

*Foreword to the book **Marked for life; the story of Hildegard Goss-Mayr**  
By Mairead Corrigan Maguire*

In reading Richard Deats's compelling account of the truly astonishing life of Hildegard Goss-Mayr, I am filled with a sense of the magnificence of the human person when transformed into compassion and love through the gifts of the Holy Spirit. No task is too much, no place too far to travel, no one in whom the person of God is not seen and served, such is the kindness and generosity of Hildegard Goss-Mayr, and we are all touched and grateful for such a soul force in our world.

There is much talk today about our interconnected and interdependent world and the need for us to deepen our sense of world family and responsibility to each other and the earth. Hildegard Goss-Mayr and her life's companion, Jean Goss, were over half a century ago in the mid 40's speaking such a language of universality and love of humanity, but not only speaking the language, they were moving around the world, carrying out their active nonviolent service to humanity . especially to the poorest of the poor.

How small the world feels when you read this beautiful book about Hildegard written by her dear friend, Rev. Richard Deats. It seems there was no corner of it too far to go for her to spend time to listen and learn from others, to share the message of Jesus's nonviolent love, of peace and reconciliation. Everywhere she went she joined in solidarity with people of all faiths, and none, sharing their belief and truth that killing is not in the spirit of true love, that all faiths can join together in spreading this truth, that every human life is sacred and the spirit of God lives in all men and women.

As a young woman growing up in a deeply committed Catholic family, Hildegard's faith found deep roots in the gospel of nonviolent love and service. Her parents' example of reaching out in forgiveness and love to everyone, especially the enemy (if they believed in such a concept as when love becomes so deep, there is no such thing as an enemy) but they lived under Nazi occupation and had to make choices to love or not to love. As a young woman Hildegard chose the path of love and through her prayer life came into absolute nonviolence . a gift from God to all truthseekers who knock on God's door and receive in abundance.

Hildegard was blessed abundantly: the gift of faith; the gift of love of her life's partner, Jean Goss; their twins, Etienne and Myriam; friends all around the world; and much much more. Having received much, she gave much, including her life in the service of God and the world. I am sure this call to service was many times very hard for Hildegard. To leave her children and travel to strange and often dangerous countries, often alone, must often have caused her tears and fear, but she found strength and courage in her prayers and in the love returned from all who had the gift of her presence.

I had the pleasure of meeting Hildegard and Jean in 1988 when they visited Northern Ireland which was in the midst of violent ethnic/ political conflict. It was a dangerous time to come but they did so with great enthusiasm and generosity of spirit. They addressed many groups, visited political and spiritual leaders, gave seminars on nonviolence. They brought us hope and planted many seeds of nonviolence and peace.

Hildegard's great passion was in offering active nonviolence as a way of life, and a creative alternative to armed struggle, militarism and injustice. There were many skeptics to say nonviolence was weak and wouldn't work and that only violence gets results. Hildegard and Jean were steadfast in pointing to the Christian gospels, the Sermon on the Mount, the nonviolent Jesus. They challenged the Christian Churches to teach the nonviolent message of Jesus. But perhaps the greatest witness to this message was in her own presence. Hildegard's gentleness and quiet presence brought peace and calmness to all and to those

with whom she disagreed there was a deep respect and reverence for their point of view. Difference, in any form, was not a threat or cause for anger or aggression. You knew that Hildegard could talk about peace because she had become peace. In leading such an active life, traveling the world to teach nonviolence, it must have been always a challenge for Hildegard to find the balance in her life between prayer and action. Yet she models for us the importance of doing so. I am sure it is her life of prayer and contemplation that gives her the inner strength to keep going and giving of herself with love. I see her as a mystic (like Hildegard of Bingen) spending much time in prayer and contemplation and being filled up by the Spirit to go down the mountainside and into the offices of Government and Church Palaces to plead against militarism and war, and into the slums to serve the person of Jesus in all she meets. To me Hildegard is living proof that there are many spiritual paths to God and whilst some of the mystics live on the mountain and in the monasteries, there are also the active mystics all around us doing God's work, quietly, with humility, gentleness and joy.

Deo Gracias for the life of Hildegard. And also for the life of her beloved partner and co-worker for nonviolence, Jean Goss who in 1991 passed to Heaven to be with the God he loved and served so faithfully all his life.

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*Note:*

*Mairead Corrigan Maguire was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1976 for her leadership in the peace movement of war-torn Northern Ireland. Co-Founder of Peace People of Northern Ireland, she has, since the 1970s, become a worldwide ambassador for peace.*