

*Witnessing: an issue of personal integrity Continued*

entrance,” every week I use the Gospel mantra (found in the bulletin) to remind myself of what it means to live “in the Spirit of Jesus Christ.” The old “examination of conscience” brings to mind the disconnect between values/faith and actions. Yes, it brings restlessness and a certain sense of “guilt.” Hopefully it can be followed by some corrective actions.

Therefore, living with integrity is witnessing to the Risen Lord! Jesus was non-violent; do I act in a peaceful way? Jesus cared for the poor; how am I touching the poor? Does my voting reflect public policies that support the common good? And these questions continue to cause my restlessness. The temptation is to want to ignore it. However, being a witness (i.e. a disciple) of Jesus Christ leads me to deal with this restlessness and try to find ways to express this longing for integrity and wholeness. It takes a life journey.

*Jacques Pasquier*

## Our Catholic Church and Injustices to Women

Many members of the church don't think about injustice within the church itself. There is a broad spectrum of feelings and opinions about the role of women in our church. However, when American religious sisters were being called “unfaithful” for their public stances on issues by a Vatican-directed investigation, many Catholics whom had never disagreed with the church hierarchy, found themselves out at rallies to “Support our Sisters!”\*



Now, there are growing numbers of Catholics (including Pope Francis!) that believe women should have more leadership roles within our church. Jesus recognized women and their gifts. More of us understand that Jesus' Spirit (Holy Spirit) calls each of us to serve; some women feeling that calling to the priesthood. Many of these women, excluded by the church to priesthood, leave our church and are accepted as ministers in other denominations. This represents a loss to our church. Once a year those who believe women should have equal access to the priesthood take a public stand outside Blessed Sacrament Cathedral before the annual Ordination Mass, the Sunday before Pentecost. This occasion provides an opportunity for public witness for justice within our church.

*Jeannine Daly*

\*Editor's note: In the end, Pope Francis, has applauded and thanked the Sisters for their many years of service to the church, their ministries throughout the world, and their dedicated work for peace/justice and the Earth.

### POPE FRANCIS SPEAKS OUT

**“The church must be attractive. Wake up the world! Be witnesses of a different way of doing things, acting, living!”**

# Voice for Justice

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## WITNESSING: To Give Evidence; To Be a Presence.



### The Hands and Feet of Jesus

During World War II's Nazi bombing of London, a statue of Jesus with outstretched arms was so heavily damaged the arms and hands could not be salvaged. In its reconstruction instead of fashioning new arms and hands, the parishioners chose to add this caption: *Christ has no hands but our hands. Christ has no arms but our arms. We are the body of Christ, and if the body of Christ is going to move, it is going to be by our feet. If the body of Christ is going to hug, it is going to be by our arms. If the body of Christ is going to speak, it is going to be through our mouth. We are the body of Christ.*

*Sue Buratto*

### What Does It Mean to “Witness”?

I used to think that only “special people” were called to “witness” for God. They were the saints that we read about, the ones who totally give their lives to God. However, I've come to realize that it is all of us that are called to witness each in his/her own way.

My first encounter with being a witness for peace was during the first Gulf War as protests were beginning to take shape in opposition. I heard about a group called “Women in Black” who bore witness to

the war and the pain that war creates. The “Women in Black” was a peace movement started in the Middle East by women who had suffered so much sending their sons/daughters into war. These evolved into silent marches by women and men that took place all around the world, including the metro Detroit area.

The first one I participated in was life changing for me. I had never taken this “upfront” a stance on any cause before and I was a little bit nervous on what to expect.

**“What does it mean to witness?” Continued**

Would they think I was a “peace-nik” and anti-American? I was stepping out of my comfort zone and really saying “out-loud” by my presence that I objected to the war, thought it was morally wrong and that this country’s involvement in it should end. Each succeeding time I marched, I began to see that standing up for something I believe in might be scary – some people may not understand or approve –but to follow your own conscience is all God asks of each of us. All these years later we still stand for peace every 2nd Friday of the month and the wars have not all ended—but we continue to witness to the truth of love. Jesus never said it would be easy. But for me it is the right thing to do. We are all called – what is the right thing for you?

Sheran Tioran

## What would Jesus do? Do likewise.

For most of us it is difficult to come to an understanding of what the call “to witness” to the life and teachings of Jesus means personally. We all probably tend to see the life and teachings of Jesus as ideals that we can’t follow literally. It isn’t that we don’t try to understand the Gospel call; it’s just that we see it is as next to impossible in the real world to live this call explicitly. Jesus’ call is to ALL of us is to lead peaceful, nonviolent lives. However, the grace (presence) of God allows some people to overcome this perceived impossibility.

These are people who are able to ask themselves the often asked question, “What would Jesus do?” and then go and try to do likewise. They are folks who see in our social, political, economic systems and ways of living; motives, dynamics, and resulting behaviors which seem to deny what Jesus lived and taught. When they respond to this understanding it is often at some significant cost. By openly refusing to take part in some aspect of normal society or by openly being critical of institutional norms they will

often face retributions ranging from being shunned, to being verbally and publicly ostracized, to losing their job, to being imprisoned.

Probably the most common example we are all familiar with is the conscientious objector. Until a number of years ago, when the military draft was ended, there were always quite a number of people who declared themselves to be morally opposed to the violence and killing of war and refused to take part. To many these people were considered unpatriotic or even treasonous and were accused of being cowards. We were fortunate to know many of them, including our son, and knew well how strong their faith and convictions were.

Many women and men of great faith and determination have spent much time in prison in our country as a result of their opposition to war, preparations for war and particularly the existence, and plans for use, of nuclear weapons.

There are also a number of men and women who have been strongly and openly condemned by the institutional church for speaking out and supporting legal action regarding the mistreatment of women, the condemnation of people of differing sexual identity and the sexual abuse that has been tolerated and even hidden for so many years. Many have lost jobs or been threatened with excommunication as a result.

Such people are wonderful examples of being true, sincere witnesses to Jesus’ call to us. They show that it is possible to try to live the ideals that the life and teachings of Jesus ask of us. May this grace of God increase in all of us.

Bill & Mary Carry

**“The world is changed by your example,  
not by your opinion.”**

*BeginwithYes.com*

## Advocating and Witnessing for Justice

During our Lenten retreat, Fr. Diarmuid O’Murchu emphasized that authentic discipleship is “The Companionship of Empowerment ... empowering in the name of justice, love, companionship, and liberation.” This “new way of being in the world” is clearly demonstrated by the organization NETWORK.

NETWORK was founded in 1971, by 47 religious sisters as a Catholic voice for justice, particularly via lobbying elected officials to support policies and legislation that not only address people’s needs, but also the social structures that perpetuate injustice. The organization believes their work is a living response to the ministry of Jesus in the contemporary world.

Over the years, NETWORK has grown to thousands of members such as individuals, congregations of men and women religious, parishes and diocesan organizations. All are working in various ways to influence Congress in favor of justice and peace. NETWORK staff members in Washington, DC track issues, write position papers, and meet with congressional staffers and members of Congress to address myriad issues of economic justice and global peace. These issues include advocating for a federal budget that benefits everyone, affordable housing, living wages, affordable and quality healthcare, immigration reform, campaign finance reform, nonviolent solutions to conflict, sustainable development and just international trade and investment policies. Lobbying actions carried out by individual members include meetings with their members of Congress during home visits, writing letters to legislators in response to urgent action alerts on issues that NETWORK is tracking, and letter writing to local newspaper editors.

At all times, NETWORK advocates and witnesses from a faith perspective rooted in Jesus’s call to love and care for one another, and to act for justice in the world. Membership in NETWORK is open to all. Visit [www.networklobby.org](http://www.networklobby.org) for legislative updates and membership sign up. They strive to help all of us live an authentic discipleship.

Pat Kwasek

**“We will be known forever by the tracks we leave.”**

*Dakota proverb*

**“It is your voice and mine, alone as well as together, that are meant to raise the alarms. If we don’t point out the breakdowns in human community and make clear the unseen millions in need, they go on being unseen by the many.”**

*Sr. Joan Chittister, Breaking Silence*

## Witnessing: an issue of personal integrity

The Gospels we have heard the last few weeks tell us the same story: the people who had experienced the Risen Lord began witnessing what they had seen and/or believed. Be it Peter and James, Mary Magdalena or the disciples of Emmaus, all of them had their lives profoundly changed. The Acts of the Apostles of the 2nd Sunday after Easter recount the lifestyle of the early communities where suddenly community was formed in the sharing of all their possessions. They were witnessing to their experience of the Risen Lord.

There are two ways we can witness to our experience of what the Resurrection means to us. We can talk about it, we can proclaim what we believe, but, more importantly, we can live what we believe. Witnessing becomes an issue of integrity. Does my life --- what I do, how I live my values -- tell the story of what I believe about the life of Jesus? Also at times, I will take public positions either through what I say, write or through public demonstrations. Does it reflect the way I behave in everything I do?

“What does it mean to live a life in the Spirit of Jesus Christ?” Asking this question gives me a “restlessness” – a sense of discrepancy/disconnect between personal values and actions, between “talk” and “walk.” Every weekend, I am reminded about the “servents’