

Testimony

A Pamphlet from Pax Christi San Antonio

Anticipating March 24, 2019

Pax Christi San Antonio does not solicit donations. Thoughtful comments, however, may be sent to the editor at j6anthonyblasi@yahoo.com, with the understanding that permission to publish them is implied. Pax Christi International was founded in 1945 with the encouragement of Bishop Pierre Marie Théas of Montauban, France, by Marthe Dortel Claudot, as a Christian lay organization dedicated to preventing a repetition of the savagery of the twentieth century's world wars.

Editorial

After the calendar, the *Liturgical Reading* reflections are based on readings for the Third Sunday of Lent. At some masses, the narrative about the Samaritan woman at the well, from John 4, may be read. That reading is selected from the “Year A” cycle, to co-ordinate the mass with the RCIA Program (for initiating adults who will be baptized at the Easter Vigil or Christians affiliating with the Roman Catholic Church through Confirmation at the Easter Vigil). The reflection that follows after the Calendar is for the “C Year” cycle of readings, which is intended for those who have already been initiated into the Church.

Tom Keene's poem is *Wild Forces*. For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>.

Last February 26, Marie Dennis, a member of Pax Christi and primary organizer of the 2016 Conference on Nonviolence and Just Peace, co-sponsored by the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and Pax Christi International, delivered an address at the University of the Incarnate Word, “Active Nonviolence: A Paradigm Shift to a More Peaceful World.” The text of her address follows the Poem.

Calendar

In Austin

Monday March 25, 6:30pm, lecture by Rev. John Floberg, who organized the national call that drew over 500 interfaith clergy to Standing Rock in November 2016 (the Dakota Access Pipeline protest). Weeks Campus Center, Episcopal Seminary of the South West, 501 E. 32nd St.

Tuesday March 26, 12:00pm-1:00pm, Deliberative Dialogue, “What Should We Do About the Opioid Epidemic?” Fleck Hall 305, St. Edward's University, 3001 S.

Congress. Parking permit:

<https://www.stedwards.nupark.com/portal/Account/VisitorLogin>

Wednesday March 27, 4:30pm-6:00pm, Panel discussion, "National Emergencies." Munday Library, St. Edward's University, 3001 S. Congress. For temporary parking permit: <https://stedwards.nupark.com/portal/Account/VisitorLogin>

In Beaumont

Friday March 29, 6:00pm-Saturday March 30, 4:30pm, Sr. Patty Chappelle, **SNDdeN (Pax Christi USA), Catholic Social Teaching Workshop**. St. Jude Thaddeus Catholic Church, 6825 Gladys Avenue, Beaumont, TX. Information: LaWanna 409-924-4333. Register: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/two-feet-of-love-faith-in-action-tickets-56579275135>

In Dallas

Wednesday March 27, 12:00pm-1:30pm, Mark Chancey (Southern Methodist University), Policy, Politics & the Bible in Public Schools: Is There a Space for Religious Literacy? Hughes-Trigg Forum, Southern Methodist University, 3140 Dyer St. RSVP by March 24: <https://whoozin.com/NFC-JVW-MGTE>. Information: Bora Laci, blaci@smu.edu

Thursday April 4, 6:00pm-8:00pm, "Gun Violence: A Right to Life Issue." Panel discussion, including a trauma surgeon, a representative from the SMU Black Students Association, and a representative from Moms Demand Action. Sponsored by the Catholic Community at SMU, SMU Office of the Chaplain and Religious Life, the Catholic Diocese of Dallas, Texas GunSense, the Dallas Peace and Justice Center, and the SMU Embrey Human Rights Program. Information: Sheila@Levatino.net. SMU McCord Auditorium, 306 Dallas Hall, 3225 University Blvd.

Thursday April 11, 12:00pm-1:30pm, Paul Sedra, "Egypt's Church-State Partnership and the End of Equal Citizenship for Coptic Christians. Hughes-Trigg Forum, 3140 Dyer St., Southern Methodist University. Frr, but register by April 8: <https://whoozin.com/HJE-FWD-RHUV-6WJX>. Information: Bora Laci, blaci@smu.edu, 214-768-4716.

Thursday April 18, 12:30pm-2:00pm, Elzbieta Gozdziat, "Global Migration and Human Trafficking." Room 106, Florence Hall, Dedman School of Law, Southern Methodist University, 3330 University Blvd. Register by April 15, <https://whoozim.com/43P-944-NH6M>. Information: Bora Lacy, tower@smu.edu.

In El Paso

Fridays, 12:00pm-1:00pm, Pax Christi joins Border Peace Presence in front of the Federal Courthouse (corner of Campbell and San Antonio).

Saturday March 23, 9:00am, The Migrant Way of the Cross, conducted by Bishop Seitz. Modesto Gomez Park, 4600 Edna St.; entrance across from Boys and Girls Clubs off Delta St.

Thursday March 28, 12:00pm-1:00pm, execution vigil, in front of El Paso County Courthouse.

Sunday March 31, 12:00pm-5:00pm, Cesar Chavez Day celebration. Farm Worker Center, corner of Ninth and Oregon. Information: (915) 873-8933, or cmarentess@gmail.com.

In Houston

Tuesday March 19, 12:15pm-1:30pm, Deborah Carr (Boston University), "Golden Years? Social Inequalities in Late Life." Kyle Morrow Room Fondren Library, Rice University. Information: Shirley Tapscott, shtz@rice.edu.

Wednesday March 20, 11:00am, Sharan Mehta thesis defense, "Negotiating Race in a Climate of Islamophobia: How Muslim and Sikh Americans Perceive Discrimination and Construct Racialized Religious Identities." Sewall Hall 250, Rice University.

Thursday March 21, 12:00pm, Scott Hanson (University of Pennsylvania), lecture on the interplay of religious freedom, immigration, and pluralism. Meyer Conference Room, RMC/Ley Student Center, Rice University. Register on the Rice Events Calendar (<https://events.rice.edu/>) page for March 21. Information: tolerance@rice.edu.

Sunday March 24, 9:30am, Elena Korbut (Interfaith Ministries of Greater Houston), "Refugee Resettlement: Local Solutions to a Global Crisis." St. Philip's Church, room 201, 4807 San Felipe.

Monday March 25, 6:00pm-8:00pm, Anita Hill (Brandeis University), "From Social Movement to Social Impact: Putting an End to Sexual Harassment in the Workplace." Baker Hall, Dore Commons, Rice University. RSVP at rsvpcswgs@rice.edu.

Friday April 5, 8:00am-9:00am, John Schmalzbauer (Missouri State University), "The resilience of religion in American higher education." Lovett Hall 402, Rice University (use entrance C). RSVP at https://events.rice.edu/#!/view/event/date/20190405/event_id/20205. Information: Hayley Hemstreet, hjh2@rice.edu, 713-348-3974.

Sunday April 7, 9:30am, Garland Pohl, "Does the Pope Run the Church?" St. Philip Presbyterian Church, 407 San Felipe.

Friday April 12, 8:00am-9:00am, Craig Considine, "Muslims in America: Examining the Facts." Lovett Hall 402, Rice University (use entrance C). RSVP at https://events.rice.edu/#!/view/event/date/20190412/event_id?20206. Information: Hayley Hemstreet, ihj2@rice.edu, 713-348-3974.

In San Antonio

Tuesday March 19, 12:00pm-1:00pm, Alondra Nelson, Ph.D. (Columbia University), "Racial reconciliation, institutional morality and the social life of DNA." Holly Auditorium, University of Texas Health, 7703 Floyd Curl Dr.

Tuesday March 19, 6:30pm, Wendell Fuqua, "Grassland Birds: Ecology and Conservation Delivery." William R. Sinkin Eco Centro, 1802 N. Main.

Tuesday March 19, 7:00pm-9:00pm, Green Sacred Texts (environmental passages from diverse traditions). \$10. SoL Center, University Presbyterian Church, 300 Bushnell (park off Shook). Register at <https://www.upcsa.org/registration/>

Tuesday March 19, 7:30, talk by Eva Schloss, step sister of Anne Frank. \$20 if ticket purchased at Laurie Auditorium box office (M-F, 10:00am-2:00p), or \$30 through Ticketmaster. Laurie Auditorium, Trinity University, 1 Trinity Place.

Wednesday March 20, 6:30pm-8:00pm, "Women, War & Peace II Preview," film preview and discussion. Free, but tickets are required: <https://www.tobincenter.org/box-office/2019-03/women-war-and-peace-ii> Tobin Center, Carlos Alvarez Studio Theatre, 100 Auditorium Circle.

Thursday March 21, 1:30pm-2:45pm, Rev. Helen T. Boursier, Ph.D., "The Ethics of Hospitality: An Interfaith Response to U.S. Immigration Policies." Mabee Library Special Collections Room, University of the Incarnate Word, 4301 Broadway.

Wednesday March 27, 7:30pm, Dorothy Kearns Goodwin, "Leadership in Turbulent Times." Laurie Auditorium, Trinity University, One Trinity Place.

Thursday March 28, 6:30pm, local San Antonio legislators discuss bills that may affect the environment. Lions Field Adult Center, 2809 Broadway (at Mulberry).

Wednesday April 3, 6:30pm-8:00pm, Erica Schommer, J.D., "Representing Migrants in Texas." Fiesta Room, Coates Student Center 111, Trinity University, One Trinity Place.

Saturday April 6, 10:00am, Pax Christi San Antonio meeting, residence of Maria Tobin, 8715 Starcrest Dr., #27. Information: matob@aol.com.

Tuesday April 9, 7:00pm-9:00pm, screening of "Lindy Lou, Juror Number 2," documentary on a juror in a capital punishment case. Discussion led by Kristin Houle and Sam Millsap. SoL Center, University Presbyterian Church, 300 Bushnell (park off Shook). Free, register at [https://www.upcsa.org/r, 7:30pm, registration/](https://www.upcsa.org/r,7:30pm,registration/)

Second Reading (First Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12)

This particular passage from *First Corinthians* is about temptation, resisting temptation, and being given strength in its face and an escape from it. It is no surprise that Paul would warn his church in Corinth about temptation and call upon its members to resist it. It is also not surprising that there is an escape, or salvation, from it. It is to be noted how confident he was, however, that God will provide the strength to resist it. We humans are reluctant to forgive people who give in to temptation, but the model

presented for us is to enable people to resist it and escape from it. Paul draws a parallel with the provision of nourishment and water to the Hebrews wandering in the desert after fleeing Egypt.



Photo by John Dauer

Third Reading (Luke 13.1-9)

Jesus was a Galilean on his way to Jerusalem. “And some near him at the time were informing him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices.” Jerusalem was a dangerous place for a Galilean teacher, especially one whom some people were calling a Messiah, someone anointed for a mission. “Do you think those Galileans had become sinners more than other Galileans...?” Jesus was focused on what would be right, not on avoiding what might displease an authority: “No, I tell you, but unless you reform you will all be killed.”

“Or those eighteen in Siloam on whom the tower fell and killed...” The ancients knew very well how to construct all manner of buildings. Modern architects still marvel over the engineering involved in the construction of the Herodian Temple in Jerusalem. Yet, some incompetent built a tower that fell on eighteen hapless people. Had the builders cheated on the quality of the stone? Was the incompetence in question moral incompetence? “Do you think,” Jesus asked in regard to the eighteen, “they had become more guilty than all the people dwelling in Jerusalem?” Someone, perhaps many, in Jerusalem let that tower stay as it was.

Then Jesus tells a parable about a patient gardener waiting for a fig tree to begin bearing fruit.

Poem

Wild Forces

Tiger, tiger, burning bright in the forests of the night.
William Blake

*Beautiful, wild forces dwell in us. Let them turn
the mills within and fill sacks that feed even heaven.*
Francis of Assisi

All of us in pain,
all of us in poverty,
all of us prisoners,
all of us tortured,
all of us terrorized,
all of us refugees,
all of us homeless,
all of us cold and hungry,
all of us lonely and afraid.

May we unveil and own
these powers within
and kindle the fires
that heal; whole and holy.

Tom Keene and Muse
January 25, 2019

Active Nonviolence: A Paradigm Shift to a More Peaceful World

Marie Dennis

University of the Incarnate Word

February 26, 2019

The scene is painfully familiar: a crisis captures the attention of the world – North Korea and the U.S. are dangerously posturing, with nuclear weapons in the mix; Rohingya Muslims are fleeing brutality in Myanmar; thousands of Yazidis are caught in the Sinjar Mountains where they fled from rapidly advancing ISIS militants; countless Syrians are under siege and cut off from essential aid; violence flares in the Central African Republic; people- especially women - are in danger from unrelenting violence in South Sudan and the DR Congo.

There is no question that the world has to respond to situations like these. Yet, when we consider the options, what we find every time is that the military toolbox is full to the brim with weapons and well trained personnel while the active nonviolence toolbox is almost empty. That is surely not surprising since the world spends something

like 1.74 trillion dollars annually preparing for war. In the US alone we have been spending on the order of \$600 billion (now \$700 billion) a year getting ready for war and, relatively speaking, almost nothing preparing for peace. In other words, we are well prepared to win the war, but woefully unprepared to win the peace.

We have seen the violence repeatedly horrify our own communities here in the U.S. as well -- near San Antonio, at the Sutherland Springs First Baptist Church, in Fort Hood, in Parkland (FL), Ferguson, Las Vegas, Charlottesville, Baltimore, Chicago, Orlando, ... There were **3,513** gun-related deaths in Texas in 2017 -- 352 of these were children and teenagers under 19 years old. (CDC WISQARS Database).

And as the United States abrogates one arms control treaty after another (the Iran deal, the INF treaty – is the new START treaty next?), we are slowly beginning to *remember* that nuclear weapons pose an existential threat to life on this planet.

The human community simply cannot sustain the levels of war and violence that have such unconscionable consequences. We have to find a better way to live together on this small planet.

Thankfully, there are alternatives.

In the context of civil war in the Central African Republic, at the invitation of Muslim, Catholic, and evangelical religious representatives, Catholic Relief Services trained thousands of government, civil society, and private sector leaders in social cohesion principles and techniques, and equipped them with tools they could use in their workplaces and communities. Over two and half years, CRS saw that a great majority of those trained were committed to actively rebuilding social cohesion and promoting the common good. For example, a former anti-balaka chief, mobilized his militia to protect the Muslims they had previously persecuted. In collaboration with the local imam, he initiated a connector project to rebuild the neighborhood mosque that his fighters had damaged, defaced and looted.

In Palestine, the Arab Educational Institute has organized many cultural events in front of the massive separation wall that has divided Palestinians from their land and olive trees, pulled apart Palestinian families, and severely restricted the ability of Palestinians on the West Bank to visit Jerusalem, to access health care, to connect with family members in Gaza or Israel. My three favorites of AEI's nonviolent actions at the wall are (1) concerts that bridge the wall with music; (2) symbolic actions like people jumping over hurdles to symbolize jumping over the wall; and (3) the Wall museum -- permanent posters on the wall with Palestinian women's stories, oral histories, and explanations of occupation and sumud (steadfastness)– actions that maintain hope and demonstrate common humanity over against the massive violence of the wall.

Or, look at the Southern border of the United States – and, actually, at almost every community across the United States. The creativity of nonviolent actions to stop the violence against migrants and migrant families is truly spectacular.

As you may know, Pax Christi International is a global Catholic peace movement with 120 member organizations working for peace on six continents. We share a deep commitment to active nonviolence.

For Pax Christi members around the world nonviolence is a spirituality, a way of life, a deep commitment to live the values that we believe shaped the early Christian community in the first century context of occupied Palestine where violence was a way of life. For us, the so-called “hard sayings” in Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount are central.

But the challenge is how to interpret that message in the context of a 21st century world immersed in extremely complex situations of violence. What does “love your enemy” mean now – yes, at a personal level, but maybe even more importantly, what does this worldview offer in a social context or politically?

In the public arena, nonviolence is often misrepresented, misunderstood, too narrowly defined or wrongly dismissed as either passive or naive. Very strong evidence, however, suggests a different conclusion - that active nonviolence is both powerful and effective. It is also much, much more than crossing a line or chaining oneself to a fence -- much broader than civil resistance.

In fact, one of the great gifts of our age is the growing recognition of active nonviolence as a positive, constructive and powerful force for social change; a process for ending violence without lethal force; for transforming conflict; for effectively protecting people and communities at risk; and for fostering just and peaceful alternatives.

You may be familiar with the work of Maria Stephan and Erica Chenoweth who conducted a landmark study of nonviolent civil resistance campaigns over the last one hundred years, published in their book Why Civil Resistance Works: the strategic logic of nonviolent conflict.

Stephan and Chenoweth collected data on all major nonviolent and violent campaigns for the overthrow of a government since 1900. The data covered the entire world and consisted of every known case where there were at least 1,000 observed participants -- hundreds of cases.

They found that from 1900 to 2006, nonviolent campaigns worldwide were twice as likely to succeed outright as violent insurgencies. Not only that, this trend has been increasing over time, so that in the last 50 years, nonviolent campaigns are becoming increasingly successful and common, whereas violent insurgencies are becoming increasingly rare and unsuccessful. This is true even in those extremely brutal, authoritarian conditions where you would expect nonviolent resistance to fail.

The answer seems to lie in people power itself. Chenoweth and Stephan's data showed that no single campaign has failed during the time period they studied after the campaign had achieved the active and sustained participation of just 3.5% of the population.

Every single campaign that surpassed that 3.5% was a nonviolent one. In fact, the nonviolent campaigns were on average four times larger than the average violent campaigns, and they were often much more inclusive and representative in terms of gender, age, race, class, and the urban-rural distinction. Moreover, 75% of the violent campaigns failed, while a majority of the nonviolent civil resistance campaigns were successful.

Civil resistance allows people of all different levels of physical ability to participate including the elderly, people with disabilities, and children.

Of course, just because a campaign is nonviolent does not ensure its success. Just as for violent campaigns, flexible and creative leadership is crucial to success. A poorly managed, disunified campaign will fail – and many do.

While Chenoweth and Stephan's work was groundbreaking, there is much more empirical research being done (including by them) that speaks to the effectiveness of other nonviolent approaches and to the importance of increased investment in

developing, teaching and scaling up nonviolent strategies – from conflict transformation in neighborhoods and restorative justice practices in schools to early warning and atrocity prevention mechanisms, to unarmed civilian protection, skillful diplomacy and just, sustainable development.

The Catholic Peacebuilding Network, which includes Catholic universities with strong peace studies programs (Notre Dame, Boston College, Catholic University, San Diego, St. Thomas, etc.), the USCCB, CRS, Pax Christi International, Sant' Egidio, ... has facilitated research particularly in Burundi, Colombia and Mindanao, Philippines on Catholic peacebuilding – what peacebuilding programs work; and what contributions the Catholic Church can make to building peace. Their edited book on *Catholic Peacebuilding* is a very useful resource.

The United Nations is also closely examining what makes for peace. A High Level Independent Panel on UN Peace Operations' report from 2015 specifically emphasized the importance of a long list of nonviolent approaches to peacemaking, beginning with preventing armed conflict in the first place and addressing the underlying causes of conflict. The panel called for countries to

- mobilize partnerships to support nonviolent, political solutions to war,
- employ unarmed and civilian tools for protecting communities caught in the midst of violence,
- emphasize inclusion, healing and reconciliation,
- revitalize livelihoods in conflict-affected economies,
- rebuild confidence in political processes and responsible state structures,
- reform police, promote just rule of law and ensure respect for human rights.

These seem so basic, but, in reality, as a human community we are just beginning to acknowledge the importance of steps like these to “sustaining peace” --- to building peace in its own right, not only in post conflict situations. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG16), articulated after a long debate, insist that sustainable development and peace are intrinsically interconnected. Catholic Social teaching and especially Pope Francis' emphasis on integral human development also point to the intersection of social and economic justice, human rights, ecological sustainability and just peace.

In fact, a significant increase of attention to the very serious, challenging, possible, yet (thus far) unsuccessful work of fostering peaceful communities is evident worldwide. The Alliance for Peacebuilding, International Peace Institute, the Earth Institute at Columbia University, the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, the US Institute of Peace, Quakers, Mennonites, the World Council of Churches, and countless other organizations and faith communities are promoting what would be a paradigm shift to a more peaceful world where the power and effectiveness of nonviolent approaches to conflict are appreciated and scaled-up.

What actually does make for peace? What characteristics are common to societies that don't make war?

I have recently discovered an amazing little book called *Opting Out of War*. The authors, Mary Anderson and Marshall Wallace, studied thirteen communities that opted out of war, including in Afghanistan; Bosnia; Colombia; Mozambique; Rwanda; Fiji; Burkina Faso; India; Kosovo; Nigeria; the Philippines; Sierra Leone; and Sri Lanka.

Their conclusion was that "... the prevention of violent conflict is doable. Normal people living normal lives have the option to say no to war." Anderson and Wallace have begun to identify crucial common characteristics in the different communities that deliberately avoided being drawn into war.

Similarly, anthropologist Doug Fry from the University of Alabama, who is part of Columbia University's Earth Institute Sustainable Peace project, is examining the characteristics of peace systems – neighboring societies that don't make war on each other (or anyone else). He has identified characteristics such as interdependence, non-warring values and norms, symbols and ceremonies that reinforce peace, superordinate institutions, conflict management and visionary leadership.

Fry's extensive research shows that war is not ancient or inevitable – that peaceful societies do exist. In fact, he reminds us, most people have to undergo extensive military training to kill another human being. In *Beyond War* (Oxford Press, 2007) he writes, "As a means of ensuring a nation's safety and security, war is already obsolete, for it does little or nothing to protect people from the very real threats of global environmental degradation, human rights abuses, nuclear proliferation and terrorism. It can be argued that the acceptance and the waging of war even contribute to these problems." In his more recent book, *War, Peace and Human Nature* (Oxford, 2013), Fry underscores the importance of having an alternative vision of a world without war. Exactly!!

Given what we now know about the consequences of war – physical, economic, psychological, ecological - and what we have witnessed over and over as wars fail to accomplish whatever was their stated purpose and war begets violence begets war, it seems evident that if we are ever going to achieve the kind of just peace and real security for which we all long, the global community needs to give vastly more intellectual and financial resources, creativity and courage to developing effective conflict prevention, peace building and other nonviolent tools.

Richly diverse nonviolent tools and strategies have been the "bread and butter" for Pax Christi member organizations for decades: trainings in strategic nonviolence for communities negatively affected by extractive projects throughout Latin America; accompaniment of communities at risk in the Middle East; sports for peace programs in Haiti and South Sudan; reintegrating former combatants into their communities in the DR Congo; nonviolence trainings throughout Africa's Great Lakes region; creative advocacy to reduce military spending and support diplomatic solutions to seemingly intractable violent conflicts – the list is endless.

In the last century Catholic teaching on war and peace has shifted in significant ways. Renewed attention has been given to the practice of nonviolence – not only as a personal option, but as tool for public authorities to use as well. Over twenty-five years ago the Catholic bishops of the United States said, "... nonviolence ... consists of a commitment to resist manifest injustice and public evil with means other than force. These include dialogue, negotiations, protests, strikes, boycotts, civil disobedience and civilian resistance... National leaders bear a moral obligation to see that nonviolent alternatives are seriously considered for dealing with conflicts. New styles of preventative diplomacy and conflict resolution ought to be explored, tried, improved and supported ... Nonviolent strategies need greater attention in international affairs." (*The Harvest of Justice is Sown in Peace* 1993)

Two years ago in April 2016, 85 people from around the world gathered in Rome for what has been called a “landmark” conference on nonviolence and just peace. Invited by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace (now the new Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development) and Pax Christi International, participants came together to imagine a new framework for Catholic teaching on war and peace that could help the world move beyond perpetual violence and war. Central to our conversation were the voices of people promoting active nonviolence in the midst of horrific violence.

Many participants came from countries that have been at war or dealing with serious violence for decades: Iraq, Sri Lanka, Colombia, South Sudan, the DR Congo, Mexico, Afghanistan, Palestine, El Salvador, the Philippines, Northern Ireland, Lebanon, Burundi, Guatemala, Uganda, South Africa and more. Their testimony about the power of nonviolence and the urgent need to end war was extremely powerful.

Iraqi Dominican Sister Nazik Matty whose community was expelled from Mosul by ISIS said, “Which of the wars we have been in is a just war? In my country, there was no just war. War is the mother of ignorance, isolation, and poverty. Please tell the world there is no such thing as a just war. I say this as a daughter of war. We can’t respond to violence with worse violence. In order to kill five violent men, we have to create 10 violent men to kill them. It’s like a dragon with seven heads. You cut one and two others come up....(so) we try to create an environment of nonviolence.”

Ogarit Younan, who co-founded the Academic University for Nonviolence and Human Rights in Lebanon, shared her positive experience of equipping youth, educators and community leaders throughout the Middle East with nonviolent skills to end vicious cycles of violence and discrimination.

Jesuit Francisco DeRoux, now President of Colombia’s Commission for the Clarification of Truth, Coexistence and Non-repetition, talked about the use of the just war paradigm by all sides (guerrillas, paramilitaries, official army) in Colombia’s civil war to rationalize 50 years’ worth of killing, kidnapping and enormous destruction.

Gathered in Rome we heard similar stories from many of the conference participants - courageous people in local communities living with unimaginable danger ... people like Archbishop Odama from Northern Uganda whose diocese was terrorized by the Lord’s Resistance Army ... who said stop the militarization, stop the bombing, stop the proliferation of weapons - rely on nonviolent strategies (as Archbishop Odama and the Acholi Religious Leaders did) to transform conflict and stop the marauding of violent groups.

We are not suggesting that these are the only voices from war zones or that all people in war zones believe in the power and possibility of active nonviolence, but these people have tried nonviolence and found it effective

During the conference we wrote an *Appeal to the Catholic Church to Re-commit to the Centrality of Gospel Nonviolence*, urging the Catholic Church to follow the example of other faith communities, including the Quakers, Mennonites and Church of the Brethren and to “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,” adopting just peace as one example of a new nonviolent framework for Church teaching.

Our message on “just war” was very clear: *We believe that there is no “just war”.* *Too often the “just war theory” has been used to endorse rather than prevent or limit war. Suggesting that a “just war” is possible also undermines the moral imperative to develop tools and capacities for nonviolent transformation of conflict.* It is time, we said, to replace just war thinking as the default response to potential or actual violence with a massive investment in nonviolent approaches that really make for peace.

We asked Pope Francis to write his World Day of Peace message, and someday an encyclical, on nonviolence. Obviously, we were delighted with his 2017 World Day of Peace message on “Nonviolence A Style of Politics for Peace.”

In it he offered a significant reflection on the practical application, including in public policies, of nonviolent approaches to just or integral peace. He talked about nonviolence as both a personal virtue rooted in human dignity and a political strategy with justice and equity at the center. Nonviolence is powerful, he said, and potentially very effective, with roots in dialogue, respect, concern for the good of the other, mercy and forgiveness ...

He said that an ethics of fraternity and peaceful coexistence between individuals and among peoples cannot be based on the logic of fear, violence and closed-mindedness, but on responsibility, respect and sincere dialogue -- that peacebuilding through active nonviolence is the natural and necessary complement to the Church’s continuing efforts to limit the use of force by the application of moral norms.

Pope Francis offered a specific challenge for political leaders, the heads of international institutions, and business and media executives: to apply the Beatitudes in the exercise of their respective responsibilities -- to show mercy by refusing to discard people, harm the environment, or seek to win at any cost – to choose solidarity as a way of making history and building friendship in society. Active nonviolence, he said, is a way of showing that unity is truly more powerful and more fruitful than conflict. Everything in the world is inter-connected. He talks repeatedly about integral ecology ... integral human development ... integral peace.

Nonviolence as a style of the politics for peace (Pope Francis’ phrase) sides with those who are most impacted by the monumental violence and injustice of our time (think of people trying to eke out a living in Afghanistan, of Syrians seeking refuge in Lebanon and Jordan, of Africans crossing the Mediterranean in flimsy boats to get to Europe, of Salvadorans, Guatemalans and Hondurans crossing the border into our own country.) Nonviolence as a style of politics for peace mobilizes our communities, our nations, and our world to promote the things that we know make for peace: economic justice, human dignity, a flourishing planet, mutual respect and a world free from every form of violence, whether physical, structural or cultural.

The Catholic Nonviolence Initiative that grew out of the Rome conference as a project of Pax Christi International is a partnership of prominent Catholic organisations already deeply engaged in peace-building, with networks of thinkers and peace practitioners around the globe who strongly believe in the power and enormous potential of active nonviolence.

The Catholic Church, with its diplomatic presence in almost every country and at all major multilateral organizations, has a well-developed network of universities, seminaries, religious communities, local parishes, publications and media outlets, a membership of over one billion people and rich spiritual and theological resources that

could make a tremendous contribution to the development and acceptance of nonviolent approaches to a more peaceful world.

In the past two years, the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative has engaged in a very serious conversation with the Vatican and with the local Church around the world, including in many war zones, about the breadth and potential of active nonviolence to further sustaining peace. An ambitious, carefully organized international process of discussion and discernment on different themes related to nonviolence and just, integral peace involved over 100 theologians, peace practitioners, activists and academics. We explored a systematic theology of nonviolence and a careful Scriptural exegesis of nonviolence. We began to articulate a new moral framework that includes some or all of the norms developed by the just war tradition, but leaves the language of just war behind. We reflected on women and nonviolence, ecology and nonviolence, nonviolence in other faith traditions. We gathered excellent examples of nonviolent action in different circumstances around the world and we developed proposals for how the institutional Church could integrate nonviolence into its very fabric.

In November we interviewed 20 people in El Salvador – women and men, young and not so young, politicians, pastoral workers, professors, a sociologist, priests, a former guerrilla leader, women religious, a former magistrate of the Salvadoran Supreme Court of Justice, a former Minister of the Economy, a Scripture scholar, members of Christian base communities, and theologians, including liberation theologian Jon Sobrino, SJ.

Every person we met was deeply affected by violence –by the repression, the civil war and the gangs. Their horrific experiences of structural violence and war interrogated our questions about the power and effectiveness of active nonviolence.

Most people we interviewed are actively building just peace. Their way of life and engagement in different nonviolent ways of building the beloved community with, as Jon Sobrino said, the poor and marginalized at the center, confirmed our belief that ultimately, only active nonviolence is the way to build a culture of just peace.

In early April the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development will cosponsor with Pax Christi's Catholic Nonviolence Initiative a high-level workshop in Rome for Vatican officials and many top-ranking Church officials from different regions of the world. We are thrilled that one of the central goals of our initiative – to generate creative thinking and commitment to active nonviolence in the institutional Catholic Church worldwide - seems possible.

In addition to our dialogue with the Vatican, many events and encounters are also energizing this conversation about active nonviolence in different countries. Religious congregations and universities in particular are involved: from Marquette, John Carroll and DePaul to Louvain and Leeds. San Diego University hosted a formal dialogue between some of us deeply engaged in the Nonviolence Initiative and high ranking military, including ethicists from West Point, Annapolis, the Air Force Academy, the Army War College. Fascinating!

We are working to identify and support more and clearer public policy proposals at the U.N., in Washington, at the European Union in Brussels and elsewhere, that promote peacebuilding and nonviolent approaches to national and international conflicts, so that the world will have alternatives to military action when crises occur in the future. A US foreign policy framework based on nonviolence and just peace would

call for investment in a wide range of nonviolent options, from diplomacy to trauma-informed healing, from restorative justice to atrocity prevention, from civilian based defense and protection to conflict transformation training; from support for nonviolent civil resistance to just, sustainable development; from truth and reconciliation processes to justice for and inclusion of women and youth.

It would address direct violence, structural violence, and cultural violence, with particular attention to the roots causes of the violence. It would combat corruption, address the huge profit in war-making and ensure inclusive participation of those affected in its design and implementation.

One interesting step in the right direction is the *Global Fragility & Violence Reduction Act* (GFVRA), which would give the U.S. government the tools needed for a long-term, coordinated approach to identify and mitigate the drivers of violence.

We are also listening very carefully to people from different contexts, believing that nonviolence in the context of occupation in Palestine; nonviolence in the context of poverty or street violence in Haiti; nonviolence from the perspective of liberation theologians in Latin America; nonviolence intersecting with structural racism in the U.S.; nonviolence in post-colonial Africa; nonviolence in Asia and the Pacific where the nuclear threat is all too real ... may well look very different.

And finally, we have initiated a global campaign #ThisIsNonviolence using social media and a variety of other formats to help people imagine and invest in developing more robust nonviolent tools.

In many ways Pope Francis is already beginning to do what we asked the Catholic Church to do by talking often about the power of nonviolence and by stirring the imaginations of people, including political decision-makers, who should be desperate to prevent war and protect vulnerable people without resort to arms.

The obstacles are huge, including the powerful forces behind the big business of making war, but we are enormously encouraged by the progress we have made collectively so far. To successfully convince the institutional Catholic Church to adopt active nonviolence as its Gospel-based default approach for Catholic teaching in a violent world could make a huge contribution to the paradigm shift we seek.

What if 1.3 billion Catholics worldwide were formed from the beginning of life to understand and appreciate the power and effectiveness of active nonviolence and the connection of nonviolence to the heart of the Gospel? What if we all knew how to apply nonviolent tools to defuse conflict before it became violent?

What if the Catholic Church itself adopted the discipline and spirituality of nonviolence to transform the violence of clericalism and abuse in our Church?

What if the Catholic Church committed its institutions, channels of communication and diplomacy, its vast spiritual, intellectual and financial resources to developing a new moral framework and language for discerning ways to prevent atrocities, to protect people and the planet in a dangerous world?

Links

Pax Christi International
<http://www.paxchristi.net/>

Pax Christi U.S.A.
<http://www.paxchristiusa.org>

Pax Christi Texas
<http://www.paxchristitexas.org>

Pax Christi Dallas
<http://www.Paxchristidallastx.org>

Pax Christi San Antonio
<http://www.paxchristisa.org>

Marianist Social Justice Collaborative
www.msjc.net

Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, International JPIC Committee
<http://saccvi.blogspot.com/>

San Antonio Peace Center
<http://www.sanantoniopeace.center>

Interfaith Radio, (*Interfaith Voices*)
<http://www.interfaithradio.org/>

Texas Catholic Campaign to End the Death Penalty
www.txcedp.org

Dialogue Institute of San Antonio
www.thedialoginstitute.org/san-antonio/

Climate Change
www.creation-care.com

NowCastSA
www.nowcastsa.com/