

**Reflections on Non-Violence,
from the *Book of the Blessed Ones***
(gleaned by Susan Francois, CSJP ~ August 2008)

In our 2008 Chapter Act, *Seeds of Peace: Growing in Non-Violence*, we commit to:

- ✚ Regular reflection on the Beatitudes/Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) and Constitutions
- ✚ Study the Constitutions and writings of Margaret Anna Cusack and community members, read through the lens of non-violence;
- ✚ Practice non-violence in all relationships, with self, one another, Earth, and Cosmos
- ✚ Practice non-violence in communication, reconciliation and forgiveness.

The Book of the Blessed Ones

The following excerpts are from *The Book of the Blessed Ones*, written in 1874 by M.F. Cusack. While she does not use the contemporary terminology of “non-violence,” she clearly reflects on this call from Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount.

Excerpt from Chapter XIV: Of the Life of the Blessed Ones While on Earth

It is impossible to have God’s peace unless we obey God’s law, unless we meditate on it. This great truth is easily forgotten in all the hurry and excitement of the age in which we live. *(page 51)*

Excerpt from Chapter XIV: Our Thoughts Know Where Our Treasure Is

We think mostly of that for which we have most affection. The Eternal Wisdom has said, “For where Thy treasure is, there is Thy heart also” (St. Mat. vi. 21), and He has said it in that beautiful sermon in which He has taught us how to be practical Christians, how to make our lives different from the lives of those who do not love or serve God; in which He has told us who are the blessed ones, and how we also may become such. *(page 136)*

Excerpts From Chapter XV: Of the Importance of Our Words

We considered in the last chapter the great importance of our thoughts. But thoughts are chiefly of importance as the sources of our actions, as the motives for our actions, and in their immediate effect thoughts have only an influence upon ourselves. We defile or purify ourselves by our thoughts, but we defile or purify others by our words.

Have we ever thought about this seriously? Have we ever considered the importance of our words? Have we ever calculated the good or the harm that we may do by our words? *(page 147)*.

We are too apt to think because speech is momentary, that it is therefore insignificant; and there are not a few who excuse themselves for offending others causelessly and grievously on the plea that they have only said a few words, or that they did not mean all they said. But in truth, words are exterior signs of what passes in our hearts; and whatever our manner of speech may be, it indicates that which is within, that which is real, that which is, as a rule, under our own control, else there were no such thing as human responsibility, and, as a necessary consequence, no ground for the eternal judgment. *(page 150)*

We cannot control each separate thought, even should it be right to do so; neither can we weigh each separate word. But we can put a holy guard upon our tongues, or rather, we can so regulate the fountain of our hearts that they must, as a rule, emit pure and sweet waters. *(page 152)*

Even if we considered the matter from a temporal point of view, gentle words serve us best, for it is far easier to move by love than fear, and we are far more likely to gain others to our interests by doing a kindly action than by treating them with indifference and coldness. *(page 155)*

Excerpts from Chapter XVII: Of the Duty of Christian Love to Others

Let us then learn, from the example of Jesus, how to order our words aright. The Catholic owes an especial duty to the world in this, for the world cannot understand patience under injury, silence under calumny, or gentle and courteous language to one who has done so deadly injustice. Yet these are the lessons which Jesus came to teach us, and the lessons of which He gave us Himself the example, "Friend, whereto art thou come?" It is not so long since a Christian, though not a Catholic, in a high place commented most severely on an ecclesiastic who had addressed kind and even respectful language to a contumacious member of his fold. He did not understand this practical Christianity, and so he condemned it. And we need not expect the world to understand it; but let us not forget that our Master expects us to practise it, and that He has told us again and yet again that we are not to live, or think, or act, or speak like the world. *(pages 168-169)*

Let us begin to-day, let us begin now. We may expect many failures, we shall meet with many difficulties; but our failures will not become less by waiting nor our difficulties less by delay. Let us also have courage, and persevere. At first the rude or unthankful answer will come out, but remember a first step is gained if we see even afterwards that we have been rude, or unthankful, or uncourteous. It is a great step. It is a step to thank God for, and to make us take courage. According as we correspond with one grace, our dear Lord will give us another. We ascend the height of sanctity by steps, and a step gained is worth more to our poor souls than if the whole wealth of earth were poured fourth at our feet. *(page 174)*

Excerpt from Chapter XX: Of the Blessed Who Are Poor in Spirit

The nations are involved in misery, their countries are desolated, their families are ruined, their blood is poured forth on every side. And why? Because the teachings of the All-merciful are condemned, are neglected, are forgotten, and men who have boasted of their advancement in science are at fault, are unable to maintain the common rights of man, because they have not cared to learn the sublime lessons of political economy taught them by the Creator and Savior of the world. *(page 208)*

Excerpts from Chapter XXI: Of the Blessed Who Are Meek

Force was no longer to be the rule, except, indeed, the force of love. *(page 213)*

But even towards such the new gospel taught meekness from a new motive; war was no longer to be the rule against the enemies, but love and fervent prayer. Even then there could be no mere retaliation; there could be no longer an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. And even under the old law, it is most likely that these words fixed the just measure of public punishment, not of private revenge. *(page 213)*

Excerpts from Chapter XXII: Of the Blessed Who Are Meek (continued)

We may practise the virtue of meekness both towards ourselves and towards our neighbors; but unless we are, if I may say so, meek towards ourselves, there will be but little hope of our praising meekness towards others. *(page 223)*

The soul that is full of tumult and eagerness and disturbance is ready to quarrel with others at a moment's notice, and does not stop to consider whether there are grounds for that anger or not. In truth, the whole spirit of the age is opposed to the spirit of meekness; for how can souls be at rest when there is one continual struggle for place, or power, or temporal advancement, or worldly gain? (pages 223-224)

We must try to teach ourselves meekness, and we must remember that Christian virtues are not to be obtained without effort, or by sitting down with folded hands. (page 224)

Excerpt from Chapter XXVI: How the Blessed Ones Hunger and Thirst After Justice

Certainly the saints have done many things which we may not do, and some very wonderful things which we are not called to imitate; but we should remind ourselves that the saints tried to be the most faithful imitators of our dear Lord, and that we are quite as much called upon to imitate our Lord in our measure and degree as the saints. (page 273)

Excerpt from Chapter XXVIII: Of the Blessedness of Mercy

We read in the holy gospels that “Jesus went about all Galilee teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing all manner of sickness, and every infirmity among the people” (St. Matt. iv. 23). And we also, my pilgrim friends, may go about the Galilee of this world, and preach “the gospel of the kingdom.” It is a gospel of peace, it is a gospel of love, it is a gospel of mercy; it is a gospel for the poor, for the little ones, who live near to the Heart of God. (page 308)

Excerpts from Chapter XXXII - Of the Blessings of Peace

“Peace I leave with you,” it is left, it is an actual gift; it cannot be taken away, from us unless we ourselves reject it of our own free will. It is left with us as a foretaste and assurance of that future abundance of peace, of that torrent of peace, which awaits us in the City of God. It is the peace of Jesus which is given to us. (pages 347-348)

If we are disturbed or troubled about our own affairs, we shall certainly not make good peacemakers in the affairs of others. If we would obtain the blessings promised to the exercise of the beatitude, we must make sacrifices of our own tempers and inclinations, in order to keep peace with others, and in order to have influence with those who are contending with each other. It is a common saying, but, like many common sayings, it is a very true one, that it takes two to quarrel. We must make sacrifices to keep peace. We must sacrifice our tongues when we are inclined to say quick, sharp words, or words that would in any way wound others. We must sacrifice our pride by bearing little or even great slights without complaints which always lead to recriminations and quarrels. *(page 351)*

If we would make peace between those who are at variance, we must have a wise heart - wise with heavenly wisdom - and a kind heart, enkindled with the fire of heavenly love; we must have a humble spirit, for pride is the source of one-half the quarrels in the world; and if we come with pride to set others right, we shall only add fresh fuel to the flame. *(pages 351-352)*

If we would be peacemakers, and the dear children of God, we must try to follow His example, and try to imitate the peaceful life of Jesus of Nazareth - the self-sacrificing life of Jesus in His three years' ministry, and the patient endurance of Jesus in His long and bloody agony. *(page 352)*