

2017 CMSM RESOLUTION: “Gospel Nonviolence: The Way of the Church”

A SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCE FOR IMPLEMENTATION¹

*Resolution passed Aug. 3, 2017 at National Assembly

Resolution General: “The Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM) resolves to use both our individual charisms and experience as religious leaders to 1) significantly build up nonviolent practices and a culture of nonviolence; and 2) to invite Pope Francis to offer an encyclical on nonviolence, which would include a shift to a just peace approach for transforming conflict.”

Resolution Rationale: The biblical vision with Christ as the center of our lives and communities, our vows and our mission as religious call us to see the urgency of this issue, not simply as a justice and peace concern but as embedded in who we are as baptized Christians. Jesus called us to be merciful, to love our enemies, and be peacemakers (MT 5-7). In this year’s World Day of Peace message, Pope Francis affirmed that “true followers of Jesus embrace his teaching about nonviolence;” called us to “make active nonviolence our way of life;” and “pledged the assistance of the Church in every effort to build peace through active and creative nonviolence.”² This builds on Vatican II’s call to “strain every muscle to outlaw war.”³ We recognize that violence is too often pervasive in our societies, including in the form of structural and cultural violence. For example, we must change economic structures and investments that perpetuate preparations for war and the proliferation of weapons in our society. We need a deeper understanding of Gospel nonviolence to better live out our faith, transform our societies, and “build bridges” as well as cultures of just peace.

Resolution Specifics

“1. **PRAY and CONFESS:** We resolve to pray for conversion to Gospel nonviolence in our personal habits, in our ministries, for our Catholic church and beyond. This includes ongoing confession of our own violence, and prayer for those we find difficult to love or who are identified as enemies.”

Suggestions

- a. Use [Hildegard Goss-Mayr’s prayer](#) written for the 2016 nonviolence conference at the Vatican.⁴
- b. Use Fr. Emmanuel McCarthy’s “[Nonviolent Eucharist Prayer](#)” (p. 4-5) in appropriate liturgical settings.⁵
- c. Facilitate healing circles for members and the community to identify harm and how to heal harm.⁶
- d. See additional retreat and prayer resources at the [Catholic Nonviolence Initiative](#) webpage.⁷

“2. **EDUCATE:** We resolve to regularly study, dialogue, and educate about the Gospel of nonviolence and a just peace approach.⁸ This includes our formation programs, schools, and preaching.”

Suggestions

- a. Use these [one-pagers](#) on active nonviolence, key nonviolent practices, and a just peace approach.⁹

¹ This document is available on CMSM website.

² Pope Francis, “Nonviolence: A Style of Politics for Peace,” Jan. 1, 2017, par. 3, 1, 6.

³ Vatican II, “Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World,” 1965, par. 81.

⁴ <https://nonviolencejustpeace.net/a-call-to-prayer-and-solidarity/>

⁵ http://www.centerforchristiannonviolence.org/data/Media/NV_Eucharist_PastoralApproach_01d.pdf

⁶ These can be very simple by asking What happened? What harm was done? and How do we heal that harm? For more detailed approaches see: http://www.cehd.umn.edu/ssw/RJP/Projects/Victim-Offender-Dialogue/Peacemaking_Healing_Circles/The_Circle_Process.pdf

⁷ <https://nonviolencejustpeace.net/resources/#prayer>

⁸ “What is a Just Peace approach,” 2016, <http://tinyurl.com/jn2x8jw>

- b. Use these [background papers](#) to the 2016 nonviolence conference at the Vatican.¹⁰
- c. Use Pope Francis' 2017 World Day of Peace message on Nonviolence and [other key Francis quotes](#).¹¹
- e. Offer courses on nonviolence in your schools and make it a key part of formation programs. Sample curriculums are below or available by request.¹²
- f. Use movies about nonviolence: ex. *Bringing Down a Dictator*, *Gandhi*, *Pray the Devil Back to Hell*.
- g. Create a Just Peace Leadership Corps at Catholic colleges and universities for young people to supplement their academic training with skill training in becoming just peace and active nonviolence leaders. Perhaps solicit funding to defray college costs in exchange for post-graduate work in just peace organizations.
- g. Preach about active nonviolence and mainstream the language in your communications.
- h. Share the CMSM resolution with your local Bishop.
- i. Use the [Appeal to the Catholic Church](#) from the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative and consider endorsing it on the website as an individual or organization.¹³

“3. TRAIN, ADVOCATE, and INVEST: We resolve to significantly build up nonviolent practices, such as nonviolent communication, trauma-healing, restorative justice, unarmed civilian protection, nonviolent resistance, and nonviolent civilian-based defense. This includes skill training, advocacy, and when possible investment of our resources.”

Suggestions

- a. Offer regular training in these particular nonviolent practices listed above in your community, at your schools, in your parishes, etc. Pace Bene and DC Peace Team are examples of organizations that can offer such training.
- b. Advocate for these practices at the levels of local community, state, federal and UN policy. For example, advocate to integrate restorative justice processes into the local justice and school systems. Advocate to increase investment in peacebuilding and violence prevention programs such as the [Precious Blood](#) Ministry of Reconciliation or the [Cure Violence model](#).¹⁴
- c. Call on the UN to implement the 2015 [Peace Operations Report](#) recommendation to scale-up unarmed civilian protection.
- d. Invest in these nonviolent practices and institutions supporting them by fundraising for them, providing donations, and shifting your investment portfolios toward these organizations. For example, Nonviolent Peaceforce, Cure Violence, Operation Dove (Catholic), Christian Peacemaker Teams, and the U.S. Institute of Peace are such organizations.

“4. SOLIDARITY and PROTECTION: We resolve to offer accompaniment and nonviolent resistance for solidarity and protection of vulnerable immigrants, refugees, oppressed religious and ethnic minorities, elderly, unborn, prisoners and death row inmates, and other marginalized persons along with all of God’s creation.”

Suggestions

- a. Join a local coalition of organizations working with one or more of these populations/issues.
- b. Consider supporting a [rapid response team or sanctuary coalition](#).¹⁵

⁹ <https://nonviolencejustpeace.net/resources/>

¹⁰ <https://nonviolencejustpeace.net/framing-papers/>

¹¹ <https://nonviolencejustpeacedotnet.files.wordpress.com/2016/10/pope-francis-quotes.pdf>

¹² [High School](#) level; [Just Faith Modules](#); other samples contact Eli McCarthy emccarthy@cmsm.org

¹³ <https://nonviolencejustpeace.net/>

¹⁴ <https://pbmr.org/>

¹⁵ <http://www.sanctuarynotdeportation.org/>

- c. Work with [Shoulder to Shoulder](#), a local Islamic community, or show the documentary, [Sultan and the Saint](#)¹⁶
- d. Participate in USCCB initiatives such as [Catholic Mobilizing Network](#) to end the Death Penalty and the [Pro-Life Office](#).¹⁷
- e. Lift up the issue of domestic violence in your local parish/school and provide spaces for transformative dialogue on this pervasive issue.
- f. Use this [resource](#) to learn about white privilege and how to better mobilize on racial justice.¹⁸

“5. **DE-LEGITIMATE WAR:** We resolve to not only build up alternatives to war and to other forms of direct violence, such as lethal force, but also to move away from justifying war. Thus, we resolve to concretely advance Vatican II’s call to “outlaw war,” and support similar international efforts as we promote a just peace approach for transforming conflict.”

Suggestions

- a. Write op-ed’s, speak out, and preach about the power of nonviolence and the consequences of war. For example, research has shown that nonviolent resistance is 2x’s more effective and over 10x’s more likely to lead to durable democracy.¹⁹
- b. Encourage others, especially youth to vocations and careers that promote nonviolence.²⁰
- c. Share how Vatican II called us explicitly to “outlaw war” rather than refine the criteria for war. Work at the UN for a resolution to “outlaw war.”
- d. Use active nonviolence and a just peace approach to transform conflicts, rather than using just war reasoning. See the footnote for some examples of a just peace approach on Syria, ISIS, drones, and nuclear weapons.²¹
- e. Move spending and investments away from institutions that enable, profit from or engage in war as far as possible.
- f. Address cultural violence by moving away from using various media, entertainment, clothing, objects, etc. which advertise or promote weapons, killing, or war.
- g. Be clear that lethal force is a form of violence, even when it is legal.
- h. Draw concrete ideas from this resource “[A Global Security System: An Alternative to War](#)”²² and inspiration from this short book about a true story “[When the World Outlawed War](#)”²³

Share your Stories: To create ripple effects and the illumination of God’s grace, it’s important to share your stories of promoting Gospel Nonviolence.

1. Please share occasionally within your religious community as well as your ministries.
2. Please share with CMSM so we can offer it to the broader religious network in the U.S., the broader Catholic Church, advocacy organizations in DC, and when appropriate to policymakers. Send to Eli McCarthy emccarthy@cmsm.org

¹⁶ <http://www.shouldertoshouldercampaign.org/> and <https://www.sultanandthesaintfilm.com/about-the-film/>

¹⁷ <https://catholicmobilizing.org/> and <http://www.usccb.org/about/pro-life-activities/>

¹⁸ <http://privilege.uccpages.org/>

¹⁹ M. Stephan, “Why Civil Resistance Works,” 2012.

²⁰ Pope John Paul II, “Do not follow any leaders who train you in the ways of inflicting death. Love life, respect life; in yourselves and in others. Give yourselves to the service of life, not the work of death. Do not think that courage and strength are proved by killing and destruction. The true strength lies in joining with the young men and women of your generation everywhere in building up a just and human and Christian society by the ways of peace. Violence is the enemy of justice. Only peace can lead the way to true justice.”

²¹ <https://nonviolencejustpeace.net/resources/> in “resources on just peace” section

²² This resource has a range of pieces drawn together for an alternative system. *Not all ideas are necessarily endorsed by CMSM.

²³ <http://davidswanson.org/outlawry/>

