

CALL TO PERSEVERE IN PRAYING AND WORKING FOR PEACE

By Sister Brenda Walsh, Racine Dominican

On November 29th, 2010, Fr. Dan Berrigan, S.J. spoke at a Jesuit Retreat House in Staten Island and called on those present and on all peace-makers to persevere in their efforts to create a just and peaceful society. Fr. Berrigan, now 89 years of age, has given his life to peace-making, and often at a high price in his own life. He spent many months in prison for his public demonstrations on behalf of peace. The National Catholic Reporter for December 10, 2010, tells the whole story of Berrigan's presentation. He told his audience that they may see few positive outcomes in their lifetime, but that should not deter them in their steady efforts on behalf of peace. If we do our best and trust in God's unfailing presence, the outcomes will take care of themselves. Fr. Berrigan encouraged people to work together as communities and not let fear deter them in their efforts. We need to face the future with courage and hope.

Looking back over the past decades, it seems that wars, famine, cynicism and lack of hope seem to be the order of the day. Our world is perceived by many as an unsafe place to live or raise a family. Still other perceive this as a great time to be alive when we have endless opportunities to create a better world. Fr. Berrigan and many others are living witnesses of that fact. They are making a big difference through their strong belief that another world is indeed possible./ There is a hunger for hope and for evidence of a world different than the stories we hear about through the daily news. People are looking for evidence of new principles of unity, respect, peace and reconciliation. I believe there is evidence in local community groups working for justice in a racial and economic sense as well as in environmental concerns.

Sr. Joan Chittister has been a tireless advocate for peace and justice in both church and society. Some years ago, she started a Women's Peace Initiative, to bring together a group of Jewish women and women from Arab countries who said they did not want their children dying in war. They worked to bring about peace between Israel and Palestine. A local woman in Racine, Wisconsin, now nearing 100 years old, Corrine Owens, who devoted her life to justice and peace, and now like Berrigan still uses every opportunity she sees to speak about peace and to continue her work in these areas.

I will never forget the peacemaking efforts in my own country, Ireland, that was torn apart for centuries by warring groups over control of the land. In the latter part of the last century, representative from English and Irish political rule got together and worked out an unprecedented peace agreement. The warring camps came together worked out an agreement that still is in place. Occasionally some differences need to be addressed to keep the peace movement going. A great example of the need for perseverance in our working for peace!

Each day, we can make a daily choice for justice and peace in our minds, our hearts, our families, our communities and our world. With divine power always available to us, there are no limits to what we can accomplish. We need to renew our belief that another world is indeed possible. Let us begin today with courage, conviction and hope. The example of Fr. Berrigan calls us to renew our efforts and our trust and work to make our world more like the one that God has in mind for all people. "Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me."