

Justpeace

PAX CHRISTI

International Catholic Movement for Peace

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Rome Conference on Nonviolence and Just Peace

How I wish every member of Pax Christi could have experienced this inspiring conference which took place in Rome from 11-13 April! Pat Gaffney, Chris Cole and I were fortunate to mix with 80 people from 35 countries, all keenly focussed on how to move our Church forward in its understanding of and commitment to nonviolence.

A number of unusual features made this an exceptional event. First of all, it was co-sponsored by Pax Christi International AND the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, with the participation of Cardinal Turkson, other members of the Pontifical Council, and a message from Pope Francis.

Next, it did not descend into the familiar ding-dong of pacifist-versus-just war debate. This was thanks to the planning group's choice of a process whereby four contributors gave short presentations, and then anyone could join the circle briefly to advance the discussion, and return to their places. This gave us a rich fusion of approaches from pastoral and community workers, academics, and activists.

We had all read five excellent preparatory papers, and the intensity of the listening was impressive: everyone searching for wisdom from one other, especially from amazing participants who make a daily choice to live nonviolently in situations of violence. 'Can we dialogue with ISIS?' someone asked. Yes, there's always scope for dialogue, replied Francisco De Roux SJ, who has seen many colleagues murdered in Colombia. Archbishop Odama from Uganda elaborated on how interreligious leaders had gone about negotiations with the Lord's Resistance Army. The entry point was trust: identifying who the rebels trusted and making friends with them.

Many, from Nobel Peace Prizewinner, Mairead Corrigan Maguire, speaking about Northern Ireland, or Katerina Kruhonja from Croatia, to John Ashworth, working with the Sudan Catholic Bishops Conference, conveyed how they were catapulted by violence into finding a response based on faith, and later discovered that their spontaneously improvised nonviolence had a strong tradition.

The efficacy of nonviolence has been scrutinised by Maria Stephan, a Foreign Policy specialist from the United States. Her academic research showed that nonviolence was twice as effective as violence in the 323 conflict situations analysed, and had a much higher likelihood of producing a sustainable democratic society afterwards.



Participants at the Rome Conference

The Rome conference agreed on 'An appeal to the Catholic Church to re-commit to the centrality of Gospel nonviolence'.

Opinions varied about whether the 'Just War' theory should be explicitly rejected, because some find that the criteria usefully expose the impossibility of any 'just' war. All agreed, though, that it is more often used to endorse rather than to prevent or limit war. Reliance on it blocks our exploration of more creative solutions to conflict.

To actually abolish war and violence it's clear we need to use more effective tools. If the Church were to unambiguously reclaim the path of Gospel nonviolence it would re-orientate our thinking, opening our minds to new strategies.

If the Church were to use its teaching authority and global-but-local network of parishes and schools to move the world in this direction it could have a wonderfully powerful influence. This exciting prospect has implications for the Church's diplomatic work, restorative justice, trauma healing, the formation of young people equipped with the skills of nonviolence, and above all it offers fresh hope and spiritual nourishment for a war-weary world.

The work begun at the Rome conference will progress by many practical steps. To read the background papers, sample the discussions, and endorse the appeal yourself, take a look at the website: www.nonviolencejustpeace.net

Valerie Flessati

“How do we not allow a situation in the world where the assumption continues that when there is a situation of violence or potential violence the only answer is drop some more bombs? How do we generate creative thinking, so that the experience of active, effective nonviolence can begin to move the possibilities and thinking on nonviolent intervention more the centre of moral/theological thinking?”

Marie Dennis, Co-President of Pax Christi International.

I made a choice

Conference participant Katarina Kruhonja, former Board member of Pax Christi International, founder of the Centre of Nonviolence in Osijek.

War changed my life. For us ordinary people of Croatia, the violent disintegration of Yugoslavia came so suddenly we were confused. The war and the logic of war spread like a violent fire. From a culture of nationalism to the fear-ridden images of the enemy, to being surrounded by Serbian forces bombing us. I found that I started to think like others, there was no other way. It is them or us.

While we were thinking and praying in a small group we spoke about the meaning of love for our enemy in this very situation. Some said maybe the love of enemy now is to kill them, to prevent them from committing more atrocities. This kind of logic alarmed me deeply. I started to think, what would it mean to love my enemy in this time of war? I could not find the answer. But then I made a choice, from my will. I said, killing my enemy for sure is not the way Jesus would love his enemy. So, I chose to love my enemy as Jesus would. I did not know what this would mean. This choice was my

first move from the logic of violence, and I felt I could breathe again.

My next step was to think how would I defend life? I would defend life but not by killing. But what if I needed to defend the life of my children? I don't know what I would do in such a situation. But this passover from the logic of violence opened my heart and my mind to ask: what could I do for peace and the end of the war? I met someone who was an ethicist and then a conscientious objector. Together we began to think about how we could bring peace in the middle of the war. And this was the beginning of the peace movement, the Centre for Nonviolence and Human Rights in Osijek, from the middle of the war.

We tried to find very concrete things we could do in our part of Croatia. Today, twenty years, on the situation is not as dramatic but we have the same challenge. How to be a person of nonviolence in a situation of polarisation like ours? How to interpret our past? It is the same question: How can I be a person of nonviolence and work to love my enemy and not be part of excluding the other?

FAQs on nonviolence and just war

Conference participant, Eli McCarthy, Director of Justice and Peace Conference of Major Superiors of Men (USA).

How has the just war theory obstructed the development of nonviolent conflict transformation in the Catholic Church?

Maintaining the just war theory has too often obstructed our attention, imagination and will to commit to nonviolent practices.

Some examples of this obstruction include: a prominent Christian scholar of "just war" ethics refusing to learn about the emerging practice of unarmed civilian protection because they deemed it "not [their] area of expertise;" how rarely Catholic leaders speak about or promote nonviolent resistance (especially boycotts, strikes, civil disobedience,

etc.) to injustice and violence; how little resistance is mounted by Catholic leaders to enormous military spending; how little we hear from Catholic leaders about the need to humanize or illuminate the dignity of our enemies, especially regarding people in groups like ISIS.

So much response to the conference has focused on just war and not on how the Catholic Church can and should develop more Gospel nonviolence in our education, sacramental life, preaching, seminaries, advocacy, funding, agencies, and practices.

Won't the Church lose moral impact without the just war theory?

We have distorted our moral anchor by distancing ourselves from Jesus' way of nonviolent love of friends and enemies. If the Catholic Church

were to shift to nonviolence and just peace, then international law would still have just war norms. So, in practice these two approaches would still be operating alongside of each other for now, but the Catholic Church would offer a more effective and faithful voice to the global strategies for engaging conflict. There are many examples of effective advocacy organizations who do not use a just war approach in their strategy.

Both Vatican II (Pastoral Constitution, par. 81) and Pope Paul VI called the Church to go further saying boldly it is "our clear duty to strain every muscle as we work for the time when all war can be completely outlawed.". In turn, a key goal is to outlaw war, not to legitimate or refine the criteria of war by using or teaching just war theory.

Here you can find an extended version of the FAQs <https://nonviolencejustpeace.net/frequently-asked-questions/>

“ I want us to join together, to have the Catholic church abandon the Just War perspective. In my Catholic country it has been a scandal. Priests and nuns join the guerrillas after reading liberation theology because of the paradigm. They join not because of liberation theology but because of the paradigm on the Just War. It has been hell for Colombia. We have a Catholic military structure. This is also based on the Just War paradigm. The para-military pray to the Virgin Mary before they go out and kill people. This is awful. Please help us to stop this paradigm, it is time to build a new paradigm. ”

Conference participant, Francisco de Roux sj, Colombia.

Understanding Just Peace

Conference participant Rose Marie Berger, senior associate Editor of *Sojourners* magazine.

Just peace is a Christian school of thought and set of practices for building peace at all stages of acute conflict—before, during, and after. It draws on three key approaches—principles and moral criteria, practical norms, and virtue ethics—for building a positive peace and constructing a more “widely known paradigm with agreed practices that make peace and prevent war.”ⁱ

Just peace is not merely the absence of violence but the presence of social, economic, and political conditions that sustain peace and human flourishing and prevent conflicts from turning violent or returning to violence.ⁱⁱ Just peace can help Christians move beyond war.

Just peace in biblical and Christian tradition

Just peace is rooted in the biblical concept of shalom. Its meaning encompasses definitions such as wholeness, soundness, to be held in a peaceful covenant, to be restored, healed, and repaid. It describes both domestic tranquility as well as neighbourliness among nation-states; both a physical state and a spiritual state. It is a quality of right relationship.ⁱⁱⁱ The rabbinic scholars have taught “All that is written in the Torah was written for the sake of peace.”^{iv}

The phrase “Christian peacemakers” ought to be redundant. For Christians, Jesus is the incarnation of God’s shalom and the manifestation of just peace. Many Christians, by the very nature of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection, prioritize peace with justice and reject violence as a means toward peace, recognizing it as a failure. We are called to be courageous innovators who defend the “least of these”—without benefit of the world’s weapons...

Theologian Maryann Cusimano Love has identified seven just peace principles which are to be applied at all stages of conflict, they are not only for responding to violence or war.

Just Peace Principles^v

- 1. Just cause:** protecting, defending, and restoring the fundamental dignity of all human life and the common good
- 2. Right intention:** aiming to create a positive peace
- 3. Participatory process:** respecting human dignity by including societal stakeholders—state and non-state actors as well as previous parties to the conflict
- 4. Right relationship:** creating or restoring just social relationships both vertically and horizontally; strategic systemic change requires that horizontal and vertical relationships move in tandem on an equal basis
- 5. Reconciliation:** a concept of justice that envisions a holistic healing of the wounds of war
- 6. Restoration:** repair of the material, psychological, and spiritual human infrastructure
- 7. Sustainability:** developing structures that can help peace endure over time

Footnotes

i Glen H. Stassen, “Just-Peacemaking Theory,” *Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics*, eds. Joel B. Green, Jacqueline Lapsley, Rebekah Miles, Allen Verhey (Baker Publishing Group, 2011), 443.

ii Part of this language came from a personal email exchange with David Cortright at Notre Dame’s Kroc Institute for International Peace (personal email, 3 March 2016).

iii See Malachi 2:6

iv See Midrash Tanchuma (Shoftim 18).

v Maryann Cusimano Love, “What Kind of Peace Do We Seek? Emerging Norms of Peacebuilding in Key Political Institutions” in *Peacebuilding: Catholic theology, ethics, and praxis*, eds. Robert J. Schreiter, R. Scott Appleby, and Gerard F. Powers (Orbis Books, 2010), 82. For Love’s comparison of just war and just peace principles, see presentation by Maryann Cusimano Love, “Drones: Ethics and Use” (4 Feb 2014). <http://www.usccb.org/about/justice-peace-andhuman-development/catholic-social-ministry-gathering/upload/drones-ethics-and-use-2014-02-04.pdf>

Peacemaking Resources

Nonviolent Action - What Christian ethics demands but most Christian have never really tried.

Ronald J Sider, Brazos Press, 2015

Jesus and Nonviolence: a third way. Walter Wink. Price £4.00. Available from Pax Christi

Videos of sessions and discussion from the Conference with powerful testimonies can be viewed here

<http://tinyurl.com/nonviolence-videos>

Nonviolence in Action is Pax Christi’s own webpage. It has resources and links for individuals and groups and information on our ***In the Direction of Nonviolence*** workshops

<http://paxchristi.org.uk/resources/nonviolence-in-action/>

Nonviolent Peace Force is a global movement that works to protect people in conflict areas by unarmed civilian protection (UCP). Their website has inspirational accounts of nonviolence in action. <http://www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org/>

Articles responding to the Rome Conference can be found here <http://preview.tinyurl.com/articles-nonviolence>



Nonviolence symbols brought by delegates
Photo by Judy Coode

“Human beings want to be listened to. Secondly they want to be loved. Thirdly they want to be trusted.

We struggled in our inter-religious group of Muslims, Orthodox, Anglicans and Catholic. We started to promote a sense of trust with the Government and the rebels. We became like a bridge, linking them. That was the first step. Then advocacy. To rally other people to support the idea of dialogue between the two groups.”

Conference participant Archbishop John Odama, Uganda

Call to action from Conference Appeal

Over the coming months Pax Christi will be exploring ways to give life to the Conference Appeal and respond to the call made to the Church community to:

Continue developing Catholic social teaching on nonviolence. In particular, we call on Pope Francis to share with the world an encyclical on nonviolence and Just Peace;

- Integrate Gospel nonviolence explicitly into the life, including the sacramental life, and work of the Church through dioceses, parishes, agencies, schools, universities, seminaries, religious orders, voluntary associations, and others;

- Promote nonviolent practices and strategies (e.g., nonviolent resistance, restorative justice, trauma healing, unarmed civilian protection, conflict transformation and peacebuilding strategies);

- Initiate a global conversation on nonviolence within the Church, with people of other faiths, and with the larger world to respond to the monumental crises of our time with the vision and strategies of nonviolence and Just Peace;

- No longer use or teach “just war theory”; continue advocating for the abolition of war and nuclear weapons;
- Lift up the prophetic voice of the church to challenge unjust world powers and to support and defend those nonviolent activists whose work for peace and justice put their lives at risk.

“The nonviolent way of Jesus is the only way that I know, the only example that I can find, that has enough depth and complexity to deal with our reality...

The Eucharist is the only place in my culture where there's even a hint of this other way. It's not on TV, it's not in politics, it's not in the newspapers, it's not on my city streets. The only place where I find any kind of imagination about nonviolence and peace is within my ritual of going to Mass. ”

Rose Marie Berger

Diary

5 September, Bradford

Adam Curle Peace Symposium. To mark hundredth anniversary of this peace scholar, activist and Founding Chair of Peace Studies. University of Bradford - Richmond Road, Bradford, BD7 1DP
Booking via <http://tinyurl.com/jbpz4dp>

14 September, Edinburgh

Christianity, Nonviolence and Reconciliation. 7.30pm at the Jesuit Centre, 28, Lauriston Street, Edinburgh EH3 9DJ. Open meeting with speaker Pat Gaffney of Pax Christi

17 September, Newcastle

Dismantling Barriers: day conference for WWPPI. Quaker Meeting House, West Avenue, Gosforth NE3 4ES. 10.30am - 4.30pm, day with speakers, workshops, exhibition. Keynote speaker: Zoughbi Zoughbi.

18-24 September, National

World Week for Peace in Palestine & Israel (WWPPI) Theme: Dismantling

Barriers. Resources on the Pax Christi website. Let us know if you plan an event. <http://tinyurl.com/UK-WWPPI>

18-23 September, London

You cannot pass today - life through a dividing wall. Week-long photo exhibition and prayer services on Sunday 18 September for WWPPI. Hinde Street Methodist Church, London W1U 2BB

20 September, Pimlico

Evening on Palestine with speakers include Victoria Brittain (Action 4 Children in Palestine) and Pat Gaffney, Pax Christi. 7.00pm St Peters Church Eaton Square SW1W 9AL Organised by local Amnesty International Group

1 - 8 October, National

Drone Week of Action with theme **Out of sight, Out of mind, Out of control.** Help raise awareness of growing use of armed

drones today. Resources here <https://dronecampaignnetwork.wordpress.com/>

14-15 October, Leeds

Peace History Conference **Conscience and Conscriptio**: Resistance to War 1916-2016

Venues: Holy Trinity Church and Leeds City Museum. Details and booking on-line via MAW website www.abolishwar.org.uk/

22 October, London

Sharing Gospel Joy: Perspectives on Mission in Today's World. 11.30am - 4.30pm Maria Fidelis RC School, Phoenix Rd, London NW1 1TA. Columban Missionaries project.

Book via 01564 772 096



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<http://www.twitter.com/PaxChristiYouth>

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Pax Christi – Our Values

Pax Christi members live by the biblically inspired values of **Peace, Reconciliation, Nonviolence.**

These values are supported by the witness of peacemakers down the ages and the experience of the Pax Christi community.

Pax Christi is rooted in Catholic Christianity but is open to all who are in sympathy with its values and work.

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