

Catholic Peace Action

7 Putney Bridge Road
London SW18 1HX

August 2012

Dear Friend,

Surprise, we are back!

Ray Towey, Henrietta Cullinan and Katrina Alton are in court, charged with Criminal Damage, on 3 September for marking the Ministry of Defence, in Whitehall, London, with blessed charcoal during Holy Week, on 2 April. We invite you to attend the Court. (Hammersmith Magistrates' Court, 181 Talgarth Road, London, W6 8DN. The nearest tube station is Hammersmith.)

We also invite you to join us outside for prayers at 9:30.

The action on 2 April is a repeat of the 22 February Ash Wednesday action/events in London and Liverpool. In London on 22 February, Ray, Katrina and Henrietta along with Maria Albrecht, John Lynes, Susan Clarkson, Fr Simon Lodge, Scott Albrecht, and Mirjam Johansson risked arrest by marking the building with blessed charcoal. Three reports from Pax Christi are available by email.

If you cannot attend in person please feel free to send a message of support either by post or email:
cpa.at.mod@gmail.com

At some point please send us your email address anyway so we can send you future updates.

There are several more pages we would have liked to include in this edition, (including pictures!) but thought six pages should be the limit. If you want the mark II version contact us by email and we will send it to you.

We have plans for digitalising all our past correspondence including newsletters, leaflets and photos. We seem to be missing a few newsletters, particularly from the time before the computer! If you happen to have some old copies please let us know so we can fill in the gaps.

Yours in the peace, and peacemaking-spirit, of Christ

Catholic Peace Action

Dan and Carmel Martin, Pat Gaffney, Ray Towey and Sarah Hipperson



Henrietta and Katrina, Ministry of Defence, 2 April 2012

Holy Week 2012
By Henrietta Cullinan

Early on the Monday of Holy Week the three of us met in Embankment Gardens. We shared out sticks of charcoal, blessed them and set out various directions. Katrina and I arrived at the corner of the MOD, climbed over the fence and rushed over the lawn towards the wall. We started writing our message. 'Disarm Trident now.' I drew repeated crosses working left to right across bare stone blocks between the window bays. Very quickly we were arrested and taken to Charing Cross police station.

The words we wrote were repeated many times. Disarm Trident. Trident Crucifies the Poor. The police officer wrote them down in his notebook. A detective, summoned specially from Reading, took photographs. The text was quoted again in the court documents. At our trial date I hope the words will be repeated again. The police report recognized the crosses as 'crucifixes'.

But on the front of the documents it says part of the prosecution's case will be our 'bad character'.

I have found it hard to write anything at all about this action. The mixed feelings I have are not all positive

My reflection is intuitive rather than intellectual since many distinguished writers have spoken about nuclear disarmament. Whether I am religious or not, killing is wrong, planning to kill is wrong. Trident is the UK arming itself to commit genocide.

But we have a choice. The people inside the MOD have a choice to stop arming Trident. We three are a part of that society and a part of that choice.

My intuition was that this action would be successful in that we would be able to write on the wall and be arrested. I could send my message into the world by writing on a real wall, the wall of the MOD.

Experiential. The adrenaline gets us over the fence. A force stronger than me seemed to lift my arm to write. The grass was a brilliant green and spongy and damp to kneel on. When the policeman stopped me I thought, yes, carry on writing, just a few strokes more, but then I felt his arm on mine and I let my arm go limp.

I felt small and obedient as I was taken to the police station in a van. I felt small and insignificant. What are a few strokes of a stick of charcoal against the mighty monolith of the MOD. When I was finally released about six o'clock and had left my friends I felt afraid. A day in police custody made me see Dalston completely differently, made me question whether I was allowed to walk up the street freely.

However after Easter I had a very different experience. I quickly began to draw strength out of my experience. I felt loved and able to love. Everywhere I went people seemed to be smiling at me, even at work. Everywhere I went the people I met were full of life and full of love, extended family, the administrators and teachers at my workplace, the students, even the noisy ones, the children in the park where I sometimes sit to eat my lunch. As mother and a teacher and a friend....., the love and spirit and life in my friends' lives were shining for me. I thought, 'How can anyone ever contemplate destroying humankind, seeing this? How can anyone sitting in Hoxton Square one Easter ever countenance the idea of killing and destruction? Small kids particularly and the young.

This thought I will carry with me to the courtroom. This thought has given me the strength to write this.

During Holy Week we meditate on Jesus walk to Calvary, imprisonment. Being arrested and spending the time in custody was my prayer.

I am closely attached to the London Catholic Worker community where I have attended weekly bible study and clarification of thought, prayed at vigils and blockades. The LCW introduced me to the liturgy at the MOD on Ash Wednesday. This inspired me and my friends to continue the action in Holy Week. The LCW gave me strength and the understanding to continue to be involved in direct action.

I am lucky to live a few short miles from Whitehall. I can often meditate on the nature of the State, so can often visit. I have easy access to Whitehall and have often ridden my bike, walked, processed, prayed there. It gives me an insight into the place. In making our small marks, the widow's mite. This year was the thirtieth anniversary of the Ash Wednesday.

On Ash Wednesday we mark ourselves and each other with the sign of the cross in ash. During the action I was marking my fellows, the workers inside the building with the sign of the cross. The forehead of the MOD is a reflection of ourselves. We are reflected in each others faces when we mark each other with the sign of the cross. The MOD and nuclear weapons are a reflection of ourselves and our society -- a terrible indictment of our society.

Cleansing the Ministry of Defence Katrina Alton

The Gospels tell us that 'Holy Week' begins with two symbolic events: Jesus' entry into Jerusalem followed swiftly by his cleansing of the Temple by overturning the money changers tables. So on Monday 2nd April 2012, the start of 'Holy Week', Henrietta, Ray and I went to 'Cleanse the Ministry of Defence' [MoD] in Whitehall in our own symbolically non-violent way. For inside this beautiful old building, billions of pounds are being spent each year on the preparations for war and the use of nuclear weapons: Trident. Here plans are made that will potentially destroy homes and tear families apart, cause injury and death, pollute and contaminate crops and water, and perpetuate our national addiction to violence and war. Using "blessed charcoal", just as we had on Ash Wednesday, we went to try and cleanse this place of its plans for war, to call for repentance, and a disarming of hearts as well as weapons. To turn its focus from "warfare to welfare", to begin the works of mercy that Jesus calls us to: feeding the hungry, housing the homeless, and caring for the sick.

Unlike the Temple in Jerusalem security at this place is tight, so walking in and overturning the tables isn't an option. But we wanted our message of peace, and the call to a disarming of our hearts and our nuclear weapons, to be heard by the very people who work at the MoD. Just as we did on Ash Wednesday, we used blessed charcoal to write on the walls of the MoD: proclaiming both the truth of what really happens inside this building and marking a call to repent and disarm.

Henrietta and I climbed over the fence at the front of the MoD and wrote: "Trident crucifies the poor", and "Disarm your hearts". While the MoD police then came to arrest us Ray had an opportunity to walk up the main steps of the MoD and write on the pillars. Then all three of us knelt to pray.

We were taken to Charing Cross police station, where I overheard the desk officer ask, "Can you really do criminal damage with charcoal?" We were held for 9 hours, and interviewed by MoD CID before being charged with 'criminal damage': so the answer from the MoD was "yes". A cleaning company were hired by the MoD to remove the words of truth we had marked on the wall. The MoD claim it is this 'cleansing' that causes damage to the listed building. There seems to be an overwhelming irony that we can be charged with 'criminal damage' for using blessed charcoal to proclaim words of truth, when the MoD itself is continuing to perpetuate the use of 'Trident' which if used would result in genocide and environmental catastrophe.

Was the reaction by the Empire to Jesus' over turning the tables just as ironic? I often wonder what the money changers and bankers said about Jesus after he disrupted their day's trade, branding them "robbers" and drawing attention to the collusion of the religious and political elite to exploit the poor and prop up the Empire. Did they return to the Temple the next day to set up for business as usual? Did they ask the Temple authorities for extra security? Ensure Jesus was given an ASBO to keep him out of the Temple? Or laugh at the thought that a symbolic non-violent action like this could have any long term impact on their powerful and long established tradition? Well, we know the answer: they arrested him on trumpeted up charges and found him 'guilty': the sentence for this was the death penalty by way of crucifixion.

Yet violence, no matter how brutal, cannot silence Love, and never has the last word:

“Christ is risen! does not mean that Jesus lives on in history as Lenin lives on in his revolution or as Rockefeller lives on in his oil company. Jesus does not live on because people have faith in him and proclaim his teaching. The reverse is true. People have faith in him and proclaim his teaching because he lives. Jesus’ resurrection is not dependent upon people’s faith in him or his message. It is rather that people’s faith in him and his message depends on his resurrection. In fact, at the moment Jesus was raised from the dead, no one had faith in him. When the ointment-bearing women went to the tomb on that first Easter morning they only expected to see the dead body of Jesus. When they heard the words, “You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified? He is not here, He is risen,” all life radically changed for them, forever—and so it must be for us. Everything in our lives that is not based on a Resurrection faith in Jesus and his message must be rejected. Once one has found the “pearl of great price” he or she automatically sells everything of lesser value to procure it.”

E. C. McCarthy ‘Stations of the Cross of Non-Violent Love

Since 1982 women and men have come faithfully every Ash Wednesday to the MoD to witness to the evil and futility of nuclear weapons: to proclaim that there is another way, the way of non-violence, the way of Love.

On September 3rd we will appear in court to continue to witness to this truth.

Please pray for us.

2012 Lenten Reflections

Ray Towey

It has been several years since I was arrested and spent time in a police cell but this Lent I had that special experience once again on 2 April 2012. Health and safety issues are very prominent now for the police. In previous years after an arrest we were all just bundled into a police van and even shared a police cell with other male protesters but now the police van has its own cell where you are securely placed and has space for no more than two prisoners. The police station has a nurse’s room so that medical care is available to any sick prisoner and each hour the police check on you to see if you are in good shape. I was offered food more than once and I even had a visit from two home office staff persons who wanted to know if I had any complaints against the police. You are encouraged to talk about any drug addiction issues you might have and offered help. No doubt these are all good developments for the health of prisoners but the downside is that the process takes a long time despite the computerisation of the protocols. Even a signature regarding your personal effects is acknowledged by an electronic pad and virtual signature. It was not often the Ministry of Defence, MoD, Criminal Investigation Department, CID, would interview you. I only recall it happening once before but it seems now to be more common, perhaps it’s routine. So it was a long day before release and a date set for the magistrate first hearing. The interview by CID was a discussion on the moral and legal considerations on writing on the Ministry of Defence building without permission and gave me the opportunity to widen the discussion to the morality of nuclear war and whether in exceptional circumstances the right of property may be subservient to the right of life. The interview was taped and I did request a copy which I was told would be sent to my home but I never did receive it. The charge was criminal damage to property and the action was to write the word ‘Trident’ and two crosses with blessed charcoal by the entrance to The Ministry of Defence Horse Guards Avenue London. In summary I would describe my treatment by the police as respectful.

On Ash Wednesday 22 February 2012 I had also written with blessed charcoal two crosses and ‘Trident=Genocide.’ On that occasion I was detained by the police at the outside of the MoD but not charged. I wrote in the evening when most of the police had gone because I did not wish to be involved in any physical contact with the security people. Waiting all day for the security presence to diminish was a very exhausting ordeal but at least I was able then to write on the front of the MoD with little interruption. It seems on Ash Wednesday the State gives a dispensation and no charges are made then.

In preparation for my legal defence in September I have revisited the Church’s teaching on nuclear weapons and the one consistent Church document which remains so clear and inspiring is that from the Bishops of Scotland made in 1982: “if it is immoral to use these weapons it is also immoral to threaten

their use.” The Catholic Church has always been consistent that there can be no moral case for the actual use of a weapon of mass destruction as it is indiscriminate. The concept of nuclear deterrence however argued that use would be prevented during the Cold War if both sides had nuclear arsenals and Pope John Paul II gave some support for this position when he wrote in 1982 to the United Nations, “in current conditions *deterrence* based on balance, certainly not as an end in itself but as a step on the way toward a progressive disarmament, may still be judged morally acceptable.”

At the time it no doubt gave comfort to some Catholics who did not wish to relinquish nuclear arsenals and the 1980s was a time of much debate about this issue. It is an interesting time to be a Christian in a nuclear weapons state. How we respond to this issue will write Church history for those who follow us.

Cardinal Newman made his journey to Catholicism on the principle that the doctrines of the Church undergo development and as a pupil from a school which he had personally founded I regarded the issue of the morality of nuclear weapons as undergoing development. It seemed as there was no genuine progressive disarmament even at that time then the conditions for deterrence were broken and civil disobedience was justifiable. It also set the clock ticking for nuclear disarmament to occur. Looking back 30 years it is clear and becomes clearer every day that the nuclear States have no intention of giving up their nuclear arsenals. At that time it was a judgement which Catholics could debate. Now the Church’s teaching is much clearer.

The Scottish Bishops have remained consistent and resolute.

In 2005 Archbishop Migliore, the then observer of the Holy See to the United Nations wrote, “The time has gone for finding ways to a *balance in terror*, the time has come to re-examine the whole strategy of nuclear deterrence....it is evident that nuclear deterrence drives the development of ever newer nuclear arms thus preventing genuine nuclear disarmament.”

In 2006 Pope Benedict XVI in his address on World Peace Day said, “What can be said, too, about those governments which count on nuclear arms as a means of ensuring the security of their countries? Along with countless persons of good will, one can state that this point of view is not only baneful but also completely fallacious.”

In 2010 Archbishop Francis Chullikatt the current Holy See’s observer at the United Nations reviewed the Church’s teaching at a meeting in the USA commenting and quoting from Church teaching, “Today more and more people are convinced that nuclear deterrence is not a viable means of providing security. If some nations can continue to claim the right to possess nuclear weapons, then other states will claim that right as well...such an unbalanced position is unsustainable... Nuclear weapons, aptly described as the *ultimate evil*, are still possessed by the most powerful States which refuse to let them go...no weapon so threatens the longed-for peace of the 21st century as the nuclear.”

It is clear that the Catholic Church’s teaching has moved from 1982.

In 2009 Archbishop Rowan Williams the spiritual head of the Anglican community visited Nagasaki, Japan and stated that to plan a strategy round nuclear weapons is to be defeated by them. To threaten such an outrage against humanity and its world is to begin to lose one’s moral and human dignity.

I will argue that even the established Church of England has condemned nuclear deterrence.

Catholics are guided by Scripture and the Church’s teaching to develop an informed conscience. In my view the ultimate evil of nuclear weapons have no property rights and in my defence I will argue that I am legally justified in writing with blessed charcoal on the MoD wall to draw attention to this fact. I will also argue that I did no damage to the MoD wall and therefore my actions were not criminal or illegal. Whatever outcome at my trial I am grateful for the chance of making a public Christian witness. I have always seen a Christian witness against nuclear weapons as a missionary witness and if I risked arrest then I might be able to take the witness also to the courts which give legal protection to these plans for genocide. I do not seek arrest or prison as an end in itself. I seek a conversion, that is a change of heart

by the State, disarmament. Whatever the legal result of the trial, it will be an opportunity to speak truth to power and that has outcomes which cannot be measured in human terms.



Ash Wednesday, 2012, Ray writes underneath the Ministry of Defence plaque

Where is the Ministry of Defence?!

On 2 April, the day that Ray, Katrina and Henrietta returned to the Ministry of Defence building to mark it with blessed charcoal I spoke with one of the senior Ministry of Defence police, as opposed to the Metropolitan Police. The MoD police only deal with MoD related incidents, though of course the two forces work closely together.

The officer I spoke to confirmed for me the boundaries between MOD property and London MET jurisdiction. It was as I thought. The barricades in front of the MOD are NOT on MOD property. I think this geography needs to be in the mind of future markers as they carry through the spirit of the Ash Wednesday witness and in confrontation with the MOD. This also has a bearing on the timing of marking the MOD. Obviously if the police are so numerous that they prevent access to the building then the only option for resisters is to wait to mark later in the day as Ray did, and others in the past have done, or like Katrina and Henrietta did and go around to that part of the building that was not so closely guarded.

Over a decade ago four pages of guidelines for the Ash Wednesday witness were agreed to by all participating organisations. I will mention just one paragraph to help us re-focus.

‘The Ash Wednesday witness at the MoD highlights the link between personal and corporate sin and repentance. Our foreheads and our MoD are marked with the same ash and charcoal and receive the same call to conversion and repentance. To attempt to, or actually, break the law at the MoD on Ash Wednesday in any other way would not convey the same message with as much clarity. For example, blocking the entrance, marking barriers, police officers, or pavements would diminish the symbolic confrontation with the work of the MoD and place the focus elsewhere (e.g. the workers, police or general public).’

The ‘Guidelines for Resistance at the MoD’ document is available on request and is still valid for future actions.

Dan Martin
