



The Catonsville Nine: A Story of Faith and Resistance in the Vietnam Era

Shawn Francis Peters

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On May 17th, 1968, a group of Catholic antiwar activists burst into a draft board in suburban Baltimore, stole hundreds of Selective Service records (which they called "death certificates"), and burned the documents in a fire fueled by homemade napalm. The bold actions of the "Catonsville Nine" quickly became international news and captured headlines throughout the summer and fall of 1968 when the activists, defended by radical attorney William Kunstler, were tried in federal court.

In *The Catonsville Nine*, Shawn Francis Peters, a Catonsville native, offers the first comprehensive account of this key event in the history of 1960's protest. While thousands of supporters thronged the streets outside the courthouse, the Catonsville Nine--whose ranks included activist priests Philip and Daniel Berrigan--delivered passionate indictments of the war in Vietnam and the brutality of American foreign policy. The proceedings reached a stirring climax, as the nine activists led the entire courtroom (the judge and federal prosecutors included) in the Lord's Prayer. Peters gives readers vivid, blow-by-blow accounts of the draft raid, the trial, and the ensuing manhunt for the Berrigans, George Mische, and Mary Moylan, who went underground rather than report to prison. He also examines the impact of Daniel Berrigan's play, *The Trial of the Catonsville Nine*, and the larger influence of this remarkable act of civil disobedience. More than 40 years after they stormed the draft board, the Catonsville Nine are still invoked by both secular and religious opponents of militarism.

Based on a wealth of sources, including archival documents, the activists' previously unreleased FBI files, and a variety of eyewitness accounts, *The Catonsville Nine* tells a story as relevant and instructive today as it was in 1968.

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