By Don Timmerman

Recently, a Catholic Worker was arrested trying to chain shut the doors of the Marquette U. ROTC building. A student at the door of the ROTC asked why we were trying to close the doors. She said it makes it inconvenient for those wanting to enter. I asked her if she was a Christian. She said, “No, I am a Catholic!” Then I asked her if she understood that the U.S. military too often makes life very inconvenient for the many refugees that resulted from the U.S. invasions of Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, Syria, Libya and other countries. The reason he tried to close the door was to symbolically show that the ROTC does not seem to have a place on a Christian campus. Christ taught love of enemies while the ROTC teaches, or at least legitimates, killing of one’s enemy. The ROTC is a sign of a teaching that is foreign to the teaching of Christ.

We feel that Christians must show forth Christ. Mary brought forth Jesus to us. He is called Emmanuel, meaning God with us. We Christians need to show our faith by practicing it at all times. Even when it is inconvenient to do so. We are to show Christ’s message of love not only to our friends, but also our enemies.

How do we show Christ to others? How are we a sign of Christ to others? Are we afraid to do so? Joseph was not afraid to be with Mary to show forth Christ, Emmanuel. He had lots of reasons for leaving Mary. His reputation could be destroyed and he felt disrespected for he probably thought that another was the father of the child. He showed forgiveness and love to her and stood with her for the delivery of the child.

How do we know a Christian? Is it by seeing the person going to church? No, because we see many people going to church who go there simply because they are accustomed to do so. It is tradition. Our parents, grandparents, relatives all went to church on Sunday. So we go too. Is the car a car because we put it in a car garage? No. We can tell if someone is Christian by their love, their willingness to love and forgive the enemy and willingness to do good to those who persecute and harm her/him. How many people calling themselves Christians will go to invade people of other countries, and ask others to pray that they kill off the enemy of the state? Do they show off Christ by doing so? No. Are they showing love, compassion and forgiveness? No. They are a sign of nationalism, not Christianity. Would Christ bomb his neighbors leaving many dead, maimed for life, with no homes, food, healthcare, etc.? Would he have done this to the Romans who were persecuting His people, the Jews? No. Christ would not. Instead, he would show love toward them, as he did when he was crucified. He showed God’s love for all. He was a sign of God’s love. We are called to be signs of Christ’s love.

Putting money in a collection box or attending religious meetings are not signs of Christ to others. Lots of people give money and attend religious meetings, but these do not make them Christians or signs of Christ. Are we a sign of Christ’s love if we willingly allow the government to use our tax money to build weapons, commit armed invasions and bring more misery in the
world? No. We must resist, and suffer the consequences for resisting, being a sign of Christ. Being a sign of Christ often means persecution and perhaps death to us. Just as Joseph risked persecution by remaining with Mary to bring forth Jesus, we too must follow the teaching of Christ, and be signs of Christ to others. Christ came to bring us peace and happiness. We can have this if we follow Christ’s teaching of nonviolent love. Are we a sign of Christ? Are we willing to deliver Christ to the world and suffer the consequences for doing so?

Don Timmerman
Casa Maria Catholic Worker, Milwaukee