

# Nonviolence: Power for Justice and Peace Workshop/Retreat

In his 2017 World Day of Peace message, Pope Francis called for nonviolence to  
*“become the hallmark of our decisions, our relationships and our actions,  
and indeed of political life in all its forms.”*

If you are ready to learn what this often-misunderstood concept is all about, and the hope it offers a tired, warring world, you are invited to spend a day with us, immersed in the spirituality and practice of nonviolent action. This is designed as a highly interactive six-hour workshop or retreat.

Participants will have the opportunity to:

- Learn key parts of the history of Church teaching on peace and war up to the present moment, emphasizing the current teaching on nonviolence
- Relate the concept of nonviolence to their personal and communal spiritual growth
- Understand how nonviolent action can forge a realistic path from the Sermon on the Mount, through the harsh realities of a violent world, to the reign of God among us.
- Begin, on a personal and community level, to use nonviolent power to create the relationships and the world we seek.



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Workshop facilitated by Laurie Gagne, PhD, and John Reuwer, MD, adjunct professors of theology, peace and justice, and conflict resolution at Saint Michael’s College, Colchester, Vermont. Both are long time activists involved with conflict in Central America, Congo, Colombia, the Middle East, and most recently addressing violence in urban America.

*\*This workshop will use a Catholic Nonviolence Initiative retreat format created by Laurie and John, and is intended to help advance the CNI, [www.nonviolencejustpeace.net](http://www.nonviolencejustpeace.net). For more information or to schedule a retreat at your facility, contact us at [lgagne@smcvt.edu](mailto:lgagne@smcvt.edu) or [jfreuwer@aol.com](mailto:jfreuwer@aol.com)*

# **Nonviolence: Power for peace and justice**

*Workshop outline*

**Offered by Laurie Gagne, Ph.D., and John Reuwer, MD**

A day of immersion in the spirituality and practice of nonviolent action, to learn more about Pope Francis's call for nonviolence to "become the hallmark of our decisions, our relationships and our actions, and indeed, of political life in all its forms." (2017 World Day of Peace message)

## **Introductions and opening reflection (15 minutes)**

*Worksheets for notes and reflections*

Video – *Meditation on Jesus in the Garden*

## **Part one: Catholic teaching on war and peace: The New Moment (30 minutes)**

- I. Timeline
- II. Just War Theory
- III. The New Moment

## **Part two: The Love that drives out fear (90 minutes including break)**

- I. Discovering the Love — enkindling of the divine spark

*Characteristics of the divine spark:*

- A. Detachment
- B. Acceptance of the "other"
- C. Acceptance of the enemy

*Reflection and sharing*

- II. Incarnating the Love – from divine spark to divine passion

*Characteristics of divine passion:*

- A. Inclusive
- B. Aligned with the truth
- C. Opens us to the unknown
- D. Leaves us vulnerable

*Reflection and sharing*

**Lunch** (45-60 minutes)

**Meditation: *Lament***

### **Part three: Nonviolence in real life: What does it look like? (90 minutes)**

#### I. Conflict in perspective

- A. Definitions of violence and nonviolence, conflict and peace
- B. How conflict can be a good thing
- C. Understanding the many forms of nonviolence

#### II. Nonviolent action around the globe: What makes it powerful?

- A. Where our faith in violence comes from
- B. A look at the theory and practice of nonviolent action through history and contemporary conflicts
- C. Leveling the playing field for violence and nonviolence
- D. Barriers to adopting nonviolence
- E. Visualizing how it works *video(s)*

#### III. Question and answer

IV. How might we begin to overcome the barriers to nonviolent action in our social and political life? *Discussion*

**Break** (15 minutes)

### **Part four: Going forth in the spirit of nonviolence: Becoming nonviolent peacemakers (60 minutes)**

#### I. Understanding the Third Side in conflict

*Individual reflection and sharing*

#### II. How can we be effective at these roles in our community?

*Small group activity*

#### III. How can we be effective at these roles in the wider world?

*Small group activity*

*Contact Laurie Gagne ([lgagne@smcvt.edu](mailto:lgagne@smcvt.edu)) and John Reuwer ([jfreuwer@aol.com](mailto:jfreuwer@aol.com)) for more information.*