

Catholic Peace Action

Newsletter No. 11
October 1986

7 Putney Bridge Road
London SW18 1HX

Dear Friend,

With this letter, as with our last one, we begin by sharing the good news of another birth. On 23 July, Carmel gave birth to the Martin's third child, a daughter this time, named Clare Frances. Carmel is fully recovered and Clare already weighs 11 pounds (after weighing 7.2 at birth).

With the arrival of new life we are reminded once again that we are stewards of God's creation. We are told that God knows us so intimately that each hair on our head is counted and that he calls us each by name. It is easy for us to see the love of the Father reflected in the love we feel for the newly born child. We are also reminded that our work for peace is for children such as Clare and those still unborn, the voiceless innocent and most vulnerable. We pray that our efforts for peace are adequate to help secure a future for children everywhere.

The work of dialogue and resistance continues and we invite you to our next action on 3 November. The place where we will begin the liturgy is different. Please note that it will be on the South Bank, in front of the Royal Festival Hall near the steps of Hungerford Bridge. The liturgy will begin at 8 am. We hope you are able to join us in prayer. The civil disobedience that takes place during the prayer, at the Ministry of 'Defence', is only part of our Christian witness against Death and for Life. In this witness the role of people not risking arrest is as important as those who do. Both are necessary. Do come and pray with us if you can.

3 November is All Souls Day when we commemorate all the faithful departed. As we pray for those who died in the faith we pray for ourselves that we may keep and live the faith. The liturgical significance of the date, however, is coincidental to our resistance. Simply, the date was chosen because it is then that CPA members are willing and available to extend our witness to the point of resistance. The work of the M.o.'D', in its preparations for the use of nuclear weapons, is a daily affair which makes any day an appropriate one for resistance.

The other arm of our witness is dialogue with the workers of the M.o.'D'. and we are glad that a few more people are committing themselves to this task. But more help would be appreciated. If you would like to offer 1 hour a month/two months contact us. By our continuous communication with the workers we acknowledge the need for and possibility of conversion and, despite differences of opinion on nuclear weapons, emphasize our common humanity.

There will also be an act of resistance on 4 March, Ash Wednesday. More details will appear in the next Newsletter. If you would like to be involved to the point of arrest please contact us so that we can plan the event together.

A representative of the Plowshares movement and our friend, John Schuchardt, hopes to be in London around the first of November. If so, we will organise a meeting but will not have time to send out another CPA letter. If you would like to meet him and discuss the situation of the anti-nuclear movement in the U.S.A. let us know and we will give you details of the meeting. John is a former Marine and criminal defense lawyer, and is now a Catholic pacifist who has taken part in two plowshares actions. Plowshares actions involve the physical destruction or damage of the components of nuclear war. Because of his activities John has spent more than two years in prison. John was one of eight others (including Daniel and Philip Berigan) who engaged in the first 'Swords into Plowshares' action and destroyed a Mark 12A nose cone. The case is on appeal and a sentence of 5-10 years is the likely outcome.

CPA open meetings continue to be held on the third Friday of the month at 6:30 pm, in the Undercroft, St. George's Cathedral, Westminster Bridge Road. Entrance through the car park. Nearest tube is Lambeth North. All are welcome for prayer and discussion.

Included in this Letter are two accounts/reflections on our activities at the M.o.'D'. this past August 6-9. It consisted of three elements: 1) Civil disobedience in which Theresa Dean, Margaret Holden, and Clive Gillham were arrested and charged with obstruction. 2) A Mass celebrated in the grounds adjacent to the M.o.'D'. Fr. David Stanley, parish priest in Bexleyheath was the celebrant and Fr. Roger Ruston was the preacher. 3) A continuous 24 hour vigil in which many people participated.

The Prayer, below, comes to us from Andrew Carter and is based on the Pax Christi vow of nonviolence. Carmel did the lettering.

Thank you for your support and we pray for you and your work for justice and peace.

Yours in the peace of Christ,

Catholic Peace Action

Ray Towey
Pat Gaffney

Sarah Hipperson
Carmel, Dan, Daniel, Sean and Clare Martin

'Catholic Peace Action is a Christian community who believe that the policy of nuclear deterrence is incompatible with the will of God. In regards to nuclear war preparations, nonviolent civil disobedience is Divine obedience. Since 1983 we have engaged in periodic acts of civil disobedience at the Ministry of Defence in Whitehall, and have communicated our concerns to the MoD workers in a twice monthly leaflet.'

God, creator and Holy Spirit,
give me the grace to
follow the way of Jesus:

to resist evil, without violence
but with my whole being;
to accept suffering
rather than inflict it;

to strive for peace in the world
beginning in my own heart; and
to live in the joy, simplicity
and compassion of the Gospel.

Reflections on Hiroshima

Ministry of Defence

6th August 1986

by Theresa Dean

I am repeatedly being told by those who disapprove of my involvement with Catholic Peace Action that I am foolish to risk getting a criminal record, to court imprisonment, to jeopardise my career. But I am not sure that Christians are called to be wise, at least not in earthly terms. As I reflect more on my commitment to civil disobedience, the paradox of the cross becomes increasingly important to me. It is in the apparent folly of the cross that we, as Christians, find our liberation and our salvation, the cross that Paul describes as "a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor 1:23-4). It is that folly and powerlessness that we must embrace if Christianity is going to have any credence; we must make manifest the wisdom of God, which turns the values of this world upside down and gives the lie to human power and status.

That our values do not and should not conform to the values of the world was made clear to me during our action on Hiroshima day and in subsequent events. It struck me as being both sad and ironic that we should not be permitted to hold our service in the park near the MoD. There we were, a small group of Christians praying in the bright sunshine amidst the flowers, plants and trees, praying for peace and for life, and our actions are seen as threatening, subversive, illegal..... Perhaps it is good that prayer is seen as such a mighty weapon, and yet the preparations for nuclear warfare, carried out in that building just around the corner are allowed to continue. And when we get to that building, the MoD workers go quickly by, eyes averted, lest the symbolic coffin, child-size, be correctly interpreted. The police officers beseech us not to force them to arrest us, and are dismayed and puzzled by our refusal to compromise our position.

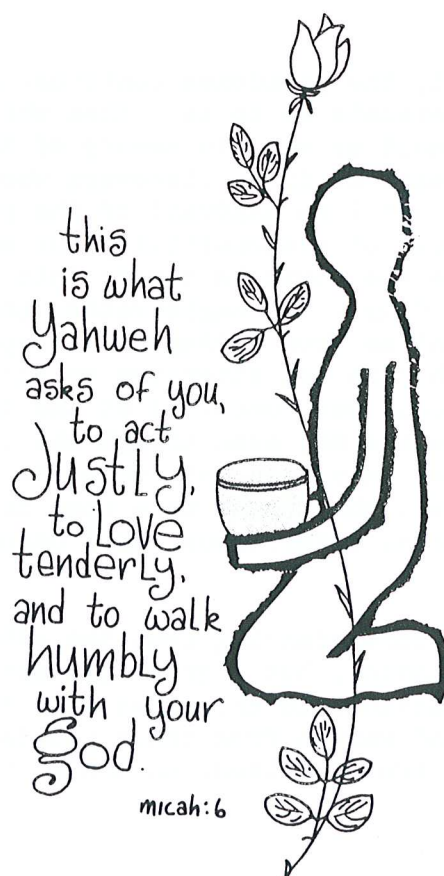
Once under arrest, the paradoxes continue. A police officer comes to see me in my cell to try to persuade me to tell them who I am. He cannot understand why my decision to withhold my name in memory of the nameless dead is inviolate; he threatens to release me if he discovers who I am - their frustration engendered by the realisation that I am unafraid of the possible consequences of my action. Their anxiety to be freed of responsibility for me results in our being hurriedly taken to Bow Street, where the court is thrown into disarray by my refusal to give my name. The Clerk of the Court, the magistrates, the Prosecution Solicitor, the Warden, they all try to prevent me from having to be kept in custody overnight; would that they would lavish such care and attention on all prisoners! Even the heroin addict with whom I shared a cell was concerned at the thought of me spending a night in prison, and tries to dissuade me, even though she is experiencing withdrawal symptoms and is obviously in great pain. And yet, when she realises that I am determined to carry through my witness, she thanks me - she, better than all the others, the magistrates and other officials, understands why I cannot renege on my decision.

I found the same understanding from the other prisoners at Highbury that night, and not only understanding, but a great protectiveness. All of the women who came to talk to me were anxious to shield me from the harsher aspects of custodial life - the compassion and warmth from these people, some of whom were in custody for some very violent and brutal crimes, on their own admission, was very humbling and

heartening. I was particularly moved by my cellmate who refused her supper when she realised that I was fasting. But most surprising of all was their desire to hear about Catholic Peace Action and to learn why, as a Christian, I feel compelled to break the law. It was a great opportunity to give witness, and I am grateful for it.

The opportunities to give witness at the court case on the 19th were manifold. A sympathetic magistrate gave us much latitude and the three of us and our witnesses were allowed to speak at length of our Christian beliefs and our abhorrence of nuclear deterrence. And because he was sympathetic, and quite clearly moved by what he had heard, the action ended with the most shattering paradox of all. The magistrate, unwilling to fine us, said that he was going to impose the least penalty that he could, which was to bind us over. Thinking that he was doing us a favour, he did the worst thing possible: to ask us either to sign a document agreeing to keep the peace by obeying the law or to go to prison. I was totally unprepared for prison, having thought that the possibility would only arise in a few weeks' time as a result of refusing to pay a fine. I had work commitments that I felt would be irresponsible to ignore; my family, completely devastated by my being kept in custody on the night of the 6th, would have been broken by my going to prison that day, when they were not expecting it. So I felt that I had no option but to sign, and in doing so felt that I had signed away my integrity.

That I had no alternative made little difference then or now. I still feel that I have violated my integrity, and I don't think that I will regain my self-respect until I break my binding-over order, which I intend to do on November 3rd. Not a day has gone by since August 19th when I haven't thought about it, questioned what I did, agonised over it. And yet, in the midst of the tears - of which there have been many! - the pain and the confusion, there has been growth and a deeper understanding of what it means to be a Christian involved in civil disobedience. It doesn't mean seeking out the most effective means or the most sensational, but struggling to be faithful, as best as one can, within our limitations and constraints. The last few weeks have been a painful reminder that when we try to reflect the folly of the cross, we are inevitably going to be asked to share the pain of it as well..... and to understand that the cross is the sign and symbol of God's glory, not ours, and God's ways are not ours.



August 1986

By David Stanley

Scene One

On August 6th at 7:30 am some fifteen people gather round a child's coffin in the Embankment Gardens to pray for the victims of Hiroshima. All round the Gardens strange, sad people waking up from their hard and lonely beds, some declaiming to absent audiences, others cursing God and the world. They are familiar and welcome, or at least tolerated. But the gardeners and wardens can't cope with people praying, let alone coffins. We are moved on before we can finish.

Scene Two

Three people kneeling before the coffin, placed like a dead baby on the top step of the entrance to the Ministry of Defence. Flurries of security panic-- after all that box might contain a little of the same stuff they are in business to manufacture and use themselves, and in the wrong hands... Early workers arrive and are not obstructed. The three continue kneeling, it seems for a long time, silent and sad and strong. A little singing and psalming among friends.

Scene Three

Small coffin silent and alone as workers stream past in increasing numbers, some choosing not to notice, some accepting leaflets, a few grinding their teeth. The jaws of the MoD swallow their daily food. The three mourners parley with police on the pavement below. No-one is obstructed. The mourners are bundled away.

Scene Four

Friday 8:30 pm. The Eucharist on the steps of the MoD, previously authorised, is now refused by the police, who feel deceived by the action on Wednesday. We remove to the grass on the riverside of the building, and celebrate Mass under the stoney gaze of General Gordon of Khartoum. The huge bulk of the MoD dwarfs the tiny celebration, as we proclaim our belief that the peace of Christ is stronger than the supposed security of weapons of mass destruction.

Scene Five

August 19th, pm. The Magistrate's Court in Wells street. We are shunted from one floor to another as they try to find a vacant court. As a witness I miss most of the proceedings, waiting my turn. An hour passes, so the defendants must be being allowed to defend themselves on their own terms. I am called, and take the oath, resting my hand on God's word. Theresa asks me why I was there, Margaret asks what significance August 6th has for Christian peacemakers, Clive asks if the Church ever sanctions the right of conscience to disobey the law of the land in order to obey a higher law.

The defendants seem exposed and vulnerable; the magistrate magisterial, not unfriendly, perplexed, in command of the law, listening. I feel the privilege and responsibility of being able to speak openly of the Gospel in a court of law. Is it mischievous or sincere of the prosecuting counsel to quote Romans 13 about the duty to obey civil authority? He also reminds us that August 6th for Christians is the Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord. Indeed.

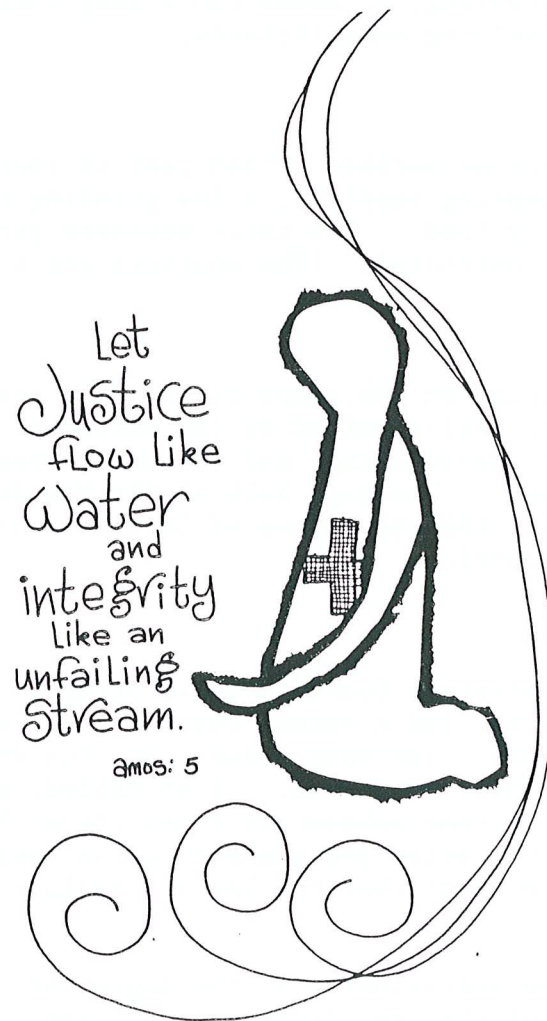
The defendants are found technically guilty of the offence of 'wilfully obstructing the highway without lawful authority.' The magistrate mutters the unexpected sentence, binding them over to keep the peace for a year. Does this mean they must sign? Yes, to the Queen, to keep her peace. Margaret, Theresa, and Clive are led off into a side room.

Later/

Later they emerge outside the court. They have signed. Tears, frustration, anger. Sense of failure, even betrayal. Prison now (the consequence of not signing) is different from prison later, and we are not ready.

But this is not defeat. We have witnessed in action and word that Christ's peace and the Queen's peace are not the same. It is Christ's peace we must keep and build. The crisis between the two will continue to break out at the MoD.

I am glad to have had a small part in the play.



June 13th. 1986

Dear Dan,

I am so sorry to be so long in replying to your enquiry about why I did not and do not join you in your action outside the M.O.D. on behalf of peace. The chief reason for the delay is that I have been unable to answer it coherently. Like the people in the Gospel story I found myself much as one of those who all at once began to make excuses.

There is, at least in my case, a fairly practical difficulty in terms of transport and cost.

But I think the real problem may lie a little deeper. Is it, perhaps, to do with witness and ministry? In the Gospel Jesus frequently takes Peter, James and John apart with Him. This has nothing to do with favouritism. It is to do, I think, with our witness 'to the ends of the earth.' This phrase tends to be limited to strictly geographical situations but I believe it more fully means that between us we are to witness to the truth in every field of human endeavour. It is from this witness that we develop our ministry, our kind of service to others, and, as we know, there are many ministries. When, for instance, I was in the Catholic Evidence Guild speaking in public places it did not occur to me that everyone should join the C.E.G. (Heaven forbid!) It was a special and rather dotty ministry, trying to make Christ present amongst the somewhat eccentric people who were drawn to such gatherings. In effect, we were a bunch of eccentrics talking to groups of eccentrics. As we grow older we slowly develop our various ministries, mostly in fits and starts and a bit like Topsy, just growing into things any old how. Many of us end up more or less committed to a whole jumble of minor activities in Parish, Deanery and Diocese and these preclude further commitments in other directions.

There is, however, a secondary problem and that is that a very great number of Catholics and other Christians remain uncommitted to any Christian activity except Church attendance, regarding this alone as central to their faith. The very idea, therefore, of demonstrating outside the M.O.D. to such people is appalling. The problem here is not that it upsets such people but that it fails to communicate anything at all to them other than that the Catholic Church has taken leave of its senses. This, I think is the most difficult problem we all face, for it is not confined to your action outside the M.O.D. I believe that there will always be those, like Peter, James and John, prepared for this ministry and witness but inevitably they will be few. What is really required, I believe, is the support of the many, and especially of the clergy and the hierarchy. Here I believe the whole Church in England is in danger through silence. As a result more and more youngsters leave since no one seems to want to address themselves to specific issues. Various things are condemned in the round but when it comes to decision time, when the question is posed 'just whose side are you on?' the hedging and fudging begins.

The very fact that you and yours are posing this question is what is important. To me it is preposterous that it should remain unanswered and that your witness and action should go by without remark. It is inevitable that, as a child of the twenties, the terrible events in Germany in the thirties remain stamped on the memory, along with their consequences. What made it possible for a largely Christian nation to accept the Nazi movement so readily? All the research suggests that an infantile grasp of Christian teaching by the laity coupled with silence and ambiguity by the Bishops and clergy (until it was too late) was sufficient to do the trick. To-day the same horror is slowly growing in England. Massed police making dawn raids, villification of unorthodox groups, continuous promotion of 'bogeymen' by mass media, underlying and persistent racism - all the ingredients present in Nazi Germany when Hitler rose to power are here in England now. For my part I know that I cannot feel ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ other than a little ashamed that I do not join you on the steps of the MOD and elsewhere for it is in my nature

to want to be in the thick of things. By the very same token it is also in my nature to become explosive in the presence of any sort of injustice or juridical pomposity so it would be more than likely I would do you know good in the event!

Dear Dan and Carmel and family, you are always welcome here. Remember us when you pray as we do you.

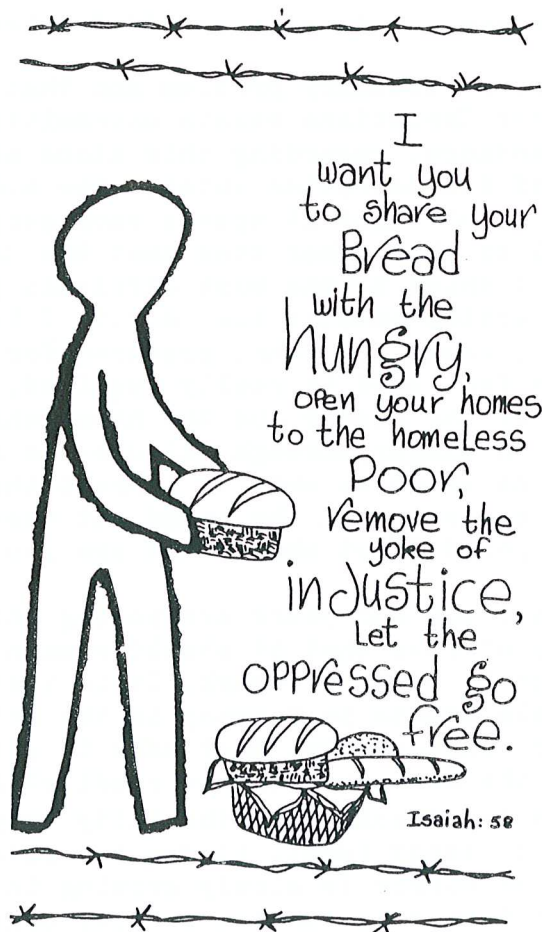
Peace and Joy,

Prosper & Ginny

Prosper & Ginny Dowdon

P.S. In the 'Diary of a Country Priest', Bernanos puts these words in the mouth of the old atheist Doctor who has befriended the young curé:

'Justice! Don't you have anything to do with justice young man! I got mixed up in it when I was a lad and it got me into no end of trouble. You see, any sort of injustice makes me see red. Now, if I see an injustice about my own weight and size strolling along unprotected I jump on its back and throttle it. But justice! Keep well clear of it young man.'



U.S. Bishop Condemns Trident and Praises Nonviolent Resistance

(On 25 January 1986, the U.S. Government commissioned its seventh Trident submarine in New London, Connecticut. The submarine was named 'Alaska' and during the commissioning 51 people were arrested for blockading the entrance to the naval base. The name of the submarine and the arrests prompted the Bishop of Juneau, Alaska to write two letters. The one below, praising nonviolent resistance, is to the presiding judge in New London; the one overleaf condemns Trident. In August 1986 the U.S. Government commissioned its eighth Trident submarine.)



DIOCESE OF JUNEAU

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

419 SIXTH STREET
JUNEAU, ALASKA 99801
TELEPHONE: 907/586-2227

February 13, 1986

The Honorable Justice Raymond Norko
Superior Court Building
112 Broad Street
New London, Connecticut 06320

Dear Judge Norko:

It is a source of extreme concern to me that the United States Government continues to commission Trident Submarines. Speaking for myself, I judge the production of such an instrument of potential death and destruction to be morally indefensible. I do not believe that any man or woman of conscience should tolerate its presence in the name of our country or, in my case, in the name of my state.

I am enclosing for your consideration a letter I wrote to the Juneau Empire in the City of Juneau shortly before the commissioning of the USS Alaska.

It is my deep conviction that those who protest the production and commissioning of Trident Submarines and demonstrate against them in a nonviolent manner are truly the conscience of our nation. In the total context their actions are not only moral but legal since they are performing actions aimed at saving the lives of not a few but millions of innocent people. They are among our nation's truest heroes. I applaud their wisdom, their integrity and their courage. They are not deserving of prosecution or imprisonment, they are worthy of honor and respect.

Sincerely yours,

+ Michael H. Kenny

+ Michael H. Kenny
Bishop of Juneau

Enc.

BISHOP MICHAEL KENNY OF JUNEAU

ON USS ALASKA, TRIDENT SUBMARINE

Saturday, January 25 the United States of America will commission another Trident submarine. This latest weapon in our nuclear arsenal will bear the name USS Alaska.

On a most fundamental level it matters little what name is stamped on a Trident submarine. "What's in a name?" A rose by any other name would smell as sweet...and a Trident by whatever name it goes would be as lethal, as death dealing. Should it have no name at all, it would still be a mockery to the human race and a shame to the nation that produces it.

The Trident sub is an extraordinary example of the moral bankruptcy and dreadful folly of the continuing arms race. This singular vessel contains 360 nuclear warheads, each one of which contains more destructive force than 30 Hiroshimas! From its shadowy depths this one sub can unleash upon our earth eight times the firepower of all the bombs dropped during the course of World War II.

To say the Trident is a weapon that should never be used is to say that it is a weapon that should never be made. To claim that we build it only to keep peace and that we possess it only to deter war is also claiming that we have the ultimate will to use it. And never, never, never, never could we justify the massive and discriminate slaughter that would follow. We will not be judged before the throne of God (or before what human tribunal might survive) for what the Russians do, but for what we do. It is so infantile to attempt to justify one's own behavior by pointing to the deeds of someone else. There are simply those things that moral, decent and civilized people may not do regardless of the actions of others.

Each time an additional nuclear weapon is produced the peril in which the human race lives is multiplied. Such instruments of death and destruction do not advance any true peace; they

simply add to the reign of terror. And all of this is not without present and very real tragedy for the enormous amount of resources poured into the arms race might otherwise have gone to alleviate the desperate conditions of the world's poorest people. But make no mistake about it, while the poor are robbed others reap immense profits.

Now, to this latest crime against humanity, this particular sub, we give the name of our beloved state. How sad, Alaska - "The Great Land" - now the name of a weapon system that can desecrate the land. Our Native peoples who gave Alaska its name have such a reverence for the earth. It is a nurturing mother. Now we have given that same name to a sub that can destroy that mother.

As a country and as a state we are disgraced.