

ADVENT, 1984

Can anyone experience inner peace in the face of the
extensive brokenness we experience all around us? Can
anyone sustain a hope for peace in the world?

There is something about this time of year that evokes such questions in thoughtful people. Christmas shopping isn't the answer. Its illusory promise only makes more evident the inner emptiness and fear. It touches neither our personal pain nor the suffering of our world.

The daily news brings before us a world progressively more disintegrated: starvation in Ethiopia, renewed oppression in Chile, the assassination of Mrs. Gandhi in India, nations seeking more sophisticated and destructive weapons. Closer to home, the longing to love and be loved has remained unmet in so many. In the face of these realities, hope and meaning do not come easily. A reflective silence is required for them to emerge from the depths of ourselves.

What provides meaning to your life?

What is the source of your hope for peace?

We in Ailanthus believe the meaning and hope of our lives is that Love is present and active in our world. This Love was uniquely manifest in the life of Jesus. This Love subtly has possessed our hearts, turning us from violence and toward a life of compassion and forgiveness. Our hope for peace is not found in ourselves but in the power of this Love, a Love that is willing to suffer for the sake of others. Such a life is demanding yet satisfying at some deeply personal level. It is the only meaningful response we have found to a nation that is increasingly grown more callous to the suffering of its most vulnerable people and is moving ever closer to the use of nuclear weapons.

We are convinced that violence is the antithesis of love. As a way to peace, a source of hope and meaning, we believe it is an illusion. In truth, violence only creates brokenness, only leads to despair and death.

An Advent Question: Does the development of nuclear weapons provide a context in which hope and meaning thrive in your heart? Does it bring you personal peace? Does it provide any hope for global peace?

Ailanthus: a nonviolent witness for peace
23 Dartmouth Street; Boston, MA 02116