Opinion

Guest Voices



Cathy Breen, Carmen Trotta and Bernard Connaughton, members of the New York Catholic Worker community, are pictured outside St. Patrick's Cathedral during one of their Sunday witness actions. (Courtesy of Liam Myers)



by Liam Myers

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

May 1, 2024

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

I am a member of the New York City Catholic Worker community, first founded by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin in 1933.

Like many others, we do not know what to do in the midst of our heartbreak and deep sorrow for all lives lost in Israel and Palestine. But we carry forth with the legacy of Day and Maurin, and of our movement, which has borne witness to suffering in New York City and around the world since 1933.

For the past two months our community has attended the 9 a.m. Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral each Sunday, and then held a vigil outside the church to call for the New York Archdiocese "to take a firm and clear stand against the horror in Gaza."

As the large doors open and people flood out of the church, they are confronted with our presence. We hand out our ceasefire statement and they see our signs which read: "Free Palestine," " Pope says end war now," and "We cannot say we did not know."



From left: Bernard Connaughton, Carmen Trotta and Cathy Breen of the New York Catholic Worker community are pictured outside St. Patrick's Cathedral during one of their Sunday witness actions. (Courtesy of Liam Myers)

As Catholic Workers we strive towards living daily the works of mercy which, as Dorothy taught us, are opposed to the works of war. Our vigil is an outpouring from our way of life of feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and sheltering the houseless. This practice also requires us to say no to the way in which our government is complicit in destroying crops, land, homes and families.

Furthermore, as our ceasefire statement reads, we are "sick at heart that the New York Archdiocese has remained painfully silent in regards to the ongoing genocide of Palestinian people, overwhelmingly funded with billions of dollars in military aid from the United States."

While our presence outside the cathedral is met with varied responses, we know that this is precisely where God calls us to bear witness to the "continuing horror of grieving families, orphaned children and a starving populace."

Advertisement

Each day that passes the situation in Gaza changes, as does the American conscience. In the past weeks we've felt a glimmer of hope as students across the country have started encampments at universities calling, in part, upon the schools to disclose their investments and divest from investments complicit with Israel's military campaign.

The students recognize that without their scholarship, their money and ultimately their presence, the universities cannot continue with business as usual. In the same way that the students make the university what it is, we recognize that it is the people that make the church what it is.

Therefore we expect, perhaps foolishly, our church leadership to be clear about the horror of war, and the killing of children, no matter whose children they are. We remain grief stricken that over 13,000 Palestinian children have been killed since the start of the conflict, according to UNICEF.

> We have to ask ourselves, is it too controversial, or rather political, to condemn the killing of innocent children?
>
> Tweet this

While we are heartened to know of New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan's commitment to peace in Israel and Palestine, we are concerned that his lack of clarity from the pulpit allows for our church to be indifferent at this crucial moment. We have to ask ourselves, is it too controversial, or rather political, to condemn the killing of innocent children?

We hope, for the sake of collective humanity, that all who pass by our vigil will join our heartbroken plea as we continue to proclaim the words of Pope Francis: "Let us all say: Enough, please! Stop the war."

A version of this story appeared in the **May 10-23, 2024** print issue under the headline: 'Enough, please! Stop the war'.