



FR. GEORGE ZABELKA: The RELUCTANT PROPHET
Transcript

Fr.Zabelka: I wanted to get involved in more I want to get into action, because that is where people really needed chaplains is people that were dying in an actual combat zone, and so forth.

Studs Terkel:Let's see Daniel Ellsberg, Phil, Caputo and Roger Baldwin , the old-time union founder Erol Eric Walter Bair George Zabelka father George Zabelka piece of what it's all about. I call him smash your own. George is a storyteller, but the story he's telling happens to be scripturally true. That's the thing that Scripture today that he's telling him that the story about neighbors in the world and peace.

Fr. Zabelka: I went through parachute training I didn't have to go as a chaplain. But here I am with the men. But here I am as a chaplain and I should do what they're doing to go through what they're going through

Mike Matsco,friend: I've known him way back when he was in the military, and he was a hot. We used to call him Gen. George as a nickname. Kind is back, but he's a different person altogether a different personality rather than being a great disciplinary. He's easier to get along with no and that's peaceloving turtle. He's going to Amber on the couple of days

In Amarillo, Texas

Fr.Zabelka: Many years ago, as a U.S. Army chaplain, I watched on August 6, when the Enola Gay let left for Hiroshima in a box car took off for Nagasaki. And I said nothing. I knew hundreds of thousands women and children were vaporized, incinerated, and I said nothing. I was silent. Today we have mega tonnage that dwarfs the imagination just waiting that they will come and accident or computer failure. We all of us can no longer be silent.

Dick Sherwood, B29 Pilot, Secret Mission, Hiroshima:There is a noble of opening an envelope or was. We were supposed to fly back across the area that had been bombed we were to come down on the deck. When I say I'm the dark. I mean on the deck because we dropped to 200 to 300 feet in an attempt when I got the cutest experience I guess of the desolation that we created over an area that is much larger than I thought was possible, any bombing mission At ground zero there was nothing but poulverrization.

Shuntaro Tanabe-Hiroshima Survivor (Hibakusha):One of my friends beside me, who was sent to me. Something from the airplane, it's a kind of parachute andthe instant I saw it in the I saw it, a heat wave ,a flash. Yes, and I went outside of the factory, and I saw Holocaust, Mesa. And I saw among the charred bodies of mother with a baby.

And I know I feel sorry for the babies soy touch the baby's head in the babies had instantly fell on the ground right there like ashes.

Dick Sherwood: is he moved out we came across this one cheap church steeple that were still standing them across buildings and people grinning in the streets. A mass of humanity really destroyed. It's hard to live with that kind of a memory. Sometimes I can't pass.

Fr.Zabelka: Fine. The past is good to remember. I went to Japan last year, and I went on a pilgrimage. It was a holy walking on every step of the way prayer and ask forgiveness of this boxes and the deceased. I know down before the nine in the peace Park were in offered flowers installed on my face and show the press and everybody. I want to be forgiven for this crime this year. I was invited to come the Pantex. The place for these bombs were put together by the thousand. We are preparing another calvary right in Amarillo

Leroy Matthiesen, Bishop of Amarillo, Texas:People came to me in asking for recommendations. They were seeking employment . There, and I gladly give it to them. So for 1948 until about 1980. I was rather blissfully unaware of the existence of Pantex and what they did there. That plant is the final assembly point for all nuclear weapons produced United States something that I did not know then. There's an estimated 5 to 8 nuclear bombs come off the assembly line everyday.

Jim Douglass, peace activist and author: This community here are blocking the track of the White train the train that carries 180 hydrogen bombbs. Every three months from the Trident submarine base where I live, but from the Charles Naval weapons station, the other end of the line... The bombs delivered by this train is six times the power of the second world war.

Bishop Matthiesen, celebrating Mass: We come then to offer thanks to God for all the gifts that he is given to us at the same time as first forgiveness for our failures to use those gifts wisely. Sins of violence from his best years, especially on this anniversary of the dropping of the first atomic bombs. We ask forgiveness for that sin the flower heads in asked the Lord to forgive us to beware this and continued to knew to bless us.

Oh God, we have betrayed you. We have heard the stories of the victims of nuclear weapons of Hiroshima and Nagasaki that we have been numbed by the horror of their pain.

We know the weapons by name, but we have often kept silence. We claim to put our trust in you and our churches still look to the military for strengthened protection. We have prayed for peace, but our tax money has paid for war.

Song: Lord. Make me a Means of your Peace

Bishop Matthiesen: A sin left unnamed, will be repeated in the future this is why it is worthwhile to go through the pain of remembering Hiroshima. The means that both sides use deliberate attacks on population centers as in the case of London, Coventry and over Dresden, Osaka, Tokyo, Hiroshima and Nagasaki could in no way be morally justified. Planes are on the tarmac taking off in large numbers.

Fr.Zabelka: Northfield is the biggest airport in the world at that time. With four big runways capable of taking a plane up every minute and we knew they were carrying napalm. And we knew they were bombing cities and civilians, and I knew that because I talked to the crew bombing Japan one particular pilot was going through a nervous breakdown. What really bothered him was the low level missions. At time B. 29 were makeover because of the more agronomic and as he was finally the city it down one of the main streets dropping napalm. He saw this little boy standing in front of him than just a few hundred feet below him are so any subtle look of wonder. Looking at the plan as the voice you, and he knew that within seconds. Boy would be annihilated. We knew it was going on.

Then another group came to the island a very special group of 509 composite group. And we all on the island it was a special group. We. They didn't, they were fenced in and they didn't, have to go out for anything. And they asked me to have mass for the Catholic members there some other wiki says It to most people just knew that they had a special bond that we copied gimmick band or other means for him and the gimme Bob gimmick shortly afterward before the ship came back that caused the great stir in the island. Of course, the first atomic bomb and the terrible effects of the bomb something that we talked about, and it was just a big news about in here parts. We listen to what in the war for us.

Dick Sherwood: We ought to make yourselves known, make contact to the Wing Commander least of them and let it be known that we should chorus go up and see what goes. Rather than do another atomic didn't happen that way.

Picture of exploding atomic bomb

Setsuko Thurlow, Nagasaki survivor: If I learned anything from that experienc, it was the sacredness of each and every human being like God's love is for all of us. Not just to us in capitalist countries, but the homeless and those beautiful children to assist afloat as as the build beautiful children in London

Toronto: August 9th, Nagasaki Day

Fr.Zabelka: In 1982 and 1983. It has been said that I walked with a group of 20 ecumenical men and women on a pilgrimage to Bethlehem. Israel, a distance of some 6500 miles for two years. Across America and Europe, we walked into David talk to all who would listen. We urged a new way of thinking, if we were to survive. Martin Luther King put it best in. It's not a choice of bouncer nonviolence is a choice of nonviolence or nonexistent.

SetsukoThurlow: Fr Zabelka is different from others. He has seen openly and publicly that he was wrong and he has the courage to say so. And it's inspirational to us without repainting of her past wrongdoing. How can we have the spirit of love the spirit of reconciliation and to try to rebuild the world. We envision.

View of the destruction of one of the two cities.

Fr., Charles McCarthy, theologian and lawyer: Fr. George Zabelka stands at the low point. When that form of Christianity as mass violence, and slaughter and violence reaches it's nadir at Hiroshima and Nagasaki with Christians evaporating Christians by the tens of thousands in 9 seconds, he's there he is the channel that communicates the justification for the that.

Fr.Zabelka: No I did not protest. Our response was the same as the firebombing that was going on in Tokyo, and in other cities. War is hell, it's terrible. It's horrible, but it's necessary in order to bring peace and bring victory.

Prof.Gordon Zahn, sociologist: I'm quite sure that any chaplain who was involved would have been about with a nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki would have felt that it was cruelly out Sarah. I'm quite sure, that was outside of their sphere of competency to pass judgment on it., and then of course they would given the nature of the war. Given the time, given the prospect of the continuation of the war. I'm quite sure that most of them would've felt elated at the thought that this has been dropped.

Fr.Zabelka: The fact of civilians being obliterated by bombing didn't seem to enter my mind. I think we were brainwashed by our government, by the church from childhood we were brought up to follow the customs.

Prof.Gordon Zahn: Zabelka's position was entirely normal. It would have been quite abnormal of him if he had taken some other position. In my research for example, from about 100 RAFchaplain's during the second world war. I discovered that universally, basically, that they saw themselves as pastors. They were caring for the individual souls and their temptations and the men assigned to the latest medicine

policy or strategy. They feel that it's outside the scope he might personally be critical of others. But they feel under no circumstance can they speak out.

Fr.Zabelka:There was no protest, the bishops weren't making any. They were given on any statements of all I know they can probably dig up some statements now say they were against the civilian run. At that time, there was so currently nothing that we knew about.

Prof.Gordon Zahn: This is the terrible thing about the just war teaching. Ever since they've been in use babe justified every side of every war that came along. The German bishops for example, were issuing statements, calling upon German Catholics to fight for folk and fatherland as a Christian duty. Now the American bishops for the most part, didn't quite go that far, but there was no question as to where their loyalty was.

Holy Name Victory Parade, New York, 1945. with Cardinal Spellman

Fr.Zabelka: We are the conquerors. We were able to do almost anything. There's a ferry that goes from Honshu to Hokkaido to the town of sakoro, and I remember driving up there. We didn't know exactly when the ferry would be going. And so we drove up to the dock, where the ferry was Quesada's passengers and the scars and we noticed that it was 100 or 200 yards out already going toward Hokkaido and will so with their pride. That feeling with power that that the conqueror has. We drove on the dark, and we got out and waved to the ferry to come back and sure enough, it stopped and came back and we got on this power the victorious.

Although we did not speak Japanese truly, we helped, where we could defeat and give candy bars to the people in the in fact, a little boy wandered into our camp. He was hungry and had lost his parents to the bombing. So I brought him in a kind of adopted him and had a little GI uniform for him and need sleep in my tent, and he would take care of my dog, and he was very friendly and I had to leave him when I left Japan. I often wondered what happened to the three of us chaplains took a trip to Nagasaki to see the bombing. And there were no restrictions of any kind. So we went to the nearest place where there were still survivors.

And this I think is what really got me thinking started on even at the giving of a new way of thinking on this because here were little children that were poorly burned and suffering and dying. And by that time there were nurses and doctors ever take care of them, because this was two or three but afterward, but this was the beginning of a whole new worm squirming in my stomach that something was wrong to his little children nothing to do with the war. Why were they suffering?

Scene with bodies burned and nmangled

Marcie Kaydo, Sacred Heart School teacher: When he was a pastor and he had the authority. He used every bit of it. I mean, there was no way anyone was going to have the last word except George. I remember going into rectory. One day, and the teacher had sent them to the rectory when a student had been disrupting the class had him by the shirt collar against the wall, telling him how very firm. The discipline would be ticket get into the classroom would have to be managed in the student was just taken aback dandy there and hardly breathing. And I came in and saw this I thought I'd better come back another day for the question I want answered before I got the same reaction. And many of the parishioners felt the same way they hesitated. They thought he was a ice man. The ice man, they used to call him. He was unapproachable.

Fr.Zabelka: It seems as if there were things leading me into this area of social concern and social justice. And I think that finally culminated when I was assigned to Sacred Heart Church in Flint,(Michigan), which was an inner-city parish. It was right next to the big Buick factory, and of course, the civil rights movement was starting at that time, Martin Luther King Jr. and the whole nonviolent movement. This was my second big step.

Ku Klux Klan leader: They want to throw white children and colored children into the path of integration throughout, which will come a conglomerate of bongo Malabo mongrel kind of people. Races will be destroyed in such a movement. I for one will honor God before I got it back. I do movement.

Fr. Richard McSorley, theologian, Georgetown University: In 1948. I was pastor of a little mixed-colored church in southern Maryland, where the custom was that they got the white people to receive communion before the blacks. and the blacks sit across the aisle from the white. Now That was the way, I got started right out of pastoral life. It was a simple program, harming the white man's soul and the black man's body. And I saw the church going along with it, and in some places even promoting it. So even a priest like myself, who knew nothing about this thing called racism never experienced it

. I began to think I was forced to to think about it. And so the problem was put before people like George Zabelka in Flint, where the blacks were coming in escaping from the institutional racism in the South escaping from places where I was. And yet they would meet racism there too.

Studs Terkel: Let me tell you a little bit about Flint, Michigan. went as a central city in the great American depression. Flint is a key city in the organization of the United autoworkers of America. Back in the '30s went was where the very famous sitdown strike occurred, where the workers had been for 40 days and 40 nights and that was the key moment in the formation of the United Auto Workers. And that's the city where George was in as a city of great unemployment and great despair; and also a blue collar kind of patriotism, a Rambo-esque kind of stuff.

Harriet Walker, Social Worker: George was a kind of very dedicated kind of person. He was one that knew the residents of Sacred Heart in them by name. He was the kind of person that wasn't put on. It was for real. He was a real civil rights man. One was, that was the same every day. For example, when he heard about the disturbance in Detroit. George was the only white, who could walk the streets alone to keep the unrest. Down here to this day. When you think of civil rights in Genesee County. You think of father George, and being a person that can walk walk the streets.

Fr. Zabelka: Martin Luther King, Junior, brought me into the notion of nonviolence. Before that time, the violent way was the only way. There's a connection he made so that to me as a priest was love your enemy to good to those who hate you and so forth

Voiceover of Martin Luther King, Jr.: Was not Jesus. Love your enemies, bless those who curse you do good to them that hate you use your purse carrier. We be the extremist for the preservation of or for the extension of justice. When you have seen vicious mobs. Your mothers and fathers well, and drown your sisters and brothers at whim and you have seen hate filled police curse kicked and even kill your black brothers and sisters. And you see the vast majority of people, up 20 million Negro brothers smothering in an airtight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society

Marcie _____: He (George) marched in Alabama for the civil rights issue. He walked with Martin Luther King.

Harriet Walker, social worker: he went to Resurrection city, Washington. He went to Salem

Fr. McSorley: There is an overall parallel, comprehensive and down to the last detail, between militarism and racism. They are both blood brothers to each other. The same theology of racism that some people are inferior to others and can be killed and some are not as valuable as other the enemy can be killed to save our people at the same theology that says that when all were all children of God. Some are more valuable than others. It's the same people that oppose racism and slavery, and militarism. Like Martin Luther King.

Voiceover of Martin Luther King, Jr.: We will meet your to inflict suffering to endure suffering. We will meet your physical force with soul force. We will not hate you, we cannot good contents repay your.

Father McCarthy, celebrating the Byzantine Divine Liturgy in Brockton Massachusetts

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Marcie--- :Fr.McCarthy was an important change in his (George) life. George had been listening to Martin Luther King. He had been reading about the civil rights issues and peace and justice, and Charlie left with him something to he would dig down into us all about.

Fr. McCarthy during homily: Why continue this[yearly 40 Fast for the Truth of Gospel Nonviolence] fast, year after year, when so little seems to be happening. When Christians the world round are slaughtering each other as they have for the last 1700 years. There is only one answer, that is one and one equals two. The truth is the truth is the truth. Jesus Christ taught the teaching of nonviolent love as the leading biblical scholar in the Catholic Church. Probably in the 20th century, Fr. John L. McKenzie has said, "If we cannot know from the New Testament that Jesus absolutely rejected violence, we can know nothing of his teaching or message. It is the clearest of teachings."

Fr.Zabelka: It was strictly by accident that he was brought into our diocese to to give her workshop. He gave her workshop on pacifism on the theology of Christian nonviolence, and I was searching at thattime in all different ways. And this caught my eye, nonviolence, Martin Luther King Jr., and so forth. So I came to his workshop.

Fr.McCarthy: I remember in the middle of that workshop retreat. At one of the breaks lunch. I remember him saying that I hear what you're saying and, and I've listened to it almost 3 times, but I'll tell you I've been through seminary, and I read Catholic books and and I've never heard any of this. Now, how could I have been a priest for all this. All these years, been through all this training and never heard any of it. And I said I don't know.

Fr.Zabelka: What Charlie had told me was studied, but no one, but it was not accepted. It was kind of submerged

Fr.McCarthy: We have a problem in Christianity in the sense that history is not just something that occurs in the past. History is, what is remembered of the past and that critical line in Orwell's 1984 he who call controls the present controls the past video controls the past controls the future, because people tend to act in the present and the future depending upon how they perceive the past.

has been the oldest spiritual tradition in the Christian church is the tradition of nonviolence in dates from Jesus and goes right from the first martyr Stephen on through the conversion from the violent Saul to the nonviolent Paul. Right on through three centuries. The first three centuries the century's closest to Jesus, what we have is a church that is nonviolent. That is that it's not that that Christians didn't commit violent acts that it wasn't approved. As they committed adultery, it wasn't approved, and there's a world of difference between sin and sin I'm sorry and getting up and starting over again and doing evil and calling evil good and so for three centuries it was absolutely clear that conformity with the mind of Christ conformity with the heart of Christ is utterly inconsistent with, side the pivotal point. The axial point is the Emperor Constantine In 311, you could not be a member of the fighting Roman army and be a Christian. By 416, you couldnot be a member of the fighting Roman army unless you are Christian.

Fr.Zabelka: When this entered into my soul. I realized I had to accept everything Jesus tells us as difficult and impractical. As far out as it would seem or else just given up. Not just my priesthood, but give up the whole Christian debt and actually as I mentioned. I had a friend of mine who asked they did it and we used to discuss this together. I'm.

Military training scene

Fr. Zabelka: I respect them[soldiers] and their consciences. I was part I wore the uniform, the beautiful ideals of the military of love for one another. A squad of 8 to 12 men in the military or Vietnam or whatever were bound together. They would die for one another, beautiful, and patriotism. The love of country level family. They appreciate this, that if I went into this, but what is the soldier? A paid professional killer. you can't get away from it.

You have a bayonet and your thrusting them into the bag yelling and screaming. The reason they're doing that is to give them the and the strength and the viciousness to be able to do this to a human being. At this happened or its authorized that this is all right. This is okay. The same way with rifle shooting practice and shooting. Here they are all lined up in the shooting of these targets that are somewhat formed like a human being. So it's a fine especially tight especially myself a used tissue. Shoot with them, I used to like to shoot, and I know I was even part of a rifle team in the National Guard. And we won some prizes as to being first in accuracy. But this is the awful part of it. You think only of the technical elements of accuracy, where you but you don't think of. You don't think the reason behind it, which is to prepare you to kill human beings.

Fr. John Dalton, Vietnam veteran, US Marine Corps: I do remember the saying that if we had joined the Marine Corps to learn a trade we were in the wrong place, where in there to kill everyone learned how to type will learn how to use a computer we should join the Navy. When I mean is, I I think it wasn't pleasant. And what we are being trained to do. There is no other purpose, I mean, to wonder what we were sitting there in the compound in front of our buildings, shining shoes in policy branch. What's the purpose of cleaning a rifle, if not to make things work better so you can shoot somebody.

United States Marine Creek Recruiting Depot. Parris Island, South Carolina

Fr. Dalton: find out that in one moment. It was different military official: get off the sidewalk and face. That way and occurred go hurry up, and I don't have all day. Go read recruits, all having their heads shaved. It was a process of a changing each of us from individuals. Our own thoughts, our own feelings are on moral life changed so that they got you to the point where you couldn't think on your own. Many of us came to sort of blobs.

Dr. M. Scott Peck, psychiatrist and author: Most groups tend to be rather specialized groups and group together, because they all have something in common. They are all white Anglo-Saxon Protestant or a war they are all upper-class. They all play golf, or they are all Italians, or are they all like auto racing birds of a feather tend to flock together and there is a tendency to groups to become specialized.

But the specialized nature of groups can lead to their immaturity. They always think that they are better than the groups they form their identity against other groups. In fact, one of the things that's very common in group formation is enemy formation, where if if a group esprit de corps, which is of mill military. In one of the best ways to revive it or raise the is to find an enemy to focus upon. To them lead to group cohesiveness, which is a typical well-known kind of pattern in the military. But once again, it's not just in the military. It's in other institutions as well

Military instructor: First, what is the mind? The mind is nothing more private than an explosive or chemical substance that is designed or made to destroyer killed in, you want to rip out his eyeballs. And again, the one of Toronto's publishing. You want to destroy him private. You don't want to have nothing left of him. You want to send a moment led back to his mommy

Soldier: We run PT in the morning by the time your foot hits the deck you're chanting, "Kill, kill, kill, kill, kill. And it's drilled in your mind so much. It seems like when you execute up to that is that there is something

Fr.Zabelka: What I missed most of my years as a chaplain, was the realization that this is not an ordinary affair.

Fr. Dalton: Violence is a part of it. It didn't take too many whacks alongside the head before you realize that violence is part of a per se. Once you are trained to use the it doesn't take long to if I'm the one who stands a chance of getting killed. I will use whatever and thought that it's bad, and ahead rifle. Whatever else we were traded became very used to shoot at whatever moved the real easy part of it came. When you began to see other people as asnon human beings

Fr. Zabelka: I wish that I had taken those morale guidance programs to give to them in. The purpose was morale to bring the soldiers of two high morale so that they would follow orders blindly if necessarily to do what is demanded.

Dr. Scott Peck: In the manual of land warfare, there are the words saying that they are not supposed to obey an illegal order. In fact, of the matter is that really was drummed into them. Is that they are supposed to obey all orders, and they get into serious and if they don't all orders it if. If they don't obey orders instinctively and stinks of way, they in turn. It is well known in the military. Their capacity to think their conscience or their ability to think about anything else. The larger picture in many ways just what they're focused on it what they been ordered to do with their only concern

Soldier: You have two different sets of morals. You couldn't survive in a combat situation with the same set of morals you have in everyday life. You'd never make it through the first week. The motivation it takes to actually down the site for rice bowl to kill a guy has the motivation it takes to kill your it's its just like being a bad boy supermarket. If that's what you get paid to do and don't do& gold bag groceries and you get paid enough to get paid to pull the trigger and kill them.

Fr. Dalton: I'm still in many ways fighting the Vietnam War. When I got back I spent years by myself on a farm violent things that were in that I had to deal with this to the point where I could control of the public. I often thought it was a blessing that I never met a woman that never think about merit. It would've been a hideous life for someone else

Bishop Matthiesen: The Roman Catholic Church and the government of the United States, whether it's Republican or be at the Democratic Party are on different paths now were beginning to part company with going away from the old system that we have. We have the people fighting American blood in the section where of our church. And this is causing problems for futurer government. But for people, because we were a minority church. When we first came here, and we had to establish our patriotism, and we did it by being right up front. And as a result of that many of the military are Roman Catholics as high as 50%. And you can understand why the government would now be concerned that we are now forming consciences among our people were saying we cannot use nuclear weapons.

Bishop Thomas Gumbelton, Detroit: I had 20 some years of Catholic education in Catholic institutions without having been formally taught that there was a spiritual tradition within the church that calls for disciples of Jesus to follow the way of nonviolence. I was never taught that it just didn't come in to the program teaching anywhere in that whole period of time.

Fr. Zabelka, giving a talk: The issue before the church today is not nuclear war, but the total and unequivocal rejection of theory and practice of all war and mass slaughter. There is nothing in the life of teaching of Jesus to sick just that while it is illegitimate to incinerate people by nuclear war is illegitimate to two separate people by napalm or flamethrower, condemning nuclear wars can to the Christian can give implied or approval to other forms of mass slaughter. What level of slaughter is acceptable?

Setsuko Thurow: It's a vow of the survivors will do everything we can to be sure no human being go through the experience we had.

Dick Sherwood: What now has become the Peace Corps was formed in those meetings after the telegram that peace Academy and six I'm a Pentagon economy that built clientele of modern thinkers.

Fr. McCarthy: Before Gandhi's death Gandhi made the point that it's only Christians who do not see Jesus as nonviolent.

Fr. Zabelka: Jesus taught that nonviolent acts of resistance to evil, giving everything we have is not a passive. It's an act of active resistance to the point of giving their lives.