

*Preface to the book **Marked for life; the story of Hildegard Goss-Mayr**
By Richard Deats*

Hildegard Goss-Mayr is one of the preeminent teachers of nonviolence in our time. A pioneer teacher and visionary, she has helped forge a new path for humanity.

The twentieth century, utilizing the destructive potential of mass killing and war made possible through humanity's military technology, was the most destructive in human history. At the same time, however, there emerged in the twentieth century another current of thought and action. If humanity demonstrated its lethal potential, it also surprisingly demonstrated its capacity for carrying out not only individual deeds of exceptional goodness but the capacity for building transformative and hope-engendering nonviolent mass *movements*. This arose in large part due to the life and witness of Mohandas Gandhi and the freedom struggle in India. This movement was built on the philosophy and practice of *satyagraha*, truth force. Gandhi taught and demonstrated that the decisive and enduring power in the affairs of persons and nations is nonviolence. Slowly humanity is learning this truth.

Following the amazing Gandhian movement that peacefully overcame the British Raj, at the time the world's mightiest empire, in country after country and place after place— the southern United States, the Philippines, South Africa, much of Latin America and the Soviet bloc, et al.— violent structures and practices were toppled overwhelmingly by nonviolent means. This nonviolent groundswell stimulated key figures of the world's religions to re-examine faith's relationship to violence and to see afresh the life-affirming nature of religion. Absolute respect for the human being, shalom, salaam, compassion: these concepts are the building blocks of peace and harmony, among all people, with nature and with the divine reality underlying all of life. These are not just personal but social as well.

Hildegard Goss-Mayr came out of World War II determined to give herself to the vocation of peace so that from the ashes of war would be built a hopeful, nonviolent future for humanity. A theologian/ activist and a practical mystic, for over half a century she has written and spoken and taught the way of peace and active nonviolence on virtually every continent. Her place in history will grow as her seminal role in constructing a peaceful future is discovered.

I have been privileged to know Hildegard as a friend and colleague for over thirty years. Together we have carried out nonviolence workshops and participated in conferences in the Philippines, South Korea, Hong Kong, Bangladesh. We have worked together in Israel and Palestine, Germany, France and Holland. We taught a five day nonviolence seminar at Maryknoll (New York) sponsored by the Maryknoll Sisters and the Overseas Ministries Study Center (New Haven).

This biography is my humble effort to help Hildegard's life reach and inform the wider audience her life and work deserve.

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