa needs. Can you help?