



# FRIENDS OF PEACE PILGRIM



A Non-Profit, Tax-Exempt, All Volunteer Organization  
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"Overcome evil with good, falsehood with truth, hatred with love"

Number 36

## Dear Friends of Peace Pilgrim,

We are deeply saddened by the terrorist attacks and saddened again about the retaliating attacks by the wealthiest country bombing the poorest.

The American Friends Service Committee, a recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize after World War II, sent us this:

## FRIENDS (QUAKERS) JOINT STATEMENT

We pray at this time for people of the United States, Afghanistan, and the rest of the world. We hold in prayer those killed and wounded in the terrorist attacks of September 11 and those being killed and wounded by the military strikes on Afghanistan.

We regret the decision by our nation's leaders to launch military strikes against Afghanistan and we call upon them to halt the bombing and other military attacks.

We recognize the responsibility of the international community to apprehend and try under international law, those responsible for the recent terrorist attacks. We urge that such efforts be undertaken as a law enforcement action—not as acts of war—and with great care to avoid the killing or injuring innocent people.

History teaches us that violence leads to more violence. We expect that these massive military strikes by missiles and bombers against this already devastated, starving country will almost certainly make it easier for the leaders of this terrorist struggle to recruit more people to their cause. We must break the cycle of violence.

The struggle against terrorism will indeed be long. To succeed, it will have to undermine the ability of those who would use terrorism to recruit new people to carry out such attacks. This requires ending, or greatly diminishing, the tremendous anger and hatred toward the United States and its allies, felt in particular, by many in the Muslim and Arab world. This can only be done with prolonged, nonviolent efforts for reconciliation, justice, and long-term economic development. It cannot be done through massive bombing and military attacks.

As executives of organizations of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), we continue to be guided by our historic testimony concerning God's call to renounce war and

seek peace. We commit ourselves to work and pray for the time of justice and peace promised by God when "peoples shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks, and nations shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore." (Isaiah 2:4).

*The American Friends Service Committee is a Quaker organization that includes people of various faiths who are committed to social justice, peace and humanitarian service. Its work is based on the belief in the worth of every person and faith in the power of love to overcome violence and injustice. Their address is: 1501 Cherry St, Philadelphia, PA. 19102 or 980 N Fair Oaks Ave, Pasadena, CA 91103.*

*Peace Pilgrim volunteered with the AFSC during part of her fifteen year preparation period.*

*Remember Peace Pilgrim's words: "Let us say with faith this is the darkness before the dawn of a Golden Age of Peace which we cannot now even imagine. For this let us hope and work and pray." So we continue sending out Peace Pilgrim's message of Overcoming Evil with Good.*

*People call, write, fax, and e-mail their great sorrow. They need to talk with someone; they request quantities of books, STEPS, tapes. We send out about 80,000 STEPS every year. Since September 11 STEPS have been in great demand.*

## EMBRACING ANGER

EXCERPTS from a Public Talk at the  
RIVERSIDE CHURCH in NEW YORK

*Thich Nhat Hanh gave this talk after the terrorists attacks. He is a Zen Buddhist Monk who worked tirelessly for Peace in Vietnam and helped rebuild destroyed villages. He was nominated by Martin Luther King for the Nobel Peace Prize. Our Webmaster, Bruce, and about 2000 others were at the church. Here are some excerpts from his talk:*

My Dear friends, I would like to tell you how I practice when I get angry. During the war in Vietnam, thousands, including friends of mine, were killed. I got very angry. One time I learned that Ben Tre, a city of 300,000 was bombed because some guerrillas tried to shoot down American aircrafts. The city was destroyed and the military

man responsible declared later that he had to destroy the city in order to save it. I was very angry.

But at that time, I was already a solid practitioner. I knew that acting or speaking while angry is not wise. It may create a lot of destruction. I went back to myself, recognizing my anger, embracing it, and looked deeply into the nature of my suffering. In the Buddhist tradition, we have the practice of mindful breathing, of mindful walking, to generate the energy of mindfulness. It is exactly with that energy of mindfulness that we can recognize, embrace, and transform our anger.

Mindfulness is the kind of energy that helps us to be aware of what is going on inside of us and around us. Anybody can be mindful. When you breathe in and you know it and you focus your attention on your in-breath, that is mindfulness of breathing. When you make a step and you are aware you are making a step, that is called mindfulness of walking. The basic practice in Zen Centers, Meditation Centers, is the practice of generating mindfulness every moment of your daily life. When you are angry, you are aware that you are angry because you already have the energy of mindfulness in you, created by the practice. That is why you have enough of it in order to recognize, embrace, look deeply, and understand the nature of your suffering, of your anger.

I was able to understand the nature of the suffering in Vietnam. I saw that not only Vietnamese suffered, but Americans suffered as well. The young American man who was sent to Vietnam in order to kill and be killed underwent a lot of suffering, and the suffering continues today. The family, the nation also suffers. I could see that the cause of our suffering in Vietnam is not American soldiers. It is a kind of policy that is not wise. It is a misunderstanding. It is fear that lies at the foundation of the policy.

Many in Vietnam burned themselves in order to call for a cessation of the destruction. They did not want to inflict pain on other people, they wanted to take the pain on themselves in order to get the message across. But the sounds of planes and bombs was too loud. The people in the world, not many of them were capable of hearing us. [we heard] I decided to go to America and call for a cessation of the violence. [John & Ann were deeply moved by hearing him speak in a huge church in Los Angeles] That was in 1966, and because of that I was prevented from going home. And I have lived in exile in France since.

I remember I met with Secretary of Defense Robert MacNamara. I told him the truth about the suffering. He kept me with him for a long time, He listened deeply to me, and I was very grateful for his quality of listening. Three months later, when the war intensified, I heard that

he resigned.

Hatred and anger was not in my heart. That is why I was listened to by many young people in my country. I advocated the path of reconciliation, and together we helped to bring about the new organizations for peace in Paris.

I was able to see that the real enemy of man is not man. The real enemy is our ignorance, discrimination, fear, craving, and violence. I did not have hate for the American people, the American nation. I came to America in order to plead for a kind of looking deeply so that your government could revise that kind of policy.

I hope my friends here in New York are able to practice the same. I understood suffering and injustice. I feel that I understand deeply the suffering of New York, of America. I feel I am a New Yorker. I feel I am American.

We need to look after the victims here within our country and also to have compassion for the hijackers and their families because they are also victims of ignorance and hatred. In this way we can truly practice non-discrimination. We do not need to wait many years or decades to realize reconciliation and forgiveness. We need a wake up call now in order not to allow hatred to overwhelm our hearts.

It is said clearly in the Bible, "Forgive them for they know not what they do." This means that an act of evil is an act of great ignorance and misunderstanding. Perhaps many wrong perceptions are behind an act of evil; we have to see that ignorance and misunderstanding is the root of the evil. Every human being contains within himself or herself all the elements of great understanding, great compassion, and also ignorance, hatred, and violence.

I believe very strongly that the American people have a lot of wisdom and compassion within themselves.

People in our Congress and our Senate should also train themselves in the art of deep listening, of compassionate listening. There is a lot of suffering within the country, and many people feel their suffering is not understood. That is why politicians, members of the Parliament, members of the Congress have to train themselves in the art of deep listening—listening to their own people, listening to the suffering in the country, because there is injustice, there is discrimination. There is a lot of anger. If we can listen to each other, we can also listen to the people outside of the country. Many of them are in a situation of despair, many suffer because of injustice and discrimination. The amount of violence and despair in them is very huge. And if we know how to listen as a nation to their suffering, we can already bring a lot of relief. They will feel that they are being understood. That can diffuse the bomb already.

## WHAT I WOULD SAY TO OSAMA BIN LADEN

*Interview of Thich Nhat Hanh. (friends call him "Thay") by Anne Simpkinson. He is internationally known for his teaching and writing on mindfulness. He shares his thoughts on responding to the terrorist attacks. Here are some excerpts from this interview:*

**Question:** If you could speak to Osama bin Laden, what would you say to him? Likewise, if you were to speak to the American people, what would you suggest we do at this point, individually and as a nation?

**Answer:** If I were given the opportunity to be face to face with Osama bin Laden, the first thing I would do is listen. I would try to understand why he had acted in that cruel way. I would try to understand all of the suffering that had led him to violence. It might not be easy to listen in that way, so I would have to remain calm and lucid. I would need several friends with me, who are strong in the practice of deep listening, listening without reacting, without judging and blaming. In this way, an atmosphere of support would be created for this person and those connected so that they could share completely, trust that they are really being heard.

After listening for some time, we might need to take a break to allow what has been said to enter into our consciousness. Only when we felt calm and lucid would we respond. We would respond point by point to what had been said. We would respond gently but firmly in such a way to help them to discover their own misunderstandings so that they will stop violent acts from their own will.

For the American people, I would suggest that we do everything we can to restore our calm and our lucidity before responding to the situation. To respond too quickly before we have much understanding of the situation may be very dangerous.

The first thing we can do is to cool the flames of anger and hatred that are so strong in us. As mentioned before, it is crucial to look at the way we feed the hatred and violence within us and to take immediate steps to cut off the nourishment for our hatred and violence.

When we react out of fear and hatred, we do not yet have a deep understanding of the situation. Our action will only be a very quick and superficial way of responding to the situation and not much true benefit and healing will occur. Yet if we wait and follow the process of calming our anger, looking deeply into the situation, and listening with great will to understand the roots of suffering that are the cause of the violent actions, only then will we have sufficient insight to respond in such a way that healing and reconciliation can be realized for everyone involved. In South Africa, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has made

attempts to realize this. All the parties involved in violence and injustice agreed to listen to each other in a calm and supportive environment, to look together deeply at the roots of violent acts and to find agreeable arrangements to respond to the situations. The presence of strong spiritual leaders is very helpful to support and maintain such an environment. We can look at this model for resolving conflicts that are arising right in the present moment; we do not have to wait many years to realize this.

America is burning with hatred. That is why we have to tell our Christian friends, "You are children of Christ. You have to return to yourselves and look deeply and find out why this violence happened."

Why is there so much hatred? What lies under all this violence? Why do they hate so much that they would sacrifice their own lives and bring about so much suffering to other people? Why would these young people, full of vitality and strength, have chosen to lose their lives, to commit such violence? That is what we have to understand.

We have to find a way to stop violence, of course. If need be, we have to put the men responsible in prison. But the important thing is to look deeply and ask, "Why did that happen? What responsibility do we have in that happening?"

**Question:** In your new book "Anger," you give an example of "compassionate listening" as a tool to heal families. Can that tool be used at a national level, and if so, how would that work?

**Answer:** This past summer a group of Palestinians and Israelis came to Plum Village, the Practice Center where I live in southern France, to learn and practice the arts of deep listening and loving speech. (Around 1600 people come to Plum Village each summer from over a dozen countries to learn how to bring peace and understanding to their daily lives.) The group of Palestinians and Israelis participated in the daily schedule of walking meditation, sitting meditation, and silent meals, and they also received training on how to listen and speak to each other in such a way that more understanding and peace could be possible between them as individuals and as nations.

With the guidance and support of the monks and nuns, they sat down and listened to each other. When one person spoke no one interrupted. Everyone practiced mindfulness of their breathing and listening in such a way that the other person felt heard and understood.

When people spoke, they refrained from using words of blame, hatred, and condemnation. They spoke in an atmosphere of trust and respect. Out of these dialogues the participating Palestinians and Israelis were very moved to realize that both sides suffer from fear. They appreciated the practice of deep listening and made arrangements to share

what they had learned with others upon returning to their home countries.

We recommended that the Palestinians and Israeli talk about their suffering, fears, and despair in a public forum that all the world could hear. We could all listen without judging, without condemning in order to understand the experience of both sides. This would prepare the ground of understanding for peace talks to occur.

At the end of the two weeks practice, they gave us a wonderful, wonderful report. One lady said, "They, this is the first time in my life that I see that peace in the Middle East is possible." Another young person said, "They, when I first arrived in Plum Village, I did not believe that Plum Village was something real because in the situation of my country, you live in constant fear and anger. When your children get onto the bus, you are not sure that they will be coming home. When you go to the market, you are not sure that you will survive to go home to your family. When you come to Plum Village, you see people looking at each other with loving kindness, talking with others kindly, walking peacefully, and doing everything mindfully. We did not believe that it was possible. It did not look real to me."

But in the peaceful setting of Plum Village, they were able to be together, to live together, and to listen to each other, and finally understanding came. They promised that when they returned to the Middle East, they would continue the practice. They will organize a day of practice every week at the local level and a day of mindfulness at the national level. And they plan to come to Plum Village as a bigger group to continue the practice.

The same situation now exists between the American people and people of Islamic and Arabic nations. There is much misunderstanding and lack of the kind of communication that hinders our ability to resolve our difficulties peacefully.

I think that if nations like America can organize that kind of setting where people can come together and spend their time practicing peace, then they will be able to calm down their feelings, their fears, and peaceful negotiation will be much easier.

**Question:** Is it realistic to think people can feel true compassion now?

**Answer:** Without understanding, compassion is impossible. When you understand the suffering of others, you do not have to force yourself to feel compassion, the door of your heart will just naturally open. All of the hijackers were so young and yet they sacrificed their lives for what? Why did they do that? What kind of deep suffering is there? It will require deep listening and deep looking to understand that.

We can begin right now to practice calming our anger, looking deeply at the roots of the hatred and violence in our society and in our world, and listening with compassion in order to hear and understand what we have not yet had the capacity to hear and to understand. When the drop of compassion begins from in our hearts and minds, we begin to develop concrete responses to our situation. When we have listened and looked deeply, we may begin to develop the energy of brotherhood and sisterhood between all nations, which is the deepest spiritual heritage of all religious and cultural traditions. In this way the peace and understanding within the whole world is increased day by day.

To develop the drop of compassion in our own heart is the only effective spiritual response to hatred and violence. That drop of compassion will be the result of calming our anger, looking deeply at the roots of our violence, deep listening, and understanding the suffering of everyone involved in the acts of hatred and violence.

## PEACE PILGRIM ON THE INTERNET

*by Bruce Nichols*

If anyone went looking for the Peace Pilgrim Website <[www.peacepilgrim.com](http://www.peacepilgrim.com)> between October 13th and 18th, you may have been surprised to find a message offering the URL for sale. Due to a misunderstanding and some miscommunication between the registrar and webmaster, the site was down for about 5 days (the first time since it's inception in 1995). We are happy to say that all is corrected and, in fact, improved. Information about Peace Pilgrim can now be accessed at both <[www.peacepilgrim.net](http://www.peacepilgrim.net)> (which has become the main site) and <[www.peacepilgrim.com](http://www.peacepilgrim.com)> (now a mirror site but functioning exactly as before). Your bookmarks will still work at either address but the <[www.peacepilgrim.net](http://www.peacepilgrim.net)> URL will become the preferred location since it more accurately reflects the not-for-profit nature of Peace Pilgrim's life and our work. The Friends of Peace Pilgrim website <[www.peacepilgrim.org](http://www.peacepilgrim.org)> was unaffected by the outage.

The Peace Pilgrim <<http://www.peacepilgrim.net>> (mirror site <<http://www.peacepilgrim.com>>) and Friends of Peace Pilgrim <<http://www.peacepilgrim.org>> websites continue to offer information and materials about Peace Pilgrim to people worldwide. The Peace Pilgrim site was the recent recipient of the Innerpeace.org "Hidden Treasure" award for its service to the cause of inner peace. The Friends of Peace Pilgrim website now has photos and information about our new home in Somerset, California including maps and directions, as well as information about our current offerings and activities. The Spanish language