

SIMPLICITY

Live Simply So That Others May Simply Live

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Winter 2017

On Pilgrimage

by Steve Baggarly

In the past few months I did two things that I've never done before. In July I went out of the country for the first time, and in October I spent five days on a silent retreat.

Thanks to a posthumous gift from a local peacemaking priest, I was able to respond to an invitation from friends at Nukewatch, a Wisconsin-based nuclear weapons abolition group, to join German anti-nuclear activists for one week of their twenty week campaign to oppose NATO's nuclear weapons in their country.

Buchel Air Base in the German state of Rheinland-Pfalz is home to 20 B-61 nuclear gravity bombs belonging to the United States. The US stores another 130 B-61's in NATO member states Turkey, Italy, Belgium, and the Netherlands. Guarded and handled only by US soldiers, their use requires orders from Washington DC.

At Buchel, the weapons are kept in vaults under earthen bunkers sheltering German Tornado fighter jets that practice take offs, landings, and maneuvers every weekday, ever ready to load up the nukes and fly under the radar deep into Russia to take out ICBM missile silos, stop a Russian westward invasion, or head to the Middle East.

Two different versions of the B-61 are stored

at air bases in the five NATO countries, and they can be set for different explosive powers, from .3 kilotons (kt.) to maximums of 45 kt. and 170 kt. The Hiroshima bomb yielded about 15 kt.—these bombs can be up to 11 times as powerful. The weapons will be upgraded as part of the thirty year, \$1 trillion program underway to renew and rebuild the entire US nuclear warfighting infrastructure that will ensure that our warheads, their delivery systems, production and simulation facilities, and command and control centers, will last into next century. The B-61's will be fitted with new tailfins making them more accurate and more useful in a first strike. As Russia rightly points out, the bombs are in violation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to which the US is signatory and which prohibits any nation from sharing their nuclear weapons with another.

Germany has been home to US nuclear weapons since 1955. At the peak in 1971 the US had 7300 nuclear weapons throughout Western Europe, Greece and Turkey. These included nuclear warheads, bombs, land mines, depth charges, artillery shells, and even nuclear projectiles fired from recoilless rifles. During the 1980's there were mass demonstrations in Germany

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(continued from page 1) against the US nuclear armed cruise missiles stationed there. A favorite nonviolent tactic at the missile installations was sit-down gate blocking actions, in which even death camp survivors wearing their striped uniforms and German judges participated. After the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989, the US pulled all of its nuclear weapons out of Europe except for the B-61s. In 1996 German activists realized that there were still 20 stored at Buchel, and there have been protests there ever since.

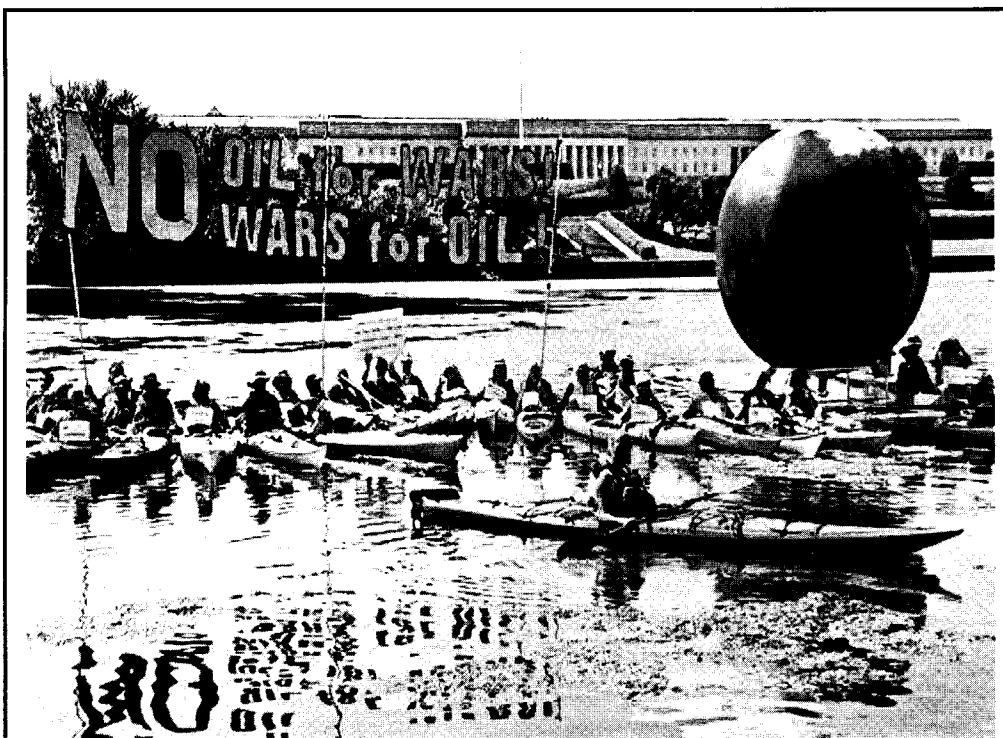
For a week, eleven of us from the United States joined German activists holding signs at the main entrance to the base twice a day, as airmen arrived for work and as they left, calling for nuclear disarmament and the ouster of the US weapons from Germany. One poll showed that about 90% of Germans are against US nuclear weapons on their soil, and even being in the area where livelihoods depended on the base, we experienced a good deal of support.

On the weekend more people came, including some from France, Belgium, and Catholic Workers from the Netherlands. One day we went onto the base through an unlocked gate, bringing loaves of bread for the planes to drop in lieu of bombs, and the next we blockaded multiple roads leading into the base.

The week before we arrived in Germany, 122 countries gathered at the United Nations finalized the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (as of September 20th, 53 countries have signed on and 3 have ratified it, including Vatican City). During the road blockade at Buchel, the base commander came out to talk with us and we presented him with the Treaty and encouraged him to press his government to sign on.

We met the commander again a couple nights later, after four of us Americans and one German cut through four fences and entered one of the three areas on base with earthen bunkers. For 20 years protests at the base have been scrupulously nonviolent and the

soldiers and police were courteous the entire week as well, even as they led us from the bunker area (alas, not one of the weapons storage sites). The base commander, summoned at 3 am, told us we could have been shot, but, as after each previous action, we were just let go with a warning (though we just learned that, not unexpectedly, our German co-conspirator will be brought to court in January).



On September 17, the Norfolk Catholic Worker joined kayaktivists organized by World Beyond War (above) in front of the Pentagon, the world's largest consumer of fossil fuels.

The week before, Kim Williams and Ralph Schvartz from the Norfolk Catholic Worker, along with Catholic Worker friends Sue Frankl-Streit from the Little Flower Farm in Louisa Co., and Joan Wages from Roanoke, and 15 others were arrested at the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality in Richmond. They peacefully blocked the office entrance in opposition to two proposed interstate pipelines that would carry fracked-gas through Virginia, crossing over 1000 rivers, creeks, and waterways. The DEQ plays a central role in the pipeline certification process.

For the past two years Kim has been organizing with local groups to demand that energy corporations get off of dirty fossil fuels and convert to renewable energy sources. Sea level rise in Norfolk, monster hurricanes in Houston and Puerto Rico, and raging wildfires in California, all bear witness that climate change is here and climate change is now. If the planet is going to be livable for future generations, we humans need to change our ways of thinking and being.

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We are Waiting

by Pat Bernier

We are waiting.

Advent is the season of reflective waiting, hopeful waiting. This is the time we are challenged to turn away from the glitz and noise of society's preparations for Christmas, to focus inward.

We are waiting for the promised Savior to arrive. We are waiting for the coming of the Kingdom of God. We are also conscious that too many wait for food, wait for shelter, wait for justice, wait to be seen.

On Thursday mornings I am so blessed to join with others who wait.

The Norfolk Catholic Worker serves breakfast three days a week (Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays) on the street in Norfolk. They have been doing this at various locations in the city for over 28 years. Currently they serve the hungry on Salter Street, at a place the guests call "The Wall" because of the red brick cemetery wall along which people line up. A few years ago one longtime volunteer left the area to rejoin her family in New York and she asked if I'd fill in for her on Thursday mornings. Thanks, Mary Ann.

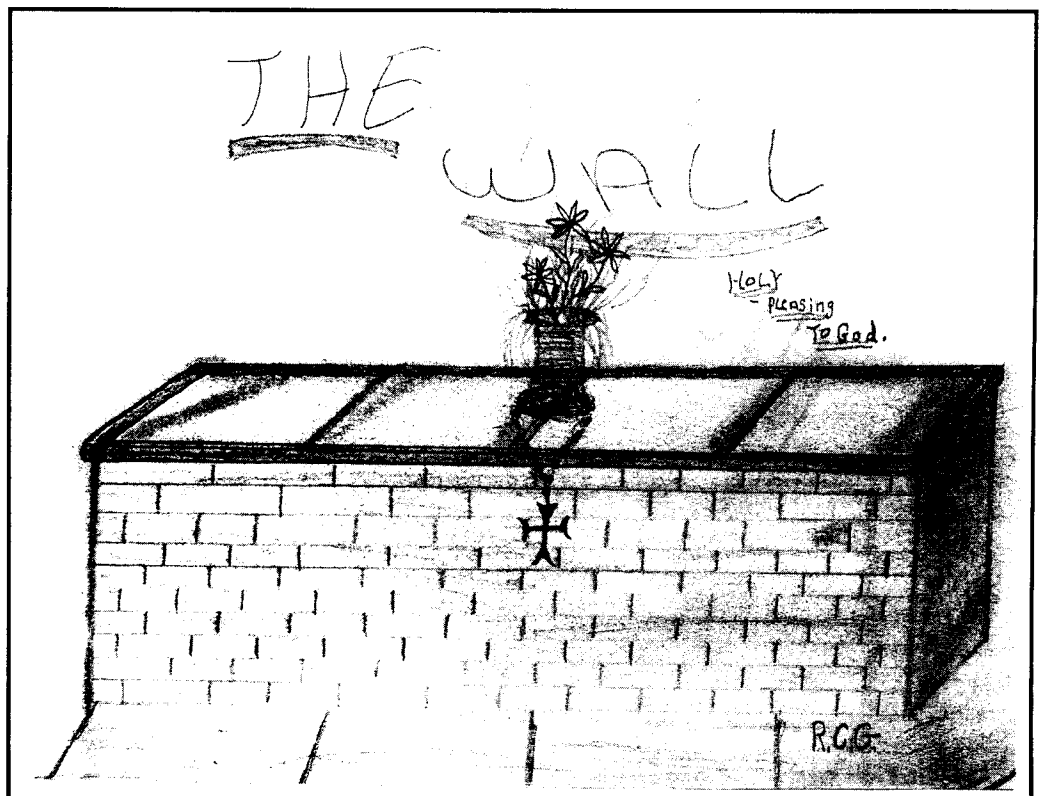
So many lives touch and intersect on these mornings.

As we begin to prepare for the morning meal at Sacred Heart Catholic Church, lines begin to blur. Volunteers begin to arrive about 6 am. A few local friends, who may have spent the night outdoors, also arrive for some early morning hospitality—and just as often to help to get things ready for "the line." We work and then we pray—together.

On to the Wall! We arrive to a flurry of activity and to a line of friends waiting for breakfast. We hit the ground running, as they say, tables are set up, breakfast foods are set in place—and on Thursdays that even includes soup! Just as earlier at Sacred Heart, *everyone's* a worker. It becomes difficult to label who is the giver, who is the recipient.

I first arrived with the illusion that I was helping but now know it is a gift to be able to participate in the hospitality and fellowship that is the hour-long street fair that occurs on Salter Street on these mornings. I realize that Steve and Kim who are the face of the Norfolk Catholic Worker are ministering to me as much as those who are waiting for food on these mornings. I call it a "street fair" because when I depart in order to get to work, the line is still in full swing. As I walk up Salter Street to my car, I enjoy a special perspective on the action: of groups gathered in conversation, sorting through clothing, picking up trash, checking out what toiletries are available—so many familiar faces, new faces, voices sharing stories, greetings, food, and laughter. Sometimes there is music. I've even seen dancing. It is a beautiful slice of life.

I don't want to minimize the reality of suffering and pain that many of the friends we encounter on these mornings experience. I know I look for certain faces and am concerned when I do not see them. I listen to expressions of anger and confusion. But I also do see real joy and hope and optimism and that is where the veil lifts and I can begin to see what we are waiting for. **



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From Buchel, four of us headed to Nuremberg. There we were toured around by an 84 year old friend who had spent the week with us in Buchel. Frank grew up in Rastenburg, the East Prussian town closest to the Wolf's Lair, Hitler's main headquarters on the Eastern Front. In 1942, his sister was part of a local contingent invited to Hitler's birthday party, and Frank still weeps when he thinks of himself as an 11 year old boy in the Hitler Youth learning to shoot standing up, lying down, kneeling, from a ditch, or in a tree. Just before the Red Army entered his town at the end of the war, his family fled—first by truck, then on foot, then by boat and train—finally reaching western Germany where they were divided up among local farming families. Even then the German people were utterly convinced that new super weapons would win them the war. Frank grew up to work with refugees around the world and with development projects in Africa.

In Nuremberg he took us to the Nazi Party Rally Grounds, where annual rallies were held between 1933 and 1938. I stood ten feet from where Hitler spoke before 200,000 people at a time, ultimately inspiring them to kill millions. Each years' rally had a theme, in 1935 it was the "Rally for Freedom," freedom meaning the return of military conscription, pulling out from the requirements of the Treaty of Versailles, and the promulgation of the Nuremberg Laws which (partly inspired by Jim Crow in the US) stripped German Jews of citizenship and (borrowing directly from the laws of 30 US states) criminalized interracial sexual partnerships and marriage. 1939 was to be the "Rally for Peace" but it was cancelled due to the invasion of Poland. During our visit the stadium seating, like the nearby museum, was populated with high school classes learning their nation's recent history from their instructors in hope that such things never happen again.

We also went to Courtroom 600 at the Nuremberg Palace of Justice where the trials of Nazi war criminals took place after the war. While the rest of the city was rubble, the building along with its adjoining prison was almost undamaged. The trials served as symbolic counterpoint to the pre-war Nazi rallies, and the Nuremberg Principles that emerged from the trials have been the guidelines for determining what constitutes war crimes ever since. The Principles declared individuals responsible for their actions, even if pursuant of fulfilling commands of their government or a superior, so that no longer can anyone committing war crimes, crimes against humanity, or crimes against the peace, claim that they are "only following orders."

Three months later I made another journey, this time to a monastery in the mountains surrounding Virginia's Shenandoah Valley. In 1098 in France, monks and nuns wanting lives of contemplation and manual labor founded the Cistercian order. In 1664, reform minded members of the community in La Trappe sought to live stricter rules of silence, prayer, austerity, manual labor, and seclusion. This branch of the Cistercians became known as Trappists. In the 1970's a trio of Trappists at a Massachusetts monastery determined to make the contemplative life available to people outside the monastery boundaries. Inspired by the Western spiritual classic *The Cloud of Unknowing*, they formulated a simple meditative practice they called Centering Prayer.

Living in Catholic Worker communities for 30 years now, spending my life attempting the works of mercy and opposing the works of war, I am regularly brought back to St. Paul's searing reflection on love in 1 Corinthians 13: "If I give everything I have to feed the poor and hand over my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing." Love is the bottom line in the Christian life, and I have been ever aware of how scant a reserve I possess.

Out of a felt desire to be less self-centered, fearful, and compulsion driven, and more in touch with the divine love at the core of all being, for two years now I have tried to practice Centering Prayer. Rather than an attentive meditation practice, which seeks to focus ones attention, Centering Prayer is a surrender practice. It seeks to let go of everything passing through our consciousness, in order to be open to contemplation, to God's silent presence, and to personal transformation. A simple sacred word is used as needed to help release any thought grabbed onto during the two 20 minute sessions recommended per day. It is that simple and that difficult.

So at Holy Cross Abbey in Berryville, at a retreat house on the Trappist monastery grounds, I joined 14 other people for six days of silence and solitude. We didn't speak, we didn't make eye contact. We sat in silence for four Centering Prayer sessions each day (for a total of 3 ½ hours) and three times a day sat in the chapel listening to the Trappist priests and brothers praying the liturgy of the hours. The rest of the time I walked through their fields, visited their natural burial cemetery, and sat by the Shenandoah River.

For Christians, in the end, Jesus' invitation is to love, and love means disarmament—both political and personal. The pilgrimage is both outward and inward: the painful, terrifying work of letting go of the weapons we cling to both in our hands and our hearts. And these journeys are inseparable, the

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An Unprintable Letter to the Editor on North Korea

by Steve Baggarly

To the Editor of the Virginian-Pilot:

Our politicians and media never mention the roots of North Korea's military posturing—three years of total war waged against it from the air by the United States during the Korean War. Though for Americans the Korean War is all but forgotten, for North Koreans it is as if it happened yesterday.

From June 1950 to July 1953 the US dropped more bombs on North Korea (an area the size of Pennsylvania) than it did in the entire Pacific Theater during World War II. After quickly running out of military targets we moved on to population centers, hoping to crush the morale of the enemy and the people. 50-



100% of 18 of the North's 22 largest cities were destroyed. Saturation bombing and firebombing (including 33,000 tons of napalm) killed most of the 2 million North Koreans, mostly civilians, who died in the war, an *unimaginable* 20% of their population. The entire society was forced underground—factories, government offices, hospitals, schools, and much of the population burrowed into the earth. People came out at night to farm. Shortly before the armistice we bombed five irrigation dams, intentionally flooding thousands of acres of rice paddies in hopes of creating widespread famine.

During the war we constantly threatened the North with nuclear annihilation, and we have regularly threatened them with it ever since. From 1958-1991 we had thousands of nuclear warheads, atomic mines and artillery shells, and air-dropped nukes at the ready in South Korea. Today we surround them with military bases and missile defense shields while targeting them with submarine and land based nuclear ballistic missiles.

We are an existential threat to them. They are not to us. They know very well that we could obliterate every last North Korean man, woman, and child, with barely a twinge of

conscience. We've tried before. **

(*The Korean War: A History*, by Bruce Cumings, is an excellent primer for understanding today's saber-rattling)

(continued from page 4) struggle being to simultaneously hold and pursue two seemingly incongruous insights of Trappist monk Thomas Merton.

First: "The duty of the Christian in this time of crisis is to strive with all our power and intelligence, with our faith and hope in Christ, and love for God and humanity, to do the one task which God has imposed upon us in the world today. That task is to work for the total abolition of war. There can be no question that unless war is abolished, the world will remain constantly in a state of madness and desperation in which, because of the immense destructive power of modern weapons, the danger of catastrophe will be imminent and probable at every moment everywhere. The church must lead the way on the road to the nonviolent settlement of difficulties and toward the gradual abolition of war as the way of settling international or civil disputes. Christians must become active in every possible way, mobilizing all their resources for the fight against war. Peace is to be preached and nonviolence is to be explained and practiced. We may never succeed in this campaign but whether we succeed or not, the duty is evident."

And secondly: "For only love—which means humility—can exorcise the fear which is at the root of all war...So instead of loving what you think is peace, love other people and love God above all. And instead of hating the people you think are warmakers, hate the appetites and the disorder in your own soul, which are the causes of war. If you love peace, then hate injustice, hate tyranny, hate greed—but hate these things *in yourself*, not in another." **

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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

NEEDS

Prayers and action for a just and peaceful world

Volunteers: to serve breakfast on the streets or to drive/accompany guests to medical appointments

Food: ground coffee, quick grits and quick oatmeal (not old fashioned), sugar, brown sugar, creamer, family size tea bags, salt & pepper, fresh produce, rice, pasta, beans, quinoa, spaghetti sauce and other tomato products, peanut butter & jelly

Clothing: men's durable clothes (in winter: warm jackets, pants, hoodies, gloves, long johns—in summer: shorts, t-shirts), belts (men 32-36), socks

Special Needs: Used car, U locks for bicycles, washcloths, clean sleeping bags, adult size rain ponchos

Money to pay the bills

Catholic Worker Schedule

Breakfast on the streets:

7 am Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday. Prep begins at 6 am at Sacred Heart Catholic Church; meal is served on Salter St., between Virginia Beach Blvd. and Princess Anne Rd., 1 block east of Monticello Ave.

"End All US Wars Now" vigil:

5-6 pm the first Tuesday every other month (December) at St. Paul's Blvd. & City Hall Ave.

"No Drone Warfare" vigil:

4:30-5:30 pm the first Tuesday every other month (January) at Langley Air Force Base, Hampton, corner of Armistead Ave. and Sweeney Blvd.

"No Nuclear War—Disarm Trident" vigil:

11 am-12 noon the third Friday every other month (December) at Norfolk Naval Shipyard in Portsmouth, where USS Rhode Island is being overhauled, on Effingham St. at the main gate just north of Portsmouth Blvd.

"Close Guantanamo Prison/No Mass Incarceration" vigil:

12 noon-1 pm the third Friday every other month (January) at Federal Building, Granby St. and City Hall Ave.

"Abolish the Death Penalty" vigil:

5-6 pm each evening of a scheduled Virginia execution, St. Paul's Blvd. & City Hall Ave.