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# BLUEPRINT

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**The Journey from Violence to Peace:  
Pace e Bene Nonviolence Service  
By Ken Butigan**

The spike in violence had been horrifyingly dramatic.

Over a few short weeks, a public housing project for the mentally ill in a large Midwestern US city had experienced five suicides, two questionable deaths, and numerous fist fights. In spite of this growing, violent wave, the housing case manager couldn't persuade mental health agencies to provide the long-term support she knew was needed. Because of the chronic nature of mental illness, with its often slow response to behavioral interventions, she believed that what was required was ongoing mental health outreach to form a support group with the residents. But the assistance for this just wasn't there.

"I felt a deep compassion for the suffering of these wounded sisters and brothers," the case manager later wrote. Aware of the way that, for all people, our woundedness lies at the root of violence in ourselves, toward others, and in our culture, she wondered, "Can I help them face their wounds with active non-violence?" She decided to try. To do this, she turned to Pace e Bene Nonviolence Service's study program, *From Violence To Wholeness*, and adapted it to the special circumstances of the housing project.

Though the program is designed for ten weekly sessions, she expanded it to a 30-week process. She then began gathering with the residents who wanted to explore nonviolence as a creative and effective process to resolve the violence in their lives and in the world. Each session, they reflected together on the previous week's experiences of violence and possible nonviolent responses. They discussed basic readings and viewed videos on Gandhi, Dorothy Day, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Cesar Chavez, highlighting the principles they had lived by, and how their very lives had demonstrated an alternative to the cycle of violence. Each session the group did role-playing, skits, and group activities to experience the toolbox of techniques to become nonviolent peacemakers.

"I have been humbled by many of the behavioral changes and testimonies of the residents," wrote the case manager (who prefers to remain anonymous to protect the privacy of the persons involved). "By about the twelfth week, physical fights and ver-

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bally abusive behavior were greatly reduced and at some sessions were not present at all. Some residents made statements that their psychiatrist or their community support worker commented on how they were changing.

“The residents themselves expressed statements of 'feeling peace,' 'feeling less angry,' 'more in control.' You could also hear a sense of pride in their conversations with one another and with other residents in the building who had chosen not to participate. They were not in a support group for the mentally ill because they were 'crazy'; rather, they were in a 'nonviolence group' learning to be peacemakers with themselves and others in the building, working to make it a better place to live.”

### ***Nonviolent Power***

Nonviolent power is a force for justice and the well-being of all.

It is a constructive force rooted in the unity of life and the pursuit of truth. It is a power that unifies, rather than threatens; that integrates, rather than fragments and destroys; that seeks the truth and not simply the victory of one side over another. It affirms human interconnectedness and restores it when it has been frayed. It is rooted in the human capacity for cooperation and compassion.

For fifteen years *Pace e Bene* (pronounced “pah-chay bay-nay”) has been experimenting with, and leading trainings in, the ways of nonviolent power. It has done this through *Nurturing Cultures of Nonviolence*, a program featuring *Peace Grows!*, a workshop process supported by a new book, compact disk, and DVD that highlight the ways a more nonviolent culture is being built and fashioned all around us. It has also pursued this through *Paz y Bien*, an inductive process styled on the base-community model that explores nonviolence and justice in the Latino/a community in Northern California.

And it has done this systematically through *From Violence To Wholeness*.

*From Violence To Wholeness* explores how every person has within herself or himself a

reservoir of this integrative, cooperative power. It experiments with how this power for justice, dignity and genuine peace can be unleashed by an individual as she or he confronts violence and injustice, or it can also be manifested by large social movements exercising nonviolent people-power for structural change.

Like the residents of the Midwestern housing project, a growing number of people in the United States and other parts of the world have explored and experimented with the power of active nonviolence by using the *From Violence To Wholeness* program.

Some groups, like these women and men, have used this process to deal with the rage and injustice they face in their interpersonal relationships and in the midst of dehumanizing conditions.

Others have used it to prepare to participate in nonviolent social action. For example, a group used this training - which highlights the challenge and possibility of transforming “Us versus Them” thought and action -- to prepare for an anti-globalization demonstration at the World Bank in Washington, DC. They credited what they learned in the training with helping them to keep their cool in a tense situation in the midst of an intersection where there was a sudden altercation between police officers and another group of counter protesters who had assailed them. By staying centered, they managed to change the dynamic of the situation, after which the police calmed down, recognized the group's determined peacefulness, and withdrew from the area, allowing them to continue their witness.

Still others have used this process in areas of intense social conflict. For example, the hundreds of people who traveled through numerous militarized zones to take part in seven *From Violence To Wholeness* trainings held throughout Colombia.

## *Pace e Bene Nonviolence Service*

The mission of Pace e Bene is “to develop within ourselves and to share with others a deeper understanding of active, transformative nonviolence as a way of living and being and as a process for cultural transformation.” Founded in 1989 under the auspices of St. Barbara Province of the Franciscan Friars of California, it is an independent nonprofit organization that maintains its Franciscan spirit and close ties with the St. Barbara province and its members. Its strategic goal is to collaborate with groups, communities and populations to develop less violent and more peaceful lives and social conditions.

Hence the name. St. Francis and St. Clare of Assisi greeted the people of the thirteenth century with the expression “Pace e bene!” or “Peace and all good!” So much was expressed by this little phrase: *May you have the fullness of well-being, may you be secure and happy; may you not want; may your dignity be respected; may the goodness in your inmost being flourish; may the world in which we live know this deep peace.* It was a blessing, a hope, and a way of acknowledging the sacredness of those whom they encountered.

The ministry of peacemaking-recognizing the primordial presence of God's peace deep within each of us and serving it with prayer and action-has persisted as a central dimension of Franciscan spirituality over the past eight centuries. It is in this spirit that Pace e Bene Nonviolence Service works to mainstream peacemaking that will empower people from all walks of life to prayerfully and relentlessly engage in nonviolent efforts for the well-being of all.

## *The Roots of Pace e Bene's Journey*

Pace e Bene's founders included Louis Vitale, OFM, Sr. Rosemary Lynch, OFM, Alain Richard, OFM, Peter Ediger, and Julia Occhiogrosso. Each had wide experience in non-violent social movements. Vitale, the former provincial of the St. Barbara province of the Franciscan Friars, participated heavily in the

United Farm Workers movement in the 1960s and 1970s, was active in counseling draft resisters during the Vietnam War, and worked on a nationwide welfare rights campaign. Sr. Rosemary Lynch had been active in social justice issues with the members of her community throughout the world, and had played an important role in the Sagebrush Alliance, a network that addressed environmental issues throughout the West. Both Vitale and Lynch had also long been involved with nonviolent witness at the nearby Nevada Test Site, activities that later contributed to the establishment the Nevada Desert Experience, a nationwide, faith-based organization whose goal was the achievement of a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and the end to nuclear testing at the test site 65 miles north of Las Vegas. Alain Richard had emigrated to the United States from France in 1970; from 1981 to 1985, he coordinated the International Fast for Peacemakers. He served as an advisor for the 1983 International Fast for Life, and was a long-term volunteer with Peace Brigades International in Guatemala. Peter Ediger was a former Mennonite minister who had been a conscientious objector during World War II and had, among other projects, participated in the nonviolent campaign to close Rocky Flats, the facility outside Denver, Colorado that produced plutonium pits for US nuclear warheads. After working at the Los Angeles Catholic Worker for several years, Julia Occhiogrosso had founded the Las Vegas Catholic Worker.

When they launched Pace e Bene, the founders hoped to create a center that would go beyond a single issue approach to justice and peace. While they would continue to support specific campaigns and movements (in fact, concrete advocacy would be a part of every staff-person's job description), they were determined to uncover, and respond to, the deep structure of the United State's dominant culture that created this series of national problems. They decided to focus on what they termed cultural transformation, with active nonviolence being one of the chief means to that end. Pace e Bene began offering a series of workshops and retreats on culture, nonviolence, and the integrity of creation.

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This depth work was a particular interest of mine. I had just recently left a position in Washington, D.C. as the national coordinator of the Pledge of Resistance, a grassroots movement committed to ending U.S. war in Central America. Begun in 1984 as US involvement in the conflicts in Nicaragua and El Salvador heated up, the Pledge was a commitment that people throughout the country took to protest US military escalations in the region. Structured as an emergency response network, the Pledge was able, within hours of increased military activity, to organize scores (sometimes hundreds) of nonviolent marches, rallies, interfaith services, or civil disobedience actions in which people were led by conscience to risk arrest at congressional field offices, military bases, or other relevant sites. Within a few months of being launched, 100,000 people took the Pledge. From 1984 through 1991, these members took part in literally thousands of demonstrations; Pledge records indicate that 20,000 people, in the spirit of Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Dorothy Day, were arrested in acts of civil disobedience. Pledge groups held regular activities throughout the country, thus contributing to the deepening and broadening of the larger US Central America movement that, over the course of the 1980s, had a steady impact on US policy.

The Pledge mobilized nationally coordinated actions in response to critical escalations of the war, including the US imposition on the embargo on Nicaragua (May, 1985), a string of military aid packages to the US-created Contra forces in Nicaragua (1985-88), the deployment of 1800 US troops to Honduras (March, 1988), and the assassination of six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her daughter by US-trained Salvadoran government soldiers (November, 1989). 2,482 people arrested in over 1,000 demonstrations held at congressional offices and federal buildings within ten days of this carnage played an important role in ending Congressional military backing for the El Salvador's Arena government. This, in turn, catalyzed a genuine peace process and an eventual end to the war.

During the three years as national coordinator, I was privileged to be in regular contact with the organizers of many of the 400 local Pledge groups throughout the United States. Many of these were working people, and often, as we talked strategy and tactics, we invariably discussed more practical questions: *How do we do this kind of work and still live a human life? What is the connection between the personal and the political? How do we maintain an active political commitment and still put food on the table? How do we keep from burning out?* These were questions about balance and integration, and I had many of them myself.

In the Summer of 1990, I decided to leave my job with the Pledge to explore these questions more deeply. I wanted to learn more about living a life that balanced political work, personal life and faith--both to live in a more centered way day-to-day, and also to grow into a style of life that would support the vision and practice of faith-based, public witness for peace with justice. Moreover, I wanted to work with a team of people who were pledged to this vision and who would, in turn, offer these resources to others. I imagined a loose network of groups grounded in a lifestyle of deep and active nonviolence that would support one another over the long-haul to be "relentlessly persistent" in living deeply human lives committed to the vision and practice of what Martin Luther King, Jr. called the "Beloved Community."

And so I came to Pace e Bene. Since arriving, I have collaborated in developing *From Violence To Wholeness* with those who founded the community, and with those who have come and gone since - Patricia Bruno, Michelle Fischer, Joan Brown, and Cynthia Stateman.

Over the past four years I have been grateful to be on a part of a team (of staff and associates) that has deepened, broadened and transformed the program, including *From Violence To Wholeness* Coordinator Laura Slattery, Ken Preston-Pile, Veronica Pelicario, Brendan McKeague, Cindy Preston-Pile, Christina Leño, Julia Occhiogrosso, Joi Morton-Wiley, Jonathan Relucio, Linda

Jaramillo, Moira Finley, Gade Duerksen, Judith Kelly, and L.R. Berger, as well as collaborators in the larger community, including Janet Chisholm, Glen Gersmehl, and Cynthia Okayama Dopke. Pace e Bene has grown over these years; we now have offices in Oakland, CA, Chicago, IL, Montreal, Quebec, as well as Las Vegas.

### ***Putting the Power of Active Nonviolence into Practice***

Pace e Bene and its program From Violence To Wholeness are rooted in the conviction that we stand at a crossroads in human history.

As Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote, “The choice humanity faces is no longer nonviolence or violence - it is nonviolence or nonexistence.” Dr. King's words have never been more apt. At a time of permanent war, of the threat to civil liberties, of growing poverty, of ecological devastation, and of the urgent need to mend many forms of bitter structural brokenness that spell despair and death for millions of women, children, and men, humanity faces the challenge and opportunity to choose powerful and creative nonviolent alternatives. We can continue to opt for the devastating spiral of war and injustice, or we can build civil societies where the dignity of all is respected and the needs of all are met. True peace and long-term human survival depend on this.

Fortunately we live in an era when, despite its enormous violence, a deep historical shift is taking place in favor of *the cooperative power of active, transformative, and effective nonviolence*. This shift, which has been gathering momentum for the past three hundred years, accelerated during the 20th century with the application of spiritually-grounded nonviolence by Mohandas Gandhi to win India's independence from Britain; with the spirited use of disciplined nonviolence by the US Civil Rights movement to make epochal change in the United States; and with countless nonviolent struggles for human rights, political change and environmental protection. People in innumerable contexts have used nonviolence to work for the survival and dignity of all. Over the past two decades, this

disciplined and grounded nonviolent *people power* has:

- Brought down the Marcos dictatorship in the Philippines (1986) and the Suharto regime in Indonesia (1998), and created the conditions for East Timor's independence from Indonesia (2000);
- Fueled the Solidarity movement's social transformation of Poland (1980s);
- Powered the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia and throughout Eastern Europe (1989) that undermined Soviet control and contributed to the disintegration of the USSR, a collapse that occurred in the wake of the 1991 military coup which was thwarted by 40,000 people nonviolently defending the parliament building in Moscow;
- Ended military governments in Spain and Portugal (1970s), the dictatorship of Milosevic in Serbia (2000), the corrupt government of the Republic of Georgia (2003), and is in the process of creating nonviolent change in Ukraine (2004);
- Upended numerous military dictatorships in Latin America, including Pinochet's regime in Chile (1980s) and the governments responsible for Argentina's “Dirty War” against its own people (1970s and 1980s);
- Ended the apartheid regime in South Africa and sparked that country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (1980s-1990s); and
- Created the global conditions for the emergence of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, ending almost all nuclear weapons testing on the earth (1992).

What these and many other movements underscore is that active nonviolence is *neither* passive *nor* ineffective. Rather, active nonviolence is a form of effective and deeply rooted power at the disposal of people and societies. Energetic and courageous, this power creates peace, justice and meaning *without* maintaining and escalating the spiral of retaliatory violence. Unlike violence that threatens and dominates, the power of nonviolence is rooted in the human capacity for connection, compassion, and cooperation. This power can: transform personal rela-

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tionships, communities or whole societies by breaking cycles of violence; free ourselves and others from destructive fear; celebrate differences while affirming the interdependence of all beings; and discover new paths of constructive and courageous living.

Despite the growing success of active nonviolence, however, nonviolent people power remains largely ignored, misunderstood and under-utilized. Assumptions based on selective readings of history and a set of persistent stereotypes (which assert that nonviolence is passive, weak and ineffective, in spite of growing evidence to the contrary) block access to this power and hinder its deployment. Equipping a growing number of people from all walks of life with the vision and toolbox of nonviolence, on the other hand, has a multiplier effect in catalyzing and deepening the momentum of people-power movements for social change. We will therefore build a more peaceful world when millions of people throughout the US and around the world:

- DISCOVER NONVIOLENT POWER,
- MAKE THIS POWER THEIR OWN, and
- FIND WAYS TO PUT THIS POWER INTO ACTION

*From Violence To Wholeness* is designed to encourage the discovery, internalization and use of the power of nonviolence for personal and social change.

Twenty thousand people have taken 400 one day and weekend *From Violence To Wholeness* workshops since 1997. Hundreds of nonviolence study circles have been organized, guided by the 178-page *From Violence To Wholeness* book that has been translated into Spanish, Portuguese, and French.

These workshops and study groups have opened “safe space” for people to explore the experience and dynamic of violence, described in this program as “any physical, emotional, verbal, institutional, structural or spiritual behavior, attitude, policy or condition that diminishes, dominates, or destroys ourselves or others.” In *From Violence To Wholeness* groups, participants

reflect on their *personal experience of violence* and the *violence of systems*, and the connection between the two.

But it does not stop there. It then invites people to explore nonviolent power as a force for justice and the well-being of all to challenge the pervasive violence belief system and to create an alternative to passivity on the one hand or retaliatory violence on the other.

*From Violence To Wholeness* offers participants an orientation and process for introducing participants to the explicit, ongoing, spiritual journey of the nonviolent life. It recognizes that this journey is life-long. It does not pretend that one “achieves” this in ten weeks or even ten years. Pace e Bene regards this training as a modest introduction, a beginning orientation and method, a glimpse of what is possible and some tools and techniques and processes to experiment, learn, practice, and embark. It offers a vision and toolbox that may be handy in applying grounded nonviolence to the challenges of our lives and to the cry for change and healing in our world. Guided by four commitments to relationship-building, diversity, spiritual practice and nonviolent action, *From Violence To Wholeness* seeks to support the deep, slow work of becoming whole human beings. It seeks to do this by:

- Cultivating the integration of the whole person: mind, heart, body and spirit;
- Connecting personal transformation and social change;
- Offering spiritual grounding for the nonviolent life;
- Exploring the history and practice of active nonviolence;
- Providing concrete tools for putting nonviolent power into practice;
- Creating safe space for transforming personal and social violence;
- Helping people make linkages with many different movements for change;
- Encouraging the development of nonviolence support groups to help make a difference in our

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- Offering a leadership-training program for those interested in facilitating and supporting workshops, retreats and study groups.

A range of organizations and communities in North America, South America, Europe and Australia have used and adapted this process in their own cultural, religious and geographical contexts. Some of these include Fellowship of Reconciliation USA; Pax Christi USA; School of the Americas Watch; Michigan Peace Teams; The Nonviolent Peaceforce; Lutheran Peace Fellowship; The Episcopal Peace Fellowship; Justapaz (Bogota, Colombia); and People of the Way (Perth, Australia). We have also worked with groups in a number of Catholic dioceses in the US, including the dioceses of Oakland, CA, San Jose, CA, Santa Rosa, CA, Las Vegas, NV, Gallup, NM, Omaha, NE, Milwaukee, WI, Detroit, MI and Pittsburgh, PA.

### **Conclusion**

A growing number of people in the US and around the world are hungry for plausible alternatives to bitterly destructive and dehumanizing cycles of violence. This longing was dramatized in the unprecedented antiwar movement that materialized in the run-up to the current war against Iraq when 15 million people marched for a peaceful alternative. This rapidly organized peace movement on every continent signaled a growing, determined rejection of violence as a way to solve complicated problems. At the same time, this desire has been underscored by innumerable efforts for economic justice, racial and cultural equality, an end to homophobia and sexism, and a wide range of other forms of violence and injustice.

Hence the need for training.

We invite you to consider getting a copy of the From Violence To Wholeness curriculum and host a study program. Or think about attending a one day or weekend workshop. In either case, safe space will be opened for you and others to reflect on your lives and to learn from one another, and to experiment together with the integrative power of active and creative person-power,

community-power, and people-power. We use ritual, small-group work, role-plays, journaling, and action to help create community and support participation in social movements for change. We embark together on a journey where we make contact with our woundedness and sacredness and begin to become aware of the woundedness and sacredness of our opponents. We come to see the violence of coercive power differences; we come to slowly understand that nonviolence is an active process in transforming domination, inequality, and injustice. Such social and personal de-centering and re-centering is a long process of transformation and gradual revelation.

In weekend workshops, facilitator trainings, or a small group process, *From Violence To Wholeness* invites people to form, or deepen, communities of long-term, active, creative transformative nonviolence. Together we can open ourselves to the Spirit of Nonviolence, and be led to create in small and unimaginably momentous ways a world where the power of love trumps everything that would deny it.

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To purchase a *From Violence To Wholeness* book or to learn more about FVTW workshops and trainings, please contact: Ken Preston-Pile, Pace e Bene California Office, 2501 Harrison Street, Oakland, CA 94612; 510-286-8765, kenpreston@paceebene.org. Web: www.paceebene.org.

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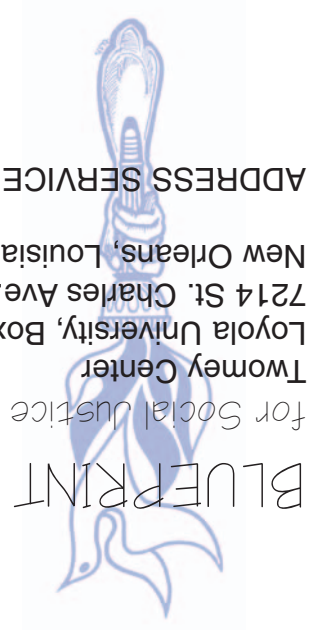
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# In this Issue

## The Journey from Violence to Wholeness by Ken Butigan

Nonviolent power is a force for justice and the well-being of all. Ken Butigan writes about the Peace e Bene organization and its dedication to the teaching, the tools, and skills of the cooperative power of active, transformative, and effective nonviolence. Over 20,000 people have taken training workshops which explore violence on personal and systemic levels. People then explore nonviolent power as a challenge to be the pervasive violence belief system all around us. The journey is a long process of transformation to allow us to create a world where love trumps everything that would deny it.



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