
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN THE PROPHETIC VOICE: THE PEDAGOGY OF EILEEN EGAN

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This article offers an overview of the life and work of Eileen Egan, a contemporary and passionate Christian leader whose values can inform religious education today. Peace educators, social activists, service learning directors, and Catholic political leaders have much to learn from her example and zeal.

Eileen Egan was one of the leading Catholic peace activists of the 20th century. She was the first layperson to work with Catholic Relief Services, founded Pax Christi USA, brought Mother Teresa's work to the attention of the world community, was a companion to Dorothy Day, and served as associate editor of the *Catholic Worker* for 30 years. Founding organizations for justice and peace, highlighting the violence inherent in the plight of the refugee, advocating for reform as journalist and author, pointing to the fresh exemplars of the character of Christ in the witness of Mother Teresa and Dorothy Day, calling forth an integrative understanding of Catholic social teachings – these are the legacies of Egan's lifelong commitment to international service and peacemaking.

In one of the many laudatory obituaries written about her in the fall of 2000, Jordan in *Commonweal* paid tribute to a woman who “was small of body, but brilliant of mind, one who spent a lifetime both actively serving the victims of war and promoting alternatives to armed conflict” (p. 6). In a review of her book, *Peace Be with You*, published a year before her death, Cunningham, a noted writer on spirituality, called Egan “one of the most remarkable Catholic women of our time” (2000, p. 32).

Sympathy for the suffering person, respect for those whose lives are guided by conscience, a wariness of civil authorities – these were the legacies from Egan's childhood experiences in an Irish Catholic family living in Protestant Wales, then in young adulthood as an émigré transplanted to New York City. Egan would honor that legacy as she refused over the course of

her life to permit her faith to be co-opted by nationalism, by patriotism, or, ultimately, by a war-sanctioning religious tradition she found corrupting of the message of Christ. But she loved the Church. With prophetic passion, she rooted the message of peace with a Catholic sensibility, working to ground an advocacy for peace in the mind of the Church, to critique Christian accommodation with nation and culture, and to permeate the Catholic consciousness and Catholic structures with the rich tradition and witness of Gospel nonviolence.

Yet hers remains a life and witness of relatively unapplauded achievement. This paper will bring forward with new attention Egan's life and life stance, and using the metaphors "prophet," "advocate," and "exemplar," bring her pedagogy and distinctive contribution to a reframing of a Catholic ethos of peace into conversation with educators and religious educators. The paper argues that her critical questioning of the traditions, assumptions, and premises of Catholic teaching on war and peace is a sign of the emancipatory, transformative learning that is at the heart of what it means to engage in religious education.

"THESE WORKS OF LOVE": A LIFE OF PEACEMAKING

"I opened my eyes to World War I. War was actively opposed in our house" (E. Egan, personal communication, Summer 2000). This early reminiscence, recounted in an interview conducted the year before her death, forms a frame for what would be Eileen Egan's lifelong, uncompromised hatred of war and the tenacity and courage required to sustain her prophetic challenge to culture, society, and Church.

THE FORMATIVE YEARS

Born in Wales in late December 1911, Egan was the oldest of six children born to Irish emigrants. In countless interviews, Egan always attributed her early and deep-felt faith and commitment to justice to the enduring influence of her mother. "My mother felt empires were noxious. Ireland was only one example of the harm they could do; India was another. But she expressed her views with gentleness. She wanted Ireland to be free, but not by violence" (as cited in Anderson, 1996, p. 22).

In 1926, relatives in the United States successfully urged the Egans to migrate. The family settled in Manhattan and into their new urban life. Egan graduated from Hunter College in 1935, then taught high school English and speech in New York City public schools to help support her family. She also made sporadic visits to Portugal during these years, where she had a commitment from the National Catholic News Service to use her articles chronicling the plight of the growing body of refugees escaping from Europe.

She also began taking graduate courses at the New School for Social Research where many scholars from Nazi Germany taught economics, sociology, and history, the so-called University in Exile. Egan described this time as a search for meaning in the social, economic, and political tides that were sweeping the human family. What revolted her, she wrote, was the unquestioned acceptance of violence in pursuit of what were stated as idealistic ends: "There had to be another answer, another solution that did not involve or justify taking human life" (Egan, 1988c, p. 12).

"PEACE, POVERTY, AND MERCIFUL SERVICE": DOROTHY DAY AND THE CATHOLIC WORKER

By the early 1940s, Egan had found an answer in the Catholic Worker Movement. Cut to the quick by its impassioned but shocking assertion of neutrality on the issue of Spain's Civil War, Egan saw in the Worker the abhorrence of war, the dignity of the human person assailed not only in violence but in the depersonalized systems of capitalism and communism, and the commitment to the works of mercy that had been deeply imbued in her by her mother. The U.S. Catholic hierarchy at the time was an active supporter of Franco and opposed American arms shipments to the Loyalist government. "The Catholic Worker seemed to be a door to my new future. It seemed my only option" (E. Egan, personal communication, Summer 2000).

Thus began a lifelong association with the Worker and a profound friendship with Dorothy Day, formed on a shared vision that only an infusion of compassion through works of mercy could trump the works of war. Egan was a prolific contributor to the *Catholic Worker* and became its associate editor in 1964. In later years, she took over the arranging of Day's lecture tours and accompanied her on many of them. Egan would go on to write several biographic essays of Dorothy Day. Egan's personal accounts of her friendship and experiences with Day are often cited as "primary sources" in other biographic treatment of Day. With unabashed admiration, she credited Day, with her linkage of merciful service, poverty, and peace, with a revival of a Catholic commitment to nonviolence, putting flesh on the ancient maxim, "The church abhors bloodshed" (1988b, p. 84). Throughout each chronicling, Egan raised up the prophetic witness of a "woman who saw her peace fellowship not as a special compartment of her life, but as the fruit and expression of a life lived in the light of the Incarnation" (1999, p. 262).

"WORKS OF MERCY, WORKS OF PEACE": CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES

In her professional life, Egan became the "sacrament" of the Catholic

Worker, taking the works of mercy as far as possible into the midst of war. In 1943, Egan became the first lay person, first overseas staff representative, and first woman to join the newly formed Catholic Relief Services (CRS), a partnership that would last for 4 decades. "From the beginning, I saw CRS as an extension of my peace work," Egan recounted in an interview (E. Egan, personal communication, Summer 2000). She would soon come to see in CRS work a reversing of the works of war, works of mercy as a protest against the works of war.

In what was to become an impressive model of inter-agency collaboration, Egan's CRS assignment changed in 1946 to make official the link between CRS and the National Council of Catholic Women (NCCW) that she had been forging through informal, personal networking. Egan became a conduit connecting millions of Catholic women with the needs of post-war Europe, needs Egan (1988a) highlighted through articles, pamphlets, speaking engagements, and tours of resettlement camps. She then prepared the administrative infrastructures to carry out millions of dollars of economic development projects and refugee relief from Hong Kong to India, from Korea to Uganda, over the next 40 years.

With Egan's recommendation, one of the recipients of an NCCW gift was Mother Teresa and her Calcutta hostel. Later, encouraged by Egan to make her first visit outside India since her arrival there 31 years earlier, Mother Teresa addressed the 1960 NCCW convention in Las Vegas. Over 3,000 delegates representing 10 million Catholic women were introduced to this woman whom Egan saw as the voice of Asia's need and Asia's dignity.

Egan's travels with CRS gave her firsthand experience with the effects of modern warfare, waged not just against armies but against whole populations, now bearing the collateral damage of unspeakable human suffering and unspeakable human loss. In what was to become a key pillar of her own developing theology of peace, Egan saw in war what she called the reversal of the works of mercy:

In point of fact, every one of the corporal works of mercy is literally reversed in total war. Rather than shelter the shelterless, we destroy the shelter of man; rather than feed the hungry, we make the children of man hungry for generations by uprooting them and scorching and mining their fruitful fields; rather than clothe the naked, we raze the productive plants that make the cloth that covers them; rather than ransom the captive, we make a captive of every member of the enemy nation we can lay our hands on; rather than heal the sick, we hasten their death by blockading their supplies of goods and medicines. And to make the unspeakable cycle complete, we unbury the dead. (as cited in O'Sullivan-Barra, 1954, p. 21)

In 1978, Egan retired from full-time active service with CRS. In 1996, CRS honored her by creating the annual Eileen Egan Journalism Awards to recognize the vital contribution of Catholic journalists who have worked to raise awareness of the causes of suffering and to promote social justice in the developing world.

“UNDER THE JUDGMENT OF LOVE”: VATICAN II AND PEACE

In 1965, in an example of mutual support, Day and Egan joined to move their prophetic voices to the public square that is St. Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican. The nature of modern warfare was forcing the Church to examine war as a politically rational tool in a new light. Egan had removed herself from the CRS payroll for a period to be part of a lobby for peace at the Second Vatican Council’s final sessions scheduled to include deliberations on peace and war.

A draft of “Schema XIII – On Making Lasting Peace,” to be included in the document that would come to be known as *Gaudium et Spes* or *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* (Vatican Council II, 1987), had been leaked, and the American pacifist community was horrified to learn that it included a statement to the effect that, in time of war, the presumption of justice was to be with one’s own government. The challenge, as Egan (1988b) described it: finding a way to let the Council bishops know that there was another strand of opinion in U.S. Catholicism which supported a commitment to Gospel nonviolence, the right of conscientious objection, the end to the arms race, and the repudiation of nuclear weapons and all warfare in the nuclear age.

To prepare to influence the Council in its deliberations, Egan edited a special edition of the *Catholic Worker* on the subject of war and peace. Egan (1965) wrote the lead editorial, “We Are All Under Judgment.” The eight-page issue was airmailed to all Catholic bishops in anticipation of deliberations.

At the Council, Egan made personal contact daily with cardinals and bishops. On December 6, 1965, *Gaudium et Spes* was approved. In it, the Council confirmed that national defense is the only possible rationale for force, which is only legitimate when used as a last resort and when restrained by the principles of proportionality and noncombatant immunity. Included in the document was a ringing denunciation of any attack on population centers with weapons of mass destruction as a “crime against God and man” that “merits unequivocal and unhesitating condemnation” (Vatican Council II, 1987, §80). The Second Vatican Council singled out blind obedience for censure and called the arms race a “treacherous trap for humanity” (§81). The Council also clearly spelled out the right of Catholics to be recognized as conscientious objectors provided they accept some other form of service to the human community.

The American peace lobby rejoiced at the Council's call for an evaluation of war with an entirely new attitude and its call to "educate the minds of men to renewed sentiments for peace" (Vatican Council II, 1987, §82). They applauded the one solemn and absolute anathema of the Council: the wholesale condemnation of indiscriminate war. As Egan was to recount several times in her self-effacing style, "Whether the witness of prayer and fasting or the mailing of the *Catholic Worker* to the world's bishops had any effect on the final outcome can never be assessed or known. What is important is that it occurred and that it took place as lay action" (1988b, p. 102).

“LOVING DISAGREEMENT”: U.S. CATHOLICS AND PEACE

The failure of the Council to condemn unequivocally the possession of nuclear weapons – and the preparation for war that possession implies – continued to be a point of impassioned, lifelong concern for Egan. It would be the subject of theological reflection in the 1983 National Conference of Catholic Bishops' pastoral letter, *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response*. Egan's own work, her essay, "The Beatitudes, the Works of Mercy, and Pacifism" (1980a), arguing that war reverses the Incarnation, obliterating by bombs and blockades the recognition of Christ in the face of the homeless and hungry, was referenced in the pastoral, the only work by a woman so cited.

When the pastoral was released, Egan applauded its endorsement of pacifism and active nonviolence as legitimate and authentic expressions of Christian citizenship. But she rejected the notion that pluralism at the level of moral theory or moral rightness concerning matters of war and peace was possible. She found little comfort in the Bishops' endorsement of vocational pacifism and would continue to work for an institutionalized expression of that commitment throughout her life.

“JESUS IN DISTRESSING DISGUISE”: MOTHER TERESA, THE COUNTERSIGN

Another prophetic witness Egan brought to bear comes in the theological portrait she would draw of Mother Teresa. Her association with Mother Teresa had begun in 1955 on a CRS mission to Calcutta. At that time Mother Teresa and her work were not universally known. Against much local opposition, she had just opened her first home for the dying. She took Egan on a tour where, Egan often recounted later, much to her shame she had turned away in instinctual revulsion from the "rows of pallets with the wasted bodies and the suppurating sores" (1999, p. 149). For Egan, the eventual reframing of that experience came from Mother Teresa herself:

Our work calls us to see Jesus in everyone. He has told us that he is the hungry one. He is the thirsty one. He is the naked one. He is the one who is suffering. These are the treasures. They are Jesus. Each one is Jesus in his distressing disguise. (Egan, 1999, p. 149)

In 1960, Egan's role as "shepherdess" for Mother Teresa continued post-NCCW Las Vegas Convention. She orchestrated a New York City grand tour, cementing ties among CRS, the United Nations World Health Organization, and the Missionaries of Charity, prompting a steady increase in the flow of funds and medicine to Calcutta, Bengal, all of India, and eventually to other areas outside of India where the sisters worked, and arranging a friendship-forging meeting with Day at Maryhouse. "How alike these two visionaries were," Egan wrote. "Mother Teresa served the dying of the scourged city, seeing each one as Jesus in distressing disguise. Dorothy Day reminded Christians that Jesus likened salvation to how we act toward him in his disguise of frail, ordinary humanity" (1999, pp. 296-297).

Egan authored four books on the writings and spirituality of Mother Teresa. Her biography of Mother Teresa, *Such a Vision of the Street* (1986), won the coveted Christopher Book Award in 1985. In these works and in other articles and short biographies of Mother Teresa, Egan spoke often of her as a countersign, "one who offered the hope that the world was not condemned, that a world created out of love and redeemed by love might also be purified by love" (1986, p. 481). Responding to critics who charged that "palliative charity" alone would never change the unjust structures behind the poverty, suffering, and death that made it necessary, Egan argued that Mother Teresa's revolutionary love does serve as an accusatory finger, a finger pointing the way toward "structures that do not marginalize, that do not ignore, that do not produce refugees" (1980b, p. 242).

ORGANIZING FOR PEACE

Another marker in Egan's lifelong commitment to peace would be her role in the founding of the American Pax Association and Pax Christi USA. Trying to spread the message of peace with a Catholic sensibility and wanting to ground an advocacy for peace in the mind of the Church, Pax focused its energies on lobbying for peace within the institutional Church rather than on reform of political structures, even as it affirmed the individual as the one called to respond to Church teachings on war and peace. Its goal was to educate and convert individual Catholics to a stance for peace and to persuade the hierarchy to broaden and deepen the public peace witness of the Church.

Egan had embraced early on the term "Gospel nonviolence" to describe her stance, seeing in it the call to both the active struggle against evil by non-violent means and the active rebuilding of the world that the word "pacifist"

might veil. She and Thomas Merton carried on a rich personal correspondence in the mid-1960s, weighing the use of the word “pacifist” in the Pax movement. Both agreed that it had been understood historically in the context of individualism and subjectivism, and therefore had been religiously marginalized. “Gospel nonviolence” and “Gospel peacemaking” – actively reconciling differences through creative, communally-based initiatives – would be the clarion call of the new peace movement to the Church, as it had been in Egan’s writings and thought for several years.

THE RIGHT TO REFUSE TO KILL

Part of Egan’s prophetic stance consistently focused on the right of conscience in deciding fundamental issues of war and peace. During the mid-1960s, Egan was asked to represent Pax Romana, the international movement for Catholic graduates and students, as a non-governmental organization at the United Nations. Over the next 20 years, with her well-honed repertoire of persistent poking and prodding, Egan used this forum to press for the sanctioning of conscientious objection as a fundamental, universal human right. Egan argued that surely the United Nations, the organization of the world’s peoples dedicated to a world without war, should protect what she called the right to refuse to kill.

The persistent lobbying by Egan, Quaker activists, and War Resisters International, a non-religious peace group, are credited with moving conscientious objection to the agenda of the 27th U.N. Commission on Human Rights held in Geneva in 1971. The issue languished there for the next 17 years, subject to the vagaries of East-West relations and continued pressure from Egan and others. In 1987, post-*glasnost*, the Commission did approve the landmark resolution: “Conscientious objection to military service should be considered a legitimate exercise of the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights” (Egan, 1999, p. 234). Egan recalled the achievement with great satisfaction. “I think that’s one of the happiest things in my life,” she told one interviewer, “that I got that into the UN system” (Hartnagel, 1996, p. 1). Jegen, who was serving as Pax Christi’s NGO representative at the time, credits Egan’s reframing of conscientious objection as the right to refuse to kill as one major contribution in the decision of the UN delegates.

“THE SEAMLESS GARMENT”: LIFE, ALL OF A PIECE

Although the phrase “seamless garment” and the theological controlling metaphor and unifying image it came to represent in Catholic social teaching is associated with Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, it was Egan who first

coined it in a 1981 Pax Christi publication, *The Unborn Child and the Protection of Life*. The pamphlet was part of a campaign to make obvious to the Catholic hierarchy the need for consistency in linking anti-abortion and anti-nuclearism. Egan (1981) wrote, "In common with the early followers of Jesus, we view the protection of all life, from its conception to its end, as a seamless garment." Egan would go on to use seamless garment as a template for criticizing Church education and advocacy efforts, where, as she saw it, right to life had been defined too narrowly as only a sexual reproduction issue. The Seamless Garment Network, a coalition of now over 160 member organizations, was founded in 1987 to advocate for the expression of this consistent ethical vision of the value of life in policy, legislation, and personal decision making.

LEGACY OF PEACE

In her final years, Egan did not shy away from the challenges of what it would mean to be faithful to a pacifist stance in a post-Cold War world where, as she termed it, the "fearful symmetry" of nuclear stalemates had been replaced with new anguishes: bloodletting in clan warfare, ethnic cleansing, rape as a sanctioned military tool, the difficult decision to use force to defend or establish the basic human rights ennobled in Pope John XXIII's *Pacem in Terris* (1963) but so brutally violated in Somalia, East Timor, Rwanda, and Bosnia. The reshaped world does not call for a reshaping of Gospel nonviolence, she would still steadfastly proclaim, but rather, new and crucial teaching tasks answered with new forms of witness.

Egan's opposition to war was complete. Her capstone work *Peace Be With You: Justified Warfare or the Way of Nonviolence* (1999), part history and theology, part biography and personal memoir, is a summa of a lifetime of peacemaking. In it she was to make her final sweeping historical and theological arguments for severing the just war theory from any Gospel endorsement or accommodation. One month before the end of her life, she could still write with hope and confidence, "We live in a graced time when war, having shown its most evil and destructive face, has lost any glamour or glory" (E. Egan, personal communication, Summer 2000).

On October 7, 2000, Egan died at St. Vincent's Hospital in New York at the age of 88. "How she was a peacemaker! How she loathed war with an intensity," said Franciscan Father Vianney Devlin in her funeral homily. Nurtured in her nursery in Wales, strengthened by her experiences in assuaging the horrors of war, solidified by the visions of Dorothy Day and Mother Teresa, she never wavered in her zeal and single-minded dedication to Gospel nonviolence as the imprimatur of Christian discipleship.

TOWARD A PEDAGOGY OF PEACEMAKING

Egan never wrote a curriculum nor taught in a classroom. Yet within the story of her life and life stance, we find the markers that honor what it means to educate, the critical probing and questioning of assumptions and the ferreting out of points of view that call us to embrace a new way of retrieving the richness of our religious traditions. In her role as prophet, advocate, and exemplar, one can find resources for religious educators who are willing to make a more intentional commitment to educate for peace and justice.

Egan shows that an authentic manifestation of religious education is a willingness to be a herald to the Church from within the Church. She once described the Pax Christi agenda as addressing itself to the “long haul of changing the mindset of a great lumbering church on the subject of peace and war” (1996, p. 44). Egan’s challenge in bringing a new message of peace to the Church is an explicit acknowledgement of the teaching function of the Church as well, a power for transformation of persons and social structures that, in her opinion, had been domesticated or squandered or co-opted, but a power nonetheless. Seeming to take her “pedagogical marching orders” from what O’Hare would describe as the “chief tool of peace and justice education – classical doctrine, ethically retrieved” (1986, p. 45), Egan made accessible the traditions of her religious community even as she made manifest the personal transformation required to reshape those traditions and the society they purport to serve. Her passion was reclaiming and reframing the demands of discipleship found in the rich traditions of the Church as a resource in forming Catholic conscience and catechism. Her critical questioning of the traditions, assumptions, and premises of Catholic teaching on war and peace – she who was always self-consciously Catholic – is a sign of what religious educator Regan (2002) might describe as the emancipatory, transformative learning that is at the heart of what it means to engage in religious education.

A PEDAGOGY OF PROPHECY

Egan points to the power of the prophet in the curriculum of those who would educate for peace and justice. Her life witness is replete with examples of her prophetic voice, basing her authority on what Mongoven (2000) calls the knowledge of the religious tradition, personal insight and experience of God, and passion for justice. In her prophetic word (written, spoken, and embodied), she both announced the reign of God revealed in the handing on of traditions of nonviolence and mercy that make that reign present, visible, and possible, and denounced traditions that, in her opinion, ran counter to Gospel values. Biblical scholar and educator Brueggemann (1978) in *The Prophetic Imagination* describes what has come to form the

classic definition of this prophetic ministry: “to nurture, nourish, and evoke a consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us” (p. 13). Prophets fight against the domestication of the radical call to live out the Gospel. They criticize the dominant consciousness of the culture, engaging in a “rejection and delegitimization of the present order of things” (p. 13). What we might term Egan’s methodology – bringing into dialogue and critical reflection scriptural imperatives and Church history and tradition with her own experiences of war and peace – finds a home in what Brueggemann labels the task of prophetic ministry.

As Brueggemann (1978) notes, one of the tasks of the prophet is an engagement with the battle for a system of language, what he labels an embracing of a language beyond analysis or coercion needed to express a vision of the Reign of God as an alternative to the world of the dominant culture. Prophetic speech is an invitation to see with the perspective of the passion of God, to “create a different epistemology out of which another community might emerge” (p. 50). Egan’s pedagogy of peacemaking takes Brueggemann’s challenge seriously. Her distinctive contribution to a reframing of a Catholic ethos of peace shows both the vision and vocabulary of prophetic witness, using language to challenge the dominant cultures within Church and world on war and peace. It was Egan who saw in conscientious objection the right to refuse to kill; saw in war the social organization for mass killing; saw in nuclear weapons instruments of indiscriminate genocide; saw in works of war the reversal of the works of mercy; saw in the nuclear deterrent the threat of an Auschwitz crematoria of the sky; saw non-violence as the heart of the Gospel and love of enemy as its most distinctive teaching; and saw the dignity of all life wrapped in its seamless garment.

Several contemporary religious educators have spelled out more clearly the linkage between the prophetic voice and religious education. With the voice of the prophet, religious educators guide the community in developing a critical consciousness, helping it to discern when to say yes and no. Prophets emerge from the community and call it to reformation and renewal. As prophets, catechists lead their communities to examine the signs of the times through the lens of Gospel values. Saying yes to their prophetic ministry, catechists articulate and nurture a vision of reality past, present, and future, naming the “contradiction between the present experience and the vision of God” (Mongoven, 2000, p. 276), raising up the implicit understandings and assumptions that have forged the present, and proclaiming, with a reframed religious imagination, that a new future infused with God’s love and fidelity is possible (Regan, 2002).

In her discernment and engagement with Scripture and Church history in dialogue with her own experiences of war and peace, Egan also points to the commitment to critical reflection inherent in the role of prophet that is a

foundational marker of what it means to educate. Within her prophetic approach to retrieving the richness of the Christian tradition, we find the probing and questioning of assumptions and the ferreting out of points of view required in both making accessible the tradition and calling for an authentic “appropriation” that will lead to transformation. Egan once wrote, “It is my contention that it is a special task of the Christian to be the voice of the victims of history as historian, as critic and prophet, and as mythbreaker for the history of his own time” (1968, p. 3). Her life stands as a prophetic critique of what she saw as the “unholy alliance” of Church with its *realpolitik* accommodation to culture in issues of war and peace.

PEDAGOGY OF ADVOCACY

Egan’s life and life stance point to both the role of advocate inherent in religious education and, for some, the role of founder. Her passionate commitment to an ethos of pacifism as an absolute spiritual value was matched in equal measure with a commitment to peace advocacy. Harris and Moran (1998) describe advocacy as “a particular and peculiar form of speech, of the word. It is speech undertaken on behalf of others and/or for the cause of others” (p. 139). Lobbying Church and organizations through personal presence, tracts, pamphlets, brochures, essays, books, speeches, and her writing and editing of the *Catholic Worker*, Egan advocated for the cause of peacemaking and the institutional expression of that commitment.

Is advocacy an authentic expression of what it means to educate for peace and justice? A theme common to religious educators is that all education (the foundation on which religious education rests) must facilitate change and transformation. Boys (1983) spells out “advocate,” rallying others to a cause, as one way that a teacher may properly provide the resources by which people might come to claim information, concepts, and attitudes in their work for justice. Part of Egan’s legacy as peacemaker is a record of embracing the critical reflection and raising-to-consciousness of the presuppositions, traditions, and interpretations that have forged Catholic social teaching. As such, she reminds us that implicit within the “religious educator as advocate” metaphor is the “see, judge, and act” construct foundational to both traditional and contemporary education and religious education theorists, recognizing as they do the political nature of educational activity. The Gospel is a public and political summons. The freedom, peace, justice, and love Jesus spoke of are concrete realities, calling for social, structural, and political expression. Faith cannot be lived ahistorically or apolitically.

Egan’s legacy as advocate and founder also points to the broadening of the definitions of the arenas of religious education beyond classroom, curriculum, and text, and calls religious educators to be ever alert to new ven-

ues and partners in peacemaking. As Boys (1989) contends, "One who would offer leadership in the Catholic community on issues of peace and justice needs to think across varied situations and institutions, and to think relationally in order to allocate financial and human resources" (p. 213). Egan reminds religious educators that the "publics of education" may be political, pedagogical, or personal.

Behind Egan's pedagogical resume is also the recognition that organizations have power to prevent or resolve conflict through the advocacy work of collaboration and skill building. Organizations such as Pax Christi, Bread for the World, Amnesty International, death penalty reform groups, and what Boys terms peace and justice centers carry tremendous educational power and potential through their newsletters, internships, speakers bureaus, conventions, lobbying, and advocacy information packets and through prayer vigils, rallies, and other kinds of symbolic activity.

But it is in the very person of the religious educator that a curriculum of advocacy might be embodied most boldly and profoundly. Religious educator Durka (2002) makes this point in *The Teacher's Calling*. Teachers must not shy away from what it might mean to teach courageously, with the passion of both nurturing the "imagination of a new future" (p. 17) and then showing how it is possible to move from what is to what is not yet. The zeal and passion of advocacy can be one way to express the invitation inherent in good religious education.

THE EXEMPLAR AS PEDAGOGUE

Egan's own witness, experience, life, and action and her dedication to unveiling the Good News embodied in the lives of Day, Mother Teresa, and other prophets of peace speak to "the power of the stake of the convinced person in the world" (McClendon, 1990, pp. 37-38). In many ways, in her own person we can see a vehicle for integration, bringing the implications of the message of Day to the Church and the spirituality of Mother Teresa to the lay person. In her own person, we find a synthesis of uncompromised charity and a prophetic call to justice. When "Gospel nonviolence" and "Gospel peacemaking" would, over time, become the clarion call of a new peace movement in the Catholic Church in the United States at the end of the 20th century, it would draw on the rich resource in Egan's prolific and prophetic writings, organizing, and advocacy, and on the power of her personal witness.

Under the rubric of a discussion of the communion of the saints, it has been theologians and spiritual writers who have traditionally addressed more forthrightly the transformative and pedagogical power of the exemplar. In these adventure stories of life and faith, creative models of our holiness continue to create new history in the Church, making present the Christ, the

inexhaustible model, a discovery for each new generation, they have contended (Rahner, 1967). The renewed interest in “mediating figures” in the popular religious press would seem to further endorse exemplars and their patterning of the human life of faith as important conversation partners with those dedicated to the transformative learning that leads to social change. The narratives like those of Day and Mother Teresa so carefully crafted by Egan can, as Tilley (1990) describes it, “truly become my own story...showing me how to move from the injustice of my life to a justified life or from violence to peace” (pp. 16-17)

In this regard, Egan’s work also points to the power of theological biography as important methodology in religious education. This approach, broadly defined as an exploration of the religious convictions embodied in the narrative of a life story and the social, historical, and experiential perspectives that give theological truths a shape (Goldberg, 1982) has, for the most part, focused on the remaking of theology using narrative and biography. For example, all liberation theologies begin with the naming and claiming of the narrative base of the participants’ own experience. Recognition of the power of the exemplar sharpens the connection between narrative and religious education.

CONNECTIONS: A PEDAGOGY OF PEACEMAKING

Limning the template of Egan’s life and life stance as prophet, advocate, and exemplar can reveal many of the dimensions of what educator Hessel (1982) names as a pedagogy demanding “a critical consciousness and hopeful vision that ennobles [us] to evaluate events and act courageously to change dominant systems, encounter fresh claims and ideas of justice, and work for *shalom*” (p. 111). However, two areas of Egan’s methodology in peacemaking need to be clarified in order that Hessel’s liberating pedagogy might be demonstrated: her record of embracing the socio-political implications of all education and the invitation to critical reflection that distinguishes education from catechesis.

With the important exception of her lobbying at the United Nations, Egan’s single-minded focus on reform of the Church leaves a legacy of a pedagogy of peacemaking that shows a less-than-full embrace of the socio-political implications of what most theorists would agree is a key component of religious education. Political imagination leading to legislation, judicial review, allocation of resources, governance, use of power – these are the appropriate discernment and outgrowth of religious education. Educator Groome (1991), for example, makes “educating for a public church” a key component of shared praxis methodology which should “shape people’s politics as much as their prayers....It is impossible to educate for love, justice,

peace, and so on toward all humankind and remain ‘apolitical’” (pp. 12-13). Religious education must move beyond nurture and domestication to a wider educational ecology where the Church is in dialectic with the world as an effective symbol of justice and peace, empowering what Groome describes as a “faith that does justice for peace” (p. 397).

Egan’s pacifism was never nurtured in a sectarian withdrawal or communal enclave. Her ethic of discipleship was directed to informing the obligations of citizenship, and she always affirmed that the Church has a positive responsibility to participate in the building of a more peaceful world of justice. But her “public square” was almost exclusively St. Peter’s Square. While Egan worked to expand the Catholic Worker communitarian ideals to include the life and witness of the Church, her pedagogy carries a different emphasis and focus than the model that Cardinal Bernardin used in bringing the “seamless garment of life” debate to the public square with all its unabashedly political known and unknown ramifications.

Too, what we might label Egan’s methodology, a pedagogy of prophetic advocacy and proclamation, carries with it a certain earnestness and potential didacticism that must be carefully nuanced in finding its appropriate place in an “invitational” religious education that would not be mistaken for indoctrination. “Education is infinitely more complex and fraught with ambiguity, diversity, and slowness than are proclamation and indoctrination. Ultimately, however, it is the only just way of promoting justice” (Boys, 1983, pp. 98-99). We have no example of Egan conducting a shared praxis workshop at the parish level, and her writings rarely show the wrestling with the response to those who question the absolutizing of human life over other values such as justice, freedom, and human rights or how we live “between the times” in a human community distorted by sin, arrogance, and greed. Yet her resume – transnational, international, ecumenical, lay and hierarchical, men and women in friendships and professional and vocational associations all of a piece – shows an incredible commitment to be dialogical. For the religious educator, the challenge will be to make certain that dialogue leads to analysis and understanding, not paralysis.

How has Eileen Egan influenced the Church’s thinking about war and peace even as the manifestation of Gospel nonviolence remains illusive in our own day? This work has argued that in Egan we do see a model for yearning for, working for, and educating for a world of peace. She has helped to translate the language of the prophetic, radical Gospel ideal of peace from a personal ethic to the mission of the Church.

Egan shares in the Catholic Worker’s contribution in addressing major questions on the intersection of religion, culture, and politics and in challenging the assumptions of the relationship between faith and social reform. Historian Piehl (1982) noted how Egan and others in the Catholic Worker

offered a “radically alternative model of what it might mean to be both American and Catholic,” a distinct melding of “contemplative Catholic spirituality and modern forms of social action” (pp. xi-xii). Engaging in and shaping that conversation came to define the U.S. peace movement in the 20th century. In the transcription of that conversation is the rigorous, intellectually engaged embrace of Catholic spirituality with a social conscience that is Egan’s hallmark. As Catholic Worker, as Pax Christi founder, as United Nations lobbyist, as journalist, author, and activist, Egan played a critical and unique role in moving forward the dialogue within the Church on pacifism as a clear ethical alternative to the just war criteria and applying just war criteria critically to the nuclear age. Her ministry of accompaniment with Dorothy Day and Mother Teresa modeled in her own person the synthesis of the prophetic view of peace as justice and the compassion of the merciful heart as its sacramental expression.

In a time of seemingly intractable divisions in Church and in culture, those who have committed their vocational call as religious educators to reform and renewal may welcome Egan’s fresh patterns for identifying shared visions and the energy, courage, imagination, and love needed to make “manifest the reign of God.”

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