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To: Participants in the Nonviolence and Just Peace Conference, Rome, Italy, April 11-13, 2016.

Can you name a context/contexts of conflict, violence or war that has prompted your determination to seek nonviolent responses?

For over three decades I have been involved in nonviolent campaigns and movements addressing situations of violence and war, including policies of discrimination against homeless people in the United States, U.S. wars in Central America, nuclear weapons testing, the occupation of East Timor by Indonesia, and the two U.S. wars against Iraq. In each case, nonviolent solutions – neither violent nor passive – were the most effective. Many of these policies were transformed, typically following years of relentless movement-building, which often involved “alerting, educating, winning and mobilizing the populace” (as social movement thinker Bill Moyer put it) to remove its passive or active support for the status quo and, in turn, to generate people-power for change.

What are the strengths and opportunities created by active nonviolence in the face of violence and war?

As Professor Michael Nagler puts it, “Violence sometimes works and never works; nonviolence sometimes works and always works.” He is stressing the qualitative difference between violent and nonviolent solutions, and their long-term impacts. Violence often begets more violence by not resolving the issues at hand and, instead, by often leading to more violent conflict. Nonviolence is better equipped to address the issues that generated the conflict in the first place – and thus begets more nonviolence. The work of Maria Stephan and Erica Chenoweth (*Why Civil Resistance Works*) has quantified this, showing that nonviolent strategies are twice as successful as violence ones. And I have seen this in my own life – in the successes of the movements I have been part of (the U.S. Central America peace movement prevented a U.S. invasion of Nicaragua; the global anti-nuclear movement achieved a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty; certain statutes used to attack homeless people in San Francisco, California were discontinued) but also in conflicts and struggles in my work and in my relationships.

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?

In this time of great systemic violence and injustice we are called to build a culture of nonviolence fostering justice, peace and sustainability for all. “Nonviolence” both announces this goal (a world dedicated to the well-being of all and free of violence and injustice) and our means for achieving it. We stand at a great turning point, in need of both a bold vision and a concrete plan to spread the principles, methods, and active power of creative and transformative nonviolence. The Church can both dramatically announce this vision and foster and build out the infrastructure to translate this vision into concrete reality by:

- Issuing a papal encyclical on Nonviolence and Just Peace that would proclaim the centrality of nonviolence to the Gospel and thus the life of the Church
- Calling on all diocesan Justice and Peace Commissions to integrate the theology, spirituality and praxis of Gospel nonviolence in their work and teaching
- Encouraging and institutionalizing support for research on and Church-wide training in the theology, spirituality and praxis of Gospel nonviolence
- Integrating the theology, spirituality and praxis of Gospel nonviolence in all Catholic educational institutions, including seminaries, universities and colleges, secondary and primary schools, and all educational institutes, center and projects
- Integrating Gospel nonviolence in catechesis and formation
- Development of resources for integrating Gospel nonviolence in liturgical and sacramental contexts and in homiletics
- Development of resources for integrating Gospel nonviolence in Church ministries and pastoral life, including guidelines on how to develop and implement alternatives to violence and promoting a culture of peace and nonviolence
- Fostering a global conversation on Gospel nonviolence and its implications for the life of the Church
- Fostering a global conversation on nonviolence with the larger world, including concrete steps for developing and implementing nonviolent peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding.

To implement these and other global initiatives, the Church is encouraged to:

- Call on every Church institution – dioceses, parishes, agencies, universities, seminaries, religious orders, women’s congregations, voluntary associations and others– to create concrete plans to explicitly integrate Gospel nonviolence into its life and work
- Develop and launch *Catholics for Nonviolence*, a global movement supporting this Church-wide initiative, and
- Call on the world to spread the vision, strategies and methods for nonviolence through education, training, support for new and existing projects, organizations, institutions, and movements promoting nonviolence and just peace.

In every age, the Holy Spirit offers the church the wisdom to respond to the challenges of its time. In our own day, we are being called to invoke, pray about, teach and put into practice Jesus’ active nonviolence in response to the global epidemic of violence and to live in faithful witness to the God of unconditional, nonviolent love. In this decisive moment, the church is called to illuminate and disclose anew the foundational role of nonviolence in Jesus’ proclamation of the Reign of God -- and to explore myriad, tangible ways to lift up and embody this fundamental reality spiritually, theologically, ecclesiologicaly, liturgically, and pastorally.