



## Coordinator's Corner: Thou Shalt Not Kill

By Pat Ferrone

A powerful image offered by Sr. Helen Prejean at the Pax Christi MA fall assembly stays with me still, available when I have neither the imagination nor inspiration to find a way to witness to the radical, indiscriminate, love of Jesus. There she is, rooted to the moment, sharing the insights she has gained over her thirty year vocation of compassion to those on death row - now wiser, now less apt to judge hastily those who "ain't there yet" in terms of rejecting the death penalty.

She stands by the podium, both arms widely outstretched from her body, in imitation of Jesus on the cross, bridging, it seems, the challenges we sometimes face when thinking of the perpetrator of a crime and his victim. Often, our instinct is to turn away in repulsion from the criminal and lean in toward the victim with empathy, there being little room in our hearts for both. Maintaining the pose (an inherently difficult thing to do for an extended period of time,) Sr. Helen speaks of her prayerful intent to reach out with one arm to the killer she counsels, and with the other to the killer's victim, wishing to embrace both in the

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name of love. It seems a hard-won perspective, filled with the tension of pushing beyond one's limitations to incarnate more faithfully Jesus' presence and love. It is a timely image for us to contemplate during this Lenten time of deep looking, repentance and metanoia. For without doubt we need reminders of love's choice to reconcile and heal, rather than to remain stuck in judgment and alienation. Because Christ's body is crucified today whenever violence is used, whether by a wayward individual in the grip of explosive or intentional malice, or



Sr. Helen Prejean speaking at Bay Path University (MA) in 2012

by people in service to the state, or to an ideology of darkness built on perverse righteousness, our resolve to be Christ's peace in an unforgiving world is essential.

The day with Sr. Helen was of consequence in many ways, particularly when she reminded us that the "gospel is always about

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## Gene Sharp and His Research on Nonviolence

By Michael True

The major strategist of nonviolent struggle since Gandhi, Gene Sharp, author and editor of numerous books, articles, and pamphlets, has been widely known since the publication of his ground-breaking study *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* in 1971, later expanded into three volumes (1973). In describing the characteristics of nonviolent action, he provides a list of 198 methods of nonviolent action, and gives historical accounts of struggles against repressive regimes.

A former conscientious objector, Sharp published his first book, *Gandhi Wields the Weapons of Moral Power*, in 1960, with a foreword by Albert Einstein. Here Sharp developed what he regarded as a surprising truth: that nonviolent action can be strategically and successfully

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**NOTE: To promote a greener future with a leaner budget, print copies of future issues of this newsletter will be mailed only to our readers who have no access to email.**

## Coordinator's Corner...

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persuasion and an attraction to truth." Timely, and wedded to clear thinking, it draws people into the realm of action based on compassion, not coercion. Again, she said we must "choose to act beyond where we might be - reaching for the stars, hoping to become more like images of the living God."

Another recollection comes from a conversation in which I asked her advice about a request from the man on Florida's death row to whom I've been writing and now felt ill-equipped to answer. I was torn by the conflict of not wanting to disappoint him but perhaps being afraid to venture into murky territory. Instead of providing an easy answer, Sr. Helen suggested it was up to me how deeply engaged I wanted to become in the issue, implying (it seemed) that once in, I might be faced with much more than I had anticipated. Her quiet response posed more questions, like how much stretching am I capable of on behalf of another, and what am I willing to sacrifice?

The questions took root in me, and became even more complicated with the news in early January that my friend had been served with a death warrant signed by Governor Rick Scott, and summarily moved from death row to death watch, the holding area for prisoners before the final walk to their death. The time since then has been an immersion in this new reality and the awful vision of a friend, not an abstract stranger - like Jesus, being handed over to be crucified. Not on a wooden cross, but on as close

an imitation of one as our "enlightened" society can provide.

But there is a back story to the present one, beginning more than three years ago when I began exchanging letters with the "pen-friend," assigned to me through the Sant'Egidio Community, whose mission in part is to connect death row inmates with correspondents, and to work for the total abolition of the death penalty.

Marc James Asay, also identified by # 078387, has been on death row for nearly 30 years after being convicted of two terrible murders in 1987, when he was 23 years old. Undeniably, his prior criminal history as a teenager had marked him as a menace to society, characterized by multiple arrests and imprisonments. The facts presented on Murderpedia portray him as a violent white supremacist killer, beyond redemption.

***"The Lord's commandment, 'Thou shall not kill,' makes all life sacred. Blood poured out, even a sinner's, always cries out to God." Bishop Oscar Romero***

And yet, despite a childhood as the youngest of a large brood in which he was traumatized by emotional, physical, and sexual abuse, and later his own disastrous choices, what has emerged from a stunted life lived in a solitary 7' x 9' cell is a man who is a far cry from a menacing monster. Rather, he is most sociable and kind, has maintained long friendships through the exchange of letters with people in the United States and Europe, reads and studies, and painstakingly creates exquisite models out of the materials at hand. He also gives and receives love, and trusts in the mercy and

unconditional love of God.

His many friends are in touch with one another, and share equally consistent stories about this redeemed and good man. His oldest sister, a practicing Catholic, and the only sibling to visit him regularly, said in a recent phone conversation that Marc's spiritual transformation in prison began shortly after their mother was killed in an auto/truck collision in 1996.

I am told that even prison staff attest to this transformation. Ironically, the office of Warden John Palmer at Florida State Prison uses this vision statement to explain their objectives: "Inspiring success by transforming one life at a time." In this case, however, it seems that even if transformation comes, execution will follow. It makes no sense.

As if trying to meet an important deadline, Governor Rick Scott began issuing more death warrants for 2016, beginning with Michael Lambrix who was due to die on February 11, to be followed by the execution of Marc on St. Patrick's Day, both by lethal injection. With the completion of these two executions, the number awaiting the same disposition would be diminished by only two, bringing the "to kill" list down to about 387 poor souls, all of whom can anticipate the procedure that is deemed "compatible with the evolving standards of decency that mark the progress of a maturing society, the concepts of the dignity of man, and advances in science, research, pharmacology, and technology," and achieves the "foremost objective of "a humane and dignified death."

I recently studied Florida's protocols for lethal injection. Though Marc has concluded it to be "humane," compared to the "more severe punishment" of "keeping killers alive in prison" forever, I find no connection between a "maturing society," a "humane and dignified death," and execution. Rather, the whole procedure is a corruption of medicine and violates and demeans the oath of medical professionals



Florida Governor Rick Scott  
(salon.com)

to care and heal. Though the American Medical Association prohibits physicians' participation (as do the American Nurses Association and the American Society of Anesthesiology), some do participate, and without censure. The doctors often wear "moon suits" to disguise their identity. To my mind, all personnel involved seem to function as acolytes to the ritual of execution.

It is a staged drama, with a precise choreography in place, each person assigned a definite role. After entering the chamber, the inmate (previously showered and dressed) is strapped to the execution gurney with arms outstretched on boards (wrists restrained) in preparation for the insertion of intravenous catheters in the veins of both arms; heart monitors are affixed, and a lethal cocktail of three drugs, prepared beforehand, is at the ready in syringes with plungers poised to deliver death at the command of the Warden. With everything and everyone in place,

and at the Warden's signal, the curtain in the observation gallery is raised and the eyes of up to 32 witnesses are focused on the unfolding event. It is at that time the inmate is allowed to make an oral statement that is piped into the witness chamber. At another signal from the Warden, the delivery of lethal doses of drugs begins, though the apparatus containing the vials are out of sight. Clean, efficient, sleepy death follows, except for the 7% who suffer from botched procedures.

The *New Republic* gives this explanation of the choice of lethal injection: "States adopted lethal injection in order to make the death penalty seem more peaceful, like an ordinary medical procedure. 'No pain, no spasms, no smells or sounds - just sleep, then death.'" Thirty-two states currently employ this method of execution, though, it should be noted, all executions within the US are on the decline, with only 49 in 2015.

But, for now, a monkey wrench has been thrown into Florida's death machine as a result of the January 12 decision by the US Supreme Court (*Hurst v. Florida*) which judged the manner of pronouncing the death sentence in Florida unconstitutional because it allows a judge to overturn a jury's sentence and order death, rendering a jury's decision only advisory to the judge's ultimate decision. This is perceived as a violation of the 6th amendment. Coincidentally, Florida is one of only three states that don't require a unanimous decision when ordering the death penalty. Michael Lambrix's case was the first challenge entered under the new decision, resulting in an indefinite delay in his execution.

Marc's execution was upheld for March 17, but the Jacksonville

Circuit Court will allow the very capable state appointed lawyer, Martin McClain, to mount one last appeal in early March before the Florida Supreme Court (McClain received an award from the Innocence Project a few years back for his valorous work). Also assigned to the case is federal lawyer, Billy Nolas, a feisty last-ditch-effort attorney. Their task, given limited time, is formidable. Thirteen Boxes of evidence have disappeared or gone to rot, and the video of the trial, as well as the transcript are missing.

The outcome of the future appeal is tenuous at best. The Florida legislature is busy at work, intent on helping the governor push ahead with executions by trying to rework the provisions for assigning people to death in conformity with law. Florida is known as a "killing state," and the death penalty will not disappear easily. A comment by a journalist suggested that Governor Rick Scott (who has tallied up more executions on his watch than any previous governor) is interested in running for US Senator in 2018 and would like to preserve his image as one who upholds law and order, including ordering more executions.



Marc James Asay (*Murderpedia*)

For his part, though, Marc is "perfectly at peace" with whatever happens, though his lawyers will make their pleas for sparing his life. Asked what he would do if his sentence changed from death to life imprisonment, Marc replied

that he becomes psychologically undone and “nauseous” when thinking of it, though he agreed that he would try to adapt and accept the decision if God wills he should live.

For my part, though I may have little to do with the eventual outcome of this one man’s life, I feel called to put my prayerful energy into the things I can do, without calculation except for the hope of changing minds and hearts and reminding others of the love that calls us forth to be disciples of compassion . For instance, one of my wishes is to divert the focus from the **fact** of Marc’s accepted guilt, which includes his ability to say, “I understand society’s wrath” and “I’m not sure what anyone could say to relieve their (the survivors’) grief,” to a perspective of compassion and mercy toward a man who is not the crazy, drunken youth who murdered two men on a summer night so long ago.

None of us is a static being, and in Marc’s case, his remarkable metamorphosis belies any picture of him as incorrigible. Thirty years of solitary imprisonment and his heart-felt repentance should disqualify him from execution. Rather, all things being possible with God, he should be granted clemency and returned to a loving community where, as Dorothy Day has said, “it is easier to be good.”

These past weeks have been spent writing letters to all the Florida bishops, communicating with the Catholic chaplain at the prison, speaking with Marc and his sister, and writing and talking with one of the journalists who is covering the repercussions of the Supreme Court ruling and Marc’s case, and writing this column. I have talked with Nancy O’Byrne of Pax Christi Florida, and others working

to end Florida’s death penalty. I am strengthened by God and by the trust Marc has placed in me to do what I must. This will unfold as one step follows another. In this limbo time, I pray for everyone - Marc and his family; Robert Booker and Robert McDowell, his victims; the governor and legislators and judges of Florida; and all who work within the prisons system. And, especially, all Pax Christi people, and others, working to eliminate this horror.



(paxchristiusa.org)

But let me end with Marc’s words, which offer a glimpse into his soul:

*“I am sure that in this experience we are all learning and growing wiser and stronger. We are lucky to have one another, and despite the complexity of it all, I am sure we’ll be fine. We are taught to walk by faith - not by sight. This makes sense to me because I clearly see that what I see offers no clear path. But in my heart I know to press onward. But the love and support I receive from you and others is so vital. If I leave the world a mad man I will leave a mad man who was truly loved and cared for. So yeah, it’s not that I see clearly, it’s that I hope to be at that time, once and for all, made whole again, and go on to be the child of God I am meant to be.”*

*Pat Ferrone is Coordinator of Pax Christi Massachusetts.*

Addendum: On Wednesday, March 3, the Supreme Court of Florida issued a unanimous decision to “indefinitely postpone” the execution scheduled for March 17 of Marc James Asay, in light of the need to consider the widespread implication of the Hurst v Florida ruling by the US Supreme Court. It is unclear from the ruling whether the death penalty should be applied retroactively to those already on death row.

## **A Prayer To Abolish the Death Penalty**

*By Helen Prejean, CSJ*

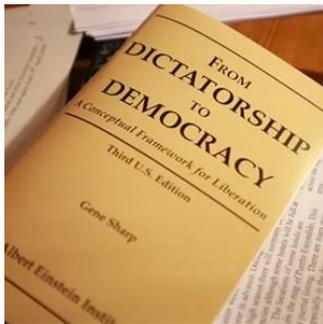
*God of Compassion,  
You let your rain fall on the just  
and the unjust.  
Expand and deepen our hearts  
so that we may love as You love,  
even those among us  
who have caused the greatest pain  
by taking life.  
For there is in our land a great cry  
of vengeance  
as we fill up death rows and kill  
the killers  
in the name of justice, in the name  
of peace.  
Jesus, our brother,  
you suffered execution at the hands  
of the state  
but you did not let hatred  
overcome you.  
Help us to reach out to victims of  
violence  
so that our enduring love may help  
them heal.  
Holy Spirit of God,  
You strengthen us in the struggle  
for justice.  
Help us to work tirelessly  
for the abolition of state-  
sanctioned death  
and to renew our society in its very  
heart  
so that violence will be no more.  
Amen.*

# Gene Sharp and His Research on Nonviolence

*Continued from page 1*

employed by those who do not adhere to pacifism as a moral absolute. That investigation led to his showing how strategic nonviolent action can bring about social and political change regardless of the “moral purity” of those employing it. Also important is his follow-up study, *Gandhi as Political Strategist* (1979).

Sharp's indispensable shelf of books, for both scholars and activists, also includes: *Waging Nonviolent Struggle* (2005); and *Sharp's Dictionary of Power and Struggle* (2012), with 845 definitions of terms. His books



([www.aeinstein.org](http://www.aeinstein.org))

with detailed discussions of alternatives to war-making - *Making Europe Unconquerable: The Potential of Civilian-Based Deterrence and Defense* (1985), with a foreword by George F. Kennan; and *Civilian-Based Defense: A Post-Military Weapons System* (1990) – have been thoughtfully and respectfully reviewed by diplomats and military historians. *The Anti-Coup* focuses on means of protecting democratically elected governments against coups d'état.

A popular pamphlet, *From Winter-Spring 2016*

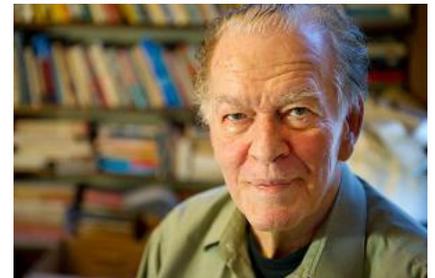
*Dictatorship to Democracy: A Conceptual Framework for Liberation* (1993), was first published in Burma in five native languages, and later in over forty other languages, including Arabic, Chinese, Farsi, Russian, and Tibetan. Like most of his publications, it is available from the research institute that Sharp founded in 1983, the Albert Einstein Institution, P. O. Box 455, East Boston, MA 02128, or [www.aeinstein.org](http://www.aeinstein.org). In addition to these conceptual studies, he has also published detailed discussions and evaluations of the democratic uprising in China in 1989, and of successful nonviolent resistance to and removal of Soviet troops from Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia.

These discussions of nonviolent resistance movements are made concrete by Sharp's many encounters with activists from around the world, and by his careful documentation of what works, what doesn't work, and why. Such skilled analysis has also informed his commentaries on recent campaigns in the Middle East. It is, in fact, difficult to exaggerate the importance of Sharp's contributions to peace and conflict and nonviolence studies, as he continues his research and responds every day to requests for commentary and information.

In a recent trip to England and Norway, for example, at screenings of AEI's new documentary, “How to Start a Revolution,” Sharp spoke before 30 new Church of England bishops in Canterbury, and addressed the House of Commons, Ministry of Defence, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These presentations were covered extensively in four BBC interviews, major newspapers, and on television, as well as by the Norwegian media. Also, in 2009, the American Friends Service

Committee, a Nobel Laureate in 1948, nominated him for the Nobel Peace Prize.

A learned, genuinely modest person, and an excellent writer, the Professor Emeritus of Political Science at UMass Dartmouth



Gene Sharp ([www.aeinstein.org](http://www.aeinstein.org))

deserves wide recognition and deep gratitude for his enormous contributions to the effort to resist humiliation and injustice, to resolve and/or transform conflict, and to provide tools to bring about social and political change without killing or harming people. Although his staff is small, he has been inordinately successful in making his knowledge and research available to scholars in peace and conflict and nonviolence studies, and to the general public, in public forums, on the Internet, and through the media.

Nonviolent activists in Eastern Europe, as well as Yugoslavia, Georgia, the Ukraine, and Egypt, have cited Sharp, along with Gandhi and Martin Luther King, as models in resisting dictatorships and working for democratic reforms. Although Sharp insists that he deserves no credit for his leadership, his work has obviously been significant for people committed to peacemaking and justice-seeking around the globe.

*Michael True, Emeritus Professor, Assumption College, is co-founder of New England Catholic Peace Fellowship and Center for Nonviolent Solutions, Worcester.*

## Nonviolence in the Kitchen

By Diane Simoni

Grace before meals has taken on a higher level of gratitude for me ever since I opened my mind to the compassionate possibilities for answering the daily question, “What’s for dinner?” It started when a friend I had not seen in a few years asked me if I was vegetarian. She was thinking I must be vegetarian or vegan, given my general consciousness about the world’s ills and my efforts to “make a difference.” Well, I was neither at that time.

I opened my mind and my heart that day as I listened to her explain what she eats, since, as a vegan, she would have no meat, dairy, eggs, or fish on her plate. And, thankfully, from that day on, my own plate began to reflect my values of: nonviolence, active stewardship of creation, and avoidance of taking more than my fair share. That is why saying a prayer of thanks before every meal has become an exercise in containing delight!

For twenty-five years prior to that day, I had been an on and off vegetarian (meaning I ate eggs, dairy and fish, but no animal flesh) with one brief stint of veganism (eating no animal products at all). During the omnivore years, I knew that for my family’s dinner, animals were suffering: sentient beings spending their entire lives in cages and their deaths the result of barbaric practices. But I did not know how to escape my part in that system. I was trapped by my culture-- steeped in the American diet of meat and potatoes.

This friend outlined meals I could

serve to my family that included legumes, grains, beans, greens and nuts. She even went shopping with me to point out foods I had never previously cooked: beets, leeks, chia seeds, tempeh, etc. With her support, I finally became free from that which had held me bound: the pseudo-educational dietary guidance from my youth. That government-sponsored, industry-influenced guide extolled planning each meal using four food groups-



([www.forksoverknives.com](http://www.forksoverknives.com))

one group entirely of meat and one called “dairy.” I was free to say “No” to livestock practices that contribute more to global warming than the entire transportation system.<sup>1</sup> I was free to eat lower on the food chain, thereby not taking more than my share of the world’s resources from my hungry brothers and sisters across the globe. I was free to get the product of the slaughterhouses off my plate and out of my kitchen.

With this freedom has come joy, a Gift of the Spirit. And joy has brought with her another Gift of the Spirit: courage. It was this courage that prompted me to ask Pax Christi MA Coordinator Pat Ferrone a question when I was registering for the Sr. Helen Prejean program in November 2015. I asked if Pax Christi extends its mission of peace through cruelty-free food choices and if there would be a vegan option for lunch that day. Eating

plants instead of animals, I briefly explained, is compassionate and merciful toward the animals as well as the people that have to kill them and much more healthy for humans- a surprising benefit.

Yet, it should be no surprise for readers that doing what we know is “right” -while it may initially entail apparent difficulties or sacrifices - often has miraculous repercussions. For me personally, I had a major health improvement and discontinued my four prescription medications after I began eating a vegan diet. For others, they may experience some of the health benefits of eating a whole foods, plant-based diet that are elucidated in the book *Forks over Knives* and in the movie and on the website by the same name. Making this healthy change to eating lower on the food chain could use a “How to” manual. Some quick and easy ideas can be found at the Mercy for Animals’ website: [www.chooseveg.com](http://www.chooseveg.com) or PETA’s website: [www.goveg.com](http://www.goveg.com).

The Rev. Warren Savage explains that “the practice of a spirituality of nonviolence calls for a change of heart...”(PCMA Newsletter, Summer-Fall 2015). This change of heart seems not to be a once-and-done inspiration but part of an on ongoing journey towards embracing more peace and more love. If Pax Christi members are opening up for a change of diet along with their change of heart, reading about the American Vegan Society’s philosophy of “Ahisma” (<http://www.americanvegan.org/ahimsa.htm>) is a good place to start. There, one can delve into how non-killing and non-harming ‘in the kitchen’ is part of a dynamic harmlessness that can create positive changes. God willing those changes will also extend to the battlefield.

<http://www.fao.org/newsroom/en/news/2006/1000448/index.html>

*Diane Simoni is a clinical social worker in private practice in Massachusetts. She is a member of Trinity Episcopal Church in Wrentham, MA and of the Society of the Companions of the Holy Cross. She is a Spiritual Director and holds a certification in Plant Based Nutrition from eCornell.*

## Dead Man Walking

By Mike Moran

“Y’all speak southern?” With these modest and humorous words, Sr. Helen Prejean, CSJ, not only set a down-to-earth and comfortable tone for her audience but launched one of the most memorable keynote presentations ever delivered at a Pax Christi Massachusetts annual Assembly.



*Sr. Helen Prejean at St. Susanna*

Since Sr. Helen is one of our foremost authorities on the death penalty, especially from a spiritual perspective, perhaps no other speaker could have better addressed the theme of our 2015 Assembly, “Dead Man Walking: A Faith-Based Journey to Abolish the Death Penalty.” Of course, she even wrote the book on the subject (with the same title), which also inspired a movie seen by millions of viewers around the world and an equally powerful opera.

But few of the 100 plus people who gathered to spend the day with Sr. Helen on Saturday, November 14, at St. Susanna  
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Parish in Dedham could have predicted where she would lead us by the end of the day. While she remains based in the New Orleans area, where she grew up and began her ministry to death row prisoners and the survivors of their victims over thirty years ago, her expertise is sought throughout the country and beyond, and she travels widely to oppose the death penalty. She testified here in Massachusetts last year against a death sentence for convicted Boston Marathon bomber Dzhokar Tsarnaev.

In telling us how she first became involved in prison ministry, Sr. Helen stressed the importance of witness, quoting Fr. Ernesto Cardinal’s view that “if our eyes don’t see, our hearts don’t feel.” While working with poor black residents of the St. Thomas housing project in New Orleans in 1982, she was asked by an acquaintance if she’d like to become a pen pal to a death row inmate. She said yes, thinking this might be someone like the people she was working with, whose trying lives sometimes landed them in prison. But when Patrick Sonnier, a white “Cajun” from rural Louisiana, answered her letter, she was led into a world she had never experienced before.

Five years earlier, Sonnier and his younger brother, Eddie, had abducted a teenage white couple, David LeBlanc and Loretta Bourque, from a lovers’ lane, raped Loretta, forced both to lie face down, and shot them in the head. As Sr. Helen gradually helped Patrick to feel remorse for his crime through her spiritual ministry, she came to realize that the families of the victims also needed her attention and prayer. At St. Susanna, she even called Lloyd LeBlanc, David’s father, “the hero of the book” for teaching her that lesson. Lloyd prayed for Patrick’s mother, Gladys, and visited her

shortly before her death in 1991, seven years after her son was executed.

Citing St. Bonaventure on praying not for knowledge but for “fire,” Sr. Helen described her continuing work to abolish the death penalty, which can lead to wrongful executions of innocent people (two cases are documented in her second book, *The Death of Innocents*). Her third book, *River of Fire*, now in progress, will carry the story forward. Though crediting Amnesty International and the American Civil Liberties Union as her earliest “teachers” about the death penalty, Sr. Helen said Catholics owe much to Saint John Paul II for his forthright condemnation of capital punishment throughout his papacy as a violation of a “consistent ethic of life.”

A delicious lunch included many pies and other home-made treats contributed by St. Susanna parishioners. During this and other breaks through the day, the very personable Sr. Helen defied her rock star status by making a one-on-one connection with almost every attendee. My thrill was when, after a warm chat about the craft of writing, she wrote in my copy of *Dead Man Walking*: “To Mike – my fellow writer – choose life!” Many other attendees had similar stories of their own Sr. Helen moment.



*Deacon Arthur Rodgers accepts the PCMA Peacemaker Award*

At the annual Pax Christi Massachusetts business meeting

after lunch, the 2015 peacemaker award went, fittingly, to Deacon Arthur Rodgers, Catholic chaplain at MCI-Shirley, for facilitating the establishment and growth over the past two years of the first ever Pax Christi chapter - Our Lady of Guadalupe - inside a prison (see the last issue of this newsletter for the full story). It was presented by Brian Ashmankas and Charlotte and Roger Stanley, three members of the Central Massachusetts local Pax Christi group who have provided external guidance while meeting with the inmate-run group inside the prison.

Afternoon activities focused on sharing local stories of how the death penalty has affected individual attendees. PCMA board member Sue Malone talked about the regular visits that she and her husband Jim make to the imprisoned son of two beloved friends whom he murdered several years ago as a disturbed teenager.



*Isaura Mendes (Assembly photos courtesy of Phil Mandeville)*

But no story was more moving than that told by Isaura Mendes, a Dorchester anti-violence activist who lost two sons and several other family members to street violence over the past twenty years and found the strength to forgive their killers. Confirming from her own experience that “forgiveness is a journey,” Sr. Helen helped us all to learn from these stories how to find similarly effective ways in our own lives to protest and abolish the death penalty.

A closing parish Mass celebrated by St. Susanna pastor, Fr. Stephen Josoma, featured Sr. Helen as homilist, and parishioners who missed her earlier in the day were eager to talk with this empathetic preacher of love and nonviolence after the liturgy.



I suspect many other attendees would join me in summing up my own feelings at the end of the day by echoing Sr. Helen’s own words in the Introduction to *Dead Man Walking*: “I have been changed forever by the experiences that I describe here.”

*Mike Moran is the editor of this newsletter.*

## Driving Sister Helen

*By Irene Desharnais*

One thing I avoid, if possible, is driving, and especially driving into Boston. Therefore, I surprised myself when I volunteered to pick up Sister Helen Prejean at Logan Airport on a Friday night at 5:30!

Thanks to the marvel of cell phones, we found each other easily. As we slowly inched our way through the traffic, Sister Helen revealed her familiarity with the city I proudly call my home. Recently, she had visited Boston several times in preparation for the trial of Dzhokhar Tsarnaev.

Throughout the ride, the humor of Sister Helen amazed me. I guess I

was expecting that a woman deeply involved in the difficult ministry of accompanying death-row inmates would be very dour and serious. On the contrary, Sister’s joie de vivre permeated her conversation.

When we arrived at Hospitality House in Dedham, two Sisters of Saint Joseph, Sister Maryann Enright and Sister Mary Ann Crowley, welcomed us warmly and provided a delicious meal. After I left, Sister Helen, who does not have a television in her apartment in New Orleans, ironically opted to watch reruns of “Murder, She Wrote”!

On Saturday, Sister Helen’s presentation was truly inspiring for me as she recounted the effect Sister Marie Augusta Neal, SND, had on the direction of her ministry. Sister Augusta has also influenced my thinking. After Mass, Father Josoma invited us to a feast at the rectory, which Sister Helen enjoyed immensely. However, Sister did not remain for dessert. Instead, she returned to Hospitality House for ice cream, more episodes of “Murder, She Wrote,” and a good night’s sleep!

The return trip to Logan on Sunday was much too quick. Sister Helen related how uplifted she was by the witness of so many peacemakers at the assembly on Saturday. Her appreciation of everyone she met during the weekend was profound.

My gratitude for the privilege of chauffeuring Sister Helen was also profound. I was truly uplifted by her company and felt blessed to spend time with this delightful woman so totally infused with God!

*PCMA board member Irene Desharnais is from Jamaica Plain.*

# ***Pax Christi Massachusetts 2016 Retreat***

## ***Facing Violence Unafraid: Building Jesus' Nonviolent Alternatives***

**Retreat Leaders: Sr. Jane Morrissey and Philip Harak**

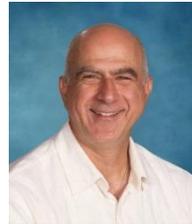
**Saturday, April 9, at St. Gabriel the Archangel Parish**

**151 Mendon St, Upton, MA 01568**

**Registration begins at 8:30 – Program 9:00 am to 3:00 pm**



**Sr. Jane, more than fifty years a Sister of St. Joseph of Springfield, has for the last ten years worked at Homework House, an after school program for children at risk in Holyoke's poor neighborhoods.**



**Philip has helped teenagers find nonviolent alternatives to conflicts for nearly 40 years. A public high school English teacher, he has created the school's only peer mediation program and academic study of nonviolence.**

Participants will be invited to examine the role Christ plays in their lives. Then, with a guided walk through Scripture, we will explore how we can rely on Jesus as we creatively apply His messages in our professional and personal lives. Sister Jane and Phil will draw on their experience as educators of public school youth to suggest alternative and creative responses to conflict and violence.

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### Registration Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Street Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State \_\_\_\_\_ Phone/E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Donation\*\*--\$40 at the door, \$35 if postmarked by March 31. (Lunch Included)

Student Donation\*\*--\$15, registration by March 31 suggested. (Lunch included)

I would like to be an Assembly Sponsor and will donate an additional tax- deductible gift of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to help defray the cost of the Assembly.

Mail Registration and check, made out to "Pax Christi MA" to:

Charles Gobron, 6 Bolser Ave., Natick, MA 01760

**\*\*Scholarships available For information: [paxchristima@gmail.com](mailto:paxchristima@gmail.com)**

**2016 Pax Christi Massachusetts Peacemaker Award Nomination**  
*To be awarded at the annual Pax Christi Massachusetts Assembly Fall 2016*

This award is given to an outstanding peacemaker who embodies the ideals of Pax Christi. She or he need not be a member of Pax Christi and may be a person as young as 16, or older. Nominations may be submitted by PC-MA members, teachers, campus ministers, parish pastoral leaders, youth ministers, family members or friends who have been inspired by the nominee.

**DEADLINE:** Nominations must be received by September 1, 2016.  
**SEND TO:** Mike Moran, 135 Shearer Street, Palmer, MA 01069 (or email to: moran3@comcast.net)

Nominee's name/s \_\_\_\_\_  
School, if applicable \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Social justice & peacemaking activities, volunteer involvement, etc. (attach, as needed)  
Your name \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship to nominee \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*\*

**2016 Pax Christi Massachusetts John Leary Youth Peacemaker Award Nomination**  
*To be awarded at the annual Pax Christi Massachusetts Assembly Fall 2016*

This award is given to an outstanding young peacemaker who embodies the ideals of Pax Christi, as John Leary lived them. John was a Harvard University graduate who worked with PC Massachusetts co-founder Gordon Zahn at the Pax Christi Center on Conscience and War in Cambridge and died at age 24 while jogging to Haley House, a Catholic Worker House in Boston, during the summer of 1982.

Nominees for the John Leary Award need not be members of Pax Christi but must be no older than 24. Nominations may be submitted by PC-MA members, teachers, campus ministers, parish pastoral leaders, youth ministers, family members or friends who have been inspired by the nominee.

**DEADLINE:** Nominations must be received by September 1, 2016.  
**SEND TO:** Mike Moran, 135 Shearer Street, Palmer, MA 01069 (or email to: moran3@comcast.net)

Nominee's name/s \_\_\_\_\_  
School, if applicable \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Social justice & peacemaking activities, volunteer involvement, etc. (attach, as needed)  
Your name \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship to nominee \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

# In Memoriam Marian Frazier (1925-2016)

By John Stella

Throughout the history of humankind, Our Creator has provided us with emissaries to kindle our better selves to be mindful of The Divine Plan.

Marian Frazier religiously heeded the call to be a messenger of peace and justice. The seed was initially planted by pious Irish parents who nourished their children with nightly rosary followed by conversation about their daily experiences in relation to the Divine Beatitudes.

Marian demonstrated what became the standard of her moral stewardship following her marriage to neighbor North Cambridgian, Gerald, whose military service necessitated relocating to the Deep South.

While carrying the first of her eight children, she disembarked from a bus that would remain stationary unless she moved to the front section from the rear seat she occupied next to a woman of color. Her refusal produced a barrage of insults from the driver and passengers.

This defining moment spurred Marian to challenge the code of separation long practiced in the South. She made friendships with communities of color, introducing her growing family to the unchristian consequences of racial discrimination. She was now in the company of

Thomas Merton, Dorothy Day and the phalanx of peace and justice seekers she so admired.

Marian's march to a different tune - not always approved by some relatives and friends - was a natural progression to the gospel of loving nonviolence.

Her companions along the way included Thomas Gumbleton, Jerry, Dan and Phil Berrigan, Eileen Egan, Gordon Zahn, Charles McCarthy, Roy Bourgeois, Agape, and other travelers, religious and laic.



*Committing Civil Disobedience, New York City, 1980s (photo courtesy of Maureen Frazier)*

Marian immersed herself in the Civil Rights movement, the Catholic Worker, Plowshares, School of the Americas Watch, New England Catholic Peace Fellowship, Pax Christi, and wherever she saw the need for peace and justice to be sought.

Marian's lifetime of vigiling, prison ministry, corresponding, home sheltering, alms giving, and an occasional jailing overbrim her final portfolio.

Mont Marie, the former Mother House of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Springfield, became

Marian's home for the last few months of her life. Her room was a short distance from the lovely chapel, which she could visit, with assistance of family or friend, for Mass or reflection.

On the eve of her passing, she was surrounded by her family and Sisters of St. Joseph, who witnessed her receiving the Blessed Sacrament, joining in with the Litany of the Saints.

Mont Marie Chapel hosted the celebration of Marian's life. Her family and many friends of faith bade farewell to a very special matriarch who fully practiced what is often preached. Pax semper vobiscum, Marian.

*John Stella is a co-founder of Pax Christi MA and former editor of this newsletter.*

## Pax Christi MA Board of Directors 2015-2016

<u>Coordinator:</u> Pat Ferrone 238 Harris Avenue Needham MA 02492 781-449-3890 <a href="mailto:patferrone@rcm.org">patferrone@rcm.org</a>	<u>Secretary:</u> Jeanne Allen 10 Sutton Place Easthampton MA 01027 413-527-0037 (email page 12)
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<u>Treasurer:</u> Charles Gobron 6 Bolser Avenue Natick, MA 01760 774-270-2442 <a href="mailto:cgobron@aol.com">cgobron@aol.com</a>	<u>Newsletter Editor:</u> Mike Moran 135 Shearer Street Palmer, MA 01069 413-283-5716 (email page 12)
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OTHER BOARD MEMBERS: Brian Ashmankas (Millbury); Nancy Carapezza (Wayland); Irene Desharnais (Jamaica Plain); Phil Harak (Southampton); Sue Malone (Westborough); Sally Markey (Springfield); Rose Morrissey (Westborough); Fr. Rocco Puopolo, s.x. (Holliston).

Quarterly Board meetings are held in the Hogan Campus Center at Holy Cross College in Worcester at 10 AM and are open to all PCMA members (the next meetings are March 12 and June 11, 2016).

## Local Groups

### **Beverly P.C.**

Sr. Linda Bessom, SND  
15 Bubier Street  
Lynn, MA 01901-1704  
(781) 595-7570 x18  
linda@mahomeless.org  
Mtgs 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday, 7:00 PM  
St. Mary's Convent

### **Boston (Citywide) P.C.**

Christina Abbey  
Paulist Center, 5 Park St  
Boston, MA  
(781) 286-5004  
[LNCabbey2004@yahoo.com](mailto:LNCabbey2004@yahoo.com)  
Mtgs 1st Monday, 2:00 PM

### **Cape Cod P.C.**

Edouard & Francoise Rocher  
77 Old Post Road  
Centerville, MA 02632  
(508) 771-6737  
Contact for meeting info  
[paxchristi-cc@comcast.net](mailto:paxchristi-cc@comcast.net)  
Our Lady of Victory  
Centerville, MA 02632

### **Central Mass P.C./Our Lady of Guadalupe P.C. (MCI Shirley prison chapter)**

Sue Malone  
45 Adams Street  
Westborough, MA 01581-3610  
(508) 366-2050

[organurse@gmail.com](mailto:organurse@gmail.com)

Mtgs 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday, 7:00 PM  
St. Rose of Lima Parish  
Northborough, MA 01532

### **Holy Cross College P.C.**

College of the Holy Cross  
1 College St, Box 2847  
Worcester, MA 01610  
Meetings and activities geared to college calendar

### **Holy Cross Parish P.C.**

221 Plumtree Road  
Springfield, MA 01118  
Martin & Sally Markey  
(413)739-3278  
[parishsocialministry@gmail.com](mailto:parishsocialministry@gmail.com)  
Mtgs 1<sup>st</sup> Monday, 6:30 PM

### **Metro West P.C.**

Faith Madzar  
24 Grove Street  
Natick, MA 01760  
(508) 655-0268  
[fmadzar@gmail.com](mailto:fmadzar@gmail.com)  
Contact for meeting info

### **National Shrine of Our Lady of La Salette P.C.**

Sheila Matthews  
199 Maple Street  
Somerset, MA 02726  
508-674-8220  
[sheilmatthews@aol.com](mailto:sheilmatthews@aol.com)  
Mtgs 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesdays, 7:15  
Chapel of Reconciliation

### **Rhode Island P.C.**

Bill Waters  
(401) 438-6612  
[wjtwj157@gmail.com](mailto:wjtwj157@gmail.com)  
Fr. Ray Tetrault  
(401) 374-5036  
St. William Parish  
200 Pettaconsett Ave  
Warwick, RI 02888  
Mtgs last Sunday, 6:00 PM

### **St. John's Prep P.C.**

St. John's Preparatory School  
72 Spring Street  
Danvers, MA 01923  
Bill Mackinson  
978-774-1057  
[wmackinson@stjohnsprep.org](mailto:wmackinson@stjohnsprep.org)  
Prayer for Peace, Tuesday mornings, 7:45-8:00 AM

### **St. Susanna Parish P.C.**

262 Needham Street  
Dedham, MA 02026  
Pat Ferrone  
781-449-3890  
[parferrone@rcm.com](mailto:parferrone@rcm.com)  
Contact for meeting info

### **Western Mass P.C.**

Jeanne Allen  
10 Sutton Place  
Easthampton, MA 01027  
(413) 527-0037  
[jeanne.allen@hhcinc.org](mailto:jeanne.allen@hhcinc.org)  
Mtgs 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday, 7:00 PM  
Elms College, Chicopee

*If you belong to a Pax Christi group that is not listed above, please let us know so we can add it to our list. If any information above is incorrect, or if you would like to be added to a list of Pax Christi "friends" and receive current messages from the Board, please email changes or additions to Mike Moran: [moran3@comcast.net](mailto:moran3@comcast.net)*

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Attleboro, MA 02703  
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[www.paxchristima.org](http://www.paxchristima.org)