

An assembly from Pax Christi reflecting on Pope Francis's meeting with President Trump and the significance of one of the gifts Mr Trump received from His Holiness.

### Introduction

**[Slide 1]** When President Trump visited the Pope, as is traditional on such occasions, the two leaders exchanged gifts.

**[Slide 2]** Pope Francis presented Mr Trump with a selection of his most recent writings including his message for World Peace Day 2017: *Nonviolence - a style of politics for peace*.

Mr Trump promised to read them; how will it challenge him? How does it challenge us?

**[Slide 3]** In this message Pope Francis writes:

To be true followers of Jesus today also includes embracing his teaching about nonviolence

But what exactly is nonviolence?

### Reading (Matthew 5:38-42)

“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.

### Reflection: Going the Extra Mile

**[Slide 4]** *If anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile*

We have probably all heard the advice or the encouragement to go the extra mile. It is a favourite of teachers and other adults when they want you to work a bit harder, to put a bit more effort in, to make a special effort.

And what better advice than advice that comes from Jesus himself. How can it not be good advice?

But what if Jesus actually doesn't mean what we think he means?

Palestine 2000 years ago – where Jesus was living and teaching – was occupied by the Roman Empire. The Romans ran things. The Romans made the rules.

One of those rules is that a Roman soldier could stop a Palestinian peasant at any time and force them to carry their heavy bag. It didn't matter if it was inconvenient, out of the way, or if they were in the middle of something else; they simply had to do it. The law said they had to – but they could only be forced to do this for one mile and no further otherwise the soldier would be in trouble.

*If anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile*

**[Slide 5]** But Jesus is telling people to keep going. To walk a second mile. To go the extra mile. What is going on?

Can you imagine? The poor peasant who has had his day interrupted gets to the end of his mile and keeps going...

The soldier doesn't know what is happening. If he keeps going people will think he is breaking the rules; he could

**Note for Leader:** For the first part of this reflection you may wish to invite two volunteers to act out the parts of the soldier and the peasant as you read it out.

You will also need a backpack, a helmet (or something to distinguish the soldier) and a shabby cloak (or something to distinguish the peasant).

be in trouble.

So the soldier asks for his bag back... but the peasant smiles and insists it is OK... so the soldier demands his bag... but the peasant still carries on... people are beginning to notice... they are stopping to watch... the soldier is really panicking now... shouting... give me my bag back!

The rules are unfair. The system is unjust. The peasant is being mistreated. Suggesting walking a second mile is a way of challenging that unfairness, highlighting the injustice, and trying to bring about change.

**[Slide 6]** This is nonviolence.

## **Living Nonviolence**

**[Slide 7]** Nonviolence is creative

It says no to injustice

But refuses to respond to violence and hate with more violence and more hate

It breaks the cycle of violence

**[Slide 8]** Nonviolence doesn't build walls

Doesn't seek to divide

Us against them

**[Slide 9]** Nonviolence responds to violence, injustice, and conflict,

With love

And a determination to stand up for what is right

With hope

Unwilling to give up even when it is difficult or seems impossible

With faith

That the world can be better

That we can live in peace.

**[Slide 10]** Nonviolence sees a world where there is too much violence, too much injustice

And counters it with more love and more goodness.

**[Slide 11]** It is Lucie... the Czech teenager who refused to stand idly by whilst racists marched through her city sowing hatred.

**[Slide 12]** It is the York mosque that invited the anti-Muslim protesters in for tea, biscuits, and a game of football; disarming anger with peace and warmth.

**[Slide 13]** It is the taxi drivers, the homeless, the ambulance crews, hospital staff, hotel workers, and countless others who responded to the attack on Manchester with compassion and a determination to help.

And it is us when we speak out against violence, stand up for those who are suffering injustice, and give our time and energy to help others.

## **Let us pray...**

We pray that we will stand up for what is right, even when it is difficult.

We pray that we will speak out against injustice even when we are scared to.

We pray that we will respond to the challenge of nonviolence as we work for peace in our world.

We pray that Mary, Our Help, will guide and sustain us in our efforts as we say together, *Hail Mary...*

### **More on Nonviolence**

The Catholic Nonviolence Initiative [nonviolencejustpeace.net](http://nonviolencejustpeace.net)

The #ThisIsNonviolence Campaign [bit.ly/2qfv701](http://bit.ly/2qfv701)

Find Pax Christi's other schools resources on our website [paxchristi.org.uk](http://paxchristi.org.uk)