by Don Timmerman

Recently, we of the Casa Maria Catholic Worker Community went to a gun shop to ask people not to buy guns. We do this every month and have done it for about 30 years because we see the negative effect of having more and more guns on our streets. We believe the gun is made to do violence to another, and that anyone who gets a gun, especially a handgun, shows that s/he is willing to do violence to another. We recently had a young man of 19 years shot in the alley behind our house. Someone thought that the gun was the way to bring about what he wanted. What it brought him was unhappiness and fear. He mistakenly thought that the gun would bring him peace. It did not!

We are ridiculed for this by those wanting to buy guns. They claim that they want to be safe and want to protect their loved ones. They feel they have the means to bring about peace. That is why they call their guns “peacemakers.” They believe the only way to bring peace to the world is through doing violence to those who want to harm us. And guns are the instruments of violence that will bring peace. This is a strange message for Christians since Christ gave us the true means of having peace and happiness, and it was NOT using a weapon against anyone, friend or enemy.

Today is Pentecost. It is actually the birth of the Christian church. It is the time when the Apostles and others realized who Christ was and what his message really was. They now see Him as their leader and servant, and His message is to bring peace to the world. When he first saw His followers after he rose from death he said, “Peace be with you.” Finally, they understood how to bring about peace. They finally saw that peace can only be gotten by having a spirit of love. That spirit is necessary for anyone who wants to follow Christ. What the Apostles meant by having the Holy Spirit was having the spirit of loving all people, even your enemies or people who want to do you harm, and DOING GOOD TO THEM. They finally understood the example of Christ and His crucifixion. He loved even those who betrayed him, tortured him, disrespected him and finally killed him in one of the most horrible ways to die. He did this to show us how to bring peace into the world. If peace would be possible in any other way Christ would have told us. He said the way to peace and a happy life is by loving your enemy.
When you have the spirit of love and peace you are willing to sacrifice what you have for the sake of another. You are willing to do good to bad people. That spirit of love and peace presents itself in different ministries or ways of showing your love. The various ministries are undertaken by followers of Christ, according to their abilities and desires. These ministries are many. The ministry of hospitality, the ministry of visiting the sick and dying, the ministry of teaching the young morals and correct values, the ministry of providing food, clothing, and other necessities of life to others are all ministries arising out of that spirit of love taught to us by Christ in word and deed. Violence and the use of weapons were not in his teaching. Yet many of us still believe they can be Christians and still do violence to others who do violence to them. Such is not the Spirit of Christ, but rather the spirit of the world. We have yet to learn that peace cannot be attained through violence against others. Rather than spending trillions of dollars on weapons and war we Christians need to demand that all that money should be directed toward helping those millions who are dying due to the lack of necessities of life. Put aside your violent ways of the world, and begin to live according to the Spirit of Christ. Like the early Apostles, let us show others the true way of peace and happiness shown to us by Christ.

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