Opinion

Guest Voices



Art Laffin, center, of the Dorothy Day Catholic Worker, participates in a protest for peace with other demonstrators outside of the White House April 15, 2016. (CNS/Chaz Muth)



by John Dear

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This week on "The Nonviolent Jesus Podcast," John Dear welcomes Art Laffin, longtime peace activist, author and Catholic Worker, whom Dear first met in 1982.

Dear asks Laffin about his life journey to the Catholic Worker, and his encounter with Dorothy Day. "When I was young, I asked the question: 'What would Jesus have me do?' " Laffin said. "I realized Jesus is commanding us to embrace his command of unconditional love, including our enemies, and to renounce all forms of violence and killing."

Laffin was a member of the Covenant Peace Community in Connecticut from 1978 to 1990. He has been a part of the Washington, D.C., Catholic Worker Community since 1990, first at Olive Branch Catholic Worker until 1994 when Laffin joined the Dorothy Day Catholic Worker, where he still lives with his wife and son*. He has been active in the faith-based nonviolent movements for peace, social justice, disarmament and human rights.

Laffin has been imprisoned for his involvement in two Plowshares disarmament actions, as well as other nonviolent actions. He is author of a new edition of *The Risk of the Cross: Living Gospel Nonviolence in the Nuclear Age*, co-editor of *Swords Into Plowshares*, and co-editor of *Arise and Witness: Poems by Anne Montgomery, About Faith, Prison, War Zones, and Nonviolent Resistance*.

He speaks in the podcast about his mentors and friends, Jesuit Fr. Richard McSorley, Jesuit Fr. Daniel Berrigan, Philip Berrigan and Fr. Henri Nouwen.

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"They were all doers of the word that led by example; they kept their eyes on the prize," Laffin said. "I learned from them that life is a long haul made up of a lot of short hauls, and everything makes a difference."

Since 1990, Laffin has kept a Monday morning peace vigil at the Pentagon.

"We advocate for all victims of war and injustice. People ask, 'What difference does it make?' We ask, 'What happens if we're not there?' " Laffin said. "No one thinks about a nonviolent alternative. I view the weekly vigil at the Pentagon as a prayer of intercession. I believe miracles have occurred during our protest actions."

Speaking about the upcoming 80th anniversary of the U.S. atomic bombings in Japan at Hiroshima on Aug. 6 and Nagasaki on Aug. 9, he said: "Humanity and weapons cannot coexist. We need to heed Jesus' Gospel call to nonviolence. We need to hear Dr. [Martin Luther] King's message just before he was killed: The choice is no longer violence or nonviolence; it's nonviolence or nonexistence."

"War has become normalized," Laffin said, "so we have to stand for life wherever it is threatened. I keep coming back to the command that we have to love one another, including our enemies."

"On the cross Jesus is showing us how to live and die," he said, "and opens up a new nonviolent history, so we don't lose heart. Christ is risen!"

Listen to the full episode here.

**This story has been updated to clarify Art Laffin's Catholic Worker history.*

This story appears in the **The Nonviolent Jesus Podcast** feature series. View the full series.