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## A sign of hope in Northern Ireland peace pact

by Mary Ann McGivern

NCR Today

Writer Colum McCann had an essay in the *New York Times* Saturday honoring the 15 years of the Good Friday, or Belfast, Agreement that brought peace to Northern Ireland. He reminds us that hope and hard work together can accomplish the unthinkable ? peace.

Northern Ireland still has eruptions of violence over parades and flags, symbols that spark real fire in the hearts and hands of loyalists (loyal to the Queen) and republicans (desiring a united republic of Ireland).

Two years ago, a Catholic policeman was murdered and this past winter street rioters injured 50 or so officers ? not to mention broken windows, car damage and injury to civilians.

Yet the peace is holding. Peace after four centuries of state-sanctioned terrorism, retaliation after retaliation, famine, flight and sorrow.

This Easter season Northern Ireland?s successful peace process is a reminder to us all to put our energies and our tax dollars into diplomacy, not weapons.

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