

Kathy Kelly

Last Saturday afternoon, quietly without fuss, Launceston was graced with the presence of a world leader flying into our city. I was privileged to hear her speak on Saturday night and moved to tears by what she had to say. The world leader – the American Kathy Kelly, nominated three times for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Like me, few of you would have heard of this remarkable woman. She started her activist life working with the poor in Chicago but soon branched out to peace activism, a holy calling that has caused her to be arrested over sixty times in thirty years. The co-founder of Voices for Creative Non-Violence, she has practised what she preached. She told the story of how singlehandedly she stole into a nuclear missile base in Kansas to plant corn on top of a silo. For that act she received 9 months jail in a maximum security prison. But the part of the story that moved me most was her interaction with one of the arresting soldiers. After forcing her to kneel and binding her hands behind her back, one soldier was left to guard the prisoner whilst the others went to arrange transport. She asked for a drink and the young soldier guarding her told her to open her mouth whilst he poured water from his canteen into it. She then prayed for the young man and the others caught up in a culture of violence, only to hear a loud “Amen” from her guard.

Jail didn't seem to deter her from her acting out for peace, and since that time she has visited Iraq and Afghanistan on numerous occasions, living with locals. She has a first-hand experience of the horror of war, telling of the effect of shock and awe bombing on the men, women and children of both countries. Particularly chilling are her stories of death by remote control, where satellite technology allows someone in the US to pull the trigger that causes deaths from remote control

drones. Killing without conscience is made easy, when you are dealing with an enemy thousands of miles away.

And all her peace activism springs from a deep-rooted faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ. **And As I See It**, Kathy Kelly should be regarded as a modern saint, showing us all a holy alternative to violence.

So let me finish with the words of another modern saint – one whose activism cost him his life – Oscar Romero:
A church that doesn't provoke any crisis, a Gospel that doesn't unsettle, a word of God that doesn't get under anyone's skin, a word of God that doesn't touch the real sin of the society around it, what gospel is that? Very nice pious considerations that don't bother anyone; that's the way many would like preaching to be. Yet does such a Gospel light the world we live in? The Gospel of Christ is courageous; it is the “good news” of the One who came to transform and take away the world's sin.

Tony would be more than happy to chat about the above article.

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13 November 2011
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