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Bishop John Stowe of Lexington, Kentucky, speaks during a breakfast awards ceremony June 11 in Louisville, Kentucky. Stowe received the Dorothy Day Guild's initial Dorothy Day Peacemaker Award on behalf of Pax Christi USA. Stowe is president of Pax Christi USA's national council. (Courtesy of Pax Christi USA)



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Given that Pax Christi USA has helped to "revive the concept of Gospel-based nonviolence," the national Catholic peace and justice organization seemed like "a natural fit" for the Dorothy Day Guild's initial Dorothy Day Peacemaker Award, said Kevin Ahern.

"Pax Christi has also influenced Pope Francis' writings and thoughts on war," said Ahern, a Manhattan College religious studies professor who serves as chairman of the Dorothy Day Guild, the official organization charged with promoting Day's cause for sainthood.

More than 10 Catholic bishops and several staff members from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops were on hand for a breakfast awards ceremony June 11 in Louisville when Bishop John Stowe of Lexington, Kentucky, received the award on behalf of Pax Christi USA.

Stowe, the bishop president of Pax Christi USA's national council, was in Louisville for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' June 12-14 spring plenary assembly here.

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"It was nice to be in that space, to be able to bring Dorothy Day into that venue," Ahern said of the notable 20th century Catholic pacifist and activist who co-founded the Catholic Worker Movement with French social activist and writer Peter Maurin.

In its work and advocacy on behalf of Gospel nonviolence, Ahern said Pax Christi USA exemplifies Day's "vision and legacy." In prepared remarks, Johnny Zokovitch, Pax Christi USA executive director, said the organization was "incredibly honored" to receive the award.

"So many in Pax Christi USA, myself included, were formed in the Catholic Worker tradition and strive to live out Dorothy's commitment to personalism, nonviolence

and the works of mercy in our everyday discipleship," Zokovitch said.

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Ahern said the Dorothy Day Guild's new award is the outgrowth of several conversations over the past year between guild members and New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan, who has championed Day's canonization cause.

Ahern told NCR that the award, which will be given annually to an individual or organization that embodies Day's peacebuilding and commitment to pacifism, is also intended to encourage Catholics outside of Day's native New York City to "take ownership and participate" in her cause for sainthood.

"We're trying to grow the attention of Dorothy's canonization, and more importantly, to share her life of witness to the Gospel, to the Beatitudes and the works of mercy," said Ahern, who added that the guild worked with staff members of the bishops' conference to organize the awards breakfast.

'In a time of negative energy, where there are a lot of prophets of doom out there about the state of the church, it's really great to find ways to celebrate the good work that's being done.'

—Kevin Ahern, Dorothy Day Guild chairman

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Ahern told NCR that Pax Christi USA not only received several nominations for the award, but that several nominated individuals themselves had been affiliated with the organization.

"We were thinking initially of an individual for the first award," Ahern said, "but it made a lot of sense to us to choose Pax Christi USA when we read those nominations."

Originally intended to coincide in part with the 40th anniversary of the U.S. bishops' conference's May 1983 pastoral letter "[The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response](#)," Ahern said the award is modeled in part on the [Cardinal Bernardin New Leadership Award](#), which the bishops' conference presents every November to

a Catholic who demonstrates leadership in fighting poverty and injustice through community-based solutions.

"In a time of negative energy, where there are a lot of prophets of doom out there about the state of the church, it's really great to find ways to celebrate the good work that's being done," Ahern said. "At its best, that's what a canonization does. And at its best, that's what an award does."

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