

Pax Christi

Peace Sunday

15 January 2017



***‘Nonviolence: a style of
politics for peace’***

Pope Francis - World Peace Message 2017

Promoted by Pax Christi with the support of the International Affairs
Department, Catholic Bishops’ Conference, England and Wales

Ideas to help the celebration of World Peace Day in your parish

Before Peace Sunday

If you have a **Pax Christi parish contact** or **Justice and Peace group** in the parish, enlist them in helping to prepare for the day. Invite them, and those who prepare **liturgy/children's programmes**, to use the materials in the booklet. These resources can help you prepare a Mass, vigil, or holy hour for peace.

The week before Peace Sunday (**Sunday 8 January**) put a notice in your **parish newsletter/website** to remind people of the day and theme. Make a link to the Pax Christi Peace Sunday webpage.

Arrange for the **Pope Francis prayer card** to be given out on Peace Sunday.



The **Week of Prayer for Christian Unity** is celebrated between 18-25 January and the theme for 2017 is *Crossing Barriers*. (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:14-20). This is an ideal theme to link with Peace Sunday and we have incorporated a prayer from the Week in these materials. More here: tinyurl.com/jaazonj

This booklet provides resources for more than one day. Make January 2017 the time when you begin a whole period of reflection and exploration about living Gospel nonviolence in your parish. (see page 18)

Please consider taking a collection to support the work of Pax Christi, the International Catholic Movement for Peace.

Your help is essential to us.

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© Fr Rob Esdaile for liturgy and scripture reflections. Cover photo of Pope Francis at the United Nations, 29.9.2015 © L'Osservatore Romano Photographic Service. p.6 Stained glass by Paul Quail in St Augustine's Church, London N4. p.13 photo courtesy of Operazione Colomba, Rimini.

The 50th World Day for Peace, with the title, *Nonviolence: a style of politics for peace*, will be observed in England and Wales on 15 January 2017, the 2nd Sunday of Ordinary Time (Year A). The readings for the Sunday Eucharist are Isa 49.3, 5-6; Psalm Ps 39.2, 4, 7-10 (resp.v. 8-9); 1 Cor 1.1-3; Jn 1.29-34.

Introduction to the Liturgy

The Bishops of England and Wales invite us to keep this Sunday as a day of prayer for world peace and to reflect on the theme Pope Francis has chosen for the annual World Peace Day: *Nonviolence: a style of politics for peace*. We'll explore that theme in our Mass today, but let's begin with that first word in the title, 'Nonviolence', and use that as the basis for our examination of conscience and acknowledgement of fault. How often do we actually express in our own lives what St Paul wishes for the Church of Corinth in today's second reading - namely, 'grace and peace'? And what do we actually do in the face of the violence in the world around us - respond with more violence (of thought, or word, or even deed)? Or does Christ show us a better way and give us something urgent and important to say to our neighbours?

Lord Jesus, who teaches us how to love. **Lord have mercy.**

Christ Jesus, who refused to hate your enemies. **Christ have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, who bore all our violence in your body on the Cross. **Lord, have mercy.**

Introduction to the Readings

First Reading (Isaiah 49.3, 5-6)

The Servant of God, in the Prophet Isaiah, discovers two things: the fact of his calling - the heart of his God-given identity; and the intention of the One who sends him - to spread salvation to the ends of the earth. The Servant of God cannot be true to himself without being true to that vision. And salvation can never be spread through the barrel of a gun or through threat of violence.

Second Reading (1 Cor 1.1-3)

St Paul begins his First Letter to the Corinthians with a reminder of how the Gospel transforms every human community. It creates communion, making us belong to each other. And it demands a transformation of our way of

living, so that we may truly live as saints, bearers of the grace and peace Jesus came to bring.

Gospel (Jn 1.29-34)

If you, like John the Baptist, were commanded to point out Christ in the crowd, what would you look for? What would you point to? John looks for the action of the Spirit, the Dove of Peace descending and remaining on a life which makes sense in itself and offers meaning to others. And his eyes settle on a poor pilgrim, vulnerable, humble, unarmed. Before we can proclaim salvation today, we also have to look to the Crucified and Risen Jesus, the defenceless lamb who laid down his life for all.

Homily Notes - First Reflection

I'm afraid that there was a terrible act of violence performed here in church last Sunday. The Body of Christ was torn in two - just like every time you've ever been to Mass. But at the same time we celebrated his magnificent rejection of violence. We all prayed, '*Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us [and] grant us peace,*' proclaiming that *this* brokenness uniquely brings healing, mercy and peace.

Of course, the gesture of breaking the bread wasn't originally accompanied by those words. The breaking happened at the moment Jesus said: '*This is my body. Take and eat ...*' And then, if it was typical Mediterranean flat-bread which he held in his hands, there was a gradual slow tearing apart of the loaf. Jesus is telling his friends: '*This is what's going to be done to me tomorrow. This is how much they hate me*'. And we know what happened next. They sang psalms of thanksgiving. They crossed the Kidron valley. He prayed, surrounded by his sleeping disciples. And then they ran away, while the Temple authorities and the Roman administration did their worst.

That's half the picture - the *passive* part, what was done *to* Jesus. But alongside that there's Jesus's *action*. He didn't run away. He stopped his disciples from fighting to save his life. He didn't hit back. He refused to hate, but prayed: '*Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing*'. He broke the cycle of violence, retaliation and resentment which looms over our human history. He surrendered his body to his torturers. More importantly, he surrendered his Spirit into his Father's waiting hands. And the Father raised him up, turning his death into life for the world.

That's our Christian claim - and all of it is captured in that breaking of the bread and sharing of the cup. Here, in the cruellest brokenness is wholeness found. Here, in the pouring out for the many of Jesus' lifeblood, is the New

Covenant of Peace and the in-gathering of the nations into God's Kingdom. Here is universal communion proclaimed and begun.

All of which makes it deeply puzzling why we Catholics are usually so addicted to violence. Our attitudes to war and peace are scarcely different from those of our non-believing neighbours. We presume the unfortunate inevitability of armed conflict. And we lose little sleep over the fact that, over the course of the last decade, the UK has sold more weapons than any other country apart from the USA, and sold two thirds of those weapons to the Middle East, which needs weapons imports about as much as it needs oil imports. There was scarcely a murmur from the pews over the parliamentary approval of replacement of the Trident nuclear submarines last July or our new Prime Minister's stated willingness in that debate to launch these weapons of mass destruction. The growing use of drone strikes for targeted assassinations in other sovereign territories does not seem to disturb us overmuch, either... It all seems rather a long way from the greeting which St Paul extends to the Christians of Corinth in our second reading today: '*May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ send you grace and peace*'. That's what the Apostle thinks Jesus came to bring: *grace and peace*. Indeed, that offer *is* the Gospel.

So what about us, as followers of Jesus? What do we bring to our world? Pope Francis challenges our acceptance of violence as 'a fact of life' with the theme he has chosen for this year's *World Day of Prayer for Peace*, which we celebrate this Sunday in England and Wales: '*Nonviolence: a style of politics for peace*'. At one level, maybe Pope Francis is simply making the point that violence doesn't work as a form of conflict resolution. And why would it? '*War brings on war! Violence brings on violence!*'¹ he says. Most of the countries which have been the focus of war-fighting in this Third Millennium are simply failed states now, their infrastructure trashed, their people turned into refugees, their civic society destroyed. Think of Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Yemen, South Sudan...

Maybe, though, we need to go further. Instead of talking about the conditions that might allow us to wage a '*Just War*', perhaps it's time to start focusing on what would make for a '*Just Peace*'. It's time to start drawing on the memory of the ways in which Christians through the ages have rejected violence and worked for peace - whether we think of ancient saints, like St Martin of Tours and St Francis of Assisi, or more recent figures like Blessed Franz Jägerstätter (executed as a conscientious objector by the Nazis), or Blessed Oscar Romero (assassinated for his championing of the

¹ Pope Francis, Angelus Address, August 31, 2013. See also quotations from previous popes in Pontifical Council for Justice & Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, n.497

rights of the poor). It's time to explore how we can transform Jesus' most basic instruction to his followers, *'Love your enemies!'* into a practical programme of acts of reconciliation, and the creation of spaces of dialogue and friendship that reach across all the barriers and brokennesses of our world. Fundamentally, it's time to look again at the broken host at our Sunday Eucharist and to recognise there the grace and peace that we need in order to heal the wounds of war and hatred.

Homily Notes - Second Reflection

Have you ever waited at an airport or at a railway station for a loved one to arrive, especially when it's been such a long time since you last met? Or have you been to meet someone you have never met but have only seen in a photograph? Or someone you have only ever spoken to by phone? There's that little flutter of anxiety: Will I recognise them? Will they recognise me? What if they walk right past? What if I'm waiting in the wrong place?

Maybe that gives us a way in to understand the predicament of John the Baptist in today's Gospel. There he is in the wilderness, with a sea of people swirling around him, all wanting baptism. But welcome though they may all be, they're not the ones he's really looking for. He knows there's someone else. So he waits, patiently and impatiently, in the desert. In fact, all he knows is that he will know when he shows up: *'I did not know him myself,*

but he who sent me to baptise with water had said to me, "The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and rest is the one who is going to baptise with the Holy Spirit"'.

The question we face on this Peace Sunday is: are we in the right place to recognise Christ when he shows up? Which means asking ourselves and each other: where can we see the Spirit descending and coming to rest in our day? Where is the Dove to be found, the symbol of peace, the sign of God's active presence in our midst - *'the Lord, the*

Giver of Life, who has spoken through the Prophets' (as the Creed puts it), the One who inspires all true love; the Advocate, the Comforter, the Bond of Communion who heals all divisions?

An ability to discern the presence of the Spirit is an essential part of the life of the Christian disciple. And the point of all our formation of the young

ought to be to equip them to listen to the voice of the Spirit, in their heart, in the Scriptures, in the worshipping community and in the events of daily life. But attentiveness to the voice of the Spirit becomes particularly important in our world which is so riven by conflict and division. Pope Francis has spoken of the many armed conflicts around the globe as constituting *'a Third World War in instalments'*. Think of Syria and Libya and the flood of refugees unleashed as a result of a heady mix of internal repression and external aggression. We have to ask insistently: Where is the dove of peace to be seen today? What is the Spirit saying to the Churches - and to all men and women of good will?



Einstein said that insanity is keeping on doing the same thing again and again and expecting different results. And we keep on throwing weapons at the problem of military conflict. How, logically, can that achieve the effect which we as Christians seek - reconciliation, a world at peace? It doesn't make sense, but it seems that we just don't have the

imagination or the will to seek another way. And part of the problem might lie in our own Christian theology.

We have a long history of ethical reflection on what might constitute a *'Just War'*. The intention was certainly a very good one - limiting both the grounds for warfare and the effects on the innocent of such armed conflict. But unfortunately it gave the illusion that there can be such a thing as a **good** (or even a **holy**) war. Modern warfare does not respect the rights of non-combatants, either directly (because many bombs are inherently 'weapons of mass destruction', due to their sheer force) or indirectly (as the flows of refugees across our continent testify). There is no good war. It is always a terrible failure of the human spirit.

So now Pope Francis is calling us to switch our attention, from defining *'Just War'* to identifying what would allow *'Just Peace'* to break out. That's the import of his message for the World Day of Peace, which we celebrate in England and Wales today. He calls for *'Nonviolence: a style of politics for peace'*. That means both setting up new (often difficult) international conversations between competing nations and learning new ways of undertaking such conversations, drawing on the various successful examples of conflict resolution around the world - which always involve people at grassroots level, as well as the great and the good jetting in for conferences.

It means rethinking our own way of doing politics domestically - and our own way of talking about those we disagree with. It means our own willingness as Catholic Christians to get involved in politics and to speak up against the easy resort to violence as a 'solution' to conflict. And, above all, it means our profound personal change of heart, rooted in prayer to One whom the Baptist called 'the Lamb of God', that wonderful description of our vulnerable, defenceless and nonviolent Saviour. We must ask once again: where is the Dove of Peace to be seen; where is the voice of the Spirit to be heard in our midst today?

Prayers of the Faithful

Priest: It is Christ who is the Light of the Nations, and he asks us to bring that light to places of shadow and darkness. Let us pray for ourselves and for the world in which we are his witnesses. The response to each intercession is: **Christ, be our light.**

That Christ may open our eyes to see where the Spirit is at work in our world today, opening up new paths of peace and hope.

Let us pray to the Lord: **Christ, be our light.**

For our own homes, our families, our parish community; that the grace and peace Christ came to bring may reign over us, so that the stranger may find welcome and the hurting may find comfort in our company.

Let us pray to the Lord: **Christ, be our light.**

For the Church, that the divisions opened up at the Reformation may be bridged by a renewed love of God's Word and a deeper understanding of our call to be one. For God's blessing on the forthcoming Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. And for Pope Francis as he leads us on the pathways of peace and unity.

Let us pray to the Lord: **Christ, be our light.**

For our political leaders, that they may seek to find a shared understanding and achieve reconciliation in the face of divisions of every kind. And for our nation, that we may work to achieve a just peace across the world.

Let us pray to the Lord: **Christ, be our light.**

For the victims of warfare: those killed and wounded, those driven from their homes as refugees, those scarred in their memories and in their hearts.

Let us pray to the Lord: **Christ, be our light.**

For the Prophets of our day who, like John the Baptist, both name what is wrong and witness to hope; for all who take risks for peace and justice: we ask God's blessing today especially on the work of the international Catholic Peace Movement, Pax Christi.

Let us pray to the Lord: **Christ, be our light.**

Let us commend to God's mercy all who are unwell (especially), that they might be restored to health; and all who have died (especially.....). May they dwell for eternity in the light of God's face.

Let us pray to the Lord: **Christ, be our light.**

In a moment of silence, let us place before the Lord our own thirst for peace

...

Final Prayer: Father, as the Spirit descended like a dove on Jesus, your Son, at his baptism, so grant that the same Dove of Peace may open up paths to a just peace for all today. To you we make these our prayers, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Additional Resources

The Courageous Nonviolence of Jesus

The nonviolence of Jesus is *not*

passive - He did not shrink from conflict: went to Jerusalem knowing that he would be killed. (Mt 20: 17-19)

meek and mild - He stood up to the powerful.

defeatist - He seizes the initiative, asks, or does, the unexpected. Whose head is on the coin? (Mk 12: 13-17) Rides into Jerusalem on a donkey not a warhorse. (Mt 21:1-11)

The nonviolence of Jesus is a positive force *for*

healing - individuals by his compassionate love, humanity by suffering a violent death on the cross with forgiveness.

restoring - rejected people to community, sinful people to relationship with God and justice with each other.

asserting - human dignity, equality, and access to God's love and forgiveness for those who repent and believe.

The nonviolence of Jesus

Challenges the culture and status quo to demonstrate God's inclusiveness

- Jesus related to the presence of God in everyone including those outcast or shunned - prostitutes, lepers, the poor... eating with tax-collectors and sinners (Mk 2: 15-17)
- His message goes beyond the house of Israel. Samaritans shown to be good (Lk 10: 25-37) and grateful (Lk 17: 11-19) Canaanite woman's faith (Mt 15: 21-28)

Breaks the rules sometimes to demonstrate what is important to God

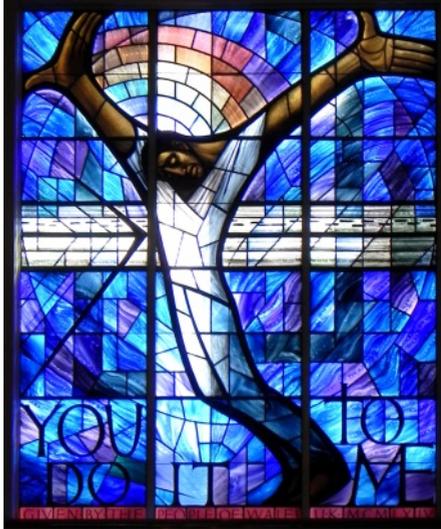
- On the Sabbath - picking up grain (Mk 2:23-28) healing the blind man (Jn 9:13-16)
- His disciples not washing hands (Mk 7: 1-13) or fasting (Mk:2: 18-20)
- Speaking to the Samaritan woman alone (Jn 4: 5-42) touching the woman with the haemorrhage (Mk 5: 25-34)

Confronts the powerful

- Jesus exposes hypocrisy - Counting dill and cumin but neglecting justice and mercy; 'You snakes; you brood of vipers!' (Mt 23)
- Exploitation by money-changers - his prophetic demonstration provoked the chief priests and scribes (Mk 11: 15-19)
- Speaking truth to power - the Pharisees (Mt 21:23-27; Jn 8:3-11) and Roman governor Pilate (Jn 18: 33-40)
- Limits to co-operation - render to Caesar *only* what is Caesar's (Mk 12: 13-17)

Accepts suffering willingly, but does not inflict suffering

- Rejected any retaliation by James and John for insult by Samaritan village (Lk 9:51-56) and use of a sword in Gethsemane (Mt 26: 49-55)
- Armed only with truth and love - absolute nonviolence of the cross as way to resurrection
- Jesus knew when it was wise to withdraw from a violent situation: 'he passed through the midst of them and went on his way' (Lk 4:28-29)



Stories

The stories below could be used in various ways:

- as articles for parish newsletters
- to enlarge as part of a display in church
- for quiet reflection during a prayer service, followed perhaps by the prayer about Witnesses for Peace and Nonviolence (p.14)
- to start a group discussion about nonviolence. What nonviolent actions can you pick out in these stories? What nonviolent attitudes underpinned those types of action? What do you think of Gandhi's comment that 'Nonviolence is not a cover for cowardice, but it is the supreme virtue of the brave'? What are the advantages of nonviolence over violence?

St John XXIII and the Cuban Missile Crisis

In October 1962 the United States found proof that Soviet missiles had been positioned in Cuba. President Kennedy announced a blockade on Soviet ships approaching Cuba and for a week a nuclear war seemed a terrible possibility. Using every diplomatic avenue behind the scenes, Kennedy asked Pope John XXIII to help defuse the tension. At his weekly audience the Pope delivered this veiled comment: 'The Pope always speaks well of those statesmen, on whatever side, who strive to come together to avoid war and bring peace to humanity'. He sent a message to Moscow appealing for negotiations to continue for the sake of peace. These encouraging signals enabled President Khrushchev to overrule more combative colleagues, withdraw the missiles from Cuba, and portray himself as a dignified peacemaker. Khrushchev later said: 'What the Pope has done for peace will go down in history'.

Source: Peter Hebblethwaite, John XXIII: Pope of the Council, Geoffrey Chapman, 1984, pp 445-448

Revolution by Candlelight

In East Germany the Protestant Church provided a unique haven for independent citizens' groups to meet beyond the control of the State. At St Nicholas Church in Leipzig Pastor Christian Führer started regular 'Peace Prayers' in 1982 and the small group persevered despite harassment by the secret police. In 1989 widespread election fraud provoked furious demonstrations across the country. The East German Church Federation called for a democratic multi-party system, economic reforms, a free press and freedom to travel. Thousands now attended Monday peace prayers in

Leipzig, where they were urged to use nonviolence. Tension was at its height on 9 October 1989, with thousands of extra Stasi police on the streets, and a bloody confrontation expected. Three citizens' leaders met Communist officials in private and agreed that if the protestors remained peaceful so would the police. After the prayer service 70,000 unarmed people holding lighted candles marched through Leipzig. It was a turning point. Each week numbers increased as prayer services followed by protest demonstrations erupted all over the country. On 4 November half a million marched in Berlin; on 8 November the entire Communist leadership resigned, and the following night the border between East and West was opened and the Berlin Wall came down.

Source: Ronald J. Sider, *Nonviolent Action*, Brazos Press, 2015, pp 95-100



left: a section of the Berlin Wall - now a museum piece - outside the Imperial War Museum in London

Political courage in Northern Ireland

No one should underestimate the real achievements this [Good Friday] Agreement means... It took enormous courage for many of these politicians (traditional opponents) to sit down together, agree to discard some long-held dogmatic principles and accept compromise and change. It took enormous courage for them to recognise each other's 'identity' and agree to each person's right to different political aspirations. It took enormous courage to admit that violence is not the way forward and to pledge themselves to nonviolence and democracy.

Mairead Corrigan Maguire, *The Vision of Peace: faith and hope in Northern Ireland*, Orbis, 1999, p 121

Liberian women are tired of war

For more than 20 years Liberia suffered from brutal civil wars - until a group of women decided they'd had enough. Leymah Gbowee coordinated the Women in Peacebuilding Network in Liberia and brought Christian women together in 2003 to pray and work for peace, soon joined by Muslim women. 2,500 women picketed President Charles Taylor's motorcade every day with signs reading 'The women of Liberia want peace now'. Taylor agreed to peace talks with opposition warlords and a delegation of women then kept vigil outside the negotiations in Ghana. After seven weeks and no cease-fire they escalated their nonviolent protest, forming a human barricade across the doors, so the male negotiators could not leave until agreement was

reached. When security guards tried to arrest the women they threatened to undress - a cultural taboo for the guards to witness. Three weeks later a peace deal was signed. The women went on to work alongside UN Peacekeeping Forces, persuading fighters to hand over their weapons and go back to school. Their voter registration campaign in 2005 increased the proportion of women voters from 15% to 50%. Liberians elected President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf who, together with Leymah Gbowee, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2011.

Various sources

Kenyan Muslims shield Christians

A group of Kenyan Muslims travelling on a bus ambushed by Islamist gunmen protected Christian passengers by refusing to be split into groups, according to eyewitnesses. They told the militants to kill them together or leave them alone, a local governor told Kenyan media. Some of the Muslim passengers gave non-Muslims headscarves to try and conceal their identities when the bus stopped. One hundred passengers, mostly women, were on the bus at the time of the attack, according to Kenyan officials.

Various sources: December 2015

Nonviolent resistance in the South Hebron Hills

Residents of the South Hebron Hills experience continual harassment from nearby settlements but remain firm in their commitment to nonviolent resistance. Each day they graze their sheep in contested areas and resist settler attempts to drive them from their lands. International volunteers from Operation Dove have maintained a presence there since 2004.



Recently the shepherds, accompanied by the volunteers, were arrested following a nonviolent action during which villagers repaired the road which links At-Tuwani village to Yatta. This is an example of nonviolent resistance and of the importance of the witness of volunteers. The volunteers were quickly released and the shepherds were held for several hours, released only after paying a fine.

Source: www.tinyurl.com/South-Hebron

Prayers

Witnesses for peace and nonviolence

- Reader 1 Loving Creator and giver of all life,
We thank you for the many people who have gone before us:
- Reader 2 For those who have lived out Jesus' example of love
- Reader 1 For those who have worked tirelessly to make sure that all
people are treated with dignity
- Reader 2 For those who have taught us how to pray
- Reader 1 For those who have shown us how to forgive
- Reader 2 For those who helped us to cross boundaries
- Reader 1 For those who have tried to live your way of nonviolence
- Reader 2 For those who have lived out your kingdom of justice, love and
peace
- Reader 1 We name them now before you...

People can be invited to come forward to light a candle and, if they wish, name out loud a person who has been an example of peacemaking for them.

- Reader 1 We know that we do not go alone, for the path is brightened by
those who have gone before us. May our lives also be a shining
example to others.

**All: Jesus, following your way is not easy. Give us courage, strength and
wisdom. Convert our hearts to your way of nonviolence. When we are
afraid, help us to remember your words, 'Peace I leave with you, my
peace I give to you; but the kind of peace I give you is not like the world's
peace'. Thank you for giving us this example and forgive us for the many
times we fail. Amen**

Penitential prayer

*This penitential prayer is taken from a liturgy prepared for the Week of
Prayer for Christian Unity 2017. You will need a basket of stones ready and
three readers apart from the leader. We have included seven prayers that
require stones. You may wish to add others.*

L: As we offer these prayers we bring forward stones that represent our sins
and transgressions, those things for which we seek forgiveness. They will
form a small wall. The response to each prayer is:

Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.

(Alternatively you may wish to use a familiar sung response.)

Leader: One stone in our wall is lack of love.

R1: Gracious God, the love of Christ compels us to ask forgiveness for
whenever we have failed to love. We humbly pray: **Forgive us our sins, as
we forgive those who sin against us.**

L: One stone in our wall is intolerance.

R2: Gracious God, the love of Christ compels us to ask forgiveness for
banishing people from our community in the past and for religious
intolerance today. We humbly pray: **Forgive us...**

L: One stone in our wall is discrimination.

R3: Gracious God, the love of Christ compels us to ask forgiveness for all
forms of prejudice and discrimination against one another. We humbly pray:
Forgive us...

L: One stone in our wall is religious wars.

R1: Gracious God, the love of Christ compels us to ask forgiveness for all
wars that we have waged against one another in your name. We humbly
pray: **Forgive us...**

L: One stone in our wall is our indifference to the needs of others.

R2: Gracious God, the love of Christ compels us to ask forgiveness for our
closed minds and hearts. We humbly pray: **Forgive us...**

L: One stone in our wall is the abuse of power.

R3: Gracious God, the love of Christ compels us to ask forgiveness for our
abuse of power. We humbly pray: **Forgive us...**

L: One stone in our wall is our silence in a world of war and violence.

R1: Gracious God, the love of Christ compels us to ask forgiveness for our
not speaking out. We humbly pray: **Forgive us...**

L: Let us pray. Lord our God, look upon this wall that we have built, which
separates us from you and from one another. Forgive our sins. Heal us.
Help us to overcome all walls and divisions and make us one in you.

Activities to help explore the theme



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?

Look at the picture on page 10 of a stained glass window in the 16th Street Baptist Church, Birmingham, Alabama. 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.

What is nonviolence?

for three voices which could be used during a service or to start a discussion.

Voice 1: What is nonviolence?

Voice 2: It is a strategy for social change that rejects violence.

Voice 3: It is a philosophy of active peacemaking.

Voice 2: It is a spiritual discipline.

Voice 3: It is a pragmatic choice based on what works.

Voice 2: It is an active response to violence.

Voice 3: It is a force more powerful than violence.

(pause)

Voice 1: Why are we talking about nonviolence here in church?

Voice 3: Because God's will is for peace.

Voice 2: Because God calls us to turn swords into ploughshares.

Voice 3: Because God is the source of power.

Voice 2: Because God is the source of love.

Voice 3: Because God is love.

(pause)

Voice 1: Yes, but why are we talking about nonviolence at Mass **today**?

Voice 3: Because today is Peace Sunday.

Voice 2: Because Pope Francis has asked us to think about nonviolence.

Voice 3: Because nonviolence offers a style of politics for peace.

Voice 2: Because we need better tools for solving conflicts.

Voice 3: Because nonviolence can turn enemies into friends.

(pause)

Voice 1: How do Christians walk the talk of nonviolence in everyday life?

Voice 2: By working for justice.

Voice 3: By trusting in God rather than trusting in weapons.

Voice 2: By practising creative and disarming ways of responding to a crisis.

Voice 3: By actively and publicly resisting war.

Voice 2: By building relationships with those who are supposed to be enemies.

Voice 3: By showing more love.

(pause)

Voice 1: What is nonviolence?

Voice 2: The way of Jesus.

Voice 3: A force more powerful than violence.

Voice 2: The way of love.

*adapted from Prayers and Practices of Nonviolence,
Mennonite Central Committee Canada, 2011*

Parish Activity

Engage your parish council, pastoral team and others in reflection on how the community can strengthen its living out of Gospel nonviolence, recognising that peacemaking is an integral part of our daily life that, just like other aspects of our faith life, needs to be encouraged, nourished and resourced.



Use this simple chart to initiate this discussion - perhaps exploring the questions over a series of meetings or enlarging the chart and making it available for others to respond to.

Prayers and activities for children

Nonviolence in action: Mama Zepreta's house

This story, a drama from Kenya, can be used as an assembly or group activity. It explores positive and nonviolent ways of challenging injustice. tinyurl.com/gwk2axb. It is taken from the *Teach Peace Pack*, produced by the Peace Education Network of which Pax Christi is a member.

Making peace starts with me

You will need:

- Each line from the prayer below enlarged on a single A4 or A3 sheet
- Coloured paper and scissors for the children to make cut-outs of their own hands
- Coloured pens



What to do: If your group is not too large you could take each line in turn and ask the children to say what this means for them. Divide a larger group, giving out one or two of the lines to each smaller group.

This can be used as the basis of discussion. Can they think of how they have acted in one of these ways? What did it feel like? Has someone responded to them in this way? What did it feel like?

Invite the children to choose the one which means the most to them and to write it out on a hand cut-out which they may wish to decorate too.

These can be gathered and mounted under the heading 'Making peace starts with me'. This could be presented during Mass or displayed clearly for others to see.

At the end of the session use the words as a prayer reflection.

Making peace starts with me

When I respect myself and other people and keep from saying or doing mean things to others.

When I listen carefully to others, especially when they disagree with me.

When I care about others' feelings and don't always try to get my own way.

When I say I'm sorry and mean it when I hurt another person.

When I forgive others when they hurt me, and don't hold a grudge.

When I find safe words and ways to talk and act even when I'm angry, and try to solve problems peacefully.

When I treat the earth and all living things with care and respect.

When I find fun ways to play and TV programmes to watch that don't make hurting others look exciting or fun.

When I can speak to others when they hurt or use harmful words, and stand up for those who are being treated unfairly.

When I follow Jesus and his way I am on a path to peace.

Adapted from Institute for Peace and Justice, USA

Blessed are you peacemakers

When you speak out against violence.

When you stand by those who are hurt or ridiculed.

When you listen to those you disagree with.

When you give your time and energy to help others.

When you try to forgive those who hurt you.

When you love and open yourself to others.

Adapted, Pax Christi, Blessed are the peacemakers



Suggested songs

L = Laudate (Decani Music)

CH = Celebration Hymnal for Everyone with Supplement (McCrimmons)

LHON = Liturgical Hymns Old & New (Kevin Mayhew)

Peace before us, David Hass, 1987, GIA Publications, Inc.

Here I am Lord, Daniel L. Schutte - **L 865 CH 285 LHON 376**

You are salt for the earth, Marty Haugen - **L 854 CH 821 LHON 749**

All creatures of our God and King - **L 694 CH 15 LHON 103**

Peace Child, Bernadette Farrell. Go Before Us, OCP Publications

Give us, Lord, a New Heart, Bernadette Farrell - **L 514**

A new commandment - **L 920 CH 4 LHON 133**

O day of peace, Carl P Daw, jr - **L 900**

Lord, make me a means of your peace, John B Foley - **L 899 LHON 449**

Who will speak, Marty Haugen. 1993, GIA Publications, Inc.

Article for a parish magazine

'Becoming Prophets of a Just Peace'

by Fr Rob Esdaile, Parish Priest of Our Lady of Lourdes, Thames Ditton, Surrey

A curious monument

In a little courtyard to one side of St Mary Major's basilica in Rome is a stone cross, perhaps 10 feet high. Nothing unusual about that, perhaps, until you look more closely. The vertical arm of the cross is in the form of an old cannon. The story is that when King Henri IV of France decided to return to the Catholic Church in 1593, the Pope of the time was less than gracious, setting up an inscription to commemorate his 'absolution' from his errant ways. The King felt insulted, so a French prelate retaliated by manufacturing this most military of crosses. Beneath it he too wrote an inscription, the motto of the first Christian Emperor, Constantine: '*In this sign I have my victory.*' The ambiguity was deliberate: If the cross doesn't work, there is always the gun.

In which sign do we have our victory?

That ambiguity has hung over the Church for the last 1700 years and it challenges us in a new way today. Firstly, because of the sheer power of modern weapons, which no longer lob small lumps of rock across a few hundred yards, but can carry the destruction of whole cities in one warhead a quarter of the way around the world in minutes. Secondly, because of the number of armed conflicts played out in these first decades of the Third Millennium. Pope Francis has called it, '*A Third World War in instalments.*' Think Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Afghanistan, Libya, South Sudan, the Ukraine ...

Alarm at this proliferation of violence has provoked the Holy Father to call, in his message for *World Peace Day* (celebrated in England and Wales on Sunday, January 15th, 2017), for a *new style of politics* aimed at building peace and for new way of conducting international relations - with *Nonviolence* as its central tenet. It ought to be obvious that violence cannot heal the wounds caused by violence, and that crushing our opponents by military might will never bring true reconciliation. Yet we seem to have difficulty in grasping that truth. Our theologians and ethicists have laudably devoted their energies to assessing when warfare is *not* legitimate (when other means of conflict resolution have not been exhausted; when those who declare war do not have the authority to do so; when the immunity of non-combatants is not safeguarded; when the evil caused is not balanced by achievement of a far greater good; when there is no prospect of success,

etc). But that has left us with the illusion that there *could* be a *just* war, an *okay* war; even a *good* or *necessary* or *holy* war, a war which does God's will.

War No More

God is love. That is the fundamental Gospel message. And Jesus demonstrably refused to hate his enemies, to retaliate or to seek their destruction. For 300 years nearly all Christians took these two truths for granted, until Constantine lifted the Church out of persecution and set it on the road to power. And then the cross gradually took on the shape of a weapon in many people's eyes - believers and unbelievers alike.

Today the Church is no longer needed by secular power as a prop. That frees us to articulate a different vision; no longer as guardians of a '*Just War*' but as prophets of a '*Just Peace*'. That requires, firstly, our own conversion of heart - letting our basic responses be refashioned by Christ. Next it means reaching beyond the rhetoric of conflict to try to hear the real hopes and fears of our opponents and to identify what we have in common. Then initiatives to promote dialogue must follow, together with measures which can 'de-escalate' tensions and resolve disputes, learning both from recent conflict resolution processes and from our own Christian tradition of peacemaking. And through all of this must run an effort to articulate a vision of the sort of people we want to be and the sort of world we wish to create: how can we make it easier to live together in harmony?

The vision is a radical one. It really does constitute a new style of politics, as Pope Francis has said. The transformation won't be easy. But it's the only path which offers hope to our divided world. Fortunately, we don't need to make that journey alone. There are many others already committed to this new way, in organisations such as the international Catholic Peace Movement, *Pax Christi*², groups which have already developed training and techniques for those who dare to believe that another way is possible besides preparation for war. But our greatest resource is the message and example of Jesus, calling us to love our enemies and to walk the way of peace together. In that sign we have our victory.

² Contact www.paxchristi.org.uk or write to Pax Christi, Christian Peace Education Centre, St Joseph's, Watford Way, London NW4 4TY (UK) / 020 8203 4884 / E-mail: info@paxchristi.org.uk

Useful websites

Catholic Bishops' Conference of England & Wales: www.catholicnews.org.uk

Catholic Nonviolence Initiative: www.nonviolencejustpeace.net/

Nonviolence & Justpeace Conference: tinyurl.com/Rome-conference-report/

Christian Peacemaker Teams: www.cpt.org/

Nonviolent Peace Force:
www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org/

A Force More Powerful:
www.aforcemorepowerful.org/

Peace encyclicals and World Peace Day messages:
tinyurl.com/encyclicals-messages

Peace Stories: from the Pax Christi international network:
www.paxchristipeacestories.wordpress.com/

Teach Peace Pack: www.peace-education.org.uk/teach-peace

More resources from Pax Christi

Nonviolence in Action webpage offers articles, reflections and resources, including a PowerPoint presentation on the Nonviolence of Jesus based on Matthew 5: 38-41 www.paxchristi.org.uk/resources/nonviolence-in-action/

Nonviolence Works: 60 nonviolent victories. An exhibition of 10 x A3 laminated panels. Can be hired from the Pax Christi office. £10.00 per booking includes postage.

Peace People who Changed the World. Case-studies of 10 people and their approach to nonviolent peacemaking. £14.99 (please add 20% for postage)

The Way of Peace: Exploring Nonviolence for the 21st Century. Useful resource packed with stories, questions, and quotes. £10.00 (please add 20% for postage)

Jesus and Nonviolence: a Third Way by Walter Wink, £6 (please add 20% for postage)



Nonviolence in action

For World Peace Day 2017 - Peace Sunday will be 15 January in England and Wales - Pope Francis has chosen the theme *Nonviolence: a style of politics for peace*.

In our violent world this offers a timely opportunity for our parishes to explore the Catholic tradition of nonviolence which goes back to Jesus, and to develop ways to make Gospel nonviolence better known through our sacramental and education programmes, as well as an effective influence on our social justice work and political choices.

Following a ground-breaking conference on *Nonviolence and Just Peace*, held jointly with the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Pax Christi International has launched the 'Catholic Nonviolence Initiative' www.nonviolencejustpeace.net to deepen the Church's commitment to Gospel nonviolence.

Contact Pax Christi if we can help you to run an event in your parish, school, university, religious community or diocese.



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