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'The days of violence are ending': an excerpt from 'The Nonviolent Life'

by John Dear

On the Road to Peace

Greetings from Scotland! I'm spending a few weeks traveling around beautiful Scotland, speaking everywhere on peace and nonviolence. I will write about the trip as soon as I catch my breath, but this week, I thought I'd offer another excerpt from my new book, "The Nonviolent Life." This is from the conclusion. The book is available from paceebene.org. As we say in Scotland, cheers!

Active nonviolence offers you and me a way out of the world's mad violence and a way forward into the light and life of God's peace. It invites us to reject violence once and for all. It suggests that we no longer need to nurture violence within us, or manifest violence toward others, or treat animals and the earth violently, or remain powerless in the face of the world's systemic injustice, warmaking, nuclear weapons and destructive policies. We have a power at our disposal, a weapon of love and truth that we are still just learning.

With nonviolence, as Gandhi and King insisted, the days of violence are coming to an end. With every choice and action for nonviolence, we begin a new era in human history. This new age will be rooted in the best of spirituality, theology, and morality, the best in all of us for all of us. As we deepen nonviolence in every aspect of life, we herald the coming of a nonviolent world, a world without war, hunger, killings, executions, nuclear weapons, or environmental destruction. There can be no better use of our lives. Along the way, we fulfill our calling to become sons and daughters of the God of peace. We directly serve the coming of God's reign of peace on earth.

The nonviolent life, as we have emphasized in these pages, involves three dimensions: practicing

nonviolence toward ourselves, so that we cultivate inner peace and claim our union with the God of peace; practicing nonviolence toward all others, all creatures and all creation, so that love and justice can spread far and wide, and creation itself is protected; and practicing nonviolence by joining the global grassroots movement of nonviolence, so that more and more of us participate in the struggles to end war, poverty, nuclear weapons, environmental destruction and all forms of structural violence, and make inevitable greater breakthroughs for justice and disarmament.

As we understand the nonviolence of Gandhi and King more and more, we realize the necessity of practicing all three dimensions simultaneously. We determine not to repeat the mistakes of our movement ancestors, but to stand on their shoulders and go farther down the road toward peace. As we do, we can become, like Gandhi and King, transforming people of active nonviolence?saints, prophets, apostles, teachers, healers, and champions of God's peace.

We can do this. We can live a nonviolent life. We can welcome God's gift of peace within us, among us, and in the world. We have more power than we realize. Each one of us has the power of the God of peace within us, if we dare believe and act on that faith. We can make peace our home, and help turn the earth into a home of peace for everyone.

And so I end our reflection the way I began, with a prayer to the God of peace asking for help to become peacemakers, people who live the nonviolent life to the full:

God of peace, thank you for inviting me to the life of nonviolence, to become a peacemaker, your beloved son/daughter.

Give me the grace to be nonviolent to myself, that I may make peace with myself, welcome your spirit of peace within me, and radiate personally your peaceful presence.

Give me the grace to be nonviolent to all others, all creatures, and all creation, that I may love everyone as my sister and brother, and help protect humanity, your creatures and creation that your reign of peace may be a living reality.

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And give me the grace to serve your global grassroots movement of nonviolence, that I may do my part to help end war, poverty, racism, sexism, nuclear weapons, systemic injustice and environmental destruction, that more and more people will welcome your wisdom of nonviolence and work diligently for disarmament and justice that your peace may one day be realized everywhere on earth.

Thank you, God of peace, for all the blessings of peace, hope, life and love that you give me. Make me an instrument of your peace, and I will offer you the gift of a nonviolent life well lived, for your greater glory. Amen.

[John Dear's new book, *The Nonviolent Life*, can be ordered at paceebene.org. John is currently on a speaking tour of Scotland. Next year, he will tour the United States speaking about the life of nonviolence. To see John's speaking schedule or to invite him to speak in your church or school, go to John Dear's website or contact the Franciscan-based peace group Pace e Bene. John's book *Lazarus, Come Forth!* and other recent books, including *Daniel Berrigan: Essential Writings, Put Down Your Sword*

and *A Persistent Peace*, are available from Amazon.com.]

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