

The two hands of active nonviolence

This simple action and description could be used as part of a homily, a service or discussion on what active nonviolence seeks to do. (It could also be used with children.)

You will need: a living 'visual aid' of two hands in this position, clear for all to see.



The upright hand is saying to the person involved in the injustice or violence: Stop what you are doing. I cannot accept this behaviour. I refuse to build walls... making it clear that there will be no cooperation with injustice or violence.

The outstretched hand is saying to the same person: But we need to talk. I believe we can make better choices. I will not reject you. My heart is open to you as a sister/brother... making it clear that you are seeking change and an opportunity to work things out together, not revenge or punishment.

Based on metaphor of two hands, Barbara Deming

Invite people to try this for themselves, thinking of a situation or time when they have had to confront injustice or violence. What words might they have used in each case?

The Nonviolent Jesus

Look at the picture of a stained-glass window in the 16th Street Baptist Church, Birmingham, Alabama. Both its creation, and the image, are an illustration of nonviolence in action.

Welsh artist John Petts made the window after hearing that four young girls had been killed when the church was bombed in a racist attack one Sunday morning in 1963. His black Jesus shows the two hands of nonviolence: one stopping the oppression, the other reaching out in forgiveness and reconciliation. The window was donated to the church by the people of Wales.

"In Petts' window the jets of the fire hoses became the bar of Christ's cross, and a symbol of the violence meted out to the protestors.... Around the head is a rainbow of coloured glass which signifies the end of the storm while at the same time an expression of racial diversity and unity. The 'Black Christ' is a striking affirmation of what surely lies at the heart of our faith: on the one hand, justice and a refusal to accept all that is not borne out of a love for our brothers and sisters, and on the other hand, unfathomable mercy and forgiveness."



From Cowan Watson, Editor of *Light of the North*, Aberdeen Archdiocese

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Catholic Nonviolence Initiative

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