

From The Kings Bay Plowshares 7

On Nov. 12, 2020, two more of the Kings Bay Plowshares 7 were sentenced by video conferencing with Judge Wood in the court in Brunswick, GA. They both received less time than was expected according to the sentencing guidelines prepared by the probation department.

Carmen Trotta was sentenced to 14 months in the morning session. This was a downward departure based on the judge granting his objection that the seriousness of his criminal history was overstated by the probation report. He only has four misdemeanor convictions for demonstration related arrests. However the judge overruled numerous other objections from the defense, particularly to the increases for risk of death and lack of acceptance of responsibility. Carmen vigorously disputed these issues to no avail.

Three character witnesses testified to Carmen's devotion to peace and the works of mercy. Bud Courtney who lives and works with Carmen at the St. Joseph Catholic Worker house spoke about how Carmen's example of selfless service to the poor prompted him to join in the work and move into the house. He said that "We look to (Carmen) for guidance and leadership. He is the elder. He is an inspiration."

Kathy Kelly, an international activist with Voices for Creative Nonviolence, who has known Carmen for 25 years spoke about many of the projects they have worked on together over the years, particularly with the Afghan Youth and a weekly vigil for peace in Yemen. She also recounted a trial in Ireland for the Pitstop Plowshares action at Shannon airport. The defendants were not permitted to speak about their religious beliefs but one of their attorneys, Brendan Nix, known for his oratorical skill, managed to recite the "Sermon on the Mount", the Beatitudes, which he called the greatest political speech of all time.

Carmen's brother, Louis, a corporate lawyer, testified that while they didn't agree about many things there was no doubt that he helped a lot of people through his life at the Worker and he was always trying to make the world a better place. He urged the judge to give Carmen consideration for a lighter sentence because of his work.

Carmen delivered a sentencing statement where he explained his journey of conscience began with an examination of the Vietnam war and reading Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Beyond Vietnam" speech. He was deeply troubled by what he found were US war crimes. His first arrest was to protest the Iowa national guard going to Honduras to "build roads" to expedite the invasion of Nicaragua by the contras. He also felt that he must dissent to what his country did to Iraq by destroying the advanced water facilities and then sanctioning chlorine imports to purify any remaining water. Now that country is destroyed. He noted that Yemen is being destroyed today with 45% of the children being malnourished and stunted for life.

Clare Grady was sentenced in the afternoon in a three hour session. She was sentenced by Judge Wood to one year and one day which is well below the guidelines. After more than an hour of legal argument by her attorney, Joe Cosgrove, the judge overruled all the defense objections to the sentencing recommendations. These were basically similar to what Carmen had argued earlier in the day.

Two character witnesses spoke on Clare's behalf profoundly framing her spirituality and its impact in relation to her family, her community, and with creation. Pastor Bill Wylie-Kellermann, retired Methodist minister from Detroit, has known Clare since the early 1980's, having met at a spiritual retreat after the Greensboro Massacre in NC, and counts her as his spiritual friend. He praised Clare, saying, "She leads a life of conscience." He described her as a plumb-line for her faith communities and her family.

Clare's eldest daughter Leah described growing up as an unschooler, ultimately graduating from Bryn Mawr College. She was raised in the Ithaca's Loaves and Fishes Community Kitchen serving both those monetarily poor and those in need of comradeship. Leah had worked there for 7 years from the age of 18, following her mother's 17 years of service. Generosity, joy, honesty, truth, and justice, and the principle of "do no harm" are principles she sees her mother trying to live by. Leah described her mom's action as based on her faith, believing in the arc of the universe bending towards justice. When Judge Wood asked how would she feel if her mother were to go to jail, Leah responded, "I'd be worried for her physical health as I am for each of the 2.5 million incarcerated in US prisons."

Clare then gave a sentencing statement with a litany of twelve points that illustrated what compelled her to symbolically disarm the Trident nuclear sub base. The first seven were her love and gratitude that flows from being a mother, to working for justice, breaking bread, and living the mission statement of Ithaca's Loaves and Fishes from Matthew 25. "I especially hold the part that says, 'whatsoever we do to the least, that we do to Jesus.' The bible passage tells us a little about the least, that they are those without food, drink, clothes, those without health

care, without welcome, and the imprisoned. I add to this list of the “least”, those who are being killed, *Epecially those being killed in our name*. Because when we kill others, and harm others, we do that to Jesus. I believe it is a Christian calling to withdraw consent, interrupt our consent, from killing in our name. To do so is an act of Love, an act of justice, a sacred act that brings us into right relationship with God and neighbor. This is what brings me before this court today for sentencing, it is the consequence of my choice to join friends to undertake an action of sacramental, non-violent, symbolic disarmament because the Trident (nuclear submarine) at Kings Bay, is killing and harming IN MY NAME. To be clear, these weapons are not private property, they belong to the people of the United States, they belong to me, to you, to us. These weapons kill and cause harm in our name, and with our money. This omnicidal weapon doesn’t just kill IF it is launched, it kills every day. Indigenous people are, and, continue to be some of the first victims of nuclear weapons, the mining, refining, testing, and dumping of radioactive material for nuclear weapons all happens on Native Land. The trillions of dollars spent on nuclear weapons are resource STOLEN from the planet and her people.”

Clare’s attorney, Joe Cosgrove, spoke of Clare being a two-time cancer survivor and suffering from Lyme disease and he stated that Clare faces “the trifecta,” with her facing a COVID ridden prison sentence. Judge Wood was apparently moved by these health concerns and arguments for mitigation. With credit for time already served pre-trial Clare might only have to serve half a year.

Both defendants were also sentenced to three years supervised probation and ordered to “jointly and singly” pay restitution of \$33,501. Carmen informed Judge Wood that he did not intend to pay restitution to the Navy because the base is “a genocidal criminal conspiracy.” She told him that would be taken up after he didn’t pay. Carmen requested that he be able to self report to prison in 30 days and Judge Wood agreed to recommend that. Clare requested 90 days.

On Nov. 13, Martha Hennessy, the sixth of the Kings Bay Plowshares 7 defendants, was sentenced to 10 months incarceration as well as three years of supervised probation and restitution today. This was a downward departure from the guidelines of 18 to 24 months recommended by the probation department. Conducting the sentencing virtually from the Brunswick, GA court Judge Lisa Wood granted defense arguments that her criminal history was overstated. She reduced Martha from a category 2 to a category 1, similar to what she had done for Carmen Trotta the day before. Then she further reduced the sentence for mitigating factors such as the good work that Martha does with the Catholic Worker, her age, and the minor amount of damage she had personally caused on the submarine base.

Four friends of Martha testified as to her good character and good works. Her long-time friend and co-worker Elizabeth Blum spoke about her deep respect and love for Martha. They

met while both studied to be occupational therapists in 1982, have been employed together, and even shared patients, are neighbors and friends in Vermont, have birthdays one day apart, attended each other's weddings, and share meals from home-grown produce. Elizabeth has watched and appreciated Martha's growth in her Catholic faith and service to the most disadvantaged. Even though Elizabeth does not share Martha's faith, she shares a deep concern "for peace and the planet and our families." Elizabeth poignantly described growing up in the 1950s during atmospheric nuclear testing, fearing milk contaminated with Strontium 90 fallout, the absurdity of imagining duck and cover drills in schools could save anyone. She expressed indebtedness to Martha for "exposing how vulnerable we all are to nuclear weapons" through the Kings Bay Plowshares action.

George Horton said he got to know Martha over his past two decades of involvement with the canonization process around her grandmother, Dorothy Day, and through Martha's work at the Catholic Worker. His work at Catholic Charities in New York City over four decades involves teaching parishes about Catholic social teaching and the social action of the church. A Vietnam-era Army vet with a law degree, he described first seeing Martha at Maryhouse as she was bent over, meticulously cleaning a large pot that fed many people. "She's a worker," he said, "She's always working... for people who needed help and were welcomed into the community of the Catholic Worker." He said that Catholic Charities of New York has a budget of \$80 million. "We can become separate from the people.... We are not able to advocate for justice and peace because we have a government contract." In contrast, Martha's life involves charity as well as advocacy for justice and peace like her grandmother. "Martha challenges you. But I want you to know that I have never been challenged by Martha where I have never felt the love that she has.... Martha is a critical part of the Catholic Worker community.... She cooks, cleans..." He described how Martha has important relationships with homeless people that keep them from feeling isolated and alone. She engages them in conversation. "That's what the Catholic Worker community is about.... There's something special going on here.... Martha's heart breaks when she sees someone hurting. To take her out of the Catholic Worker right now would be terrible." He told the story of standing with Martha and others in St. Patrick's cathedral noticing a Blue Lives Matter flag hanging the day after a police officer's funeral. Someone objected to the pastor. "I thought the complaint should have been made in private. I remember she said, 'George, sometimes people have to be made uncomfortable.'... My faith has grown through this experience of attending the trial and going to the base. It's had an enormous impact on my faith."

Mary Yelenick is a retired attorney and friend of Martha's. She serves as the NGO Representative at the United Nations for Pax Christi International, a global Catholic movement for peace and nonviolence. As an attorney, Mary addressed Judge Wood on how "the adherence to law provides predictability and stability to society." She spoke of the global community challenging the legality of "diabolical weapons of mass destruction that glide ominously through the waters of Kings Bay," as was done to end what was once deemed "legal," such as slavery. On Jan. 22nd, the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons will enter into force, making all nuclear weapons illegal under international law.

Mary spoke of the principles from which Martha's life and actions flow. "Her biological and spiritual heritage" comes directly from her Christian faith, handed down by her grandmother, Dorothy Day. Following her faith, "In a deeply symbolic, sacramental action," Martha poured her blood at the Kings Bay nuclear weapons base hoping "that blood would be a wake-up

call..."

Here's part of Mary's moving statement to the court. "The final questions that dying children everywhere – not only here in Brunswick, but all across the planet – will be asking their parents – as they and their parents scream in agony, consumed by raging fire; or withering away from radiation; or inexorably reduced to skeletal remains from global starvation, with nuclear dust clouds blocking the sun's rays – is 'why didn't somebody stop this, while we still had a chance to stop it?' And the response – the final agonized whispers of parents dying horrific deaths in Brunswick, Georgia, and all across the globe – the last human sounds before the extinction of all life on this small, fragile, beloved planet – will be: "Some people DID try to stop this. But we prosecuted them. And we locked them away."

Martha's spiritual director Sister Marylin Gramas had accompanied Martha in her discernment process, saying, "I helped Martha be free to sense God's promptings." She noted Martha's shyness and low key nature and that a Plowshares action was not easy. She praised Martha's helping to offer food, shelter, and especially welcome to the poorest at Maryhouse, and described Martha's deep appreciation of her grandmother, Dorothy Day, giving her life's convictions which led her to the action. She asked the judge for leniency so Martha could continue her good work.

The prosecutor, Greg Gilully, then said that despite the good that Martha does, she broke the law and committed a serious crime. While she might not deserve a maximum of 20 years, a term of imprisonment was justified and needed as a deterrence.

Martha began her sentencing statement with, "I stand here as a result of my conviction that calls me to point out that nuclear weapons are illegal." Then she quoted the U.S. Constitution that all treaties are to be the supreme law of the land. "I am attempting to help transform the fundamental values of public life. I am willing to suffer for the common good and for our sin of not loving our brothers and sisters, a condition that leads to war." She added, "I have no criminal intent; I want to help prevent another nuclear holocaust. The spirit of the law contained in international treaties for disarmament is very clear, to prevent mass murder on an incomprehensible scale. The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists' Doomsday clock is set at 100 seconds to midnight. I see my grandchildren's faces in that clock." Martha's full statement will be on the website. Martha was ordered to report to prison in 30 days.

Fr. Steve Kelly, in Glynn Co. jail awaiting transfer to Tacoma, WA, to appear in court for a probation violation, let supporters know he was able to call in to hear the sentencing of his codefendants. The final defendant to be sentenced, Mark Colville, was granted a delay of sentencing as he does not want to waive his right to appear before the judge in open court. Mark explained in motions filed with the court that Connecticut's rules pertaining to COVID-19 are that upon returning from travel out of state, one has to quarantine. Mark is the sole driver for his nephew undergoing dialysis 3 times a week. The doctors have stated that there must be one designated driver to reduce the possibility of COVID infection. The judge granted a sentencing delay until Dec. 18th. If it is done virtually or during continued COVID travel

restrictions, the court will provide the same call-in numbers to the public.