

6th Anniversary Iraq War - - March 19, 2009

Sisters of St. Joseph demonstration, vigil focuses on peace at Freedom Park, overlooking Fort Riley, on St. Joseph's Day 2009. Susan L. Allen, Director of Nonviolence Education, invited to speak.



The group for the 2009 peace prayer at Freedom Park overlooking the Army's Fort Riley was smaller than in 2008. But the focus on peace and nonviolence was just as strong as at last year's inaugural event.



Sister Carolyn Teter.



The day's observances including a silent 'peace walk' through Freedom Park.

On St. Joseph's Day — and the sixth anniversary of the Iraq War — about 16 Sisters of St. Joseph and other participants listened to prayers, personal statements, music and a talk by Susan L. Allen, Ph.D., director of nonviolence education at Kansas State University's Women's Center. Then, after a meditative “peace walk” through the small park at the base of hill that is home to the world's first “atomic cannon,” most of the group walked up the hill to hold huge signs asking people to “Pray 4 Peace.” The silent demonstration was timed for the shift change at Fort Riley, just across Interstate 70, so people leaving the military base would see the signs.

The event was organized by the sisters' Justice and Peace Center in Salina. Sisters and others from Concordia took part in the hour long prayer and vigil at the Motherhouse Thursday.



Susan Allen, speaking to the group in Freedom Park, just outside Junction City, suggested that it's those kinds of quiet actions that will change the course of violence.

Using the phrase "everyday nonviolence," Dr. Allen said, "We need to pause and reframe the way we view conflict, rather than just react to it."

Too often, she said, "If somebody yells 'war,' our instinct is to jump on the other end of the teeter-totter and yell 'peace' — but that will never, ever work." Instead of seeing conflict and nonviolence as that teeter-totter, or as the only two options, "We have to view the options as a gyroscope; it's not just black or white, one or the other — there are a multitude of actions possible."

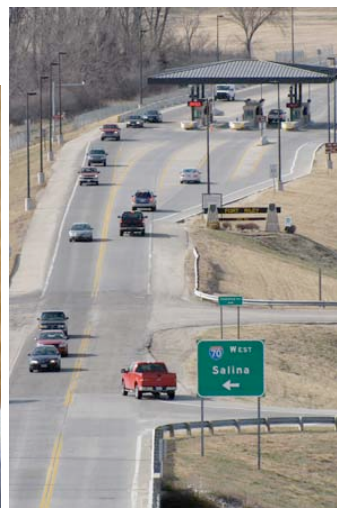
She believes we can resolve conflict earlier in the process with three steps:

- Step back, or pause and consider.
- Plan ahead, or consider all the options.
- Step up, or be willing to be committed to your plan of action

“I’m already against the next war,” she said. “What we have to ask ourselves is, ‘What we are doing or not doing right now to address the next crisis?’”



The hill at Freedom Park is topped by the world's first "atomic cannon," while other types of military weapons decorate its slopes.



Sister Esther Pineda Sister Judy Stephens

<http://csjkansas.org/index.php/2009/03/20/prayer-demonstration>