

Jim Harvey in the dusk of a life of mercy

Patrick O'Neill | Nov. 29, 2008

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Dying from cancer, and in hospice care, Jim Harvey was not able to come to the annual School of the Americas Watch gathering this year, but Harvey's friend, Scott Wright, wanted to make sure that Harvey's life commitment to a more peaceful and just world was made known to the newest generation of activists.

Wright and his wife, Jean Stokan, distributed copies of a six-page tribute to Harvey, who as a young priest in the late 1960s spent 18 months in federal prison for destroying draft files as a member of the Milwaukee 14, a group opposed to the Vietnam War. The six pages include several pieces of Harvey's writings and his photographs.

Harvey is a professional photographer who traveled the world to take pictures of poor and oppressed peoples.

"For the last forty years, Jim Harvey has moved thousands of people and audiences through his photographs and stories taken on numerous trips to places of great suffering and hope," Wright wrote. Those journeys included war zones in El Salvador, accompanying refugees in flight, numerous other trips to Latin America and a 2002 trip to Iraq with Voices in the Wilderness six weeks before the US attacked Iraq.

In 1968, Gordan Zahn invited Harvey to write the preface for his highly regarded biography, "In Solitary Witness," about the refusal of Austrian peasant Franz Jagerstatter to fight in Hitler's army, a refusal that resulted in Jagerstatter being executed by the Nazis.

In that preface, Harvey wrote: "As we move into the future the family of man desperately seeks those who have within them the capacity to discern and act upon human needs -- the capacity to cry out in collective witness against the atrocities that are taking place in the world, to take the leap into history and to live with suffering humanity. History cries out for our witness."

When he received the news in July that his cancer was terminal, Harvey decided to embark on a pilgrimage from Boston to New Haven, CT in solidarity with undocumented Latinos who come to the US in search of work.

"My idea is to spend my last days with the undocumented human beings of Central America who are walking to get to the United States," Harvey said in an August interview during the pilgrimage.

Harvey has "continued to be a prophetic voice for justice" in solidarity with Third World peoples, Wright told *NCR*.

Harvey is in hospice care at his home in Bangor, ME, where he is also being cared for by his partner, Nancy Minott. For more information, go to: www.posibilidad.org. You may write to Harvey at 85 Wiley St. Bangor, ME 04401.