

Nonviolence and Just Peace Conference

Session 2 – Jesus' Way of Nonviolence, moderated by Ken Butigan

Fr. John Dear: About Jesus and nonviolence -- it's so wonderful. Nonviolence. [Inaudible] Action. Active love. Pursuing the truth of our common unity. Consistently reconciling with everyone. Resisting the structures of violence and injustice. Building grass-roots movements for social change, as a methodology of social change that always works. So, it's a way of life, it's the spiritual life, it's a methodology, it's a revolutionary path, it's the way of Jesus. Nonviolence is power, the power of God. That's what Martin Luther King said over and over again.

But there's just this one catch that I wanted to highlight. I invite you to reflect on this because to me this is the bottom line that Jesus draws, the boundary line of nonviolence. There is no cause, however noble, no matter what anyone ever says for which you and I will ever again support the taking of a single human life. We do not kill to stop killing. We do not kill people who kill people to show that killing people is wrong. With nonviolence the days of killing are over. So Jesus -- Gandhi comes along, which -- you know all this but just for the record is what I would say -- Gandhi says Jesus is the most active person of nonviolence in the history of the world. It's an astonishing statement. And then he says that the only people on the whole planet who don't know that Jesus is nonviolent are Christians. That's what we're about here. I think it's because, as Mairead says, it's because it's the only thing you can say for sure about Jesus. How about that? That he's nonviolent. So it's our only hope, our only way forward, the greatest need, the nonviolence of Jesus, the nonviolence of God, and the nonviolence of the Kingdom of God.

So let me say a word about his teachings, his life, his death and resurrection. All his teachings, I submit, are about nonviolence. That's all he taught. Jesus does not teach us how to kill, wage war, or practice injustice, he teaches us how to practice nonviolence and build a movement. Gandhi's reading from the Sermon on the Mount every single day for 45 years. And he's not a Christian. The same passages over and over again. "Blessed are the peacemakers. You have heard it said, 'Thou shalt not kill;' I say don't even get angry, be reconciled. You have heard it said, 'An eye for an eye.' I say to you -- and in the Greek it says -- offer no violent resistance to one who does evil." That's the commandment, that's it. And we are not allowed to respond with violence or use violence. Period. If we're going to follow this guy. And we're not talking about the Nazis or George W. Bush or ISIS or Donald Trump. If we as the church reject that, we reject Jesus. And that's what we've done, I submit, for 1,700 years. And it has been a complete failure at every level, this rejection of Jesus' teaching. And it leads to the climax, "Love your enemies." He doesn't say, "but if they're really bad, and you meet these seven conditions, bomb the hell out of them. I'm trying [inaudible], but it's so serious. What's so exciting for me, in this, the most political sentence in the bible, "Love your enemies."

Welcome.

Anne McCarthy: I'm so sorry.

Fr. John Dear: The most political sentence, "Why, then you are sons and daughters of the God who lets the sun rise on the good and the bad and the rain to fall on the just and the unjust." I think that's the only, the clearest sentence about the description, the description of the nature of the mystery of God. In the Bible. It's Jesus saying, "God is not violent." This is the theology, the heart of the question and I invite us to grapple with it. If God is nonviolent we do this and practice this. So he's very clear, I submit, in all his teachings about nonviolence, and we need to start to be really clear that that's what we're trying to do at this gathering. His life, I think his life is the story of active nonviolence. In effect, he organizes the poor on a campaign of nonviolence, goes to Jerusalem like Gandhi on the Salt March, enters the Temple where all the religious authorities are working with the Empire to oppress all the people, and does nonviolent civil disobedience. He doesn't hit anybody, hurt anybody, kill anybody, or drop any bombs. But he's not passive, he's active and daring and if you do that you're going to get killed.

What happens next? The Last Supper. This bread, my body broken for you, my blood shed for you. The way I look at that is if Jesus were a good Roman, if he were a good Nazi, if he were a good American, he should have said, "Go break their bodies for me. Go shed their blood for me." The Eucharist, the Gospel, the [inaudible] only make sense in the light of nonviolence. When you participate in the Eucharist you participating in the new covenant of nonviolence. "My body broken for you, my blood shed for you, Do this!" They're in the Garden of Gethsemane. Here come the Roman soldiers. What does Peter do. St. Peter's thinking, "If violence is ever divinely sanctioned in all of human history, if there ever was a just war in all of human history, if there ever was a moment to kill for a good cause, it's here in the Garden of Gethsemane to protect our God. And he's right. We should kill to protect the holy one. And just as he goes to kill to protect the holy one, the commandment comes down, "Put down the sword." Dear friends, those are the last words of Jesus to the church. It's the last thing he said to the community of men and women around him before he died. It's the last thing they heard. And, I think it's the first time they understood who this guy is. He's so serious about this nonviolence. They all run away. And what we are saying is, it's time to change the history of the church, not to run away, but to stand with the nonviolent Jesus. So he goes to his death, Gandhi says, and greater nonviolence, God raises him from the dead, He comes back, Peace be with you, and he's still nonviolent. He's not angry, he doesn't talk about revenge or retaliation, he says, no you go and practice nonviolence in a world of total violence.

So in conclusion, [inaudible] for 1,700 years, I submit, the church has officially, formally rejected the nonviolence of Jesus and supported killing and war. That's certainly what's happening, in my opinion, in the church in the United States. This policy has completely failed, and I hope, with these days, we will call upon Pope Francis to write a new encyclical on the nonviolence of Jesus, to get the Church to officially reject the Just War Theory, to officially embrace the nonviolence of Jesus, and to call every Catholic to practice Gospel nonviolence. And I think we should have this gathering every two years from now on for the rest of our lives until the Pope joins us and we get that encyclical.

Thanks for listening.

Fr. Jamal Daibes Khader: Thank you. Whenever we talk about nonviolence we go directly to the teaching of Jesus to try to see how Jesus lived and his attitude, what he did and not what he said. We as Palestinians, and this is one specific point about Jesus, we ask ourselves, "What does Jesus tell us today?" Especially when many people turn the Bible as bad news for the Palestinians with all the interpretations of texts about Promised Land, Chosen People, etc. And they interpret those texts, those prophecies, in an anti-Palestinian way, "This is not your Land, this land was given by God to another people." So, what did Jesus say about it? What we see in Jesus is someone who is walking with us on the road of Emmaus where he began with the disciples beginning with Moses and all the prophets to interpret the scriptures. So Jesus is the one who is interpreting the scriptures to us to keep it as Good News.

Many times we read the Bible, we are used to read[ing] the Gospel, we are used to it but when we go back to the context of Jesus, many of [the things that] he did was shocking because he challenged the system, he challenged society, he challenged the way of thinking, the mentality. And this is a nonviolent act. And I'll give some examples: Lepers, for Jews and for people who lived during the time of Jesus, were punished by God for their sins because they are sinners, they are impure. They cannot participate in prayers because they are punished. Because of their sins. And if you touch them, you will become, yourself, impure. So, when the leper asked Jesus to heal him, the first thing that Jesus did is that he approached him and he touched him. That should be shocking for them because against the mentality of the whole society, no, he is the Son of God.

Another thing is when he heals someone and continues the conversation with the Pharisees, "What do you think, should I do good on the Sabbath or not?" And then he heals the one with a sick hand, and it's not only healing someone, it's a call to conversion for those who are around him. When he said to the paralytic man, "Your sins are forgiven," they objected, so he continued the discussion, "What do you think, should he go back home like he is or should you have compassion with him?" So it's a call always to those, to the powerful to have compassion with the poor and the sick and the marginalized to do things against the Sabbath. That's shocking. A good Jew would never work on the Sabbath. But for Jesus, healing someone is this important.

So, to be on the side of those who are left back by society, those who are poor, those who are on the side of the street, etc. In the Palestinian mentality, beggars are the lowest in the social levels, beggars are near to shepherds. Anyway. So, the blind [man] of Jericho was on the side of the road and when he called on Jesus, Jesus did not go to see him, he called him in the middle. "Your place is here, it's not on the side. You are here in the middle because you are loved by God." Eating with sinners was so shocking for people, how can you, how dare you accept the invitation of Zacchaeus in Jericho for example. Those things were shocking, were against the law as interpreted by the Pharisees. He challenged that and one aspect of the Good Samaritan is that we [inaudible] the Good Samaritan we forget about the priest and the Levite who left

him, who walked on the other side. Because according to Jewish law a priest cannot touch a dead man, the corpse of a dead man, he will be impure, he can no longer offer sacrifice to God. So, they left him dying on the street for religious reasons, to be pure in front of God. So he's challenging also the religious system at the same time. This is a Samaritan, your enemy, what you consider as enemy, you could help him, but you refuse to help because you want to be closer to God, offer sacrifices to God. Those actions were so shocking for people around him.

And another thing is that his message is first of all to the poor and the sick, etc., but his message is inclusive. It's for everyone. It's for the poor and for the rich. For the weak and for the powerful. For conversion. He accepted to eat in the household of the Pharisee Simon, for example, because he wanted Simon to convert also. So his message is inclusive. Even for, when he died on the cross, another aspect, he did not die for his friends, not only for those who recognize that they are sinners, but even for those who do not recognize that they are sinners. He died also for those who crucified him. "God forgive them," as he dies. Also for those who crucified him. This inclusive message also to everyone.

Now, of course, dying on the cross is the ultimate expression of the nonviolent, the active nonviolence of Jesus. He died because he said "no" to lies, to violence. He said "yes" to the Kingdom of God. They wanted to stop him. No, he wants to continue with his message of love and fraternity. We are all children of God. His message of good news to everyone, etc. And because of his message, because of what he said and did, he was crucified. So, his offering of himself is the ultimate expression of saying "no" to evil, saying "yes" to God, to the Kingdom of God even if he offers his own life on the cross, he's ready to do so to continue the good message for everyone. So we are all not only created in the image and the semblance of God, but we are all children of God, saved by Jesus Christ. Thank you.

Sr. Anne McCarthy: First, I'm so sorry I was late. I thought it was an hour earlier than it was, I'm really sorry.

It's so good to be here, and I was so moved by the experience already this morning, and the pre-conference papers. There's a richness and a depth already in the sharing that's revolutionary, so thank you for that.

For this afternoon, I was to add three stories of Jesus-- we could do this all day -- but three stories that have especially spoken to people on retreats that I've led on nonviolence. So I want to offer three more stories in our midst and then talk about sacraments and prayer a little bit.

So the first story is the bent woman from Luke 13. And in that story, Jesus interrupts the Sabbath service, calls out, notices the woman who's bent, and has been bent for 18 years, heals her, and then defends his action in one of the strongest challenges that he gives to the synagogue's leaders, one of the strongest challenges to their moral leadership, saying, "You hypocrites! Which of you would not let out your ox or your ass on the Sabbath to water it? And should not this daughter of Sarah and Abraham who has been in bondage for 18 years, should not she be released, freed from her shackles on the Sabbath?" Again, it's a revolutionary act.

And the woman stands up and praises God in the synagogue. And then, when she is standing and praising God with the others, the service can continue. So, notice that Jesus interrupts the service, all are to be standing and praising God. And I think that this is Jesus' response to the internalized oppression that we've spoken about. So the people that are so bowed under oppression that they cannot stand and speak for themselves, Jesus says, "Stop the community. Bring them forward." Those that are so wounded, as we've heard so much this morning, from all aspects of the violence cycle. Call them forth, heal them until they can also bring their voice into the circle. Now if the story doesn't sound as familiar to us and the others, it's because this is one of the stories that's never read in Sundays in our churches. When our lectionary was set, that story was skipped over. Which is, itself brings up the reality of some of the sexism and injustice that we live with, that are part of the analysis as we consider this topic of nonviolence in our church today.

Second story, the Syrophenician woman who begs for her daughter whom Jesus is refusing to heal. She challenges Jesus, she stands up to him with assurance, she begs for the life of her daughter, and she converts Jesus. He doesn't plan on healing the girl, he does anyway. Jesus is awed by her faith. Both of them are held up as models of nonviolence. Both the woman, in standing up strongly for the most vulnerable in society, and the one that she loves. And Jesus, who engages with the enemy, really listens, and converts.

Third story is Mary of Bethany, and her anointing of Jesus. So in John, she's the one who anoints Jesus. In every Gospel there's a woman who anoints Jesus before his burial. In the Gospel of John, it's Mary of Bethany. And she brings the expensive perfume and anoints his body, and Jesus receives it. In his fear, in his looking ahead at knowing where he's going, he receives her tender act. And he defends her. Several days later, Jesus washes the feet of his own disciples in another very tender, beautiful act. So we have Jesus learning from Mary, learning this ritual, I think. Realizing, because he experiences it, how important it is and then sharing that with those he loves as his way of saying goodbye. And, telling them and all of us to do that for each other. It's a tender act, it's an act that forms their relationship. And it's a revolutionary act, especially when Jesus does it because, again, he's taking on the role of the servant and changing the relationships all upside down. Those are all, I think, just additional stories to this whole breadth and depth of nonviolence that the Gospels give us and that we're called to live out.

So just a word about sacraments because as we've thought about the main question of where do we go from here, I've been reflecting a lot about sacraments and how we use them. So, sometimes we have used sacraments very effectively, official sacraments. And we had the beautiful example of Patrick Campbell and [inaudible] Islands that he described this morning. I remember the time that Bishop Gumbleton and Bishop Charles Buswell had celebrated a Eucharistic liturgy in the Nevada desert and the closing procession, they led all of us across the line which effectively stopped nuclear testing for that day. The liturgy itself was a direct action. There was not a separation between the Eucharist and the crossing of the line, the preaching of the Gospel and the crossing of the line. It was powerful and symbolic and it helped to shape us

as Pax Christi USA and who we were and who we were in the future. My own community, the Benedictine women as a celebration of their 1,500 years, marched around the Pentagon and planted Benedictine medals at the corner, at every corner. Again, it was an action that formed, that witnessed, and that shaped the community into the future. I think of other ways that we use foot washing, other ways that we can use Eucharist, even the Polish-Slovak tradition of celebrating, breaking the blessed bread in families. That's an unofficial sacrament that's available to us and is a ritual of reconciliation that can be deeply moving when our communities need it. I think that our communities will need the deep prayer, rituals, sacraments from our tradition and ones that we create to sustain us for the future. Thank you.

Ken Butigan: I want to thank you for this richness. And, if we could take a moment among you just to reflect if you have reflections on what each of you have shared, we'll take two or three minutes for that and then we'll invite folks from the middle circle to come and start to fill these other two chairs.

Fr. Jamal Daibes Khader: Thank you both for reminding us of the Eucharist. This is an important topic because for a long time the spirituality of the Catholic church is a private act of taking communion, being in communion with God, regardless of being in the community. And here I remember John Chrysostom saying once in a sermon the rich people who are in this cathedral in Constantinople, "You're receiving God, and so, Jesus as bread, he's sharing with you his own life, his body and you refuse to share the bread with the poor who are outside the church." How can we take the life -- it's life-giving, the Eucharist, and be in favor of death or be silent on that and not to promote life to everyone, to those who suffer? So it is a political act. I don't want to look at the Eucharist only in this aspect, but it enriches our understanding of the Eucharist as a community and as life-giving act. Not only that we receive it, but we have a mission to spread life to be fully lived by everyone; this aspect is important and thank you for mentioning it.

Fr. John Dear: Thank you both also, I just love hearing you speak about the actions of Jesus, both of you, it's great. As we all understand this is nonviolent action. But just to say one or two other words, someone, friends this morning, mentioned theology, these big four-letter words, spirituality. At least in the States, we have a very sophisticated spirituality and theology of war. We are dealing, I think it's around the world, whether you're talking about Kevin in South Africa to Brother Bishop [inaudible] in South Sudan, it's really everywhere. And after 1,700 years we have all internalized it. The real question, Gandhi said is, who is, what is your image of God, before you can even worship God, if you're worshipping or imagining a God of war, violence, racism or greed, well, you're going to become like that. That's what we're talking about this afternoon, getting at the spirituality and theology of peace and the spirituality and theology of nonviolence. And this is brand new, and the church of peace and nonviolence.

Second of all, I am very moved by Gandhi and MLK and their language about this. And I was trying to say in the small group, you know in the States I can't talk about love, I told the bishop that. And I know that sounds crazy. I leave near Los Alamos in New Mexico, the desert, where

they build all the nuclear bombs. 20,000 people, all Catholic, all go to mass, I do a lot of work with them -- they think they're the greatest people of peace on the planet. You know, George W. Bush really thought of himself as a person of peace, and the word love and just been so misused in the States. Gandhi and Dr. King then only used this terrible clumsy word "nonviolence." I invite us to think of it that way. And it would be helpful at least for North Americans to continue using it. North Americans have to become nonviolent. You know, the struggle is elsewhere but we are intent on killing everybody.

And the third little thought is - I think resurrection means nonviolence. Resurrection means having nothing to do with death and the metaphors and means and ways of death. The Risen Jesus doesn't have a drop of death in him, correct? Which means he has not a drop of violence in him. So if you're going to follow the risen Jesus, we're on a journey of nonviolence.

Sr. Anne McCarthy: I just want to -- yes, thank you both for your reflections. I want to mention, when you mention that our own culture in the U.S. of violence, the collusion in our culture, I don't know how it is with others, but, with militarism is strong and deep. And just to acknowledge that. ROTC is part of Catholic higher education. That would be very difficult to separate -- it's reserve military training so that college students can graduate as officers and it's part of almost every Catholic college and university participates in this. And it has really influenced our Catholic culture. And influenced our theology. And just one other word about theology is that to remember that we're doing theology when we're praying. So as we pray together and as we celebrate together and as we do sacrament together, we are doing theology and creating a different future. And we will need strong symbols of nonviolence and support for that as we go forward.

Ken Butigan: Thank you so much. Let's have a round of applause. [inaudible]

So I'm going to invite beginning in the first, this middle row, for folks to come up and fill these two seats. You all can stay here if you like, to begin with, and so if a couple of people can come up and are willing to share on the question, the invitation, the outrageous idea of Jesus and nonviolence. And as we're doing that, I'd like to come back to the rest of us for a moment to just marinate in what we've heard. To take a moment of centering, to really listen to what we've heard, to marinate in this teaching that we've just heard. And if we can just invite a couple of people either from this first row or the next row to come up, that would be great. Let's take a moment of silence as our other people sharing come forward.

So we do invite one or two folks to come up.

Gerhard Beestermöller: Thank you very much. As a German, I would to ask you how you feel about Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the Protestant pastor who lived in the United States for years. And he was a very, very committed pacifist, and during his time in [his] native Germany, he saw that hundreds of thousands of children were killed every day and therefore he decided to join the group who tried to kill Hitler. And they were very, very close, very, very close. And I'm

convinced that hundreds of thousands of people would not have died if Hitler would have been killed in 1944. How do you feel about this, all of you, who wants to?

Fr. John Dear: Well, thank you very much, and it's a great question. I've really studied Bonhoeffer and I think he was really wrong. And I say that because he said it. He said, "I am committing mortal sin, don't do what I do." And wow, do I respect him because I have studied his life and I'm so impressed and I'm just beginning to understand. But, I always say you know where active nonviolent resistance was tried, I submit, the history books are now telling us, against Nazi Germany, it was very powerful, maybe even effective. Denmark, Bulgaria, Norway. But I always prefer to look at Franz Jägerstätter when asked about Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He chose a different way and our church has beatified him, we're going to canonize him ... Franz Jägerstätter from Sankt Radegund, Austria, you know. Uneducated, gets drafted, refused to fight for Hitler, one of perhaps only five people, he has the three girls...

Gerhard Beestermöller: Several kids.

Fr. John Dear: ...and he's taken off and beheaded. I went to Austria in the 90s, befriended his family and his wife, went to Sankt Radegund, really studied him too. Not only is he the greatest modern saint, and a real political disciple like the early church, he's a profound mystic. He was in, he said, when the chaplain came in before he was executed that morning, "I cannot talk because I am in perfect union with Jesus." Nobody talks like that. And I urge people in Austria and Germany to continue to study Franz Jägerstätter. We could go on and on for a long time about that, and all those people who died, and the development of nuclear weapons – what does this mean for us now, how can we make sure there's never a rise of such a demonic power, what does it mean for us in the United States, and so for and so on. Jesus has some clear things to say.

Sr. Anne McCarthy: One of the -- good question and good response -- one of the things I've wondered about Bonhoeffer is what if the communities of resistance that he was envisioning, if they had taken off – how they might have taken off, and would that have been an even better answer than trying to assassinate one person which leaves the whole violent structure, that's created, leaves it all in place. But anyway, that's one of my wonderings. It's a question to grapple with. And Bonhoeffer grappled with it honestly, and never was sure about what he did. But we all do that, yeah.

Rose Marie Berger: My name is Rose Berger. I'm here from the United States, and I do want to start to all of my sisters and brothers especially who are not in North America and not in Western Europe, to offer my apologies. I am an American and my country is exporting the worst kind of distorted vision of death that I have ever seen. And you all are on the other end of that gun or drone or mine or tear-gas canister, and so I want to offer my apology.

The nonviolent way of Jesus is the only way that I know and it's the only example that I can find that has enough depth and complexity to deal with our realities. The reality of the Bonhoeffer dilemma, we call it. The realities that Katrina talked about in [inaudible]. Of maybe it's better to

kill our enemy to show that we love them. These are our realities. And Pope Francis has said to us, reality is more important than ideas. If you have to choose between the reality and the idea, you don't always have to choose, but when you have to choose, choose the reality.

The other piece about nonviolence that I'm always telling myself is not to apply a purity code to it. We can try to walk the nonviolence path and we will, as I say, fall off the horse many, many times. But you get back on, you get back on. And when, for me, one incident of being in a nonviolent action, and a car that was coming toward the crowd, very aggressively drove into the crowd, and I was so angry that I smashed against the driver's window with my hand. Of course, the driver kept on and I had a cut up hand. But it was that that helped me step back and say, "Okay, I think I fell off the wagon." But that's okay, that's okay, get back up. Learn from what happened, keep going. So these are some of the things that I keep finding when I go back to look at this life of Jesus and this nonviolent way.

And I have to say that as much as I struggle with my church, my mother, whom I love, the Eucharist and going to mass is the only place in my culture where there's even a hint of this other way. It's not on TV, it's not in politics, it's not in the newspaper, it's not on my city streets. The only place that I find any kind of imagination about nonviolence and peace is within my ritual of going to mass. So that's just tells me that there is something so important, we cannot squander this great treasure that we have been given.

And the final thing I would say is that especially when we're working with the trauma that's in so many of us, whether it's the trauma of living in a society like the United States where there is violence, but the true violence is the violence of indifference, that's what we are beaten with every day. Or the actual physical violence and terror that others are facing, that part of healing from that trauma so that we can move forward is working with the earth. To me, that is Laudato Si's greatest gift to us, is it provides a prescription for helping us heal our trauma so that we can continue to move forward in a positive cycle and way of peace. And, figuring out more and more ways to actually include our river as our holy water font. If you cannot drink your river water, if you cannot baptize in your river, then there is a situation of injustice that has polluted your temple. So, beginning to incorporate that as a normal process as we look at how to live in communities in a way that are witnesses to nonviolence.

Thank you.

Jeff Felix: My name is Jeff Felix from Belgium, working as a volunteer at the International Secretariat of Pax Christi International. John, you alluded twice to Mahatma Gandhi, making clear that also in other religions and ancestral traditions, there is wisdom of ways to nonviolence. And I would like to insist and invite this meeting to a kind of inter-religious dialogue, where possible.

And I go back to [a] personal, very deep experience that I had in the year 1996 in Phnom Penh, in Cambodia, that was the end of the Indo-China War and the genocide in Cambodia. And with 13 Catholic development organizations of the so-called CIDSE –Cooperation International for

Development and Solidarity, we created the Cambodia/Laos/Vietnam Program to support the local communities to fight injustices against poverty and create more justice. And I remember the 15th of June of '96 when we organized with our field office in Phnom Penh a manifestation before a temple, and the Buddhist monks came out and they carried flags, banners, with the words "[foreign language]"- "Peace" and "[foreign language]" – "Nonviolence." And the banners that read, "The suffering of Cambodia has been deep; from this suffering comes great compassion. And great compassion makes a peaceful world." That came from their wisdom coming from the Buddha, but also within Hinduism, like Gandhi, you have also strains for peace and so on, and so on.

And so, therefore, I learned that to have a peaceful heart, you have to go inside of yourself, a kind of contemplation. There is no real action before contemplation, and meet within yourself, as the Buddhist do in their meditation practice of Zen, for instance, the One, the One-in-us, the connectedness with everybody in this world and also with the fullness of creation, this One-in-us. And that's in fact to go down with what our Christian mystics did also, they go inside, don't give [inaudible] a name to the One, you can feel it, ground of Divinity, you can refer to Jesus who lived from this Father inside himself. Therefore, for me, very important that as a way to nonviolence we need to think and acquire wisdom from other religions and the action with them together also with ourselves, Christians. This should be a very important dimension, and that's what in fact Pax Christi, already is promoting since many years in this famous brochure on Peace Spirituality, with six stepping stones, and one of the stepping stones is learning from the wisdom of other religions.

Peace.

Bishop Luigi Bettazzi: I'm sorry, my English is too poor, all right? Parlo italiano. [Continues in Italian; English translation below].

Three points I wish to highlight:

First, in Jesus, nonviolence is not to be understood as resignation. He did say: "If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also", but when he was slapped, he didn't say: "now slap me on the other cheek as well". Instead, he said: "If what I said is wrong, bear witness about the wrong; but if what I said is right, why do you strike me?" Nonviolence should be active, it should teach to absolutely refuse violence.

*Second, it is up to the people of God to convert the bishops. It was suggested during the Council that every war should be condemned. That is what Pope John did, when he claimed that thinking that wars can bring justice and peace was silly: *alienum est a ratione*. It was only with the arrival of the Council that total war, that in which civil population is affected, was condemned. We used to call it A, B, C, meaning to say atomic, biological, chemical. Now, every war is a total war, because they all affect civil population, and therefore, are against God and against humanity. A catholic, a Christian, could never become a soldier, unless making a conscientious objection against being sent to a total war.*

The third point concerns a global approach. Once, Italian cities used to wage war against each other, as well as France and Germany, England and Spain, that have fought so many wars in the past. This is nowadays impossible on account of the existence of a higher authority -- the UN System --, as a necessary reference. However, it is extremely important to ensure that the United Nations become an effective authority. As long as five countries are granted veto power, the United Nations will never be an absolute authority. Friendship with one of these countries makes it easy to obtain their veto. Thus, I think we really need to push and make every effort for a more democratic United Nations System. Only then will it become an organization with a real global control. Provided, at most, with a police force, as in every particular country, with the duty to stop violence, trying not to use violence. Globally, the United Nations System should be provided with a similar force committed to stop violence without using violence.

These are the three points I wanted to highlight. Thank you.

Nathanael Bacon: I don't know about you, but I'm very moved, I think we all are, by the miracle of Pope Francis and what he's brought to the Church in such a short amount of time. And when he finishes his encyclical on Jesus and nonviolence in a couple of years we'll be here to celebrate, I believe.

But one of the first things that he did really grabbed my attention, which was his first Holy Thursday, if you recall, rather than celebrating, you know, at St. Peter's Basilica, he goes to a juvenile hall, a juvenile prison, and washes the feet of the inmates there, including a Muslim girl. And, part of the reason that grabs me is from a personal experience which I think relates really deeply to this, how we look at Jesus and nonviolence. My wife and I worked for, you know, 15-20 years with gang members, Latino gang members in San Francisco, California. And many came to live with us, which was a tricky thing, with a young daughter, and all of that. But God moved us to bring, especially one young man, named Agustín, who after being with us for a month, the priest at our parish very kindly, generously suggested that we have him be one of the twelve to have his feet washed in the liturgy on Holy Thursday. And so we were delighted, and thought it was a great idea. And then the day came, and he was having a bad day, and he decided, he said, "I'm not showing up," and he didn't show up. It was a bummer, but we got home, and hadn't been home more than five minutes, when he burst through the door, and he looks at us and he was pale, and he said, "I just got shot." He'd been out on the street, he'd been out where his, where the gang hangs out, enemy gang members had come out and opened fire with an automatic weapon and he dove behind one of those big metal garbage dumpsters, which saved his life. And one bullet caught him, you know, we were like, first of all we were looking, where's the blood, where did you get shot? And he got shot in the foot. So I take his shoe off, and it totally had just sort of taken the bottom, the thick part off the flesh off the bottom of his big toe. So guess what I end up doing?

Audience: Washing his foot.

Nathanael Bacon: Washing his foot. Thinking, this is odd. Holy Thursday, he was supposed – and I look at him and say, “Agustín, this would have been a lot better in church.” And then I'm in tears and I say, "Mijo, son, thank God you're alive," and what he said cut me to the heart, cut us to the heart, he said, "I wish they would have killed me."

So, the background, growing up in Mexico, abusive home, abandoned at seven years old, on his own since eight, crosses the border at 11, eats out of garbage dumpsters, makes his way, and finally a man takes him into his home, in San Francisco, and proceeds to abuse him, sexually. All of that pain inside comes pouring out in a group that invited him to be part of their family, a street gang. And I think, we sat with that for the longest time, trying to say, there must be a message in this, Holy Thursday, he was supposed to get his feet washed, he shouldn't have, and this happened. And I think, you know, part of what we take away from that which is very core to this Jesus and nonviolence is this, we all carry wounds. And I think, this young man had very deep wounds, like almost all the kids we worked with in the gangs, and Jesus calls us to wash those wounds, communally, to come as family, to wash those wounds with his love. And he calls us to be the instruments of that love.

And if wounds don't get washed, what happens? They get infected and I think that infection then begins to look like all the symptoms that you see on the outside, like the violence, the gangs, the addictions, and all of that. And I think at core it's these unwashed wounds. And we again recognized, that since we invited him, he would have been just a gang member, a statistic, a newspaper item, you know, some, something, someone, something to be put in a jail or to be deported. But we had opened the door and let him be part of our family, so now he was our son. And so by, then, his wounds became our wounds. And when he said that, we had to sit in that pain with him. And then we recognized, those wounds aren't just his and ours, they're the wounds of Jesus. And so this whole process, this whole process of nonviolent love is just pouring out of this love as a salve to heal these wounds that are wounds of others, and in solidarity become our wounds, and mystically in prayer and experience we recognize the very wounds of Jesus. And this is the, so when I pull out my symbol, you can see the bullet, this is the bullet that we removed from his shoe. So this is a reminder to me, almost like a prayer bead, I carry it everywhere, of the challenge of loving those who appear to be enemies, coming close enough to recognize their wounds and to be instruments of peace in washing them.

Fr. Renato Sacco: [Speaks in Italian; English translation follows:]

Before starting, I would like to say to those who might have not recognized him, that the previous speaker, Monsignor Luigi Bettazzi, has been the International President of Pax Christi for several years. He is currently the only Italian bishop to have taken part in the Second Vatican Council, and has contributed to diffuse its documents, always highly relevant for the life of the Church.

My name is Renato Sacco, and I am the coordinator of Pax Christi Italy. I think that Jesus' words: "Put your sword away!" could guide our options.

It is with some embarrassment that I will try to add some reflections to what has already been said.

I think it is important to listen to the numerous witnesses from Palestine, Sri Lanka, Japan, Northern Ireland, etc. Many of us didn't personally experience shooting and violence, but the testimony of those who did experience such situations can help us in our specific commitment to "put the sword away", saying "no" to all those structures that draw out the sword. We have recently learned that US 1,700 billion were spent in 2015 for arms. A real blasphemy. Nonviolence is a strong commitment to disarmament. With the United States we share a project of fighter-bombers (F-35) costing US 130 million each. Our commitment, as well as Pax Christi Italy's commitment, is to be close to direct payers, such as our Palestinian friends. In 1992 we went with Bishop Bettazzi to Sarajevo during the war. We were 500 people and 10 buses. In the midst of the siege we wanted to say that it is in the midst of a war that we need to build peace, and give clear signs of nonviolence.

So, how can we translate our commitment here and now? Isis is a concern, the arms sales are a concern, and among us today is the Sister who, overnight August 6-7, ran away from her village of Qaraqosh to Erbil. We know that Isis is supported by Saudi Arabia, however Italy and many other countries are selling weapons to Saudi Arabia, an issue that calls for a political, diplomatic and cultural commitment to reporting. Moreover, we are going to Qatar for the Football World Cup. Yesterday, at Vatican Radio I proposed to boycott this World Cup, as well as all Israeli products and the Banks involved in arms trafficking. In Italy we have a lobbying campaign against armed Banks, because if we really believe in peace and nonviolence, then we must ask ourselves which are our choices that support weapons and war.

In conclusion, I don't think we need to ask the pope to write another Encyclical Letter, even though I would appreciate it. The pope has already spoken abundantly, but it is up to us to say and do more, in order to show him our support.

We must commit ourselves also to put an end to military chaplains working in this war structure with military degrees.

I believe that these nonviolence strategies are options to be implemented so that the testimony of some may support our efforts.

Fr. Bonnie Mendes: Thank you. I want to give witness to how it is living in an Islamic country, like Pakistan. This was when Osama bin Laden was killed, I was in Pakistan going down a road in a city [inaudible] in a parish. And suddenly I heard a call for prayer. And immediately after that everybody on the road fell down the street, lining up for prayers. Everybody. And I was the only one left who was not lining up. And I understood what was happening. But when you live in an Islamic country, there is no room for fear, there is no room for anger. You have to be patient, and you have to be intelligent enough to live peacefully and nonviolently.

The second example I give, I was sitting in the church compound, church yard, all alone. The electricity had gone off, as it does in Pakistan, and I was sitting out in the summer and suddenly I saw a delegation coming led by the [proper name] and Islamic clerics, and a huge group of them. I invited them to come in, they refused, but they were very aggressive. And they told me, "Close your school immediately. You are giving co-education, you are giving wrong values, we are going to bomb it." Here was I trying to get children to school. And now, if I told the parents that this threat was there, the parents would not send their children. But fortunately for me, I was the only who heard this threat. And fortunate for me that among that delegation that came, there were small boys. One Muslim boy says, "But [name], the children of [name], the children of [name] comes here for physiotherapy and they give it free." And he didn't know what to say, and he just walked away. We have to have strong faith, we have to believe in Jesus, we have to believe in the cross and those values alone will stand us. There has to be a spirituality that is willing to say no to war, no to any kind of militarization, no more armaments, there has to be an end to all this. Unless we go that far, there is no other way.

Thank you.

Dr. Terrence Rynne: Terry Rynne. I was fortunate to write the background paper on Jesus and Gospel nonviolence and it's been very enriched today from these comments. One question that comes to me is, why has it taken us so long? Why weren't we reading the gospels that way for 1,700 years? I realized there are a number of reasons. One of them, clearly, an article by Karl Rahner years ago when he talked about a Christology from below. Meaning simply instead of focusing on Jesus Christ, a focus on Jesus of Nazareth. And so, a deepened understanding and focus instead of the traditional way, of the Johannine approach – start with his divinity and somehow work out his humanity; instead, theology, Christology from below starts with his humanity and finds revealed there his divinity. You know, simply. But it does focus us in a different way on his life. You know the creeds, our basic creeds: Born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate. What's the gap? His life. So, you know, whoa. Follow his life and as soon as we do that we find out just how political he was and all of a sudden we start reading with new eyes that he was trying to change the three important institutions of his religion: the Sabbath, the Temple, and the way they were reading the Torah, and so on. So I think that's important to understand, that there was a shift in mentality in the last couple decades.

The other shift has been the way we read scriptures, and so many people worked on that. You know Bernard Häring, probably the greatest moral theologian in the last century. He was sent to study moral theology and he couldn't stand the thought to just be thinking about sex all the time, he regretted that all through his life. But they said to him, the way moral theology is taught in seminaries, you can make a difference, you can bring scripture in, not just natural law thinking. And you know in his book, *The Law of Christ*, he did just that. And so a whole different way of reading the scriptures has come to us as a gift from a number of different people.

Sr. Sandra Schneiders, a wonderful biblical scholar. In 1983 she wrote a prescient article on reading scriptures for the sake of moral theology. It was in a book on, right after the bishops,

commenting on the bishops' letter from the United States. And she said every classic text is not limited to the meaning the author put into it. Every classic text, especially scripture, is meant to be read in the light of the signs of the times, and when you do that, all new meanings jump out at you. Well, we've had that phenomenal sign of the times called Mahatma Gandhi. And we came to see how effective, amazing, nonviolent action was. And people began reading scriptures in that light. For a long time, moral theologians or ethicists were afraid to be criticized for being fundamentalists and so they depended on reason and the natural law theory. John Courtney Murray, a great leader of religious freedom, talked about the way that the Gospels don't tell us anything about war and violence, because they were just, they did not want to be biblicists until they learned a new fancy word – hermeneutic – of reading the scriptures in the light of the signs of the times. So, we're inheriting a lot of wonderful work that precedes us.

Thanks.

Sr. Wamuyu Wachira: Good afternoon. Good afternoon.

Audience: Good afternoon.

Sr. Wamuyu Wachira: How are you? In Kenya, we say, "Jambo."

Audience: Jambo.

Sr. Wamuyu Wachira: [speaks in Swahili]

I would like first to thank the committee for inviting me. I was like a last-born. I got the visa just a few hours before I flew here. So, it was very hectic, but I thank God that I managed to come. First of all, I would also like to appreciate someone here in our midst, Valerie Flessati, she's sitting there. I am here really because of her, because she was my supervisor for my master's and she's the one who gave me that courage to actually speak. I was a very shy student in terms of going out there and making a statement. I knew what I wanted, but I had no courage to speak. But she said, look, you have a lot to offer, go out there and make a difference in Kenya.

I'm [inaudible] from Kenya and have been an educationist for over 30 years, and I would like just to give a background about education in Kenya, very briefly, so that you understand where I'm coming from. In Kenya schools are very different from other schools, I think, in the world. Because our students are in a culture where children are to be seen but they are not heard. And so it becomes very difficult if the young people have something to say. The teachers, they still operate on a model of, you know, the teacher is the know-it-all and the students are to love him for the education they are getting. So when the student asks a question, the teacher feels confronted, therefore he takes it as lack of respect in most of the schools. We have exceptions to the rule. But the majority of schools are still operating from an old model of teaching.

And this is where I come in, that in the schools where I have been, I have tried to ask myself questions -- how can I make a difference as an educationist? And it was in 2001 that history will

begun when 69 students were burned to death by their fellow students in a hostel because they tried to speak and they had no opportunity or they had no base to speak, therefore, they targeted the other students so that they would be heard. After that, the violence continued. There was a time, some girls were raped by boys in the neighboring school and the Deputy Principal, who was meant to be protecting them, when she was asked about, to explain what happened, she said that the boys meant no harm, they only wanted to rape. That was her reaction.

Then in 2007, you are aware of what happened to Kenya, the post-election violence. The same thing, students went on a rampage, they burned their schools, a boy was killed and so on and it's continuing. That when students are [inaudible] they end up using violence. And I began to question myself, "Why is this happening?" And I feel there is something wrong. Students don't normally kill each other. They can kill a Head, they can kill other teachers, but not their own colleagues. And I decided I was going to do a Ph.D. with a difference not so much from the academic level, but I wanted to understand where is this violence coming from. So I took time off and I went to the University of Bradford, and I did my Ph.D. And I said I was going to speak to the students themselves, I was going to listen to their narratives in order to find out why this [was] happening. So I used what you call "grounded theory," so I went to the field without a theory. Often you go with a theory and then you try to prove it. I went without a theory because I was interested to get the theory from the students. And I did get the theory because from their students' narratives I was able to find out that there is systematic violence in the school. And to deal with systematic violence in the school, we cannot deal it from an adult point of view. It has to be dealt with from the students themselves. It means the students have to be given a voice and that's the challenge I'm having right now. How do we allow the students to speak? And a lot of students said, "For the first time we have had a researcher who has listened to us. We now know that our voices are going to be heard."

And that's what I'm doing right now. I'm telling the students, go ahead, keep speaking, but use the different way, the way of nonviolence. And I think I'm making headway because I'm now lecturing at a university and some of these young people are at the university because I'm teaching across board. I have police officers in the classes, I have soldiers, and I'm speaking the same language to them. I'm saying, you can make a difference. But the police officers are asking me, "How do I make a difference when my boss wants me to be corrupt? How do I make a difference?" And I'm saying, you keep doing the right thing and this is how change is going to come. I believe that nonviolence is not something that we can teach in a class because learning is only effective when it is caught. So in Kenya we tend to de-contextualize the schools from the society. And what I'm saying is that we need to change the society for the schools to change, because they are part of the society. So if there is, if we change the violence in the society then I believe the schools are going to change. And that's what I am saying. Of course, it is a bitter pill for those involved, they are fighting it in the court. I remember that I am bringing in a culture that's not African culture. I believe nonviolence has no culture and therefore we can only follow Jesus Christ's teaching and I'll continue speaking that language that we can only

teach through our actions. So I'm talking to parents and I'm saying your child will learn nonviolence from what you do, it's not what you teach, it's not what you tell them.

Thank you.

Ken Butigan: We want to thank all of our initial reflectors and everyone. Let's take a moment before we go off to break, let's take a moment of silence, if we would. These reflections on Jesus, on nonviolence, on Gospel nonviolence, let's take a moment and let begin to settle within our spirit some of the key things that we're taking away from our time this afternoon.

[Pause]

Let's have a round of applause for all who shared their wisdom. We are now going to take a break until 4:15. And so at 4:15, please go in to your small groups and we'll see you then. There's some coffee and refreshments.