

***Gathered in Peace:
Forming Pax Christi Communities***

Gathered in Peace is a publication of Pax Christi USA and is available for download at www.paxchristiusa.org. For any other use of the publication, contact

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Introduction

Purpose

Peace I leave with you; you my own peace I give you, a peace the world cannot give. This is my gift to you.

~ John 14:27

It is this peace of Christ, a divine gift, that motivates the Catholic peace movement. The movement takes its name, Pax Christi, Peace of Christ, from this faith basis. But this peace is understood as a gift that must be shared, a blessing that requires not only a struggle against war and violence, but also the building of just structures. In pursuing this agenda Pax Christi members are encouraged by the words: “Blessed are the peacemakers, they shall be called children of God” (Matthew 5:9).

Gathered in Peace invites individuals and groups to study, live, and extend the peace of Christ.

Designed to assist forming/newly formed peace communities with their initial five meetings, this guide provides a basic methodology for a peace-making group and should be a resource for ongoing, regularly scheduled meetings. The contents include an introduction to Pax Christi, the international Catholic peace movement, its history, priorities, charisms, and peace education materials. It also covers nonviolence, justice, community, and contemporary peacemaking.

Process

There is no way to peace. Peace is the way.

~ A. J. Muste

Pax Christi promotes a model of community formation based on the gospel image: a group of people striving to live the message of Jesus. They gather in parishes, neighborhoods, religious communities, prisons, high schools, and colleges. Some even choose to live in intentional communities. Individuals study, pray, and reflect over the value of nonviolence, challenge one another’s ideas in a spirit of love, and cooperate in achieving the tasks and projects of peacemaking.

As Jesus called his disciples to be in communion with him and one another so likewise we seek to become communities of prayer, study, and action. This approach to peacemaking will help you to become a vibrant, enduring, cohesive group.

Prayer, Study, Action

Pax Christi promotes a small group method of peacemaking based on the pastoral circle of prayer, study, and action. Through prayer, groups open themselves to the movement of the Holy Spirit in their lives and in the world. By studying issues of local, national, and international concern, Pax Christi groups discern the signs of the times. Through action they proclaim God's word and articulate a vision of peace and justice that challenges social, religious, and political structures.

Action for a social change takes many forms: letter writing campaigns, visits to political and church leaders, public witnesses, marches, rallies, peace liturgies, letters to the editor, community meetings, petition drives, teach-ins and other education, nonviolent direct action, resistance actions, boycotts, fasts, sanctuary, military counter-recruitment in high schools and colleges, candlelight vigils, public statements, friendshipments (food, clothing and material drives), and many, many more.

Direct action is any public act done for the purpose of influencing public policy and/or articulating or challenging social, religious, and political values. From their discernment of the signs of the times, Pax Christi groups initiate action—as a community—in a concrete effort to affect change. Community becomes an indispensable source of support for those engaged in actions for social justice and peace. The many communities of Pax Christi USA, acting together, make up our national movement.

Structure of This Booklet

This guide is designed as a personal workbook. It contains exercises and reading assignments for meetings and the home. We highly encourage each member of your community to have his or her own copy.

There are five sessions in this guide, one for each meeting. (See table of contents.) Each session includes:

- An opening prayer
- Completion of unfinished business from previous session
- Study and reflection which includes questions and exercises
- Action suggestions
- A closing prayer

Also provided are recommended readings and/or exercises to prepare for the next meeting and suggested peace education resources available from Pax Christi USA.

In the Action Section in each session you will find different suggestions. The group must discern which to take. They include planning a public witness (questions help to guide this process), doing something from the *Organizer* (the publication for local groups), and joining something already ongoing in your community.

The material in each session may be covered in 1 ½ to 2 hours. Each community may alter the structure of the session—time, material, discussion, prayer—to fit the particular needs of the group. We believe that the most effective meetings are those enriched by prayer and a comfortable atmosphere, with some definite pattern or time limit. If your group members are familiar with each other, you may move more quickly through the sessions. Feel free to adapt them as necessary. The evaluation in section five may provide more food for thought and direction.

Celebration

Celebration is an essential ingredient for community. It is through celebration that we come to know one another on a personal basis and begin to share ideas, beliefs, and dreams more freely. Take time as a community to share the Eucharist and simple meals, observe birthdays, anniversaries, and special occasions, participate in service projects, meet for social outings, and plan activities with other groups.

Remember, peacemaking is often exhausting and frustrating. But peace is a gift, to be shared and enjoyed.

We welcome you to Pax Christi USA. May you proceed in the peace of Christ.

Session One: The Peace of Christ

Opening

Pax Christi groups often begin their time together with prayer. If this does not seem like a good way to open the first session, start with an icebreaker, the introductions below, or a short video.

Opening Prayer

(In a central location—in the middle of the room or on a small table in the midst of gathered chairs—arrange the Scripture, a candle, and a green plant as a focus for prayer. Each week select a song or symbol to reflect the evening’s subject matter.)

(As one person lights the candle...)

Leader: We gather in the light and peace of Christ.

All: May peace fill our hearts, our world, our universe.

(Optional: Sing a song or listen to centering music.)

Leader: As we focus our meeting tonight on the peace of Christ, we begin by listening to several readings to stimulate our thoughts and imagination about the meaning of Christ’s peace in our lives.

(Have different people read the following passages. Allow at least 30 seconds of silence after each reading.)

1. From Isaiah 2:2-5

“In days to come,
the dwelling of the God of life
shall be upon the highest mountain,
exalted above the hills.
All nations shall stream toward it;
many people shall come and say,
“Come, let us climb the holy mountain
to the dwelling of the Eternal One,
that we may be taught holy ways
and learn to walk in these paths.
Instruction shall flow from Zion,
the word of the Holy One from Jerusalem.”
God shall be the judge of the nations
and impose terms on all the peoples.
They shall turn their swords into plowshares

and their spears into pruning tools
One nation shall not raise arms against another;
training for war will be no more.”

2. From Gandhi

“Nonviolence is not a garment to be put on and off at will. Its seat is in the heart, and it must be an inseparable part of our very being.”

3. From Colossians 1:19

“God wanted all perfection to be found in Jesus and all things to be reconciled through him and for him, everything in heaven and on earth, when he made peace by his death on the cross.”

4. From Pope John Paul II

“Today, the scale and horror of modern warfare—whether nuclear or not—makes it totally unacceptable as a means of settling difference between nations. War should belong to the tragic past, to history; it should find no place on humanity’s agenda for the future.”

5. From Matthew 5

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.”

All:

(All join in the excerpt from Psalm 85)

Side one: I will hear what God has to say,
a voice that speaks of peace,
peace for your people and your friends
and those who turn to you in their hearts.

Side two: Mercy and faithfulness have met;
justice and peace have embraced.
Faithfulness shall spring from the earth
and peace shall follow your steps.

All: You, O God, will make us prosper
and your earth shall yield its fruit.
Justice shall march before you,
and peace shall follow your steps.

Leader: Strengthened by our rootedness in Your word, O God,
we proceed to our discussion in the spirit of prayer,
confident of your guidance. Amen.

Introductions

Introduce yourself to the group. In doing this, share with one another the reason(s) you came to this Pax Christi meeting.

Study

Exercises

1. Pax Christi is a Latin phrase meaning “the peace of Christ.” List the images, phrases, Scripture passages, parables, or stories that come to mind with these words.

Share your responses in small groups.

2. Here are some thoughts and opinions on the peace of Christ. Read them reflectively and write your comments on each. Do you agree or disagree with the statement?

“If Jesus taught us anything, he taught us how to die, not how to kill.”

John L. McKenzie, Scripture scholar

Comments:

“The only people on earth who do not see Christ and his teachings as nonviolent are Christians.” Gandhi

Comments:

Gathered In Peace (Pax Christi USA)

“Peacemaking is not an optional commitment; it is a requirement of our faith.” U.S. Bishops’ Pastoral: *The Challenge of Peace: God’s Promise and Our Response*

Comments:

3. The following is the Pax Christi USA Statement of Purpose (Have someone read it aloud.)

Pax Christi USA strives to create a world that reflects the Peace of Christ by exploring, articulating, and witnessing to the call of Christian nonviolence. This work begins in personal life and extends to communities of reflection and action to transform structures of society. Pax Christi USA rejects war, preparations for war, and every form of violence and domination. It advocates primacy of conscience, economic and social justice, and respect for creation.

Pax Christi USA commits itself to peace education and, with the help of its bishop members, promotes the gospel imperative of peacemaking as a priority in the Catholic Church in the United States. Through the efforts of all its members and in cooperation with other groups, Pax Christi USA works toward a more peaceful, just, and sustainable world.

Pax Christi USA is a section of Pax Christi International, the Catholic peace movement.

Questions for Discussion

1. What are your impressions of this statement of purpose?
2. Do you support this statement of purpose? Why or why not?
3. The questions I have at this time are. . .

Action

1. Contact Pax Christi USA’s Local/Regional Development office (phone: 561-842-7701; e-mail: paxwpb@gate.net) for a copy of the latest *Organizer*. This newsletter contains information on campaigns, projects, and events geared specifically for local Pax Christi groups.
2. Join the Rapid Response Network (RRN), an e-mail list with one or two e-mails a week on current actions and events, especially ones requiring an immediate response. Sign up on the PCUSA homepage, www.paxchristiusa.org.
3. Look through the latest issue of the *Catholic Peace Voice* and a PCUSA brochure. (The facilitator of the group should request copies prior to the meeting.)

Closing Prayer

Leader: As we close our session this evening, I would ask you to take a moment to collect your thoughts and impressions of the meeting. (*Allow a minute of quiet time.*) Let us now offer our prayers of petition. Our response will be: God, hear our prayer.

Intentions

Reader: Let us pray

--for peace throughout the world and specifically for all countries currently experiencing violence and war...we pray, God, hear our prayer.

--for world leaders, that their hearts be disarmed and opened to new dreams and visions of peace, with justice for all...we pray, God, hear our prayer.

--for an end to poverty, racism, and all that oppresses and divides the human family...we pray, God, hear our prayer.

--for the earth that shelters us, feeds us, and is our home...we pray, God, hear our prayer.

(Invite other petitions.)

Leader: And so with confidence we pray...

World Peace Prayer

All: Lead us from death to life,
from falsehood to truth.

Lead us from despair to hope,
from fear to trust.

Lead us from hate to love,
from war to peace.

Let peace fill our hearts, our world, our universe.

For the Next Meeting

1. Read the Statement of Priorities (found in Session Two). Rank the priorities, that is, put a 1 by the one that is the most important to you, a 2 by the next most important, etc.
2. Read through the history section (also in Session Two).
3. Memorize the World Peace Prayer. Spend at least five minutes each day reflecting on a verse from this prayer.

Pax Christi USA Resources on This Topic

Peacemaking Day by Day, volumes 1 and 2: These books provide a short quotation on peace for each day of the year.

Item No. 532-027; 532-130...\$6.00 or both for \$10.00

Catholic Peace Voice. PCUSA's newspaper. Subscriptions are included in the annual membership fee.

The Fire of Peace, Compiled and edited by Mary Lou Kownacki, OSB.

This 300-page personal prayer book includes prayers for all occasions from the traditional prayer of St. Francis to a prayer for the lonely to a prayer for the beginning of a peace meeting. Litanies, vows, pledges, and a section devoted to Mary the Peacemaker, social justice-oriented Stations of the Cross and Rosary, meditations, and more are found here.

Item No. 542-217.....\$12.00

Love Beyond Measure: A Spirituality of Nonviolence, By Mary Lou Kownacki, OSB.

An introduction to a spiritual basis for nonviolence, *Love Beyond Measure* contains five sessions built around Kownacki's essay "Doorway to Peace." Each session contains a prayer service, reflection questions on the essay, and related readings and questions. Designed for individual or small group use, each session lasts 60-90 minutes.

Item No. 523-239.....\$12.00

Group discounts available on most items.

Session Two: Priorities and History of Pax Christi

Opening Prayer

(Prepare a central place for the Scripture, a candle, and perhaps several copies of Pax Christi USA publications.)

(As one member lights the candle...)

Leader: We gather in the light and peace of Christ.

All: May peace fill our hearts, our world, our universe.

(Optional: Sing a song or play some centering music.)

Leader: Let us listen and reflect briefly on some readings that will help us focus on today's topic of study.

(Have different people read the following passages. Allow at least 30 seconds of silence after each reading.)

1. From Ezekiel 11:19-21

“And I will give them one heart and put a new spirit within them; I will take the stony heart out of their bodies and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes and keep my ordinances and obey them. And they shall be my people and I will be their God.”

2. From Dorothy Day

“What we would like to do is change the world—make it a little simpler for people to feed, clothe and shelter themselves as God intended them to do. And, by fighting for better conditions, by crying out unceasingly for the rights of the workers, of the poor, of the destitute—the rights of the worthy and the unworthy poor—in other words—we can, to a certain extent, change the world; we can work for the oasis, the little cell of joy and peace in a harried world. We can throw our pebble in the pond and be confident that its ever widening circle will reach round the world. We can give away an onion. We repeat, there is nothing that we can do but love, and dear God, please enlarge our hearts to love each other, to love our neighbor, to love our enemy as well as our friend.”

3. From *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response*, 1983 pastoral letter from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

“As...citizens of the nation which was first to produce atomic weapons, which has been the only one to use them and which today is one of the handful of nations capable of decisively influencing the course of the nuclear age, we have grave human, moral and political responsibilities to see that a ‘conscious choice’ is made to save humanity...Peacemaking is not an optional commitment. It is a requirement of our faith.

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We are called to be peacemakers, not by some movement of the moment, but by Jesus Christ.”

(All join in Psalm 72)

Left: May the mountains bring forth peace for the people and the hills justice.

Right: May you defend the poor of the people
and save the children of the needy
and crush the oppressor.

Left: You shall endure like the sun and the moon
from age to age.
You shall descend like rain on the meadow,
like raindrops on the earth.

Right: In your days justice shall flourish
and peace till the moon fails...
May your name be blessed forever...
All nations bless your holy name.

Leader: Confident of your continuing presence with us tonight, O God, we move now into our discussion in the spirit of prayer, asking your guidance. Amen.

Study

The History of Pax Christi

Pax Christi International

The story of Pax Christi began in France during the Second World War. Bishop Pierre-Marie Théas, Bishop of Montauban in southern France, had spoken out against the deportation of Jews and forced labor camps and was arrested. During this experience, he came to understand how difficult and demanding true reconciliation between enemies would be. Later, he met with a teacher, Marthe Dortel-Claudot, who also lived in southern France, who had thought about and prayed for the German people. Encouraged by her parish priest, she formed a small group that prayed with her for the rebuilding of Germany and for peace. She received support from Bishop Théas and began a “Crusade of Prayer” for Germany. The project was given the name “Pax Christi.”

Pax Christi grew quickly and before long bishops in both Germany and France gave their support. There were pilgrimages to Lourdes and actions to promote Franco-German reconciliation. A German section of Pax Christi was started. Quite quickly Pax Christi moved from being a Crusade of Prayer for Germany to being a Crusade of Prayer for all nations. Importantly, it was a movement of laypeople in the Church.

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In the 1950s Pax Christi spread to other European countries. The movement organized international centers and pen-pals to promote contact and international understanding, especially between young people. In 1952 Pope Pius XII gave official recognition to Pax Christi's mission as the Catholic peace movement.

Pax Christi was beginning to realize that its spirituality would lead it towards social and political action. The themes chosen for Pax Christi meetings, congresses, and Peace Days in the churches show that among its concerns Pax Christi now included the poverty and underdevelopment of countries struggling against colonization and East-West relations during the Cold War.

Today, each national section takes up issues of particular concern in their situation. To give just one example, the British and Irish sections have been most active over Northern Ireland. For twenty years they have been running play schemes to bring children from the different communities together.

In 1979, Pax Christi received consultative status at the United Nations and started to make regular submissions, especially to the Human Rights Commission in Geneva. In 1978 the International Office moved to Belgium. In 1983 Pax Christi received the UNESCO Peace Education Prize and in 1987 the UN Peace Messenger Award.

Increasingly, Pax Christi International is called upon by groups in Africa, Latin America, Asia, and the Middle East who seek to affiliate with Pax Christi. These groups on the ground in many cases have witnessed firsthand the devastation of conflict and poverty. They use Pax Christi International to gain exposure to the international stage and to have greater strength through collaboration. In this way, we are able to maintain the twofold quality of our movement: to remain dedicated to local grassroots efforts to work for alternatives to violence and the creation of a culture of peace, while simultaneously connecting these precious local initiatives to something bigger.

Pax Christi International is active in more than 60 countries in the world, including national sections and affiliated and partnering organizations on six continents.

Adapted from Pax Christi International website, www.paxchristi.net. See <http://www.paxchristi.net/about/html/history.html> for the longer version.

Pax Christi USA

Pax Christi USA was formed in 1972 and opened a national office in 1979. Pax Christi USA has established four priorities: spirituality of nonviolence and peacemaking; disarmament, demilitarization, and reconciliation with justice; economic and interracial justice in the United States; and human rights and global restoration.

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Priorities of Pax Christi USA

Spirituality of Nonviolence and Peacemaking:

Pax Christi USA promotes Christian nonviolence on the personal, communal, national, and international levels. Believing in the gospel call to conversion as found in the Beatitudes, Pax Christi USA denounces and resists the evils of violence while striving to reflect the Peace of Christ.

Disarmament, Demilitarization and Reconciliation with Justice:

Pax Christi USA members promote nuclear, conventional, and domestic disarmament, an end to the international arms trade, economic conversion to a non-military economy, conscientious objection, and nonviolent alternatives to war. Pax Christi USA promotes the just reconciliation of enemies through the United Nations and other channels.

Economic and Interracial Justice in the United States:

Pax Christi USA joins the struggle against economic injustice, militarism, and environmental destruction which are particularly harmful to those who are poor, people of color, children, and women. Pax Christi USA works toward eliminating racist structures in the Catholic Church and the country, working toward equality of all people.

Human Rights and Global Restoration:

Pax Christi USA promotes universal human rights, both at home and abroad, through solidarity with oppressed and marginalized people struggling for dignity. Pax Christi USA rejects every form of political and economic domination over others and fosters a reverence for all creation.

In working on these priorities, Pax Christi USA has

- Produced a best-selling Arms Race Primer
- worked on a Pledge of Resistance around Central America in the 1980s and Iraq in the 2000s
- Acted as consultants to the bishops on *The Challenge of Peace*
- Created the Vow of Nonviolence
- Served as election observers in Haiti and El Salvador and sponsored international election observers in the US presidential election of 2004
- Published a reflection process on the 500th anniversary of Columbus landing in the Americas
- Held (nearly every year) a national assembly for Pax Christi members and friends
- Released statements and reflections on major national and international events

Composition of Pax Christi USA includes

- Members in all 50 states
- A regional structure comprised of 20 state and metropolitan areas, with its own elected leadership
- A 13-member National Council
- Hundreds of local communities meeting regularly in parishes, neighborhoods, high schools, colleges, religious orders

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- Well over 100 bishop members
- Hundreds of communities of religious men and women
- 75 college and high school groups

Exercise on Priorities

(Please have either newsprint and markers or chalkboard and chalk.)

Have someone in the group write down the four priorities on newsprint or chalkboard. Have each person share the ranking he or she gives to each priority. Tally the results. Comment on the results, e.g., were you all in agreement? Does one stand out above the others?

Divide your group into smaller groups of three or four persons. Discuss the following questions:

1. What does each priority mean to you?
2. Have you already attempted to incorporate any of these priorities into your own life? How?
3. What priority do you find most/least attractive?
4. What questions do you have about any or all of them?

Action

1. Discuss various campaigns and programs described in the *Organizer*. If appropriate, choose an action project for your group. Divide up responsibility for the project. Set a timeline for completion.
2. What local organizing do you know of going on in your community related to any of the priority areas of Pax Christi USA? What issues are of concern to other people in your community? Are there ways you might partner with other groups?

Closing Prayer

Leader: Let us close our discussion with a few moments of silence to collect our thoughts and feelings about today's meeting. (Allow a minute or two of quiet time.)

Intentions

Let us pray in gratitude for the people who began Pax Christi and those who have worked to carry on its mission through the years, and for guidance and strength to go where the Spirit leads us.

Let us now offer our prayers of petition. Our response will be "..."

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After the intentions, pray the World Peace Prayer together:

All: Lead us from death to life,
from falsehood to truth.
Lead us from despair to hope,
from fear to trust.
Lead us from hate to love,
from war to peace.
Let peace fill our hearts, our world, our universe.

For the Next Meeting

1. Take home a copy of the Pax Christi introductory brochure. Read it this week. Consider becoming a member of Pax Christi USA. Members receive the *Catholic Peace Voice*, news updates, notifications of publications, voting and nomination privileges, and bi-monthly letters from the national coordinator.
2. In preparation for the next session, complete the following worksheet “Acts of Violence.” Be prepared to share your answers with the group at the next meeting.

Pax Christi USA Resources on this Topic

Peace Moments is a perpetual calendar flipchart with a peace quotation for every day, also honoring 312 events of historical interest in the peace movement.
Item No. 569-247. . . . \$8.50

The Nonviolent Moment: Spirituality for the 21st Century by Mary Lou Kownacki, OSB
In this book, Kownacki offers the reader a personal process for developing a spirituality of nonviolence tailored to face and transform the violence and suffering of our times. The chapters are a line-by-line reflection on Sister Mary Lou's *Prayer for the Decade of Nonviolence*. Each chapter concludes with reflection and action suggestion. Excellent resource for individual reflection, faith sharing groups, parish gatherings, families, classes, or religious communities.
Item No. 523-473. . . . \$8.00

Seventy Times Seven by Doris Donnelly, Ph.D.
Forgiveness makes the difference between hatred and love, hope and despair, war and peace. Make yourself at home with this book that asks you to acknowledge the hurts that impede healing and asks you to prepare for the passionate involvement necessary for reconciliation. Here Donnelly offers concrete steps in the process of complete forgiveness.
Item No. 541-211. . . . \$12.00

Acts of Violence

Here are twenty-one possible acts of violence. Circle or place a check next to the ones that fit that description for you. Think of the reasons for your choices.

1. a mother slaps her child
2. an alliance of countries bombs civilians in war time
3. a man rapes and beats a woman
4. security police torture prisoners to extract "vital information"
5. a woman shoots and kills her husband after fifteen years of beatings and abuse
6. two students gossip about another student
7. people, companies, and restaurants throw out 96 billion pounds of food per year in the US
8. governments worldwide spent approximately \$780 billion on defense and weapons compared with \$80 billion on education in one year in the late 1990s
9. advertising continually uses women as sex objects to sell everything from microwave dinners to Cadillacs
10. a young person becomes addicted to alcohol
11. the defense sacks a quarterback and his leg is broken
12. a teacher ridicules a student publicly for a poor assignment
13. a father yells at his child for being too noisy
14. a butcher kills a cow
15. in 2001, the average CEO at a large company made 525 times the average factory worker (up from 42 times in 1980 and 85 times in 1990)
16. a dealer makes a cocaine sale at a high school
17. students in Mexico riot after months of protesting drastic increases in education costs
18. a teenage gang burns a building in the inner city
19. More than 12% of the US population lives below the federal poverty line

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20. three dozen U.S. states send people to death row to await execution

21. a multinational corporation relocates its factories to a country where wages are lower

Did you consider all of these examples violent? Does it surprise you that some people do? Do you think they are all the same type of violence? Reflect on how these examples relate to your life.

Session Three: Nonviolence

Opening Prayer

(Prepare a central place with Scripture, candle, and symbols that represent violence or nonviolence.)

(As one member lights the candle...)

Leader: We gather in the light and peace of Christ.

All: May peace fill our hearts, our world, our universe.

Leader: We listen again tonight to some brief reflections that help us understand and consider nonviolence and its roots in our faith and spirituality.

(Optional: Sing a song or play some centering music.)

Reflections

(Have different people read the following passages. Allow at least 30 seconds of silence after each reading.)

1. From Matthew 5:38-48 (excerpts)

“...I say to you; offer no resistance to injury. When a person strikes you on the right cheek, turn and offer the other...Give to the one who begs from you. Do not turn your back on the borrower. My command to you is: love your enemies, pray for your persecutors...If you love those who love you, what merit is there in that?...In a word, you must be made perfect as your heavenly Creator is perfect.”

2. From John Paul II

“On my knees I beg you to turn away from the paths of violence and to return to the ways of peace...Violence only delays the day of justice...Do not follow any leaders who train you in the ways of inflicting death...Violence is the enemy of justice. Only peace can lead the way to true justice.”

3. From *The Challenge of Peace*

“In all of his suffering,
as in all of his life and ministry,
Jesus refused to defend himself
with force or with violence.
He endured violence and cruelty
so that God’s love might be fully manifest
and the world might be reconciled
to the One from whom
it had become estranged.

Even at his death,
Jesus cried out for forgiveness
for those who were his executioners:
‘[Abba], forgive them.’”

4. From Gandhi

“We may never be strong enough to be entirely nonviolent in thought, word and deed. But we must keep nonviolence as our goal and make progress towards it. The attainment of freedom whether for a person, or nation, or a world, must be in exact proportion to the attainment of nonviolence for each.”

5. From *The Nonviolent Cross* by James Douglass

“We cannot begin to grow in nonviolence except through prayer, fasting and solitude. Every program of nonviolence, whether of Gandhi, Martin Luther King or St. Francis of Assisi, has emphasized that the beginning of nonviolence and the continuing center of nonviolence is prayer, fasting and the gift of self. Then out of that come expressions of nonviolence. Nonviolence is not a tactic or series of actions. It is a form of prayer that becomes a realization of God’s reign.”

All: Continue to be present with us tonight, O God. Grant us open hearts and minds to listen to one another’s feelings, fears, and insights. Nurture seeds of nonviolence in our hearts and lives. Amen.

Study

1. As a group, share your reflections on the exercise “Acts of Violence.” What questions/concerns did it raise for you?
2. The Pax Christi USA Statement of Purpose states “Pax Christi USA rejects war, preparations for war, and every form of violence and domination.” Read the following three reflections aloud and answer the questions.

From “Making the Myth Real” by Niall O’Brien, CCS

No wonder so many people, gentle and kind people, quiet and unaggressive people, find themselves saying at long last: “There’s only one way to deal with the Marcoses and Enriles. There’s only one way to deal with the Khmer Rouge. There’s only one language these people understand—we say it not joyfully, but reluctantly and sadly—the only thing they understand is the gun.”

To such people I say: Welcome home, welcome to the largest consensus the world has ever known: a consensus between east and west, between capitalist and communist, between mosque, church, and synagogue. All agree that there comes a time when it is just to kill each other. Welcome home to the consensus on which our world is built.

Ultimately we are faced with two choices: to accept the “myth” of the just war, that as a last resort killing is moral, or to accept the “myth” of nonviolence: we have no last resort; killing is never right. In the first case, sooner or later we will come to the moment when the conditions for using violence are verified, when we reach the “last resort.” In the second case, believing in our “myth,” that violence is never justified, having no “last resort,” human beings come up with alternatives from the depths of their creativeness... We can and we will learn to live together, but only when we have closed off that escape route known as the last resort.

Questions

1. What is your reaction to O’Brien’s reflection?
2. Do you believe that there is a “last resort” when killing is moral?
3. What kind of alternatives need to be developed to make the “myth” of the nonviolence real?

From Pax Christi USA, Spring 1994 by Joan Chittister, OSB

It is sometimes hard to know what will teach us the most about peace: violence or nonviolence. Violence is clearly not working: its effectiveness requires constantly increasing measures. But there is a measure beyond the point of no return. There is a level where sophistication and barbarism become one again. And we are there. And we know it.

The frustration of that must be getting more and more unbearable for the politicians of the world to stomach. We can stop the war in Bosnia: all we have to do is to nuke the old guard. We can stop the civil rights violations in China: all we have to do is nuke them out of their seats of power. Who will be the politician who will step forward to do it? Who will admit that global suicide is our only means of self-control? “To strike the first blow,” the proverb teaches, “is to admit that we have run out of ideas.” Who is willing to end history for us?

But it is exactly the starkness of those questions that may end the violence spiral. It may be exactly those questions that make the politicians of the world available to more humane answers. Is peace a risk? You bet. Is steadily escalating barbarism acceptable? You bet not. If the public polls are right, if people really realize the danger as much as they say they do, then now may be exactly the time to risk nonviolence.

The options are getting clearer every day: Going into a place unarmed is certainly a risk. But going into a place armed to the teeth is no guarantee of life either. We have people all over the world opting for nonviolence, standing barehanded against brutality, unmasking the immoral, wiping away the falsifying smiles of dictators everywhere. Where are soldiers brave enough to do that?

It is these questions, in my opinion, that must become the focus of churches, the concern of the United Nations, the challenge to politicians, the criteria for public service. The questions can no longer be, “Is this the person capable of pushing the

nuclear button?” The question must now become, “Is this the person capable of not pushing the nuclear button?” It is the bravery of the nonviolent with which we must confront the world.

This pursuit of nonviolent options, this documenting of nonviolent responses may well be our single best gift to the twenty-first century.

Questions

1. What is your reaction to this reflection?
2. Do you agree that we have reached a point where “sophistication and barbarism” have become one again?
3. What is the risk of nonviolence that Chittister is speaking about?

From *Love Beyond Measure* by Mary Lou Kownacki, OSB

Nonviolence has a bad reputation. Too many identify it with the snake in the following story: it seems that in a certain village a snake had bitten so many people that few dared to go into the fields. Finally it was taken to a wise person who tamed the snake and persuaded it to practice the discipline of nonviolence.

When the villagers discovered that the snake was harmless, they took to hurling stones at it and dragging it by its tail. Finally the badly battered and disillusioned snake crawled to the wise one and complained bitterly.

“You’ve stopped frightening people,” the wise one said, “and that’s bad.” The snake was incredulous. “But it was you who taught me to practice the discipline of nonviolence,” the snake replied. “Oh,” said the wise one, “I told you to stop hurting people, not to stop hissing.”

Point: authentic nonviolence does no harm, but it does know when to hiss. It hisses loud and long at every system and structure that treads the weak and powerless underfoot. It hisses so strongly and with such persistence that governments topple and dictatorships dissolve.

When the Filipino people—armed with rosary beads—toppled the Marcos government by kneeling in front of tanks, that was a hiss.

When tens of thousands of students poured into Tiananmen Square bearing this placard: “Although you tread a thousand resisters underfoot, I shall be the one-thousand-and-first”—that was a hiss.

The Solidarity movement in Poland with its strikes, slow-downs, boycotts, prison hunger strikes, marches and 500 underground presses calling Poles to nonviolent resistance was a hiss.

So was the massive resistance to the Gorbachev coup attempt and the dismantling of the forced union of Soviet States.

Nonviolence, then can never be equated with passivity, it is the essence of courage, creativity and action. Nonviolence does, however, require patience: a passionate endurance and commitment to seek justice and truth no matter the cost.

But I am not talking about the history or philosophy or the politics of nonviolence. I do not want to discuss whether nonviolence is more effective than violence in breaking the chains of colonialism and oppression that bind so many of the world's people.

No, I would like to talk about something even more revolutionary, something much more difficult. I would like to address the doorway to peace, a spirituality of nonviolence. Because unless we address that, unless we focus on the underpinning of nonviolent action, any advocacy for nonviolent social change runs the risk of being superficial or worse—hypocritical, masking deep hostility, self-righteousness, and a desire to defeat and humiliate others.

I would like to approach the doorway to peace, then, in the company of an old Hasidic rabbi who each morning crossed the village square on the way to the temple to pray. One morning a large Cossack soldier, who happened to be in a vile mood, accosted him saying, "Hey, Rebbi, where are you going?" The old rabbi said, "I don't know." This infuriated the Cossack. "What do you mean you don't know? Every morning for twenty-five years you've crossed the village square and gone to the temple to pray. Don't fool with me. Who do you think you are, telling me you don't know?"

He grabbed the old rabbi by the coat and dragged him off to jail. Just as he was about to push him into the cell, the rabbi turned to him saying, "You see, I didn't know."

Questions

1. How compatible is hissing with nonviolence? Do you hiss? When and how?
2. When was the last time you came face to face with the violence inside yourself?
3. What does the rabbi's story tell us about the path to a nonviolent heart?

3. The Vow of Nonviolence

One way Pax Christi USA is attempting to be faithful to its charism of reconciliation is by promoting the vow of nonviolence—a journey toward disarming the heart. The vow of nonviolence is printed below. Slowly read the vow to yourself. Think about whether you could commit to taking the vow.

Vow of Nonviolence

Recognizing the violence in my own heart, yet trusting in the goodness and mercy of God, I vow for one year to practice the nonviolence of Jesus who taught us in the Sermon on the Mount:

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons and daughters of God... you have learned how it is said, "You must love your neighbor and hate your enemy," but I say to you, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. In this way, you will be daughters and sons of your Creator in heaven."

Before God the Creator and the Sanctifying Spirit, I vow to carry out in my life the love and example of Jesus

- By striving for peace within myself and seeking to be a peacemaker in my daily life;
- By accepting suffering rather than inflicting it;
- By refusing to retaliate in the face of provocation and violence;
- By persevering in nonviolence of tongue and heart;
- By living conscientiously and simply so that I do not deprive others of the means to live;
- By actively resisting evil and working nonviolently to abolish war and the causes of war from my own heart and from the face of the earth.

God, I trust in Your sustaining love and believe that just as You gave me the grace and desire to offer this, so You will also bestow abundant grace to fulfill it.

Questions for Discussion

1. What questions does the vow raise for you?
2. In what areas of your life do you find it most difficult to live nonviolently?
3. Comment on the following reflections

Nonviolence is a journey, not a destination.

Commitment to nonviolence demands a very profound conversion of mind and heart.

Action

1. Begin to discuss the possibility of a public witness, action, or campaign upon the completion of this five session process. The theme and tone may emerge as the group continues to reflect upon the priorities of PCUSA and examines needs and injustice in your community. The event could be a simple vigil at a public place such as a town square or federal building. You may want to look at dates associated with peace and justice. The Pax Christi USA website and many other places, such as Amnesty International, have information about organizing.

2. Use this time to discuss the status of any project your group may have chosen from the *Organizer*.

3. Discuss the Vow of Nonviolence as a possible group action. Upon completion of this five-part formation process, your group may choose to concentrate on the Pax Christi priority, the Spirituality of Peacemaking and Nonviolence. As a group you may decide to devote several meetings to studying nonviolence in more depth. When the group reaches the point where it is comfortable with its understanding and commitment to nonviolence, the Vow may be made together, as public witness. Many Pax Christi groups each year go through such a discernment process leading to a public Vow of Nonviolence.

Closing Prayer

Leader: We pause as we bring our session to a close, to root ourselves in prayer and proclaim our dependence on God. So we take a moment to center ourselves in Christ's nonviolent love. (Allow for several minutes of quiet time.) Let us now offer our prayers of petition. Our response will be "..."

Intentions

Let us pray:

--For the love that will disarm our own hearts, we pray...

--For disarmed hearts that may lead us to disarmed neighborhoods, cities, and nations, we pray...

--For the courage to offer nonviolent alternatives to family, friends, employers, colleagues, church and government leaders, those who we love and those whom we consider enemies, we pray...

(At this time invite petitions from all members.)

All: God, thank you for your great love and all that you give to us. Give us the grace and the courage to live a life of nonviolence so that we may be faithful to Jesus. Send us your Spirit that we may love everyone as sisters and brothers. Help us to be instruments of your peace; to respond with love and not retaliate with violence; to accept suffering rather than to inflict it; to live more simply; to resist death and to choose life for all people.

Disarm our hearts so that we may be instruments to disarm other hearts. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

prayer by John Dear, SJ, from *The Fire of Peace*

For the Next Meeting

Read the biographies found in Session Four. As you read them, answer the following questions:

1. To what has the individual committed his or her life?
2. What social issue(s) is being addressed?
3. How is the person's approach to peacemaking a reflection of the gospel?

Pax Christi USA Resources on This Topic

Love Beyond Measure: A Spirituality of Nonviolence, by Mary Lou Kownacki, OSB.

This book is a wonderful beginning to an in-depth look at a topic foremost in many people's minds today—a spiritual basis for nonviolence. It has five sessions and is excellent for both group and individual use.

Item No. 532-2389. . . . \$12.00

The Way of Peace: Nonviolence for the 21st Century, Revised and expanded by Shannon McManimon, based on the original text by Gerard Vanderhaar, STD, and Mary Lou Kownacki, OSB.

An updated and expanded classic! This manual, based on the prayer, study, action model, is an introductory guide to the spirit and practice of nonviolence in recent decades as practiced by Mohandas Gandhi, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Dorothy Day, Cesar Chavez, and others. Perfect for classroom or parish study groups.

Item No. 533-054. . . . \$15.00

Nonviolence in Christian Tradition, by Gerard Vanderhaar.

An overview of the nonviolent tradition from early Christian pacifism to modern times.

Item No. 544-011. . . . \$1.00

Peace, War and the Christian Conscience by Joseph Fahey, Pax Christi USA

Ambassador of Peace

A clear, concise survey of Christian thought regarding war and peace. This small booklet is an excellent guide for reflection and action.

Item No. 529-305. . . . \$2.50

Love Your Enemies pamphlet

One of our old favorites has been updated for the new millennium. The fifty-two ways to love your enemies include original suggestions by Mary Evelyn Jegen, SND and new updated suggestions by Johnny Zokovitch. Simple, far-reaching ways of prayer, study, and action to be practiced each week during the year. Brochure format.

Item No. 534-077. . . . \$0.50 for one; \$10.00 for 100; \$80.00 for 1000.

Vow of Nonviolence Brochure. Information on the who, what, where, and why of the Vow of Nonviolence. Copy of the Vow included.

Item No. 522-024. . . . \$0.50 for one; \$10.00 for 100; \$80.00 for 1000.

Session Four: Contemporary Peacemakers

Opening Prayer

(Set up the Scripture, candle, and perhaps some pictures of peacemakers as the central focus for the prayer.)

(As one member lights the candle...)

Leader: We gather in the light and peace of Christ.

All: May peace fill our hearts, our world, our universe.

(Optional: Sing a song or play some centering music.)

Leader: Our readings tonight help focus our attention on the unique call to be peacemakers, that we may hear this call and follow it.

Reflections

(Have different people read the following passages. Allow at least 30 seconds of silence after each reading.)

1. From Isaiah 58:6-11

“This...is the fast that I wish:

releasing those bound unjustly, untying the thongs of the yoke;

setting free the oppressed, breaking every yoke;

sharing your bread with the hungry;

sheltering the oppressed and the homeless;

clothing the naked when you see them,

and not turning your back on your own....

If you remove from our midst oppression,

false accusation and malicious speech,

if you bestow your bread on the hungry and satisfy the afflicted,

then light shall rise for you in the darkness,

and the gloom shall become for you like midday;

then God will guide you always

and give you plenty even on parched land.

God will renew your strength, and you shall be like a watered garden,

like a spring whose water never fails.”

2. From *The Challenge of Peace*

“To choose the road to discipleship

is to dispose oneself for a share in the cross.

It is not enough to believe with one's mind;
a Christian must also be a doer of the word,
a wayfarer with and a witness to Jesus.
This means we never expect complete success within history.
It also means that we must regard as normal
the path of persecution and the possibility of martyrdom.”

3. From Mohandas Gandhi

“I claim to be no more than an average person with less than average ability. I have not the shadow of doubt that any man or woman can achieve what I have, if he or she would make the same effort and cultivate the same hope and faith.”

Leader: O God, we turn now to our meeting, inspired by the gifts of Your presence in the lives and faces of our brothers and sisters, peacemakers whose lives inspire us and lead us in your ways. Continue to make Your presence known among us. Amen.

Study

Peace People

Oscar Romero

The history of El Salvador in the 20th century is filled with blood, violence, and oppression. Beginning in the 1930s, a military dictatorship ran the country. An elite 2 % controlled 60 % of the land while the vast majority of people lived in poverty, lacking education and employment.

But the history of El Salvador is also filled with courageous people who stood up to the violence – and often paid with their lives. In the 1970s, after nearly half a century of military rule, workers, peasants, and students began popular movements that challenged the status quo and demanded justice. They organized base communities: part religious, part political, these communities analyzed the conditions in the country and worked to support the people.

The government responded with even more repression and terror, eventually leading to a 12-year civil war, supported by \$6 billion from the United States. Seventy-five thousand people were killed. Kidnappings, torture, disappearances, and the killing of clergy and activists were common. According to the UN truth commission report, the great majority – 85 % – of these crimes were planned and carried out by the Salvadoran military and death squads.

One of the most prominent figures in the nonviolent struggle in El Salvador was someone whom no one had expected. In 1977, the Vatican named a new archbishop of San Salvador: Oscar Romero. The conservative Romero was viewed as a “safe choice.” However, the murder of his friend, Rutilio Grande, a Jesuit priest, that same year provoked a conversion. Romero began to speak out.

As archbishop, Romero set up an office to investigate human rights violations. He wrote a weekly column and met regularly with young clergy and nuns and members of base communities. He analyzed the social, political, and economic reality of his country and taught the social teaching of the Church and the Gospel. He spoke for the poor and called attention to institutional violence, injustice, and repression. He encouraged reconciliation. He called all people to conversion and action. In response, the Vatican urged him to tone down his speaking and writing.

But Romero did not. He spoke from a perspective of faith, believing that the Church called its members to action, to defend the rights of the people: “Some want to keep a gospel so disembodied that it doesn’t get involved at all in the world it must save. Christ is now in history. Christ is in the womb of the people. Christ is now bringing about the new heaven and the new earth.” Romero believed that we must convert our hearts to God: “As long as one does not live a conversion in one’s heart, a teaching enlightened by faith to organize life according to the heart of God, all will be feeble, revolutionary, passing, violent.”

Because he would not be silent, Romero received many death threats. Well aware of the danger, he said, “If they kill me, I shall arise in the Salvadoran people.” He offered his life in love. On March 24, 1980, while saying Mass, Romero was shot and killed. One month before his murder, Romero had sent a letter to US President Jimmy Carter asking that no more military aid be sent to El Salvador and expressing concern for human rights.

(From *The Way of Peace: Exploring Nonviolence for the 21st Century*, Edited by Shannon McManimon. Available from Pax Christi USA.)

Dorothy Day

One night when Dorothy was speaking at New York University—it was a fairly hostile audience, not well-disposed to what she was saying—one guy stood up and demanded, “Well, Miss Day, what if the Russians invaded, what then? What would happen to your nonviolence?” And she said with great simplicity, “We are all children of God. I would open my arms to them and serve them tea.”

She would consider them no less worthy of reception at the House of Hospitality than any bum from the Bowery or any cardinal from the chancery.

And this is no idle utopianism. Dorothy did not live in utopia. She lived in a house of hospitality, which is, let’s face it, often not a very nice place to be. Every day she faced people who were disturbed, dangerous, angry. But she knew the value of the human heart.

One day someone walked into The Catholic Worker and gave Dorothy a diamond ring. She didn’t make a big thing of it; she thanked the donor with a word and slipped the ring in her pocket. Those who noticed wondered what she was going to do with it.

Later in the day, in came one of those people who really does try your patience—a woman almost nobody in the community was glad to see. And Dorothy gave her the ring.

Somebody objected, “If we had sold the ring, we could have paid that woman’s rent for a year.”

Dorothy said, “Well, she still has her dignity. She can do with it what she wants. She can sell it, if she wants. She can wear it. Do you think God made diamonds only for the rich?”

A social worker once came to visit this world of special “sight” and, while at the House of Hospitality, asked Dorothy, “How long are they (“they” being the winos, the ratty youth, the confused and old people, the retarded, the dirty, the paranoid)—how long are they permitted to stay here?” She doubtless expected a reasonable answer, like “overnight” or “three days” or “two weeks.” Charity within tolerable limits.

Dorothy instantly responded, “They stay forever. They live with us, die with us. After they are dead, we give them a Christian burial. We pray for them to reach their heavenly home, and when they are in heaven we beg them to pray for us. They have become our brothers and sisters in Christ. They never leave us.”

Dorothy was a most complicated person. She was plain and elegant, abrasive and gentle, furious and patient, revolutionary and conservative, stubborn and bending. Amid all these apparent contradictions, there was a least one constant: her profound attraction to “the little way.”

Dorothy spoke about “the little way” repeatedly. I have seen her put it nowhere better than in this text I recently notice on the refrigerator door of the home of Tom and Monica Cornell: “Paper work, cleaning the house, dealing with the innumerable visitors who come all through the day, answering the phone, keeping patience and acting intelligently, which is to find some meaning in all that happens—these things, too, are the works of peace, and often seem like a very little way.”

(From *Love is the Measure: Dorothy Day* by Jim Forest, printed in Pax Christi USA magazine, June 1986)

Brief Profiles of Other Christian People of Nonviolence

Nonviolence has been practiced throughout the history of Christianity. The early Christians understood God to be peace and nonviolence. One early Christian who proclaimed this was St. Martin of Tours: a convert to Christianity, he was one of the first Christian conscientious objectors to war and a man who encountered Christ in the poor. He later became a bishop. Another was St. Justin, a martyr, who said, “We who once killed each other not only do not make war on each other, but in order not to lie or deceive our inquisitors we gladly die for the confession of Christ.”

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Dom Helder Camara (1909-1999), a Roman Catholic archbishop of Recife, Brazil, was a great witness and prophet of nonviolence, despite being silenced by the Brazilian government as well as targeted for persecution. He worked for social justice, empowering poor people to be agents of change. He lived a simple life, based on the Church's "preferential option for the poor," rooted in prayer.

St. Francis of Assisi (1182-1226), born to an Italian family of privilege, heard a call to live out the Gospel in a radically simple lifestyle. He rejected all violence as contrary to the Gospel vision of love. He is known for his joy in life and for his wonder for all of God's creation. He founded the Franciscan order, based on the Gospel command of poverty.

Peter Maurin (1877-1949) and Dorothy Day (1897-1980) founded the Catholic Worker movement to live out the Gospel vision of love. Maurin was a traveling worker who developed a social philosophy based on his Catholic faith. He felt that modern life had been separated from the Gospel and called for a "personalist revolution" in which people recognized the worth of every human being and lived their lives accordingly. A convert to Catholicism, Day had been involved in women's and workers' rights movements. Together, they combined their religious faith and social vision into a movement to practice the works of mercy and nonviolence. They started shelters and soup kitchens, a newspaper, and farming communities. This highly localized movement of intentional communities continues today.

Thomas Merton (1915-1968) was a Trappist monk who felt a solidarity with the human race. This feeling brought him to try to make connections between the monastic life and the world, especially issues such as war and racism, and made him into a prophet of peace and nonviolence.

Ben Salmon (1889-1932) was imprisoned in the US during World War I for his refusal to fight. His conscientious objection to all war – pacifism – was based on his firm Catholic faith. Salmon was the only man in World War I to base this belief on his Catholicism. Originally sentenced to death, he endured solitary confinement for much of his two-year imprisonment. Finally, he went on hunger strike, was transferred to a psychiatric hospital, and eventually released. He wrote an extensive critique of the Catholic Church's just war theory.

Hans and Sophie Scholl (d. 1943), under the name "The White Rose," were among the authors of a series of leaflets condemning the Nazi regime and calling for resistance. These university students were inspired by their Christian faith, believing resistance to evil to be part of their Christian duty. At the ages of 24 and 21, they, along with 23-year-old Christoph Probst, were beheaded for treason in Germany.

These short biographies are excerpted primarily from Robert Ellsberg's book, *All Saints*. It is an excellent collection of "daily reflections on saints, prophets, and witnesses for our times."

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Another good source is *Cloud of Witnesses*, edited by Jim Wallis and Joyce Hollyday. Included in this book are interviews and brief biographical profiles of modern witnesses and prophets who have lived the Gospel, such as Clarence Jordan (theologian, farmer, and racial healer in the US South), Penny Lernoux (journalist and advocate for the poor of Latin America), William Stringfellow (US theologian, social critic, and writer), and Desmond Tutu (Anglican bishop from South Africa and 1984 winner of the Nobel Peace Prize).

(From *The Way of Peace: Exploring Nonviolence for the 21st Century*, Edited by Shannon McManimon. Available from Pax Christi USA.)

Questions:

- 1.) Do you see the men and women profiled here as extraordinary people or ordinary people with extraordinary commitment?
- 2.) What is easy and what is difficult about what these people did?
- 3.) Where do you see such work carried out in your community?
- 4.) Do you think the Gospel calls you to get involved in the world? Why or why not and how?
- 5.) Is there a social issue you as a group would like to address?

Exercise: The Thirteenth Disciple

Read the following passage, *The Thirteenth Disciple*, aloud.

The only thing lacking in church leadership today is once again a thirteenth disciple who will gather together the different disciples for the casting out of demons.

But with Martin dead and Gandhi gone, who of us can possibly be ready for leadership like that? The days of great dreamers, great doers, are perhaps done. And if so, then what of Christian leadership and what of discipleship now?

Well, I don't know. The list of those ready to make people into a prophetic church has always been short. It is good to remember as we struggle with the false humility of powerlessness, that not even Jesus found "the ready."

Jesus called Nathaniel, the recliner, the prejudiced one. "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Nathaniel said. Nathaniel lacked openness. Nathaniel wasn't ready.

Jesus called Philip, the patriot. Philip wanted Jesus to be king, not the Nazarene. Philip lacked simplicity. Philip wasn't ready.

Jesus called Simon, the Zealot. Simon thought redemption required military and political force. Simon lacked nonviolence. Simon wasn't ready.

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Jesus called Andrew, the cynic. “Five loaves and two fishes! What can anyone do with that?” Andrew said. Andrew lacked a sense of risk. Andrew wasn’t ready.

Jesus called Thomas, the doubter. Thomas couldn’t see beyond the obvious. Thomas lacked vision. Thomas wasn’t ready.

Jesus called Judas, the pragmatist. Judas didn’t want God; Judas wanted good business practices: “This perfume could have been sold for 300 denarii.” Judas lacked spiritual maturity. Judas was definitely not ready.

Jesus called Matthew, the tax collector. Matthew spent his whole life succeeding at the expense of others. Matthew lacked a sense of social sin. Matthew wasn’t ready.

Jesus called Thaddeus, the realist. Thaddeus was looking for credibility and certification but definitely not prophecy. Thaddeus asks: “Why don’t you reveal yourself to the world?”—a loose translation of which is: “You tell them who you are. Don’t leave the burden to us!” Thaddeus lacked commitment. Thaddeus wasn’t ready.

Jesus called James the Lesser, the chauvinist. James insisted that Christianity was only for the Jews. James had no notion whatsoever of world redemption. James lacked awareness. James wasn’t ready.

Jesus called James and John, the Sons of Thunder. James and John were well on their way to becoming career ministers, ambitious men who wanted a good church position. James and John were buckin’ to be bishops. James and John lacked a sense of servanthood. James and John were not ready.

Jesus called Peter, the Rock. And Peter? Peter wanted to lead the leader on his own terms. “Don’t go up to Jerusalem, Jesus,” Peter said. Peter lacked courage. Peter wasn’t ready.

And in our time, Jesus called Martin Luther King, Jr., the dreamer. But Martin suffered bout after bout of depression, because Martin often lacked hope in the face of defeat. Martin Luther King, Jr. was not ready.

The point, you see, is that Jesus doesn’t call the ready. Jesus calls the willing. Jesus didn’t call the individuals as individuals. Jesus took the disciples in their individual weaknesses and made out of them a powerful—no, an empowering—church. And if Christianity is to be Christianity we, you and I, your church and mine, must do the same. Do we really want Christian leadership? Do we really want discipleship? The world is waiting to see you here and me there, each in our own local church, stand up with others, for the gospel questions of our time.

(Taken from *Winds of Change*, by Joan Chittister, OSB, pp. 152-155.)

Action

1. If you have decided to do a group witness, continue preparation. There are many questions that should be asked, such as:
 - * Will participants be members of your group alone, or will you work with other group(s) in the planning?
 - * Or will you join with an action someone else is already preparing? What will be your role? How can you be supportive or be allies?
 - * What will be your message? Is the wording of your message grounded in nonviolence?
 - * Who will be responsible for contacting the media before the action and following up afterward?
 - * What will be the substance of the action?
 - * Will you have a prayer service? Who will prepare the service?
 - * Will there be speakers? Who will speak?
 - * Will there be a table with petitions or letters to sign? Who will be responsible for this?
 - * What signs or banners will your group use? Who will make them? Consider making a banner with your group's name for ongoing use at actions.
 - * Will there be a creative component to the action?
 - * Who will be in charge of logistics?
 - * Will you have peacekeepers? They play the important role of keeping the group in the designated area, answering questions that arise from persons outside the group during the action, and generally seeing that the action proceeds in an organized manner.
 - * Will you need any equipment like a CD player for music, a sound system for speakers, candles for a vigil?
 - * Will you have a flyer? Who will write it and make copies? It is a good idea to prepare a flyer that clearly explains who your group is, what the reason for the action is and what you are calling for. These flyers can then be distributed during the action.
2. Use this time to discuss the status of any project your group chose from the *Organizer*.
3. Use this time to discuss any action proposals from members of the group.

Closing Prayer

Leader: As we conclude tonight, we pause again to remember that “our strength comes from you, O God.” Let us gather our thoughts and prayers in a moment of silence.

(Allow several minutes for quiet reflection.)

Intentions

Let us now offer our prayers of petition.
Our response will be, “...”

Gathered In Peace (Pax Christi USA)

Let us pray today:

--For the peacemakers in our own lives, especially those who were mentioned tonight, we pray...

--That God will continue to raise up among us prophets and peacemakers to call us to conversion and action, we pray...

(At this time invite petitions from all members.)

All: Our Father, Mother, who are in the world and surpass the world, blessed be your presence, in us, in animals and flowers, in still air and wind.

May your justice and peace dwell among us as you come to us. Your will be our will.

You will that we be sisters and brothers, as bread is bread, water is itself, for our hunger, for quenching of thirst.

Forgive us.

We walk crookedly in the world, are perverse, and fail of our promise.

But we would be human, if only you consent to stir up our hearts. Amen.
Amen.

Prayer by Daniel Berrigan, SJ

For the Next Meeting

1. Spend time this week reflecting on the following questions: How are we becoming a peace community of prayer, discussion, and action? Where are we going from here?

Pax Christi USA Resources on This Topic

Imagine a World: Poetry for Peacemakers, Compiled by Peggy Rosenthal.

This collection of poetry includes poems about war and injustice; poems about celebrating life; poems about protests; and poems to be used in rallies. It features the poems of such luminaries as Daniel Berrigan, Barbara Kingsolver, Wendell Berry, Lucille Clifton, Martín Espada, Thich Nhat Hanh, and Alice Walker and can be used as a great resource for peacemaking and justice-seeking, in personal meditation or reflection, at prayer services or rallies, in small groups or in meetings.

Item No. 529-432. . \$14.00

Pilgrims and Seekers: Saints Without Pedestals, Compiled and edited by Mary Ann Luke, OSB.

Perhaps this book's subtitle best summarizes this poignant collection of short stories. These brief and moving profiles give us insightful glimpses of people whose everyday

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lives illustrate the divine inherent in human nature. The storytellers – familiar names in today’s theological and peacemaking circles – artfully portray the child of God at work within the hearts of people of timeless faith.

Item No. 528-275. . . . \$8.00

The *Peacemaker Booklet Series* features small paperbacks that tell the stories of nine holy and heroic figures, for young and old readers alike. These books are long enough to give readers a thorough portrait of the lives and messages of these revered individuals, but short enough to be readable. A discussion guide comes with each set of nine.

<i>Dorothy Day and the Permanent Revolution</i>	Item No. 537-005, English. . . .	\$2.50
	Item No. 537-039, Spanish. . . .	\$2.50
<i>Imagine</i> , by Mary Lou Kownacki, OSB	Item No. 537-007. . . .	\$2.50
<i>Jean Donovan: The Call to Discipleship</i> , by John Dear, SJ. Updated, 2005.	Item No. 537-049. . . .	\$3.00
<i>Gandhi the Peacemaker</i> , by Sri Eknath Eswaran	Item No. 537-004. . . .	\$2.50
<i>Thomas Merton's Struggle with Peacemaking</i> , by Jim Forest	Item No. 537-006. . . .	\$2.50
<i>John Timothy Leary: A Different Sort of Hero</i>	Item No. 537-008. . . .	\$2.50
<i>Franz Jagerstatter: Martyr for Conscience</i> , by Gordon Zahn	Item No. 537-009. . . .	\$2.50
<i>Oscar Romero and the Nonviolent Struggle for Justice</i> , by John Dear, SJ. Updated 2005.	Item No. 537-135. . . .	\$3.00
<i>Ben Salmon: Witness for Peace</i> , by Torin Finney	Item No. 537-200. . . .	\$2.50
Peacemaker Booklet Series - Complete Set of 9	Item No. 537-010. . . .	\$15.00

Also includes a discussion guide.

Peacemaking Day by Day. Volumes I & II. Two best-selling books of quotes. These lively books offer a quote for each day of the year on peace and nonviolence and are ideal for group or personal prayer and reflection.

Item No. 532-027(Vol. I)....\$6.00 Item No. 532-130(Vol. II)....\$6.00

Words of Peace: Volume I.

Pocket-sized booklets, each containing 50-70 pages, enriched with words of peacemakers, words to live by. They are an excellent resource for peace education.

Selections from Dorothy Day	Item No. 551-100	\$2.50
Mary Evelyn Jegen, SND on Benevolent Living	Item No. 551-101	\$2.50
Selections from Martin Luther King, Jr.	Item No. 551-103	\$2.50
Thomas Merton on Nonviolence	Item No. 551-104	\$2.50
Gerard Vanderhaar on Nonviolence	Item No. 551-105	\$2.50
Complete Set Words of Peace Vol. I	Item No. 551-106	\$10.00

Words of Peace: Volume II

Selections from Bishop Thomas Gumbleton	Item No. 551-189	\$2.50
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Selections from Jim & Shelly Douglass	Item No. 551-190	\$2.50
Selections from Daniel Berrigan, SJ	Item No. 551-191	\$2.50
Complete Set of Words of Peace Vol. II	Item No. 551-192	\$6.50

Session Five: Where Have We Been? Where Are We Going?

Opening Prayer

(For this final session, you may want to include parts of the first four meetings. Along with Scripture and a candle, bring signs and symbols from former sessions.)

(As one member lights the candle....)

Leader: We gather in the light and peace of Christ.

All: May peace fill our hearts, our world, our universe.

(Optional: Sing a song or play some centering music.)

Leader: The readings today help us review our prayer, study, and action these past few weeks. Let us share both the reflections that help us recall the past and those which will guide us to the future.

Reflections

(Have different people read the following passages. Allow at least 30 seconds of silence between each reading.)

1. From Psalm 85

“I will hear what God has to say,
a voice that speaks of peace,
peace for your people, and your friends
and those who turn to you in their hearts.

Mercy and faithfulness have met;
justice and peace have embraced.
Faithfulness shall spring from the earth
and justice look down from heaven.

You, O God, will make us prosper
and our earth shall yield its fruit.
Justice shall march before you
and peace shall follow your steps.”

2. From the letter of James 2:14-17, 26

“Brothers and sisters: What good is it to profess faith without practicing it? Such faith has no power to save us, has it? If a sister or brother has nothing to wear and no food for the day and you say to them, ‘Good-bye and God bless you! Keep warm and eat well!’ but do not meet their bodily needs, what good is that? So it is with the faith that does nothing in

practice. It is thoroughly lifeless...Be assured that faith without works is as dead as a body without breath.”

3. From *The Harvest of Justice is Sown in Peace*

“By its nature, the gift of peace is not restricted to moments of prayer. It seeks to penetrate the corners of everyday life and to transform the world. But, to do so, it needs to be complemented in other ways. It requires other peaceable virtues, a practical vision of a peaceful world and an ethics to guide peacemakers in times of conflict.

“Amid the violence of contemporary culture and in response to the growing contempt for human life, the Church must seek to foster communities where peaceable virtues can take root and be nourished. We need to nurture among ourselves faith and hope to strengthen our spirits by placing our trust in God rather than in ourselves; courage and compassion that move us to action; humility and kindness so that we can put the needs and interests of others ahead of our own; patience and perseverance to endure the long struggle for justice; and civility and charity so that we can treat others with respect and love.”

Communal Prayer

All: We live in two worlds:
the one that is and the one that might come to be.
Nothing is ordained for us,
neither peace nor war,
neither delight nor defeat.
Life flows and we must freely choose.
We can,
if we will,
change the world that is
into the world that ought to be.

Reader One: Let us be disciples of the prophets of all times, loving peace and pursuing it, loving all human beings and bringing them the Word of God.

All: Peace will remain a distant vision
until we do the work of peace ourselves.
We must not be content to make peace in our families
and in our communities alone;
we must go forth and work for peace
wherever men and women are struggling in its cause.

Reader Two: O God of peace, inspire us to banish hatred and oppression, war and bloodshed. Help us to establish one human family doing your will in love and peace. Help us to make the world a sanctuary of goodness and blessing, compassion and mercy.

All: From this day on,
let us see the world in a new light:

Justice,
justice in peace shall we pursue! Amen.

Study

1.) Share your responses to the assignment for this session. “My dream and vision for our Pax Christi group is...”

2.) Format for Evaluation/Planning

Critical to the growth of any community are evaluation and planning. At this point it would serve you well to review where you have been and begin to discuss where you would like to go from here. To facilitate this process, answer the questions provided below as honestly and thoroughly as you can. Feel free to send comments to the Pax Christi USA National Office—in particular, ideas that would help other Pax Christi USA communities.

Your group may not be able to complete this entire evaluation in one session. If this is the case, carry this discussion over to your next meeting.

Overall Evaluation

During the past four sessions, what did you learn? like? dislike? find helpful? not helpful? inspiring?

For you, what was the highlight of Session One: The Peace of Christ; of Session Two: History and Priorities; of Session Three: Nonviolence; of Session Four: Contemporary Peacemakers?

Evaluation of Specifics

Prayer

How do you feel about our prayer together?

Comment on the time (too long? too short? just right?).

What emphasis do we want to place on prayer in the future?

How do we want to pray? What prayer forms do we want to use?

Study

How would you describe the way we have studied together?

Which forms were helpful?

How and what do we want to study in the future (more readings? more discussions? more exercises? more audio-visuals? outside speakers? other?)

Action

What actions have we carried out or are we planning?

Have the actions been helpful?

Comment on the emphasis placed on action (sufficient? not enough? too much?).

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Respond to the following: "Prayer is a form of resistance and resistance is a form of prayer."

Community/Celebration

Community and celebration go hand in hand and are integral to peacemaking.

What emphasis was placed on building community?

How can we intentionally cultivate community?

How are we open to including all people in our community?

What have we done to celebrate as a peace community?

How can celebration be further incorporated into our meetings?

Meetings

Comment on the time element.

How long do we want future meetings to be?

How often do we want to meet (once a month? bi-weekly? weekly?)

Is the location satisfactory or should we vary the location?

Issues

What issues or concerns do we want to consider?

What issues are of importance in our community?

What issues are other people/groups working on?

Leadership

What type of leadership do we want? (one person? shared responsibility? rotating leadership?)

How are we going to cultivate leadership?

Do we want to train our leaders? If so, what resources are available to do so?

Goal Setting

Look at the priorities of Pax Christi USA. What do we want to focus on? any of them now? later?

Would it be helpful for this group to spend one meeting on goal setting? If yes, then set a date.

Financing

Do we want to do any fundraising so members can attend workshops and/or Pax Christi USA events?

Do we want to contribute money to any peace efforts?

How do we want to fund activities, materials mentioned in the study section, speakers, etc.?

Networking

What are the other justice or peace groups in our area?

Do we want to network with them? If so, how shall we do it?

Growth

How will we foster the growth of our group? Where will we seek others to join us?
How can we maintain an open and embracing charism?

Anti-Racism

Does our group reflect the make-up of the community?
Do we discuss issues of importance to people from different racial and ethnic groups?
Are we open to and including of the diverse styles of discussion, worship, and action that different communities have?

Action

1. If you are planning a peace action/witness, continue with planning. Is everyone clear on roles and what each person is responsible for?

Public witness can be a powerful experience for those participating and those encountering it. It also involves taking a risk. Anytime you articulate a vision that is counter to dominant culture, you are taking a risk: being misunderstood, being marginalized, etc. Take some time to discuss your group's expectations for the witness.

After the event, discuss. What went well? What didn't go well? What would you do differently? How did you feel when participating?

2.) Use this time to discuss the status of any project your group chose from the *Organizer*.

3.) Use this time to discuss any action proposals from group members.

4.) Encourage every member of the group to become a member of Pax Christi USA. Membership supports the continued growth of Pax Christi USA as it works toward building a world where peace comes through justice.

5.) If you have not yet done so, please fill out the "Local Group Identification Form," included in the Organizer's packet. Your group will begin receiving group mailings and other information.

Closing Prayer

Leader: We conclude not only our evening with this prayer, but also our initial examination of Pax Christi and where it might lead us in our search for justice and peace. Let us remember in gratitude and anticipate with hope what God is calling us to be. (Allow several minutes of quiet time.)

Intentions

Our response will be:

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--Grateful tonight for the call to peacemaking that has gathered us together in community, we pray. . .

--That God continue to guide our search, we pray. . .

--That the Spirit of truth and nonviolence be at the heart of our work together, we pray. . .

--That those who lead us in our efforts as a Pax Christi community will be blessed with wisdom, patience, and compassion, we pray. . .

--That we may break through barriers of misunderstanding, hate, race, class, and other differences, we pray. . .

(At this time, invite petitions from all members.)

After the intentions have been offered, pray together the World Peace Prayer:

All: Lead us from death to life,
from falsehood to truth.

Lead us from despair to hope,
from fear to trust.

Lead us from hate to love,
from war to peace.

Let peace fill our hearts, our world, our universe.

**Group Resources for Pax Christi Communities
Available from the National Office**

The Way of Peace: Nonviolence for the 21st Century, Revised and expanded by Shannon McManimon, based on the original text by Gerard Vanderhaar, STD, and Mary Lou Kownacki, OSB.

This manual is an introductory guide to the spirit and practice of nonviolence in recent decades as practiced by Mohandas Gandhi, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Dorothy Day, Cesar Chavez, and others. Based in the prayer, study, action model, with exercises reflections, and referrals for more information. Perfect for classroom or parish study groups.

Item No. 533-054. . . \$15.00

The Nonviolent Moment: Spirituality for the 21st Century by Mary Lou Kownacki, OSB
In this book, Kownacki offers the reader a personal process for developing a spirituality of nonviolence tailored to face and transform the violence and suffering of our times. The chapters are a line-by-line reflection on Sister Mary Lou's *Prayer for the Decade of Nonviolence*. Each chapter concludes with reflection and action suggestion. Excellent resource for individual reflection, faith sharing groups, parish gatherings, families, classes, or religious communities.

Item No. 523-473. . . \$8.00

Appendix 1

The Pax Christi USA Movement

As a new PCUSA group, you are joining an existing movement for justice and peace that extends across the United States and is linked with other national Pax Christi sections in dozens of countries worldwide. Local groups within Pax Christi USA receive *The Organizer* four times a year. In addition, groups or individuals who join the Rapid Response Network receive action alerts and education on crucial issues weekly.

Many local groups within Pax Christi USA are organized on a regional basis. A Pax Christi USA region is an area of the country where there are six active registered local groups or 200 registered Pax Christi USA members. Currently there are 20 recognized regions. Regions have their own elected councils, receive financial support from the national office, gather yearly at a Regional Representatives meeting, produce a newsletter with a regional focus, and nominate three regional representatives to be included on the ballot for the PCUSA National Council. Regional structures allow for greater support and communication among Pax Christi members locally and provide a conduit for grassroots representation in national leadership structures.

Pax Christi USA Youth and Young Adult Forum is a national faith-based movement for college students, high school students, and young adults who seek to witness to faithful discipleship through prayer, study, and action and to proclaim the gospel of justice and peace in our society. The YAF includes young adults and college students ages 18-30. The YAF offers retreats and actions to explore the call to nonviolence and to build community among young adult peacemakers. Resources, like Pax Christi USA's campus organizing packet "Proclaiming Justice For All" and the Forum's newsletter, *Locusts and Wild Honey*, are available for young adult and campus activists and organizers. Members of the Young Adult Forum receive full membership in Pax Christi USA, including regular mailings and the bimonthly newspaper, *The Catholic Peace Voice*. The standard student membership fee is \$10. Students with limited income will enjoy full membership for any contribution given.

Pax Christi International is a global voice, an international movement speaking from the experience and vantage point of sixty countries on six continents. Each year PCI organizes seminars, conferences, and retreats. The International Secretariat, based in Brussels, Belgium, coordinates the work of PCI in cooperation with national sections and affiliated and partnering organizations. PCI is a nongovernmental organization with consultative status at the United Nations.

Notes and Reflections

Notes and Reflections

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web: www.paxchristiusa.org

Membership Form

I want to join Pax Christi USA and help make a difference. Enclosed is a check or credit card number with my membership payment of:

\$40 \$35 \$50 \$100 other

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

I would like to pay by credit card (MasterCard or Visa):

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Exp. Date _____ Signature _____

Due to limited income, I am enclosing a membership contribution of _____

Memberships and descriptions of membership levels are also available on our website at www.paxchristiusa.org.

Send form to:

Pax Christi USA
532 West Eighth Street
Erie, PA 16502-1343
Phone: 814-453-4955
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