

## Peace

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a Catholic Worker House of hospitality for homeless people in Birmingham. But it is his work as a nonviolent activist, writer and thinker that has brought him the most prominence.

As theology student in Rome in the mid-1960s, Douglass was one of several Catholic pacifists, including Catholic Worker Dorothy Day, who influenced the bishops at Vatican II to condemn total warfare and to endorse conscientious objection as a legitimate alternative to military service.

Behind his support of such stands is Douglass' belief that the world will be destroyed if nations continue to believe weapons can ensure their survival. This desire for security manifests itself not only in the arms race, but also in such phenomena as abortion and capital punishment, all of which are attempts to secure peace through misguided means, Douglass said.

"We must seek first the reign of God," Douglass said. "That entails a rejection of the system of security that rules our lives."

Since Vatican II, Douglass has attempted to live out his beliefs, and has written four books on the theology of nonviolence. He has led and participated in many anti-nuclear demonstrations and spent 18 months in jail for civil disobedience against the Trident nuclear submarine program.

He has traveled the world examining nonviolent movements and, most recently, was in the news for attempting to persuade the Balkan region's religious leaders — Catholic, Orthodox, Jewish and Islamic — to make an interfaith pilgrimage to Sarajevo to help end warfare in Bosnia.

Through it all, Douglass has come to believe that Jesus' admonitions to love our enemies, pray for those who persecute us and to bear whatever crosses are presented are the world's only hope for survival.

"Even in the sharpest of conflicts, we can find humanity and truth in the opponent," he asserted.

In his latest book, Douglass noted an example of that belief when he wrote that his anti-nuclear protests often



brought him face to face with many of his own alleged enemies.

In particular, he recalled that John Easterbrooks, the head of security at one Trident base, always treated him and other anti-nuclear activists well when they were arrested for climbing over the base's fences to pray at the nuclear-weapons bunkers.

"(We would talk periodically. We disagreed on Trident. We respected each other and, despite disagreements, agreed that nonviolence could grow on both sides of the fence. John said he trained his security police to be nonviolent in making arrests," Douglass wrote.

Despite his respect for his opponents, Douglass clearly believed that the system they protect endangers the planet. *The Nonviolent Coming of God* compares the causes that led Rome to destroy Jerusalem in A.D. 70 with the causes that may lead such nations as the United States and its enemies to destroy the world by nuclear fire and other forms of violence.

Contrary to Scriptural interpretations that envision the world ending through a divinely ordained battle in which the United States figures prominently, Douglass maintained that Jesus' mission was aimed at preventing such a calamity by offering an alternative vision of world peace.

Indeed, Jesus urged his disciples to preach the Gospel to the ends of the earth precisely because he sensed that widespread injustice and violence might someday ignite an unquenchable fire of world conflict, Douglass wrote.

"The conclusion of Luke's gospel is explicit on this point: 'Thus it is written, that Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations beginning from Jerusalem' (Luke 24:46-47)."

In his book's preface, Douglass maintained that the 1991 Persian Gulf War brought home the threat of worldwide annihilation. Coming when nonviolent movements had recently toppled repressive communist regimes throughout

Eastern Europe, the war reminded the world's peoples that Christ's nonviolence was competing for humanity's future against the violence esteemed by the world, Douglass noted.

"What the greatness of God had released through the lives of Mohandas Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and millions of other nonviolent practitioners in the world, could be seen transforming humanity," Douglass wrote. "In our time of total destruction, the nonviolent coming of God was at hand."

To illustrate these competing forces, Douglass chose the painting *Mother Intifada* by Palestinian artist Simon Mansour for his book's cover. The painting depicts a woman giving birth to the Palestinian people as they seek to end the Israeli occupation in the West Bank. Just as the people being born seem to go in different directions, so too are the world's people headed toward nonviolence or violence, Douglass wrote.

"(The painting) is a prophetic imperative to us all: Be thus reborn as a global people by your nonviolent God, or be annihilated by a desert storm beyond the imagination of presidents and generals."

In the interview with the *Courier*, Douglass explained that the Palestinian uprising itself contained both violent and nonviolent elements, contrary to Western television images that portrayed the intifada as consisting of stone-throwing teenagers battling Israeli soldiers.

Douglass, however, visited one West Bank town where the townspeople chose a different method of resistance.

"Everyone in the population refused to pay taxes," he recalled. "Their possessions were confiscated, but the people in the town still refused to pay taxes. This is a prime example of nonviolence." He added that many Israelis themselves disagreed with the repressive nature of the occupation, and vigorously and nonviolently protested it. This fact should remind the world that so-called enemies often agree, and that is why Christ taught his followers to love their enemies, Douglass explained.

"We must respect and love people from whatever background," Douglass said in the interview. "People are not the system."

Just as the Palestinians saw the Israelis as oppressors, Douglass stressed in his book that much of what Jesus taught must be seen in light of his experience as a Jew oppressed by Rome.

Jesus fully understood that many who followed him longed to see a violent end to Rome's often vicious rule, the author asserted. But Jesus pleaded with his listeners to turn from using violence against one another and the Romans, just as God has pleaded with modern humanity through such prophets as Martin Luther King to choose nonviolence over nonexistence, Douglass contended.

"(Far from announcing Jerusalem's destruction, Jesus' whole public life was an effort to create a radically alternative Jewish society," Douglass wrote. "The nonviolent coming of God in that society, would, he hoped, transform the violence of Rome, Palestine, and the world."

Jesus envisioned a world in which the poor and the oppressed came first because their enemies repented of their sins, Douglass noted. But many of Christ's parables criticized a system that stifled such a world's birth, he added.

For example, he pointed out that Mark's parable of the widow's mite is bracketed by passages in which Jesus condemns scribes who devour the houses of widows and prophecies of the destruction of the temple — "an economic institution that has become devastating to the poor."

"Jesus' attitude to the poor widow's gift of her last resources is not, as is usually assumed, approbation but rather disapproval," Douglass commented. "His comment is, in fact, a lament that she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, her whole living."

Just as the empire and its aristocratic allies in Christ's time saddled the poor with misery, such rich nations as the United States burden poorer nations with enormous debt, debt that forces various Third World nations to spend money on repayment rather than on such human needs as health and nutrition, Douglass contended.

"The political-economic system ruling the planet today is engaged in a total violence that seems beyond our capacity to change," he wrote. "Nations and corporations linked by the logic of death make up this runaway train. Beneath its wheels are the bodies of the world's poor, most of them in the Third World, most of them children; forty thousand children die of starvation each day in the Third World."

In his book's most forceful and chilling passages, Douglass reminded readers that Christ was one of thousands of Jews crucified because he was seen as a revolutionary threat to the Roman Empire and its local allies.

"Our nuclear policy of threatening all life on earth to maintain a 'new world order' in which forty thousand children die every day from want, hunger and preventable disease is evil in a way that corresponds to the execution inflicted on Jesus by the Roman Empire," Douglass concluded.

A severe critic of political and economic repression and imperialism — regardless of the ideology supporting it — Douglass maintained that it is long past time for the United States to peacefully settle its differences with the Third World and with its own minority populations.

"The Soviet Empire was transformed by nonviolence," Douglass said in the *Courier* interview. "Ours needs to be transformed as well. Our empire has enormous economic power. But racism, sexism and discrimination work together to destroy people's lives. We must turn toward a type of community not present in shopping malls."



NINE DAYS  
MAY 13 to MAY 21  
7:00PM to 8:00PM

In the Upper Room

Ascension + Pentecost

Praise, Prayers, Teachings, Novena to

**THE HOLY SPIRIT**

Day 1:

Ministry of the Holy Spirit before Pentecost

Rev. John Hedges

Day 2:

Holy spirit as a Person of the Trinity

Rev. David Reid

Day 3:

The Holy Spirit in Relation to Jesus

Deacon Ken Scariotta

Day 4:

The Holy Spirit in Relation to Man

Sr. Patricia Switzer, R.S.M.

Day 5:

Representations of the Holy Spirit

Rev. Michael Conboy

Day 6:

The Sanctification gift of the Holy Spirit

Rev. Robert Worth

Day 7:

Manifestation Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Rev. Paul Bonacci

Day 8:

The Sin Against the Holy Spirit

Deacon Paul Clement

Day 9:

The Fruits of the Spirit

Fr. Anthony Mugavero

Saint Joseph's Church

43 Gehardt Road, Penfield, N.Y.