



OMAHA CATHOLIC WORKER
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Dear Judge Steven Schwartz

Date: Nov 12, 2008

I recall the statement that was read at the Qwest Center by us, the Midwest Catholic Worker and Friends, on Oct 8, 2008 at the “ Strategic Space and Defense 2008” Conference. This speaks to some of the reasons why I did what I did. This will tell you why I feel that my action was NOT a criminal act, that neither fits a “Guilty” plea or a” Not guilty” plea, nor a plea of “NO Contest”.

Read the Statement:

Show the Judge the banner. Jack Mc Caslin helped me unfurl the banner.

In addition: I am a Christian and a Catholic Worker (www.catholicworker.org). Catholic Workers around the U.S. live closely with the poor, offer hospitality to homeless people in their homes, provide food to the hungry and resist militarism in all of its manifestations. Our motto is the teachings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount”. The “Strategic Space and Defense 2008” conference is only one of those manifestations of evil not mentioned in the Sermon on the Mount”.

I live at the Omaha Catholic Worker (the OCW). We opened in October of 2006. Our community offer’s hospitality to 5 homeless men, who often are struggling with drug and alcohol issues, mental health struggles, lack of meaningful work and abandonment from their biological families.

With the irrational expense of all military weaponry and its Space and Satellite communication systems at OFFUTT AFB, home of STRATCOM, I live respectfully and joyfully with the victims of an upside down economic system that values death machines more than human people. People loved and created by our Creator God.

We at the OCW celebrate life among God’s precious poor, in dark contrast to the millions of dollars spent on space weaponry, and big conference gala events, big music bands, and key note speakers from a 3 day annual conference here in Omaha.

I only wish you could hear the keynote speakers around our dining room table each and every night at 6 pm. I invite you to join us for dinner any night at 6pm. Come as you are. Bring an appetite and an openness to hear the keynote speakers.

As a Catholic Worker, I am a Catholic follower of Jesus of Nazareth. My Allegiance is solely to him. “Jesus is Lord” , was in the early church a political statement as well as religious statement sung often among early Christians in contrast to the allegiance paid to the local magistrates, judges and emperors of the time. My allegiance goes to only one Lord that is Jesus. There is nothing about my spirituality that is dualistic and recognizing two authorities. That would be very lukewarm of me.

I pray and struggle to commit myself each day to Jesus, my Lord and his New Way of nonviolent love and life of discipleship. I fail a lot at doing this perfectly. I do this as my commitment to further his mission to co-create the Reign of God on “earth as it is in heaven”.

I expect to be found Guilty today. I have been found guilty in many other courts as well for similar action. I have been to county jails, Federal prison, and I am not ashamed or afraid of them. I have met saints and sinners among the prisoners and prison guards.

I am incorrigible. I am not able to be rehabilitated. I am not able to be punished for my actions. I am not cooperative enough to be considered for probation, and just “try and keep my nose clean, and stay out of trouble”.

I also do not go out of my way to just violate any law I want, here in Douglas County and Nebraska at my own will. Generally I am a very lawful person in that respect, and I see the need for most laws in society. I got plenty of work at home for me to do.

However, I will again enter the Qwest Center in October of 2009 if the same STRATCOM conference will be there. I must. The poor I live with need a voice of prophetic opposition. I choose to be that voice. Last night at our dinner table, the men thanked me and wished me well in court. I wished them well in their day’s activities as well. I wish you well, in hearing me.

I will not pay a fine. Any money given to the OCW goes directly to the needs of the poor and nothing more. It does not pay me a salary or wage. We live on the grace of God and good people’s donations and we do this in voluntary poverty as our founders, Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin has asked of us (www.catholicworker.org).

I give to you Judge Steven Schwartz, my respect due to your office.

However, not to be rude to you, if a poor person or any person gave to me one thin dime outside or inside this courtroom to pay a fine, I would have to, in good conscience refuse to accept.

Money given for fines just perpetuates a system of injustice. I ask for No Probation. I ask only to be found’ NOT GUILTY” of a crime. What I did should not be a crime.

My behavior was very cordial to all people at the Qwest Center and to the police and very respectful. This charge of "Refusal to leave" is often used at the Qwest Center for those people who are loud, rude, intoxicated and belligerent and obnoxious... I was neither of those and the police officers will attest to just that. Our arrest was all video taped by the Omaha Police Dept. Please ask to see it before you make your judgment.

I do not want to go to jail. I am not a martyr. I do not like jail. I have been in Douglas County Jail before. However, I will accept it with joy, if you so choose.

If you chose a fine, I will not pay it. I ask for an alternative jail sentence, or to be let go free. I will not accept community service. (At this sentence the Judge smiled at me with a smirk, I think recalling his bluff offer to Peg Gallagher) What we were about at the Qwest Center is a community service. I do my community service among the poor at home. I am supposed to be home tonight for dinner at 6 p.m.

When I was arrested for the very same charge October of 2007, Judge Thomas McQuade gave to me an alternative sentence of 2 days in jail as an alternative to a fine and court costs amounting to \$175.00. He told me that I would be able to serve my 2 days in jail within a 90 period of my choosing. I chose some time in December and was released the very next day. I was thankful.

That is a possible alternative to suggest to you as well. If you are so inclined.

As long as OFFUTTAFB and the City of Omaha, Douglas County Sheriff's office, the Omaha Chamber of Commerce and the Chamber of Commerce of Bellevue and Sarpy County sponsor an event like this, at the Qwest Center, I will be returning each and every time.

The path to a Nonviolent peaceful world here on planet Earth, STARTS with peaceful nonviolent direct action, carried on by nonviolent people as disrupting as it may feel.

We will carry on, and I will do what my conscience guides me to do.

Thanks so much, Jerry Ebner

updated: on Nov. 13, 2009