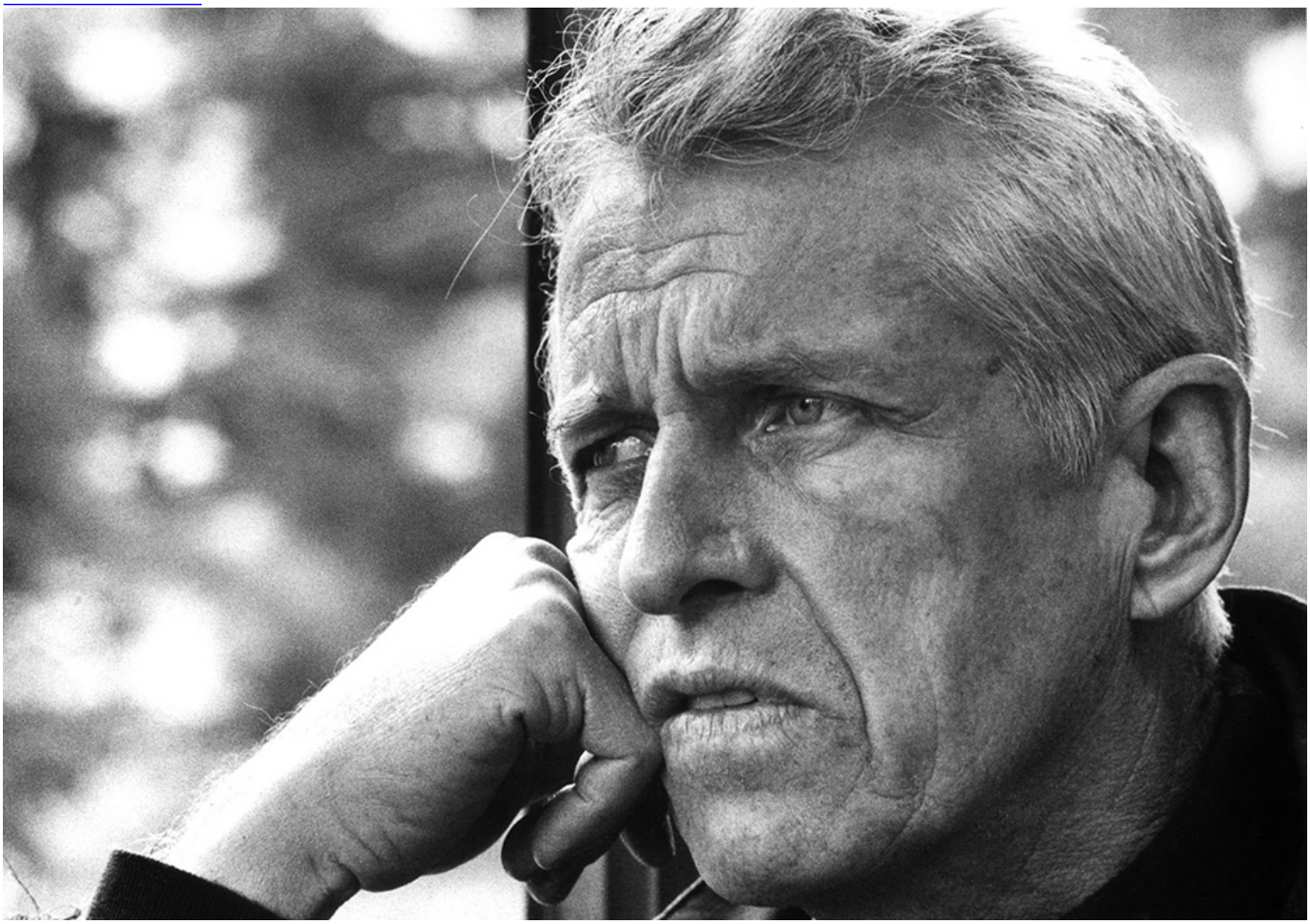
Opinion
Guest Voices



Peace activist Philip Berrigan is pictured at the University of Washington in Seattle in the summer of 1977. The former Josephite priest, a leading figure in the Catholic anti-war movement for more than 40 years, died from cancer Dec. 6, 2002, in Baltimore. He was 79. (CNS file photo/Tom Salyer)



by John Dear

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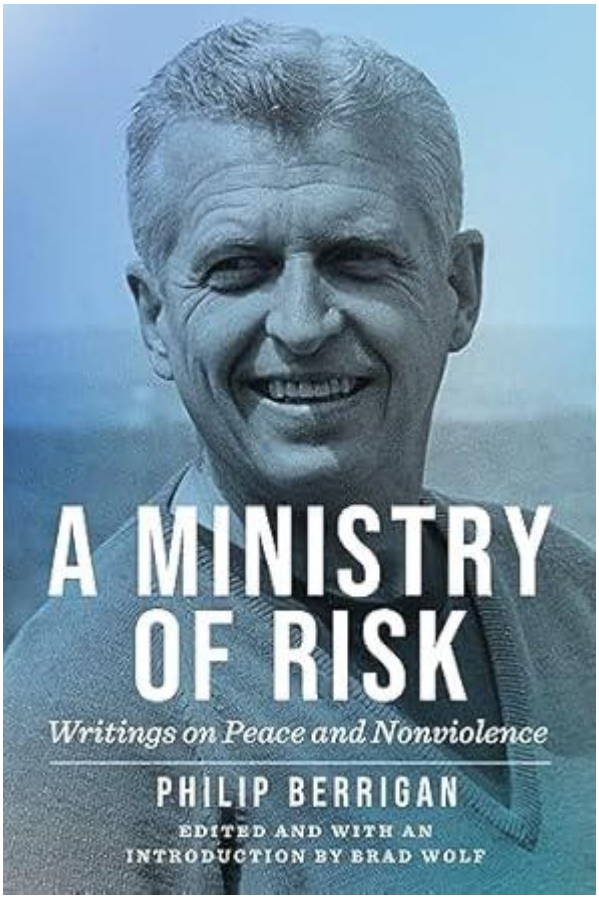
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August 18, 2025

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On this week's episode of "The Nonviolent Jesus Podcast," John Dear welcomes activist Brad Wolf from Lancaster, Pennsylvania. A former prosecutor, professor and community college dean, Wolf is executive director of Peace Action Network of Lancaster, co-coordinator of the Merchant of Death War Crimes Tribunal and current chair of the U.S. organizing committee for the People's Tribunal on the Korean Victims of the 1945 Atomic Bombings.



Book cover to *A Ministry of Risk*

Wolf recently edited *A Ministry of Risk*, the first ever collection of writings on peace and nonviolence by legendary activist Philip Berrigan (Fordham University Press).

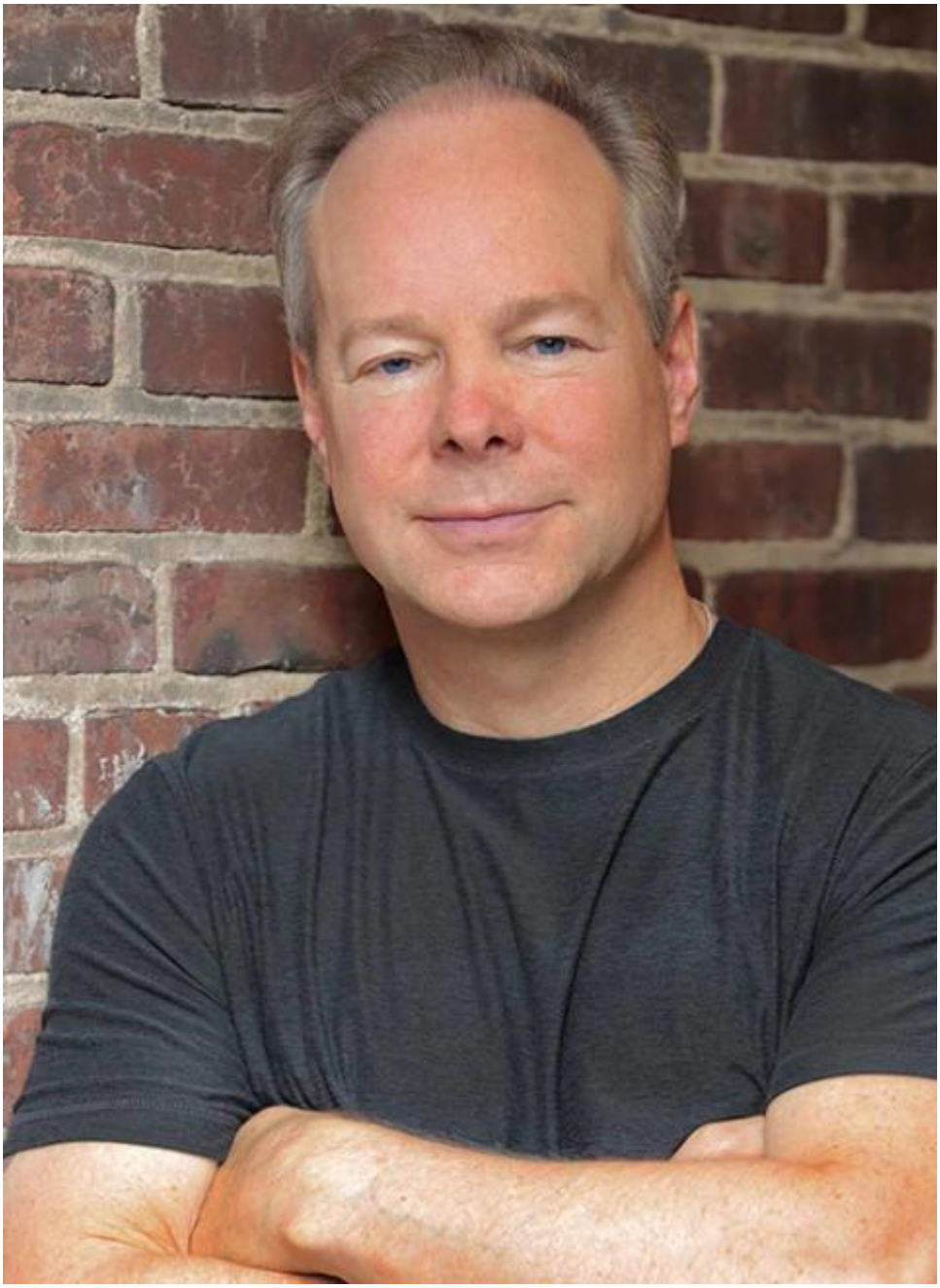
Along with his brother Daniel, Philip Berrigan was a leading voice and organizer against the Vietnam War in the 1960s and 1970s. By the time of his death in 2002, he spent more than 11 years of his life in prison for acts of nonviolent civil disobedience against warmaking and nuclear weapons.

In the episode, Dear and Wolf discussed Berrigan's leadership and daring actions from the Baltimore Four action in 1967, the Catonsville Nine action in 1968, the 1980 Plowshares disarmament action and other plowshares actions, including one with Dear in December 1993.

Wolf spoke how during the COVID-19 pandemic, he read through Berrigan's archives at Cornell University and DePaul University, and how on the first day, he found a quote from Berrigan that became the title of his book:

> A ministry of risk goes unerringly to the side of the victims, to those threatened or destroyed by greed, prejudice, and war. From the side of those victims, it teaches two simple, indispensable lessons: No. 1, that we all belong in the ditch, or in the breach, with the victims; and No. 2 that until we go to the ditch or into the breach, victimizing will not cease.

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Brad Wolf

"Phil was not fazed by anything," Wolf said.

"You have to be faithful enough to suffer and daring enough to serve," Berrigan wrote. "Obeying God's word can get you killed."

Reflecting on his long friendship with Philip Berrigan and Daniel Berrigan, Dear added that they were the most "biblical" Christians he ever knew, who read the Bible day and night, and spent every day trying to obey the word of God.

Wolf also spoke about a question Philip Berrigan put to a youth retreat in the late 1950s, a question that came to haunt him and motivate him for the rest of his life: "What does Christ ask of me?" Wolf said that Berrigan would want us to wrestle with that question, and take new risks for peace and justice, to go into the breach, and follow the journey of Christ.

You can listen to the full episode here.

Related: Philip Berrigan's revolutionary words live on in new collection
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