"The peace produced by grace is a spiritual stability too deep for violence – it is unshakable."

– Thomas Merton

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From May 17-21, members of the IHM community attended the 21st Festival of Faiths in Louisville, Ky. Sponsored by the Center for Interfaith Relations, the theme was “Sacred Wisdom: Pathways to Non-violence.” Spiritual leaders and thinkers in the Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, Jainist, Jewish, Muslim and other faith (and non-faith) traditions came together to dialogue about their traditions’ teachings on non-violence and the ways in which these teachings inform, inspire and ground our actions for justice, peace and sustainability.

Each day began with the demonstration of a different contemplative practice: Buddhist meditation, Sufism, Kabbalah etc. This was followed by panel discussions on sacred wisdom, “love thy neighbor” and “do no harm” in the morning and the practical ways to move contemplation to action in the afternoon. Topics ranged from the media and the public trust to Islamophobia and the “Black Lives Matter” movement. Each day was topped off by “Art and the Sacred” performances where music, theater and poetry intermingled to speak the beautiful, transcendent and, at times, ecstatic message of love that can often only be conveyed through art.

A confluence of events brought the National Rifle Association to the city for its annual convention at the same time the Festival of Faiths was taking place. As Muslim-American activist and festival speaker Linda Sarsour stated, “Activism is an act of worship.” So, it’s only fitting that the festival concluded on Saturday, May 21, with a compassion walk in downtown Louisville, from the festival site to banks of the Ohio River. The walk was a peaceful, public demonstration of the festival’s interfaith message of non-violence in response to fear-based and xenophobic rhetoric. As Rev. Michael McBride concluded at the festival – just days after Pentecost Sunday – “We must all speak in tongues. We must speak the language of courageous love which overcomes fear.”