

NEWS

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To Work for Peace Is to Work for Those Clinging for Life on the Margins Of the World, Peace Award Recipient Tells Franciscan Gathering

Because she works for Maryknoll, Franciscan Peace Award recipient Marie Dennis, SFO, is “constantly steeped,” as she put in, “in the richness of missionaries’ stories from around the world.”

Most of those stories are about “dehumanization and exclusion,” she told 61 regional ministers and guests attending the annual chapter of the U.S. Secular Franciscan Order in Nashville, TN, on Oct. 14 (where the Peace Award was presented).

“They are about ‘throw-away’ people whose intrinsic dignity is discarded by local and global societies. Sometimes they are stories about dramatic breakthroughs, glimmers of the New Creation – amazing stories about survivors whose lives sing of gritty hope and who pass on that hope to those who not only listen, but who hear them and are changed by it.”

She offered a litany of what it means to be a peacemaker among the poor and suffering:

- To work for peace is to work for those clinging to life on the margins of our world.
- To work for peace is to work for an end to dehumanizing poverty and economic injustice.
- To work for peace is to accompany migrants (who face great obstacles and horrendous violence in trying to provide for their families), and advocate for justice, tolerance and hospitality.
- To work for peace is to struggle for an end to destructive violence – for an end to war, all war; for an end to all the ways our societies attack and destroy human life.
- To work for peace is to promote reconciliation.
- To work for peace is to care for the earth... to stop and prevent wars over scarce resources by careful conservation and intervention to slow or reverse climate change.

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- To work for peace is to work for right relationships within an inclusive community (triumphing over the genocide and brutal repression of the last 100 years that collectively have taken millions of lives – from the Nazi holocaust to the Rwandan genocide to the slaughter in Darfur.

Dennis, a professed member of the Secular Franciscan Order, pointed to Francis of Assisi, the 13th century saint who “refused to believe that the sultan was an enemy to be killed in the name of God.”

His was “a courageous step, trusting in the basic goodness of the other and a powerful example for us.”

Likewise, Dennis added, “I believe that we Franciscans are obligated to nurture the soil of trust and right relationships.”

After all, she said, “we believe that the impossible is possible... We are Resurrection people – we are hoppers.”

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