

On Line and On Point

MARY MOTHER OF JESUS INCLUSIVE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

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ACCOMPANIMENT—Pope Francis has, for some time and in what ways are possible for him, has been revealing to us how to turn from violent warfare to nonviolent action. Particularly true is this in the current Ukraine-Russian war. It is not about condemning or judging those who take up arms. At that same time, it is also not about justifying methods of war and enabling the violent dynamic to perpetuate and spread. All along, Francis has been proposing a shift toward pastoral accompaniment and a focus on how we might break the violent dynamic.



Francis speaks of accompaniment as the way of God modeled by Jesus. On March 20, Francis said: "God trusts us and accompanies us with patience. [God] does not get discouraged, but always instills hope in us. ... [God] does not keep track of your shortcomings but encourages your potential. ... In this way God accompanies us: with closeness, mercy, and tenderness."

Such accompaniment is being done in a variety of creative, courageous, nonviolent ways by Francis as well as by Ukrainians and others. It also includes humanitarian resource provision, identifying credible messengers and persistent needs-based diplomacy, coalition building, consistent public statements, impacting Russian leaders' sources of power, prayer and shared physical risk.

Examples of Ukrainian nonviolent action include them blocking convoys and tanks, and standing their ground even as warning

shots were fired in multiple towns. In Berdyansk and Kulykivka, people organized peace rallies and convinced the Russian military to get out. Hundreds protested the abduction of a mayor, and there have been protests and refusals to shift to the ruble in

Kherson to resist becoming a breakaway state.

Ukrainians have fraternized with Russian soldiers to lower their morale and stimulate defections. Ukrainians have courageously evacuated many people from dangerous areas. The Ukrainian League of Mediators is helping address increasing polarization within Ukrainian

families and communities, in order to minimize the violence.

Russians have participated in numerous anti-war protests, and around 15,000 people have been arrested. Journalists have interrupted and resigned from state TV. Nearly 100,000 Russians from a variety of sectors have signed petitions to end the war. Russians from all parts of society have spoken out against the war — from members of the military and connected to the foreign ministry to members of the Russian oil industry and billionaires, as well as nearly 300 Russian Orthodox clerics. Meanwhile, hundreds of soldiers have refused to take part.—*from an article in NCR by Eli McCarthy [cont'd]*

OFFERINGS—We are grateful for your continued contribution toward the growth and development of our community. Thank you. Please remember to make

Mary Mother of Jesus Inclusive Catholic Community Mission Statement

We are a Christ-centered community of equals, consisting of women and men, ordained and non-ordained, empowered by the Spirit whose mission is to worship, to serve, to promote compassion, justice and care for creation. Come join us.

Send articles/info by Wed to be published on weekend: rjbannerusa@gmail.com

your regular donations to MMOJ by sending your check to MMOJ % St. Andrew UCC, 6908 Beneva Road, Sarasota. FL 34238.

Remember: MMOJ continues to donate 5% of all received offerings each month to Outreach, which will continue to focus on real issues of food and hunger in our surrounding communities.

OUTREACH—The current recipient of our offered financial support is All Faiths Food Bank of Sarasota [AFFB] in its task of providing food for hungry and needy families and children. Please be generous.

MOVIE CORNER

Thanks this week to Suzanne and Jerry Bires for their recommendation of the Amazon Prime Video original series **The Outlaws**. This comedy drama stars Stephen Merchant, Christopher Walken and Rhianne Bareto. The series centers on a group of people sentenced to community service renovating a derelict building in Bristol where they are united in unexpected ways.—*Beth Ponce*
Send your suggestions for movies to watch, to ponce.beth@gmail.com

ACCOMPANIMENT [part two]—

For Francis, accompaniment is about not perpetuating the violent dynamic as much as possible. For instance, here are additional ways of supporting peacebuilders and nonviolent activists in Ukraine: creating coordination hubs with diplomatic, legal and material assistance; amplifying their stories; supporting unarmed civilian protection units already on the ground; sending waves of peacebuilder or religious leader delegations to Kyiv and perhaps other

cities in Ukraine; and encouraging a focus on diplomatic solutions.

"There was a time, even in our churches, when people spoke of a holy war or a just war," the pope told Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill in their March 16 video meeting. "Today we cannot speak in this manner. A Christian awareness of the importance of peace has developed. Wars are always unjust, since it is the people of God who pay. Our hearts cannot but weep before the children and women killed, along with all the victims of war. War is never the way."

At the same time, the pope is not calling us to passivity or surrender in the face of aggression, as he made clear in his message for the 2017 World Day of Peace. As he told an Italian women's group in March: "The real answer is not more weapons, more sanctions, or more political-military alliances," but rather a different approach, "a different way of governing the world." What is the way about? Francis points to the school of Jesus, of Gandhi and particularly of "women who have cultivated and cherished life."

In their 2011 volume, *Why Civil Resistance Works*, researchers Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan analyzed more than 300 contemporary cases and showed that nonviolent resistance is twice as effective as violent resistance and at least 10 times more likely to lead to durable democracy, including against authoritarians. Additional research has corroborated these patterns. This is notable in light of many claims that violent resistance is necessary to defend democracy. Francis invites us into recognizing conflict as a process with a long-term view, both forward and backward.

STAFF—*Russ Banner, editor; Joan Pesce, Lee Breyer, Anna Davis, text review; Beth Ponce and Dotty Shugrue, features*

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It seems Francis invites our focus to center on accompaniment and breaking, interrupting the logic or dynamic of violence, rather than justifications for war. This is what will more likely prevent and limit war, as well as help us to prioritize abolishing war rather than regularly trying, futilely, to 'humanize' war.

As Francis explained: "Before the danger of self-destruction, may humanity understand that the moment has come to abolish war, to erase it from human history before it erases human history!"

—*from an article in NCR by Eli McCarthy — Eli McCarthy is a professor at Georgetown University in justice and peace studies, a steering committee member of the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative, a project of Pax Christi International, and the director of the DC Peace Team [National Catholic Reporter]*

QUOTE—I will not tire of declaring that if we really want an effective end to violence we must remove the violence that lies at the root of all violence: structural violence, social injustice, exclusion of citizens from the management of the country, repression. All this is what constitutes the primal cause, from which the rest flows naturally.



—Richard Rohr