

Welcome, and thank you for attending. My name is Dave Goldsmith; I am a member of the Catonsville Nine 50th Anniversary Commemoration committee; I will be acting as the MC for this event. I have just a few words to say before I introduce our honored guests: Marjorie Melville, Dave Eberhardt, Frida Berrigan, Brendan Walsh and Bob Graf.

First I need to acknowledge the help and support of Nancy Kurtz at the Maryland Historical Trust; Melissa Gotsch, Manager of the Catonsville Library; and Dennis DeBoy, a member of the Phil Berrigan Memorial Chapter Veterans for Peace. Without their efforts today's sign dedication would not be possible.

Fifty years ago this month, on another lovely spring day, Dan Berrigan, Phil Berrigan, David Darst, John Hogan, Tom Lewis, Marjorie Melville, Tom Melville, George Mische and Mary Moylan went there [pointing] to the Catonsville Knights of Columbus building to raid the selective service office with the intention to destroy by fire as many 1-A draft records as possible. We are here today to dedicate an historical marker commemorating that courageous act of civil disobedience which inspired similar acts by concerned citizens against draft boards throughout the country. I believe that the Catonsville Nine's action on May 17, 1968, which has been described as being "*arguably the single most powerful anti-war act in American history*", hastened the ending of the illegitimate and immoral war in Vietnam.

I reject the idea of there being a "dead hand of history", that there is, a permanent, immutable record of the past; on the contrary, "history" is alive and is continually shaped by the various perspectives of historians and by successive generations who reinterpret history through the prism of the present. Today, one half-century after one of the most turbulent years in the 20th century, 1968, the installation of this sign is itself an historical act. It is our conscious aim to, in the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "*bend the moral arc of the universe*", however slightly, towards peace and justice. Therefore we believe this to be an honor long overdue; we believe that the example of the Catonsville Nine shines a light for us now in a time of darkness. With today's erection and dedication of this Maryland historical marker-- a sign that permanently memorializes the Catonsville Nine-- we the living, and our future posterity will be reminded about and / or will hopefully rediscover, venerate and perhaps even emulate their brave act of conscience.

Finally, the irony is not lost on me that a Jewish atheist is MC-ing the dedication of an historical marker to nine Catholic clergy and lay people who were motivated by their religious faith to, in their own words, "*act out the Christian mandate to resist evil. We were burning draft records at Catonsville to protest our government's burning children in Vietnam.*" Those who burned innocent children were awarded medals. Those who burned paper, received stiff prison sentences. Today with true sincerity and respect we acknowledge the wisdom in their example of how to actively, positively, thoughtfully and responsibly resist evil, with grace and good humor, and with honesty and integrity, while maintaining the discipline to refuse to ridicule or hate the people whose words and deeds we adamantly oppose.