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## A Christmas prayer for peace

by John Dear

On the Road to Peace

God of Peace,

Thank you for your Christmas gift of peace, for the birth and life of the nonviolent Jesus, and all the blessings of peace, hope and love he offers us all.

Year after year, we continue to reject those blessings and offerings of peace, but you keep giving them to us. Everywhere we look, we see violence, war, greed, guns, drones, killings, injustice, nuclear weapons and catastrophic climate change. Even within us, we cling to violence and the old paradigms of war. It seems we are dead set on rejecting your life-giving invitations to peace.

Yet you keep coming into our lives and offering the gift of peace. You still invite us to the vision of peace on earth. You still point out the possibilities of disarmament in our hearts, our communities and among nations. You still call us to become, like Jesus, people of loving nonviolence.

Thank you for being a peaceful, nonviolent God. Thank you for blessing peacemakers, justice-seekers, the poor, the mournful, the meek, the pure of heart and children. Thank you for all the ways you work to end war, hunger, poverty and injustice. Thank you for making the sun rise on the good and the bad, and the rain to fall on the just and the unjust.

Thank you for showing us the way forward through the life, death and resurrection of the nonviolent Jesus. As we celebrate his birth and life, give us new strength and energy to carry on his work of peace and nonviolence, that we might become his faithful disciples, apostles, companions and friends, that we might grow up and act like your beloved sons and daughters.

Inspire us to lay down our weapons, put away our guns, dismantle our bombs, ground our drones, abolish

our nuclear weapons, feed the hungry, care for the poor and sick, liberate the oppressed and welcome your good news. Help us to learn your wisdom of peace and nonviolence before it's too late. Break our hard hearts of stone and give us soft hearts of flesh to show compassion to one another. Stir our spirits to change the world so more and more people might live with justice, peace and dignity.

This Christmas, we thank you for the hope you offer in Jesus and his way of Gospel nonviolence. Through his example and inspiration, help us to welcome your Christmas gift of peace on earth, that we might take heart and rejoice once more.

Amen.

*Editor's note: John Dear will take next week off and will return with his regular columns Tuesday, Jan. 8.*

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#### Advertisement

John Dear will speak for the abolition of nuclear weapons with Martin Sheen and Archbishop Desmond Tutu on March 1 in Oslo, Norway. He will lead a retreat, "Jesus the Peacemaker," April 5-7 in Pennsylvania. To see John's speaking schedule for 2013 or to invite him to speak in your church or school, go to John Dear's website. One of John's essays appears in the new book *A Faith Not Worth Fighting For*. His book *Lazarus, Come Forth!* explores Jesus as the God of life calling humanity (in the symbol of the dead Lazarus) out of the tombs of the culture of war and death. John's talk at the 2011 Sabeel conference in Bethlehem is featured in the new book *Challenging Empire*. John is profiled with Dan Berrigan and Roy Bourgeois in a new book, *Divine Rebels* by Deena Guzder (Lawrence Hill Books). This book and other recent books, including *Daniel Berrigan: Essential Writings*; *Put Down Your Sword* and *A Persistent Peace*, are available from Amazon.com.

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