Opinion
Guest Voices
Marie Dennis holds sign at protest.

Marie Dennis, senior adviser to the secretary general of Pax Christi International, is seen near Capitol Hill in Washington May 21, 2018. (CNS/Tyler Orsburn)



by John Dear

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What if the church fully embraced the radical nonviolence of Jesus? What if each of us fully embraced Jesus' nonviolence in every aspect of life and joined his ongoing campaign of disarming nonviolence? Can the church become a church of nonviolence and help lead a nonviolent revolution?

This week on "The Nonviolent Jesus Podcast," John Dear hosts longtime peace activist, Pax Christi leader and Catholic Nonviolence Initiative director Marie Dennis to talk about challenging the outdated just war theory, reclaiming the heart of the Gospel — active, world-changing nonviolence — and even helping to transform the Vatican in the process.

"We can no longer view war as a solution," Dennis said. "We want to see nonviolence move to the center of the Catholic Church teaching and practice."

Dennis has spent her life working on the frontlines of global peacemaking and pushing the church toward justice, even in recent years, working behind the scenes

at the Vatican to promote the alternative of nonviolence. She calls nonviolence not just a universal ethic and a strategy, but a way of life — a force capable of transforming entire societies — even the church.

Marie Dennis and Bishop Stowe at award ceremony.

Dennis served as co-president of Pax Christi International from 2007 to 2019 and was given the Pax Christi USA Teacher of Peace award in 2022. She worked for the Maryknoll Missioners from 1989 to 2012, and spent 15 years as director of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns. She is author or co-author of seven books, editor of *Choosing Peace: The Catholic Church Returns to Gospel Nonviolence* and co-editor of *Advancing Nonviolence in the Church and the World*.

"Jesus teaches us to be more imaginative in how we deal with moments of crisis," she said in the podcast. "There is always a nonviolent alternative, and we have to start choosing those, preparing for those, and living those out now."

"Jesus on the cross is the ultimate witness to nonviolence," Dennis added, inviting us to a new way of thinking, a new way of living, and a new way of being church, and to carry on Jesus' witness of total nonviolence in this world of violence, greed, injustice and war.

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