

A vow of non violence is an addendum to this document

Submitted by Catherine Arata, SSND

YEAR OF MERCY

AND

THE Vow of

Nonviolence

Participants at the Conference for Peace and Non-Violence in Rome, April 11-13 have been asked to reflect on one of four questions. I have chosen:

- **Where and how do you feel we need to invest energy in moving towards a deeper and wider practice of nonviolence within the Catholic community?**

I am a Religious Sister 74 years old. My father served in World War II. My brother was in the Vietnam War. As a missionary religious I was in El Salvador for 11 years, 3 of which were during that country's civil war and 8 years after the war. I have been in South Sudan since 2008. Witnessing to that country's Independence and the bloody aftermath of a civil war which began three years after Independence. All of these events have somehow touched me and have influenced who I am, what I think and what I believe.

I believe that peace is a matter of prayer as well as a matter of politics. Above all I believe that peace is a matter of conversion of heart, of transformation of evil to good.

I believe that the voice of the Catholic Church is an influential voice throughout the world. The Social Doctrine of the Church provides the moral setting to explore the major issues of our time. The Encyclicals and other documents on Peace offer a wealth of information and inspiration.

Is it too late to save the world from the violence it perpetuates? Can politics stop war? What new pastoral contribution can the Church make in this time? We still have time to transform what's destroying and demeaning us.

During his recent visit to Mexico, Pope Francis said, “ Divine mercy invites us to conversion and to see the damage being done. Mercy pierces evil to transform it. Mercy encourages us to look to the present and trust the good in every heart” These are words of hope similar to the words spoken by the prophet Isaias ***“See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.***

For too long we have relied on politics to bring an end to war and create peace. I the answer is not in politics but rather in prayer and conversion of heart . Can we imagine “peace”? What would happen if every catholic church in the world become part of a massive campaign of forming peacemakers? What would it mean if every religious house became a house of prayer for peace What would it look like if all toys that represent violence (e.g.guns) were outlawed?

How can the Church prepare peacemakers “to go out to all the world” to teach the gospel of peace ; how can the Church contribute to the change from violence to non-violence?

A few suggestions:

- THAT the vows of religious include the vow of non-violence. Formation for this vow be taken with poverty, celibacy, obedience to be in the novitiate
- That those being ordained to the priesthood take the vow of non violence with catechesis given in the seminary
- That at weddings the vow of nonviolence be taken by the bride and groom.
- That laity profess the vow of non violence after a period of formation
- That formation for the vows of Baptism, Confirmation Holy Eucharist all include the vow of non violence as essential to the catechesis.

There are many versions of the Vow of Non violence. I suggest the one below written by Eileen Egan and John Dear.

VOW OF NON VIOLENCE

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 was 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.

Click on these links for a PDF version of the Vow of Nonviolence in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

One final thought from John Paul II:

If peace is God’s gift and has its source in Him, where are we to seek it and how can we build it, if not in a deep and intimate relationship with God? To build the peace of order, justice and freedom requires, therefore, a priority commitment to prayer, which is openness, listening, dialogue and finally union with God, the prime wellspring of true peace.

To pray is not to escape from history and the problems it presents. On the contrary, it is to choose to face reality not on our own, but with the strength that comes from on high, the strength of truth and love which have their ultimate source in God. Faced with the treachery of evil, religious people can count on God, who absolutely wills what is good. They can pray to him to have the courage to face even the greatest difficulties with a sense of personal responsibility, never yielding to fatalism or impulsive reactions. (John Paul II, Peace, A Single God and a Shared Intention)

