

Instruments of Reconciliation

A national campaign to amplify active nonviolence in the U.S. Catholic Church

Blessed Paul VI, in the first World Day of Peace Message, boldly declared “Peace is the only true direction of human progress.”

Fifty years later, Pope Francis claimed, “Whoever accepts the Good News of Jesus is able to acknowledge the violence within and be healed by God’s mercy, becoming in turn an instrument of reconciliation.” (50th World Day of Peace, para. 3).

The Nonviolence and Just Peace conference, held in Rome in April 2016, issued an “[Appeal to the Catholic Church to re-commit to the centrality of Gospel nonviolence](#).” Many organizations – Conference of Catholic Bishops of Japan, the Justice and Peace Commission of the global leaders of Catholic religious orders (USG/USIG), the U.S. Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM), the U.S. Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), and the United States Catholic Mission Association (USCMA) to name just a few – have endorsed the appeal. “The time has come for our Church to be a living witness and to invest far greater human and financial resources in promoting a spirituality and practice of active nonviolence and in forming and training our Catholic communities in effective nonviolent practices. In all of this, Jesus is our inspiration and model.”

During the past couple of months, Catholics in the U.S. sent letters to their bishops to share their hope for greater teaching and commitment to active nonviolence and to invite him to affirm active nonviolence as the nucleus of the Christian revolution by 1) sharing and speaking about Pope Francis’ World Day of Peace message broadly within their diocese, seminaries, and other ministries, and 2) concretely committing to an initiative to scale-up practices of active nonviolence.

We ask that you continue this letter-writing campaign in July, specifically on the dates shown below.

[PLEASE REPORT YOUR ACTION HERE](#)

As Pope Benedict wrote, “For Christians, nonviolence is not merely tactical behavior but a person’s way of being, the attitude of one who is so convinced of God’s love and power that he or she is not afraid to tackle evil with the weapons of love and truth alone. Love of one’s enemy constitutes the nucleus of the ‘Christian revolution.’”

In a time when violence continues to dominate our families, our neighborhoods, and our cities – and violence is increasingly becoming the way our country deals with conflict – we want our bishops to know there are voices for active nonviolence within his diocese. We want to encourage him to embrace Pope Francis’ call to active nonviolence. We want to support him in his efforts to respond to the Holy Father, who pledged the assistance of the church in “every effort to build peace through active and creative nonviolence.”

We expect the bishops of the United States of America to receive more than 10,000 letters encouraging them to bold teaching and practice of active nonviolence—and committing ourselves to do the same.

A call to action

- 1) Write your bishop, using the sample letter. Share with him, as your Shepherd in the Lord, your call for a greater commitment to active nonviolence. Individual hard copy letters mailed directly to the bishop are more powerful than form letters, emails, or one letter signed by many. (Let us know you sent a letter by [filling out this brief form here.](#))

Some dates that may serve the campaign well for letters reaching your bishop:

- July 6: birthday of the 14th Dalai Lama (Tenzin Gyatso), spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhists and active proponent of nonviolence
- July 7: birthday of Sr. Dorothy Stang, SNDdeN, martyred for protecting the Amazon's land and indigenous people.
- July 18: birthday of Nelson Mandela, who abandoned violence and embraced nonviolence; endured decades of imprisonment for his political stance; and helped end apartheid rule and enabled the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa
- July 22: Feast of St. Mary Magdalene, first to testify to resurrection
- July 30: World Day Against Trafficking in Persons

Additional ideas

- 2) Share with your friends and family your aspiration to active nonviolence. The links to Pope Francis' 50th [World Day of Peace Message](#) and the "[Appeal to the Catholic Church to re-commit to the centrality of Gospel nonviolence](#)" from the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative, which is a project of Pax Christi International, are helpful resources to pray with and share with others.
- 3) Post on your Facebook page – or through other social media – your commitment to active nonviolence.
- 4) Form a study group in your parish to prayerfully consider what a commitment to active nonviolence means and where, in your neighborhood, it would help build peace.

Focused efforts

Some dioceses – such as the Archdiocese of Chicago – are already experimenting with a commitment to a culture of nonviolence and practical steps to greater active nonviolence to address crime and tensions within the diocese. Pope Francis wrote them a [letter of encouragement](#).

Staying connected

Please join the global Catholic Nonviolence Initiative [on Facebook](#) to receive updates on how Catholics around the world are responding to Pope Francis' leadership and recommitting to the centrality of active Gospel nonviolence.