

Date: Wed, 30 Jan 2008 00:01:37 -0600
From: John Kennington <johnkennington@cox.net>
Subject: Fr. John Dear Update & Announcement

Dear Friends of Peace,

Below is the latest column from Fr. John Dear (our 2006 Tulsa Season for Nonviolence speaker) on his recent sentencing. Following that are some emails from Bud Ryan, of Pax Christi New Mexico, with some further background on the trial and the actual event that lead to the arrest of the "Elevator 9". You can also read a newspaper account of his sentencing at <http://www.abqtrib.com/news/2008/jan/24/protester-priest-sentenced-and-fined/>

I also have an announcement to make. John will be doing a book tour this Fall to publicize his new autobiography, to be published in September. He has asked me if I would coordinate a stop in Tulsa, and of course I said yes! I have no details yet (other than I need to get 100 people there!), but it will be sometime in Oct-Dec, so please stay tuned.

Peace,
John Kennington

My day in court

<http://ncrcafe.org/node/1569>

Posted on Jan 29, 2008 09:47am CST.

"You are a renegade priest and a renegade citizen. Many people think you're a hero of nonviolence, but you're a phony. You're a fraud. You are a person of violence because you used a hammer on one of our nuclear weapons! You're a coward. You're afraid. You are no Gandhi. I will not join your cause, but I will not make a martyr out of you so that the world thinks you are the heir of Gandhi."

These were the words of the federal judge last week as he sentenced me for an antiwar protest. (For background see: ncrcafe.org/node/1565.)

In my speech, I quoted Gandhi and suggested that the judge either renounce his verdict and join our campaign to end the ongoing evil U.S. war on Iraq, or if he really believed in the system that is killing Iraqi children and maintaining weapons of mass destruction, give me the maximum sentence.

He sentenced me to six months of supervised probation, 40 hours of community service and a \$510 fine. Months earlier, my co-defendants were also chastised, but none received this sentence. (One was fined \$35; others had their six hours of community service suspended.) I said I would not pay anything, not do community service and not cooperate with the system. I was ordered to report immediately to the U.S. Probation Office, where I was told that I was not allowed to leave New Mexico for the next six months without permission, that I would have weekly visits with a probation officer, that they would make surprise visits to the place where I live perhaps weekly, and that they might require weekly drug testing. I told him I would not cooperate. Later, another probation officer said to me, "You will lose, Fr. John, if you buck the system."

So I expect they will issue a warrant for my arrest, haul me back before the judge, and put in me in jail for a certain time. The saga continues.

I'm grateful for the prayers, blessings and support of friends near and far. One said to me in the courtroom afterwards, "You should just do the sentence and move on. It's been a year and a half since you were arrested in the elevator. It isn't worth all this trouble." In many ways I agree. The government should never have

arrested us, prosecuted us, tried us and sentenced us. But now, why not get it over with?

One big reason is that the war goes on, even though it doesn't get much media coverage. In the political campaigns and primaries, the war is barely mentioned (neither is the environmental crisis, global poverty, nuclear weapons, the death penalty, or other urgent crises).

Few politicians, pundits or priests speak about the war. Dennis Kucinich talked about this glaring cover up as he bowed out of the race last Friday. "We asked for jobs," he said, "we get war. We asked for healthcare, we get war. We asked for funds for education, we get war. We ask for a clean environment, we get war. It is time to end this war. It is time to end war as policy and have the government start taking care of things here at home."

A Pax Christi friend who attended the sentencing told me of the death in Iraq last week of a 21-year-old New Mexican. The entire town turned out for his funeral. The flags went up, the church was packed, and the priest spoke at length about the just war theory. He said this was a just war, that the young man died for a just cause. Everyone in town, except my friend, was relieved. Her sad story confirmed my determination to resist this ongoing unjust war, and to do so as a priest.

As a Christian and Jesuit, I feel I must say no to the war, in this case by resisting the system. During those moments when my life feels disrupted, I recall the millions of Iraqis and Afghanis who have had their lives disrupted and destroyed because of our war, and I realize it's a small price.

The pursuit of peace, I believe, doesn't necessarily make us feel better and bring us consolation. It often leads to misunderstandings, attacks, hate mail, insults, and legal jeopardy -- to the cross. But this seems to be the way the struggle has always gone -- from Jesus and the early Christians to Mahatma Gandhi and Dorothy Day.

In a culture of war, if you speak for peace, your life will be disrupted. In a world of poverty, hunger, racism, nuclear weapons, global warming, if you take a public stand for justice and social change, your life will be disrupted. In a time of empire, if you resist the imperial authorities, your life will be disrupted. It's much easier to sit back, not get involved, not challenge the system, and delude ourselves into thinking we are making peace because we are so peaceful. I think we have to challenge the system, if we can.

The Gospel story remains the primary motivation for my resistance. I'm always amazed that Jesus did not spend his life sitting under a tree, dispensing his wisdom. He stood up, spoke out, and marched to Jerusalem, where he confronted the culture of injustice, the empire and its religious backers, and suffered the consequences of his civilly disobedient, nonviolent action. His life was disrupted, wrecked, shattered.

On the morning of my sentencing, I reread the Gospel accounts of his trials, how he was hauled before the Sanhedrin, Annas and Caiaphas, Pilate and Herod and back to Pilate, before he was finally condemned to death. Jesus was called every name in the book. At one point, he was struck in the face by a soldier. By and large, he kept silent, and emerged as the true judge over the courts and the empire and through his nonviolent suffering love, all humanity.

If I want to enter his story, share his life, and follow his lead, I have to enter the fray and resist the empire, too, and that's a messy and complicated business. Still, it's a blessing to be misunderstood, insulted and in legal jeopardy for one's pursuit of God's reign of peace. As I left the courthouse, I remembered the Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are you when they insult you Rejoice and be glad!"

This week marks the 60th anniversary of Gandhi's assassination. Gandhi maintained that the pursuit of truth and the practice of active nonviolence require public confrontation with the system of injustice, trusting that the acceptance of suffering in love and truth will win out in the long run.

"Nonviolence in its dynamic condition means conscious suffering," Gandhi wrote. "It does not mean meek submission to the will of the evildoer, but it means the pitting of one's whole soul against the will of the tyrant. Working under this law of our being, it is possible for a single individual to defy the whole might of an unjust empire to save his honor, his religion, his soul and lay the foundation for that empire's fall."

"Nonviolence means courage of the highest order and therefore readiness to suffer," Gandhi wrote. "Let those who believe in nonviolence as the only method of achieving real freedom, keep the lamp of nonviolence burning bright in the midst of the present impenetrable gloom. The truth of a few will count, the untruth of millions will vanish even like chaff before a whiff of wind."

With such words, such examples, I take heart, count my blessings, and keep on saying no to war, hoping with friends that someday, we will be able finally to say yes to a new era of peace and nonviolence.

Date: Thu, 06 Sep 2007 18:10:21 -0700

From: bud@siochainworld.org

Subject: We were found GUILTY!!! Thank you to my co-defendants/our lawyers/and ALL our supporters

This will be short (for me) and sweet:

We were ALL found GUILTY in the Elevator 9 Trial - the 6 of us who went to Trial & the 2 that took the plea & pleaded guilty. Our sentencing is within the next 30 days (for the 6 who went to trial) & although I don't think any of us will get jail time, I also didn't think we'd be found guilty!!!

I'd like to thank my fellow co-defendants - John, Ellie, Michella, Phillip, Sansi, Jan, Bruno & Jordan - for ALL having the guts to try & stand up and STOP this illegal, immoral & demonic war. I'd also like to thank our lawyers - Todd & Penni - who handled our case pro bono & Aaron our first lawyer who did the same.

And we'd ALL like to thank our supporters who started at 10am on September 26, 2006 outside Domenici's office to those that traveled today to our Trial - (the record for farthest distance to Fr. Jerry & Fr. Louie who traveled by bus 12 hours to be with us!) it would have been hard to get through this without you ALL!

I feel like I was kicked in the stomach & now have been let down by every branch of OUR government when it comes to this war - the Executive when Bush lied us into this war, the Legislative who abandoned their Constitutional responsibilities & now the Judicial who basically said that the 9 of us don't have the right to meet with our Senator & petition him against this war & also the Media who many call OUR 4th Branch of Government who parroted Bush's lies & did next to nothing (Amy Goodman et al not included of course) to try & expose those lies.

The struggle continues & I know what each of us felt today by basically being called a liar in open court by the Judge who said the combined testimony of the 6 of us could not stack up to the 2 men in uniform & Senator Domenici's Santa Fe office manager in terms of whom he believed, but how bad we may feel can't compare to what the family & friends of both the Iraqi & American dead must feel, as well as the wounded on both sides & the 2 million + poor Iraqi's who have been forced to leave their own country. I do know that it is going to take MANY MORE OF OUR FELLOW AMERICANS to stand up against this war in imaginative & nonviolent ways before we will get PEACE.

Well that was neither short nor sweet.

SIOCHAIN!

bud

Date: Fri, 31 Aug 2007 20:14:15 -0700

From: bud@siochainworld.org

Subject: Elevator 9 Trial this Thursday September 6th at 9am in Albq./on the radio Sunday 9/2 discussing the Trial]

SHALOM!

Elevator 9 Trial - this Thursday September 6th at 9am at 421 Gold SW in Albuquerque in the top floor Court Room. The Court House is on the corner of 5th & Gold, 1 block south of Central. The best way to get there is to get off at the Central exit of I-25 & go right on Central & take it to 5th Street & make a left, there are both metered parking & several lots in the area.

Please come and bring your Peace and Antiwar signs (but you won't be able to bring them into the court room, so maybe if some of you made your presence felt outside for 30 minutes & then came in, that would be GREAT.) - WE REALLY DO NEED YOUR SUPPORT!!! So we hope many of you can be with us in SOLIDARITY & let the powers that be know that we ALL are firmly against this war.

As a lot of you know last September 26th (2006) nine of us went to Senator Domenici's office in Santa Fe to get him to sign the Declaration of Peace www.declarationofpeace.org which calls for the U.S. to get out of Iraq NOW. We were denied access to the Senator's office & when we entered the elevator to go up to his office the power was cut (the doors were still open) at the request of Maggie Murray, Senator Domenici's Santa Fe office rep. This lead to the 9 of us sitting in the elevator for 5+ hours taking turns reading the names of the American war dead as well as the names of 10,000 Iraqis whose lives were stolen from them in this illegal, immoral, and demonic war. Throughout the day there were as many as 20 members of various law enforcement agencies including - building security, Santa Fe Police, a Santa Fe Swat Team member, State Police, FBI & Homeland Security. At close to 5pm we were given the choice between being arrested or getting a citation, we choose the citation after consulting with the Homeland Security Officer twice as to whether we could get our day in Court if we took the citation.

Our case has been winding its way thru the Federal Court System (whoever said justice delayed is justice denied?) and now almost 3 weeks short of 1 year from our Action we are FINALLY going to have our day in Court. We are now 6, as the charges were dropped against one of our co-defendants who was under 16, and 2 others wound up taking a plea agreement. But we could ALL use your help this Thursday September 6th, so PLEASE try & come to our Trial & stand up against this war!!!

Please pass this on.

SIOCHAIN!

Bud Ryan