

**Nonviolence and Just Peace:  
A moral framework for Catholic theology in the context of a violent world  
Catholic Nonviolence Initiative roundtable #3**

*I give you a new commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. (Gospel of John 13:34)*

*It is our clear duty, therefore, to strain every muscle in working for the time when all war can be completely outlawed by international consent .... Since peace must be born of mutual trust between nations and not be imposed on them through a fear of the available weapons, everyone must labor to put an end at last to the arms race, and to make a true beginning of disarmament, not unilaterally indeed, but proceeding at an equal pace according to agreement, and backed up by true and workable safeguards. (Gaudium et Spes No. 81)*

*I pledge the assistance of the Church in every effort to build peace through active and creative nonviolence.  
(Nonviolence: A Style of Politics for Peace, Pope Francis WDP 2017)*

*The Christian has no choice but to defend peace, properly understood, against aggression. This is an inalienable obligation. It is the how of defending peace which offers moral options.  
(Challenge of Peace, 1983 Pastoral Letter, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops #73)*

## Introduction

The mission of the Church is to draw people to a loving relationship with God by illuminating God's way in the person of Jesus and inviting the community to live in the presence of the Holy Spirit. This calls the Church to be a sacrament of our ultimate unity as children of God and with all creation. In doing so, the Church reads the "signs of the times" (Gaudium et spes #4), situating its narrative in both time and space, recognising human evolution and the different contexts of an incarnated and inter-inculturated Church, and validating its unfolding tradition and teaching through the lived experience of the people.

The new moral framework that this paper proposes will support the creation and promotion of nonviolent alternatives, creative approaches, and effective strategies to transform violence and injustice. It will encourage major investment in nonviolent options and a deep commitment to their development as viable tools for conflict prevention, resolution, and transformation.

## Signs of the Times

Three interconnected dynamics present a God-given opportunity to advance a vision of nonviolence and just peace.

First, we still live in a world marred by wars and other armed conflicts, but there are signs that the human race can make armed conflict and violence increasingly rare and even end war. Although the trends rise and fall from year to year, the data show that humanity is in the midst of a long-term decline in the number of armed conflicts and the deaths they cause. This decline of war has been accompanied by greater global wisdom about peace and the power of nonviolence. Concepts from non-western cultures, such as ubuntu in Africa ("I am because we are"; "a person is a person through other persons"; the primacy of relationships), are providing new insights into human interconnectedness. These join traditional Catholic teaching on the absolute dignity of every person; the common good; the "pure relationality" of the Trinity as the ultimate "model" of human solidarity (Benedict XVI, *Caritas in veritate* #54); and a theology of oneness with its cosmic

implications in grounding and projecting a sublime mode of peaceful coexistence, communion, and the fullness of unity.

We are becoming more aware of the long-term self-perpetuating destructive impact of violence, even where it appeared to achieve some limited short-term success. People in nations recently-liberated from colonial rule or repressive regimes, while not repudiating their liberation struggles, are beginning to interrogate the methods used, and even to ask whether the end result is really the “liberation” for which they made such enormous sacrifices; is it a just peace?

At the same time, successful nonviolent change, from the demise of the Marcos dictatorship in the Philippines and the mostly peaceful dissolution of the Soviet bloc, to successful recent movements targeting corruption in Guatemala and Burkina Faso, has demonstrated the efficacy of nonviolent action. The global data on nonviolent civil resistance movements reveal that nonviolent campaigns have been twice as effective as armed methods in accomplishing stated political objectives. Citizen-led initiatives such as boycotts and disinvestment by pension funds, trade (labor) unions, ethically-oriented banks, and churches have proved effective at both local and international levels. Awareness is increasing that there are better options than violence, and more resources are being invested in this concept.

Second, while there are many signs of hope, the world is less peaceful today than at any time in the last decade.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the experience of total war in the 20th century, the threat of a nuclear apocalypse, and the fact that civilians have increasingly been the main victims of war with gross violations of human rights in war zones, massive forced migrations, human trafficking, and the victimization of children fleeing conflict areas, have led the Church to be deeply skeptical of the ability of modern war to meet just war criteria. Since the mid-twentieth century, the popes have not justified any specific use of military force, and instead have put focus on and moral weight behind nonviolent strategies to transform conflict and bring just peace. In the past 25 years bishops’ conferences, including in Germany, Japan, and South Sudan, also have emphasized the need to focus on nonviolent options.<sup>2</sup>

“Countering violence with violence leads at best to forced migrations and enormous suffering, because vast amounts of resources are diverted to military ends and away from the everyday needs of young people, families experiencing hardship, the elderly, the infirm and the great majority of people in our world. At worst, it can lead to the death, physical and spiritual, of many people, if not of all.” (Pope Francis, *WDP* 2017) Even more, “war always does grave harm to the environment.” (Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, 2015)

Third, the nature of the warfare that does still plague the world makes overcoming it with alternatives especially pressing. Too often the idea that war might be just leads to structural violence in the form of massive preparations for war, a weapons industry, and an arms race for the latest destructive technology. The training of individuals to kill, the cultivation of political support for war, and the development of a culture of violence are themselves making violence more likely. As military technology develops, the potential destructiveness of war and the ease with which the world moves toward war continue to grow. UAVs and robotics, for example, have the potential to

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<sup>1</sup> 2018 Global Peace Index <http://visionofhumanity.org/app/uploads/2018/06/Global-Peace-Index-2018-Snapshot.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Bishops, *Harvest of Justice*(1993), Japanese Bishops on Article 9 (2014), German Bishops on Just Peace (2000), South Sudan Bishops Conference (June 2016)

make state killing more likely and widespread, as risk to the lives of soldiers is reduced. The recent use of chemical weapons reminds us once again of the terrible shadow weapons of mass destruction cast over humanity, despite long-standing opposition by the Church and much of the international community. The arms trade in conventional weapons continues to flood conflict zones and beyond with the tools of war, leading Pope Francis to ask, “Do we really want peace? Then let’s ban all weapons so we don’t have to live in fear of war” (Pontifex tweet, 29 April 2018).

While most of war’s decline has been driven by the increasing rarity of wars between separate nation states, many parts of the world are still plagued by internal conflicts, which last for decades, destroy the infrastructure and economy of countries or communities that are already impoverished, and create multi-generational suffering for civilians. These wars frequently involve non-state actors, interventions by outside powers, and “terrorist” tactics used by all sides, while lines between civilians and soldiers are disappearing. In many places not officially “at war,” gangs, organized crime, and militarised security have made wars at a neighborhood level painfully real. The spread of drone technology is likely to exacerbate this trend.

Society and indeed people's very souls are becoming militarised; even humanitarian issues such as refugees are being redefined as “security” concerns and addressed by militarised means. Social media often plays a negative role in exacerbating hatred and violence. In such wars, the categories of the just war tradition seem increasingly irrelevant and an alternative approach increasingly necessary.

These signs of our times offer a Kairos moment for the Catholic Church, as institution and people of God, to reflect upon and recommit to the centrality of Gospel nonviolence and just peace.

#### Objective of this Roundtable: A Renewed Moral Framework

Consistent with Vatican II’s call to “undertake an evaluation of war with an entirely new attitude,” (Gaudium et spes No 80), the reflection that follows seeks to identify essential characteristics of a renewed moral framework for responding to the violence and injustice of our times - one that nurtures a worldview, a spirituality, and a practice of nonviolence. This framework should help the institutional Catholic Church devote its considerable moral, ecclesial, structural, political, and financial resources to end the practice of violent conflict and other forms of social or environmental violence as part of the process of fostering nonviolence and shifting to an integral or just peace approach. We recognise that this framework must be capable of being expressed, understood, and implemented flexibly in different cultures and contexts.

By this initiative, we hope to refocus the evangelizing energy of the Church on nonviolence and just peace. We attempt to do so in a pastoral manner that listens to the experiences and voices of people on the ground in conflict situations, in multiple cultural and societal conflicts that may understand words and concepts differently, respecting and centering the unique voices of women and the experiences and wisdom of those on the margins, learning from them and creating a conversation which draws from the riches of all these sources.

Too often, the Church’s rich teaching on peace is obscured by a reactive approach to particular conflicts in which “just war” is at the center -- and is often misused to justify rather than oppose or severely restrict resort to lethal force. Instead, conflict transformation requires boldly placing

nonviolent approaches to building and sustaining peace at the center of Church teaching. At the same time, even as it emphasizes the urgent need to promote an ethic of nonviolence and just peace, the renewed moral framework draws insights from all Catholic ethical traditions related to peace and conflict.

Participants in this roundtable hold differing views on the continuing validity of the just war tradition, differences our dialogue has clarified but not resolved. Our purpose, then, is neither to sanction nor reject the just war tradition. Indeed, we hope the moral framework we articulate here provides an invitation for ongoing dialogue among those with a range of positions on traditional just war principles, especially by situating such dialogue and related moral discernment within a larger set of superseding and constant moral commitments and norms that make violence much less likely and strenuously promote the elimination of war. This is why our core emphasis is on expanding and reinforcing the growing importance of nonviolence and peacebuilding in Catholic teaching, including redoubling efforts to scale up nonviolent strategies for the prevention of violent conflict, protection of lives amid violent conflict and conflict transformation.

A renewed moral framework would enable the language of the institutional Church as a moral authority to be more consistent with the nonviolent creativity of the Gospel, while its programming, pedagogy, including the Scriptural passages chosen for liturgies, and witness would better reflect Jesus' method of socially creative transforming initiatives that break vicious cycles of violence. In turn, a moral framework built on nonviolence and just peace would better illuminate the sacred dignity of all persons and creation.

### An Ethic of Nonviolence and Just Peace

Our goal is a just peace, consisting in political cooperation for the common good, respect for the dignity of all persons and the natural world, pre-empting violence before it begins, and the transformation of violent conflict by nonviolent strategies. To accomplish a dynamic and generative just peace has always been the defining goal of the Catholic social vision. While peace is the comprehensive and ultimate political goal, justice is not only necessary, but interdependent with peace. Justice is incompatible with the existence of violence; while peace is incompatible with the existence of injustice. This idea is captured well by Paul VI when he says, "If you want peace, work for justice" (World Day of Peace Message, 1972), and Pope Francis when he says, "justice never comes from killing" ("No Matter what the Crime," in Catholic News Agency, Mar. 20, 2015).

Based on a strong commitment to peace and a realistic understanding of the nature of war, we propose an ethic of nonviolence and just peace that includes a set of contextually relevant practices for preventing destructive conflict and violence, protecting vulnerable people, and promoting sustainable peace founded on respect for life and nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace and reconciliation. A narrative of nonviolence and just peace does not negate the reality of past narratives but rather reads the signs of the times and advances Catholic teaching to move into the future. The movement from just war to nonviolence and just peace is not a rejection of the intent of earlier teachings, but a recognition that we have advanced to a stage where we can see that nonviolent approaches are better able to achieve just peace. The Church recognises that knowledge grows and evolves. Tools and technology have developed to an extent that no war could be considered "just." A new narrative is essential, even as we learn from the past.

This renewed narrative promotes a just and sustainable peace, and is based on a contemporary appropriation of Jesus' ministry, embodied in a community of love, compassion, mercy, and forgiveness--which transforms conflict and excludes violence, yet not only permits but demands active nonviolent resistance to injustice. Called to be the sacrament of salvation and human unity (Lumen gentium #1; Gaudium et spes #45), the Church fulfills that calling when it faithfully lives as just such a community. Nonviolence is both a way of life and a set of actions. This commitment to nonviolent love is expressed by Pope Francis when he says, "May charity and nonviolence govern how we treat each other as individuals, within society and in international life," as well as "To be true followers of Jesus today also includes embracing his teaching about nonviolence." (World Day of Peace Message, 2017)

We affirm and call for a return to the practice of active nonviolence at the heart of the Catholic Church in order to engage the institutional Church in worldwide efforts to end all forms of violence - armed, direct, structural, cultural, ecological - and war as a human institution and to elevate effective nonviolent alternatives. We commit to becoming more nonviolent ourselves and to using nonviolent strategies for responding to injustices, developing societies, and transforming conflict. As John Paul II proclaimed at Drogheda Ireland in 1979, "Violence destroys what it claims to defend: the dignity, the life, the freedom of human beings. Violence is a crime against humanity, for it destroys the very fabric of society" (no. 9). This is why in his 2017 World Day of Peace Message, Pope Francis called for nonviolence as "a style of politics for peace."

### Positive and Active Peace

The just peace we seek is a positive and active peace, which Jesus Christ, the Prince and Author of Peace taught and practiced. "Peace I bequeath to you, my own peace I give you, a peace which the world cannot give" (John 14:27) Peace is not the absence of conflict but the *presence* of creative processes by which human communities become ever-more skillful and habituated at working through their conflicts without recourse to violence and without demeaning one another's dignity. Christians, who by their baptism follow him as disciples, are called to be - and are blessed when they are - peacemakers, for this is a constitutive part of their being "called children of God" (Matthew 5:9). For we are called, "not to return evil for evil, or insult for insult, but instead to give blessing" (1 Peter 3:19). Just peace is not merely the absence of destructive conflict, violence and war. Nor is it achieved through passive withdrawal or abdication of moral responsibility.

The Sermon on the Mount grounds and guides the Church's public engagement on the difficult path to peace in a troubled world, as Pope Francis has affirmed by calling it the Church's "manual" for peacemaking at every level of human society (WDP 2017). While affirming the people's *traditional righteousness* as far as it went, Jesus consistently diagnosed the *vicious cycles* of violence from which it could not free them and which it too often perpetuated, and thus, Jesus graciously offered *transforming initiatives* to empower the people to take the creative nonviolent risks to strengthen human solidarity.

Nonviolence is not the (negative) refusal to do harm. It is (positive) reverence for life anchored in the absolute, innate dignity of every human person and all of creation.. It is more than the absence of violence; it is the interjection of a transformative force into circumstances of violence. It is the power of love in action, the path to fuller truth, a spirituality, a distinct virtue, a way of life, an effective methodology for challenging all forms of direct, structural, and cultural violence, as well as for protecting all people and the earth. It is a set of tools, methods, and norms for preventing

violence, actively making peace, and advancing post-conflict reconciliation, reconstruction, and sustainable peace. This more adequate and fuller understanding of nonviolence goes beyond pacifism, which is often understood merely as a rule against violence, by challenging us to become better people and societies in engaging conflict.

### Transforming Initiatives and Sustaining Integral Peace

Recognizing the interconnected roots of violence, social and economic injustice, poverty and ecological destruction, as well as the critical need for systemic and structural transformation, Catholic social teaching describes a nonviolent way of life that leads to a renewable, sustainable dynamic of just peace -- *integral peace*. Following the example of Jesus, the Catholic Church will promote the understanding and development of effective nonviolent strategies – *transforming initiatives* - for preventing violence, protecting vulnerable people, and promoting cultures of just peace. Pope Francis' insistence that "time is greater than space" and that "unity prevails over conflict" implies that we should take time to imagine the best possible ways to transform a given conflict oriented by, and consistent with, a just peace. As Christians, we also recognize the eternal aspect of time. This helps clarify the role of the Church. It also helps determine our action choices and how we measure both the fruit and costs of action.

Given the reality of violence, including extreme violence, the Catholic Church calls for an immediate and long-term commitment to *sustaining* peace – to applying on a consistent basis in every country the lessons we have learned about what makes for enduring peace. This includes preventative measures that address the root causes of conflict, support for those who challenge injustices nonviolently, and active approaches for de-escalating destructive conflict, cultivating reconciliation, transforming patterns of perception and behavior, and cultivating conversion.

We enter into, practice, and rehearse such peace during worship, especially the Eucharist, including prayers, blessings, and gestures all directed toward peace. For Catholics, the nourishing act of receiving the Eucharist in communion and the simple gesture of passing the peace should encourage us to become nonviolent peacemakers, going in peace to love and serve, and perhaps suffer, in a world that is redeemed and graced by the inbreaking reign of God, yet stifles the bold actions of peacemakers that flow from God's redemption.

### Church's Approach to Difficult Ethical Decisions

We recognize that moral ambiguities and difficult compromises will be involved as we attempt to address complex, violent, sinful situations, and that there may not be a single template which covers all eventualities. We are challenged to consider a kind of realism without militarism based on Pope Francis' insistence that realities are more important than ideas. While differences exist about how to best promote flourishing human communities as part of a well-ordered creation and defend it against violence, we have a common commitment to significantly scaling-up nonviolent practices, institutions, and cultures, as well as a recognition that the Church can make a significant contribution to those ends.

In approaching ethical decisions on conflict, war and peace, the Church will:

- *humbly recognize its own complicity in a violent world, seeking forgiveness for its participation in Crusade and Conquest, for the Doctrine of Discovery, for the institutionalized violence of patriarchy, the marginalization of women, frequent indifference to domestic and gender-based violence, the violence of sexual abuse and its cover-up, and for failing too often to denounce repression and militarism, direct and institutionalized violence.*
- *accompany persons who are poor, powerless, and marginalized, protecting and acting in solidarity with the most vulnerable communities and transforming the unjust institutions which make them vulnerable into just institutions recognizing their dignity. Accompaniment must be a two-way process, not a dynamic of the “privileged/developed” accompanying the “under-privileged/under-developed”.*
- *employ diplomatic power and legislative influence to provide an ethical framework to engage governments or world powers; suggesting procedures for limiting and ending war and violence at whatever level; encouraging just, integral peace, and nonviolence; and discouraging war as a tool of statecraft in favor of effective nonviolent alternatives.*
- *be pastoral, not letting a concern with abstract moral principles alone crowd out the fundamental importance of witness; questioning and calling out unjust or violent public policies and practices without condemning persons; recognizing that active nonviolence, ranging from skillful dialogue to nonviolent civil resistance and just peace practices are powerful alternatives to violence, increasingly realizable and consistent with the Gospel.*
- *offer normative guidelines for transforming conflict; preventing war and other expressions of violence; and defusing existing violence, which are crucial to the moral framework we are attempting to articulate. In addition, a renewed moral framework should include norms that would seek to limit or outlaw the production and distribution of weapons, weapons systems, and ammunition, and shift investments to nonviolent approaches and technologies.*

We call the whole Church to share this focus and energy, to no longer speak of wars as “just,” and to dedicate resources anew to creative, nonviolent approaches to transforming conflict; preventing or stopping the many violences in our world; and promoting cultures of just peace.

### A Moral Framework for Nonviolence and Just Peace

The focus and goal of this renewed moral framework should be on the potential for a given strategy to be conducive to building just and sustainable peace. Thus, in adopting a just peace moral framework inspired by the virtues and transformative practices in the Gospels, the Church would promote moral guidelines for public action that extend Catholic social teaching and its vision of human thriving through reconciling relationship, while drawing on the growing body of knowledge about what actually makes for just and integral peace; on the rich diversity of nonviolence and just peace experiences found in different cultures and societies; and on norms that Catholic thinkers and diplomats have helped to embed into international human rights and humanitarian law.

A just peace moral framework will in many ways recapitulate Catholic social teaching as a whole, while emphasizing active, strategic, nonviolent approaches, which include, but are not limited to, both nonviolent civil resistance and peacebuilding. As such it will inevitably be more expansive than either pacifism or the just war tradition, the two major traditions of Christian discernment that have sought to resist and restrict war and violence through many centuries.

Moral philosophers and theologians note that negative moral norms are easier to delineate with precision than positive moral norms because they mark the outer boundaries of what a community may permit. Both pacifism and the just war tradition, each in its own way, mostly name negative norms and thus can summarize their criteria succinctly. In contrast, positive norms are virtually infinite and thus require generalization, for they guide and point to all the activities by which all members of the human community build healthy lives and relationships according to their concept of the good. While including negative norms in order to rule out acts that always undermine human thriving, a just peace framework will place far more emphasis on positive norms, which require countless positive actions to create the conditions for peace.

Although a just peace framework is necessarily expansive, wide reflection by Christians about the social conditions and priority practices that nurture just, integral peace - informed by findings from the maturing fields of peace studies and peacebuilding - yields an emerging set of patterns that are amenable to summary.

In continuity with Jesus's teaching of transforming initiatives in the Sermon on the Mount, we propose three categories of just peace norms for (1) preparing for and working through the inevitable conflicts in human societies (*jus in conflictione*), (2) exiting vicious cycles of violence (*jus ex bello*), and (3) building sustainable peace (*jus ad pacem*). Threading through and uniting all three categories are a set of assumptions that strengthen each other like a braid:

- Just, integral peace expects human beings to thrive when ends and means are closely integrated, such that the means chosen in the pursuit of ends are consonant with or reflect those ends. This may be called the principle of reflexivity. The very term "just peace" responds to this principle: A social order will be truly peaceful only to the degree that it is just; the pursuit of justice will sow new seeds of injustice unless done through peaceful means.
- Achieving a just, integral, sustaining peace requires constant attention to the root causes of violent discord and to the social conditions that make for peace. Insofar as a nonviolence and just peace framework addresses the root causes of war and social injustice, while recognizing the interconnectivity of all creatures (as Pope Francis emphasizes) and "attending to the requirements of relationship" (as Cardinal Peter Turkson has defined justice), it is simply being realistic insofar as it rejects simplistic solutions that make violence deceptively tempting. Chief among the root causes of violence in the modern world are the pathologies of poverty, inequality, oppression, domination, environmental degradation, alienation, and marginalization, often facilitated through power structures shaped by cultures of patriarchy and the dehumanization of marginal groups.
- While the category of *jus ex bello* names explicit strategies for escaping vicious cycles, all just peace practices benefit from diagnosing these cycles, and can be understood as transforming initiatives, which are transformative precisely because they resist the temptation to counter the root causes of injustice through incongruent means, and instead seek to "overcome evil through good" (Rom. 12:21).
- A powerful contribution of these norms is that they apply at all stages of conflict. The categories can also overlap in time and space.

Among the many positive human actions that constitute "the things that make for peace" (Luke 19:42), then, a "nonviolence and just peace moral framework" will insist that the following practices

are morally normative. In other words, while a diversity of gifts, talents, and vocations may lead different people to prioritize their own practices and strategies of action according to their differing historical contexts, they should choose actions that consistently enhance and never obstruct the moral norms that these embody.<sup>3</sup>

1. ***Jus in conflictione*** (*preparing for and working through the inevitable conflicts in human societies*) - as believers, citizens, and communities, develop the virtues and skillsets to be able to transform conflict and work for integral peace:

- Nurture spiritual practices of prayer, contemplation, study of nonviolence, and Eucharistic participation to sustain nonviolence as a spirituality and way of life.
- Cultivate virtuous dispositions and habits of mercy, compassion, empathy, forgiveness, humility, hospitality, solidarity, courage, transparency, integrity, truth-telling, justice, and nonviolent peacemaking.
- Control rumors as an antidote to fear and to the lies of violence and war.
- Develop participatory processes for discernment and decision-making at every level, from family to community to social movements and institutions to body politic, giving particular attention to those most affected by violence and in need of empowerment, such as women, youth, those with special physical needs, and minorities.
- Deepen capacities for social analysis of the root causes of violence. Re-conceptualize "strength" and "security" to decouple them from armed or military strength.
- Begin developing personal and communal understanding and skillsets for nonviolent action and conflict transformation as vocational priorities long before destructive conflict is immediate or acute.
- Build nonviolent peacemaking communities, institutions, and cultures of just peace.

Note that these norms preserve and deepen the traditional criterion of right intention associated with the just war tradition by requiring deliberate formation of habituated intention and the skillsets needed to carry out right intention effectively.

2. ***Jus ex bello*** (*escaping vicious cycles of violence*) - with courage and creativity, seek every opportunity to practice transforming initiatives that break cycles of destructive conflict or violence through strategies that "overcome evil with good" by aligning means with ends:

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<sup>3</sup> The categories that follow draw on a synthesis of recent efforts to articulate just-peace ethics, especially: Rose Marie Berger, "No Longer Legitimizing War: Christians and Just Peace," Nonviolence and Just Peace Conference (Rome, 2016), [https://nonviolencejustpeacedotnet.files.wordpress.com/2016/05/no\\_longer\\_legitimizing\\_war.pdf](https://nonviolencejustpeacedotnet.files.wordpress.com/2016/05/no_longer_legitimizing_war.pdf); Maryann Cusimano Love, "What Kind of Peace Do We Seek?: Emerging Norms of Peacebuilding in Key Political Institutions," in *Peacebuilding: Catholic Theology, Ethics, and Praxis*, ed. Robert J. Schreiter, R. Scott Appleby, and Gerard F. Powers (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2010), 56–91; Eli Sasaran McCarthy, "Called to Holiness: Integrating the Virtue of Nonviolent Peacemaking," *Journal of Catholic Social Thought* 11, no. 1 (2014): 67–92; Jarem Sawatsky, *Justpeace Ethics: A Guide to Restorative Justice and Peacebuilding*, forward by Howard Zehr (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2009); Gerald W. Schlabach, ed. and lead author, *Just Policing, not War: An Alternative Response to World Violence*, with Drew Christiansen, S.J., et al. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007); Glen Stassen, ed., *Just Peacemaking: The New Paradigm for the Ethics of Peace and War*, 3d ed. (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2008); U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, *The Harvest of Justice is Sown in Peace* (Washington D.C.: USCCB, 1993); World Council of Churches, *An Ecumenical Call to Just Peace*, Received, endorsed and commended for study, reflection, collaboration and common action during the Central Committee meetings in February 2011, Geneva, Switzerland (2011), <http://www.overcomingviolence.org/en/resources-dov/wcc-resources/documents/declarations-on-just-peace/ecumenical-call-to-just-peace.html>.

- Recognize and learn from nonviolent strategies that already exist and are rooted in local cultures, and work within local contexts with humility and respect for these practices.
- Engage in skillful dialogue, diplomacy, mediation, and negotiation.
- Utilize nonviolent direct action, especially civil resistance, protecting vulnerable communities through unarmed civilian protection and early warning systems; and working to scale up nonviolent civilian-based defense to national and international levels.
- Use methods of conflict transformation to address both immediate and root causes of destructive violence, confronting and engaging with adversaries and drawing them toward partnership.
- Take independent initiatives that cultivate trust by doing first what one wishes one's adversaries would do, step by step.
- Acknowledge responsibility for harms and injustices committed by one's own side, and courageously ask for forgiveness.
- Practice and insist upon rhetoric and narratives that re-humanize all whom violence has de-humanized, either as victims or perpetrators of violence.
- Encourage step-by-step processes of integral disarmament to reduce the fuel of arms and arms trade that make violent conflicts easier to start and harder to stop.
- Institute processes of trauma awareness, reconciliation, restorative justice, truth and reconciliation, the healing of memories and transitional justice that allow societies to confront historic wrongs and break cycles of violence while requiring accountability, reparation, and redress for victims in situations of historic and systematic human rights violations that normal judicial processes cannot handle.

Note that these norms continue to draw upon and transform traditional criteria associated with the just-war tradition by requiring just peace practitioners to determine appropriate strategies and calibrate their campaigns by insuring but going beyond noncombatant (i.e. bystander) immunity, proportionality, and probability of success, seeking to defend human dignity and restore, build and sustain healthy relationships

**3. *Jus ad pacem* (building sustainable peace)**-steadfastly commit to the long-term, on-going work of sustaining peace, which the United Nations defines as "activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict, addressing root causes, assisting parties to conflict to end hostilities, ensuring national reconciliation, and moving towards recovery, reconstruction, and development" (Security Council Resolution 2282, April 2016):

- Address the root causes of violence by recognizing institutional and systemic forms of violence, which are often hidden, and seeking to transform them.
- Promote relationality, gender justice, and reconciliation.
- Strengthen inclusive democratic political participation and a robust civil society.
- Promote environmental sustainability, human security, and ecological justice.
- Foster respect for the human dignity and rights of all, including adversaries.
- Cultivate cultures that celebrate, respect, accept, and appreciate the rich diversity of our world's cultures.
- Promote just and sustainable economies, with a focus on eliminating poverty, ensuring racial justice, reducing inequality, and serving marginalized people.
- Support just and effective governance based on the just rule of law at international, national, and subnational levels.

Note that these norms underscore and transform the traditional criteria of just cause and objectively right intention concerning ends, while focusing the criteria of proportionality and legitimate authority on the institutions, cultures, and relationships that sustain the long-term well-being of all people within environmentally healthy ecosystems. They also embody the goals of the newer *jus post bellum* category in just war theory.

As the institutional Church and the people of God, we are especially called to accompany those who are subject to direct or structural violence and to search with them for effective nonviolent methods of defense, end the violence, address root causes of the violent conflict, and build a just, sustainable peace. The work of trauma-awareness and healing, restorative justice, reconciliation, and the long-term task of sustaining peace, after all, are intrinsic to the identity of the Church as a "field hospital" and "sacrament of human salvation." The virtues, policies, and practices above are the very ones that research on armed conflict shows are associated with dramatic reductions in the instance of warfare. Central to a new moral framework is working to spread, deepen, and institutionalize these virtues, policies, and practices until the Church's vision of a world without war becomes a reality.

We invite the institutional Church to consider the norms of this renewed moral framework as serving the purposes identified in Pope Francis' 2017 WDP message.

"Peacebuilding through active nonviolence is the natural and necessary complement to the Church's continuing efforts to limit the use of force by the application of moral norms; she does so by her participation in the work of international institutions and through the competent contribution made by so many Christians to the drafting of legislation at all levels. Jesus himself offers a 'manual' for this strategy of peacemaking in the Sermon on the Mount." (Pope Francis, 2017 World Day of Peace message)

While this vision and commitment to ending war itself should become a more central focus, the reality of armed conflicts that still exist, especially in those areas of the world with chronic cycles of war, challenges the Church to ask questions such as: Under what conditions is nonviolent force morally legitimate? Under what conditions, if any, is potentially lethal force morally legitimate? Further, should the institutional Church ever endorse killing? What role do concepts and practices such as just policing, peacekeeping, or the Responsibility to Protect play in protecting all life and moving the human community away from war?

### Institutionalising Nonviolence: Just and Effective Governance

A new moral framework working toward just, sustainable, integral peace in a world "freed from the age-old slavery of war" (Gaudium et spes # 81) incorporates Catholic social teaching's long-standing commitment to more just and effective governance. A key part of building peace is building just political, social, and economic institutions - ones embedding norms of nonviolence, equity, dignity, and participation - at the international, national, and local levels. Such institutions are better able to end existing violence or armed conflicts and avoid relapses, as well as to address the underlying causes of direct violence and new wars, preventing them from starting in the first place, and creating conditions within and among countries where violence and war become increasingly inconceivable.

At the international level, this requires strengthening and deepening an overlapping web of intergovernmental organizations, nongovernmental organizations, treaty regimes, ecumenical and interfaith bodies, and civil society groups. Such institutions are able to cultivate interdependence and cooperation, norms against war, alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, and sustained diplomacy. Their influence helps build the greater global governance the Church consistently calls for, and they have proven successful in mediating existing armed conflicts and helping administer post-conflict agreements that create an enduring peace.

International actors can also help support local women and men in working for just and effective institutional governance at the national and local levels. Nonviolent movements to "replace corrupt, dictatorial, and authoritarian forms of government by democratic and participatory ones" are crucial (John Paul II, *Sollicitudo rei Socialis* # 44) and multiple studies have shown that civil resistance is a key driver of democratisation. Just governance includes responsive, accountable, and fair public officials and political institutions that uphold the rule of law, provide space for a vibrant, multi-cultural civil society, and protect basic human rights, especially for women, girls, and those with special needs. Sustainable and equitable economic development, along with preventing corruption and ending the influence of powerful special interests who benefit from violence and war, can also contribute to dramatic decreases in the risk of violence and war.

### Just Peace, Nonviolence and Policing

In affirming the role of just governance in creating the conditions of peace, a Catholic moral framework in turn recognizes the human needs that just law enforcement or policing mechanisms with their best intentions seek to meet. In other words, it recognizes the just exercise of those enforcement mechanisms that any community needs in order to protect all life, especially the vulnerable, ensure accountability for inhumane behaviors, and facilitate the just rule of shared community guidelines or law. At the same time, the Church must recognise the reality that in too many communities around the world, the concepts of "law" and "police" are met with deep suspicion, as they are seen merely as part of the apparatus of oppression, brutality, corruption, injustice, and gender violence. The word 'policing' conjures fear, and it would take a lot of convincing that just policing can be a positive aspiration.

As Catholics reflect the need to protect all life, we might envision healthy protection mechanisms through the lens of the Eucharist. The Eucharist is God's expression through Jesus of nonviolent love, risking and offering life for others without killing. Jesus risks his life to save and protect us from the ultimate death of being disconnected from God. When we participate in the Eucharist, we are empowered and called to embody this kind of risking of life for others. This re-presents Jesus' saving work to the world and thus draws us all further into the way of salvation, which is authentic protection of our lives and illumination of our sacred dignity. "In the silence of the Cross, the uproar of weapons ceases and the language of reconciliation, forgiveness, dialogue, and peace is spoken" (Pope Francis Sept 7, 2013, vigil of Prayer for Peace, no. 3. [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130907\\_veglia-pa-ce.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130907_veglia-pa-ce.html)). With this emphasis on such risking of life, the primary orientation for any law enforcement mechanisms becomes to save every life.

In this context, we recognize, value, and support the scaling-up of both existing and emerging models of alternative policing such as the use of mostly unarmed policing units in some countries (eg Britain, Norway, Ireland, New Zealand, Iceland, and most of the Pacific Island nations). These unarmed policing units build trust, empower the community, and reduce crime - in part because of their increased willingness to actively risk their lives to save others.

Unarmed civilian protection (UCP) initiatives have protected people and saved lives in war zones and large-scale conflicts. UCP has been practiced by organizations such as the Nonviolent Peaceforce in a variety of areas of violent conflict around the world including South Sudan, the Philippines, Kurdistan, Palestine, Kenya, Colombia, and the United States. Another form of UCP is the age-old Church practice of “sanctuary;” in South Sudan, tens of thousands of people have sought protection in Church compounds. Multiple independent evaluations have shown that these unarmed approaches build better trust with all stakeholders; enable nonviolent resistance capacity; cause local people to feel safer and more secure; significantly reduce shootings and killings; build sustainable peace; increase participation and local ownership in peace processes; and improve relationships between armed actors. Multiple high-level documents at the United Nations have called for scaling up these unarmed protection approaches.<sup>4</sup>

Another effective unarmed civilian protection mechanism for local communities uses a public health approach, which recognizes that violence or killing mimics a contagious disease. It clusters and is transmitted through observation, experience, and trauma. Thus, “credible messengers” who have trust in the community are deployed to interrupt the transmission in order to prevent such violence and its contagion. The approach also creates initiatives to change the local cultural norms which legitimate violence. Research has shown this public health approach to reduce shootings and homicides on average from 40-75%. The neighborhoods they work in Honduras have shown 88% reductions.<sup>5</sup>

Traditionally, many communities have had ways to maintain order - elders, women, clan members, age sets, spiritual leaders - but these mechanisms have now largely been eroded except in very traditional areas (e.g. South Sudan, Swaziland, and among some pastoralist and semi-nomadic peoples). Modern developments of these informal or semi-formal approaches emphasise the community taking responsibility and include “Nyumba kumi” (ten households) in Tanzania and Kenya. The people get to know their neighbours who are within reach. Another development is “community policing,” whereby trusted people are chosen by the local community to prevent crime and violence, to protect the community, to mediate conflicts, to investigate crimes, to retrieve stolen property, etc. They are unarmed and non-uniformed, and are “owned” by the community, not by any government organs. As employed in a number of countries in the Global North, the term “community policing” has a somewhat different meaning for it describes uniformed official police officers assigned to work closely with the local community.

In many parts of the world, including in many minority communities in the Global North, anyone wearing a uniform and associated with the state will be automatically distrusted. “Community policing” is perceived as extending police presence and surveillance into everyday life. However, there are also many “neighbourhood watch” schemes where local communities do look out for each

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<sup>4</sup> UN High Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations, Report 2015  
[http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/2015/446](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2015/446)

<sup>5</sup> <http://cureviolence.org/results/impactworldregions/>

other. At its best, “community policing” in the Global North can be affirmed as an attempt to de-militarize official police forces and recover the community-embedded and accountable practices that are still evident in more traditional societies in the Global South.

Admittedly, “policing” of any sort is easily discredited whenever police forces are militarised or made to serve narrow interests rather than the common good. It becomes especially difficult to advocate or even imagine just policing in communities and regions that have perpetually experienced “the police” as an occupying military force. But this makes it all the more incumbent to distinguish policing proper from war-making. Good policing draws upon training for conflict mediation and other skills needed to defuse social tensions nonviolently. It aims to apprehend alleged criminals who will then be tried by an independent judiciary; it does not project overwhelming force in order to pacify civilian populations and control territory; it is “policing by consent.” Unlike militaries that are designed to be expeditionary, policing is embedded in the communities and societies that it serves. Ideally, police are thus more likely to avoid “we/them relationships” with local populations and instead remember that “they-are-we.” In turn, police forces can be more closely tethered to the just rule of law than are military forces. As compared to military operations, therefore, it ought to be far less likely, if at all, that police operations would resort to armed and potentially lethal use of force.

This then offers an opportunity to work in continuity with and also to develop for our times the Church's inherited moral wisdom. To recognize these emerging and creative types of unarmed policing, as well as to recognize the essential differences between war and policing, contributes to affirming the best intentions of the Church's tradition, even while re-centering the tradition in Gospel nonviolence.

### Just Peace, Nonviolence and the Responsibility to Protect

Papal teaching stresses nonviolence yet affirms not only the right but also the duty of intervention for humanitarian purposes. In 1993, John Paul II warned, regarding Bosnia, that when “populations are succumbing to the attacks of an unjust aggressor, States no longer have a ‘right to indifference.’ It seems clear that their duty is to disarm this aggressor, if all other means have proved ineffective” (Address to the Diplomatic Corps, January 18; cf. 2002 World Day of Peace Message, no. 11). But how do we disarm the aggressor? In 2014 Pope Francis clearly stated regarding ISIS that the international community should “stop the aggression but not make war or bomb.” In 2005, the United Nations ratified the nascent principle of the “Responsibility to Protect” (R2P), marking an important development in nonviolent protection and the just war tradition by qualifying the absolute rights of national sovereignty and national self-defense. The principle of protecting the vulnerable from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, or crimes against humanity coheres with the Gospel responsibility to serve the neighbor and “the least of these.”

However, from a Christian standpoint, the use of armed force to do so is much more controversial, especially in view of the clear Gospel and papal priority of nonviolence and the understanding that violence almost always leads to a cycle of more violence. That is why, even while initially endorsing the Responsibility to Protect, the Holy See has emphasized the priority it gives to prevention and juridical, diplomatic, and other nonviolent means of intervention (Pope Benedict XVI, Address to UN General Assembly, April 18, 2008; Pope Francis, “Vigil of Prayer for Peace” [in Syria], September 7, 2013; Pope Francis 2014 conversation with press, on return flight from Korea). Further, the World

Council of Churches has called resort to armed force in these situations a “sign of a serious failure and obstacle in the Way of Just Peace.” Acknowledging the role of international law, the WCC states “as Christians we feel obliged to go further” and challenge “any justification for use of military power.”<sup>6</sup>

There is a danger that, just as the just war tradition has often been misused to legitimise war rather than prevent it, the R2P doctrine may lead to similar uses of armed force. The Church must recognise the reality that in many parts of the world, particularly the Global South, the concept of “R2P” is met with deep suspicion, as it is seen merely as part of an apparatus and logic of neo-colonialism, oppression, racism, injustice, and even widening the reasons for war. The Holy See became more critical of the Responsibility to Protect norm in September 2008 in a statement by Msgr. Celestino Migliore to the 63rd Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. He said, “In the past, the language of ‘protection’ was too often a pretext for expansion and aggression....this same understanding and practice tragically continues today. This principle is still being invoked as a pretext for the arbitrary use of military might. The use of violence to resolve disagreements is always a failure of vision and a failure of humanity.” In 2014, Pope Francis continued to express this concern, “we need to remember how many times, using this excuse of stopping an unjust aggressor, the powerful nations have dominated other peoples and made a real war of conquest.”

While R2P is a principle that does not dictate any specific actions or tactics, the invocation of R2P to justify military intervention in Libya, resulting in the violent ouster of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011, has been criticized for leading to further violence and remains at minimum controversial. In the case of Syria, the UN has referenced R2P in multiple resolutions, but the international community – in part because of the deep partisan involvement of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council and other powerful countries in the conflict - has repeatedly failed to identify effective ways to act together in defense of Syrian communities without escalating the violence.

The use of military intervention on R2P grounds will remain a highly-contested course of action. At the same time, military force was never intended to be the main tool of the R2P doctrine. The main pillars of the doctrine, which tend to be de-emphasized, highlight the key importance of preventative measures. Nonviolent collective action and civilian protection have been shown to be effective, even in cases of mass atrocities.<sup>7</sup> Empowering and accompanying local communities, a special role of the Church, is key to defusing such violence and to long-term peace. Supporting women’s participation in decision-making processes in matters of peace and security is especially crucial, for they are both frequent targets of gender-based violence, and courageous and creative builders of peace.

### Pastoral Implications

For the Church to focus on nonviolence and just peace has deep pastoral implications.

Fundamentally, nonviolence is a way of life. If we recognise that all human beings are created in the image and likeness of God and, with St Francis of Assisi, that all creation is related as brothers and sisters, that we are called to love others as we love ourselves, and that we are One Body in Christ,

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<sup>6</sup> Ecumenical Call to Just Peace, 2011

<sup>7</sup> Kaplan, O. *Resisting War: How Communities Protect Themselves*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017. Chenoweth and Perkowski. *ICNC Special Report Series No 2. April 2018*.

then it is impossible to imagine harming any part of that Body. To harm others is to harm myself. Nonviolence is the very essence of our being as Christians; it represents our deepest values. In that respect it is a spirituality, and as such, nonviolence needs to be nurtured by the pastoral ministry of the Church.

As Church we are called to follow the way of Jesus and to help form the conscience of our community by His Way. A Church committed to Gospel nonviolence and just peace would be a confessional Church, acknowledging its own historical and contemporary complicity with war and violence; would act as a “bridge-builder” linking different sectors of society in transformative dialogue (Laudato Si’ C.5), a particular expression of the just peace norm of relationality; would generate a deeper discernment about vocations; would consistently join with oppressed and violated people to identify and address the root causes of violence; and would unfailingly nurture cultures of nonviolence and just peace.

The Church would continue to provide moral guidance, encouraging elected officials and ordinary citizens, political decision-makers, members of the military or armed forces, people working in the security sector, and all those addressing difficult, violent, or potentially violent situations, to consistently follow just peace norms; develop, support, pilot, and employ effective unarmed methods of resistance, defense, and protection; explicitly commit to disarmament, demilitarisation, ending war, and preventing violence, including in our neighborhoods; and seek ways to invite adversaries to become future partners.

The Church would encourage states to dissolve their militaries. The experience of Costa Rica, which continues to reap social dividends from abolishing its military in 1948, is an excellent example.

The Church would foster and support as examples groups that provide unarmed civilian protection in violent conflict zones, such as Operation Dove, Christian Peacemaker Teams, Nonviolent Peaceforce and other explicit illustrations of just peace norms practically applied. It would support those engaged in nonviolent collective action to change the unjust policies and practices that fuel violence. The Church also would model and encourage a spirit of acknowledgment, repentance, and reconciliation for the harm done by war and by local, structural, and systemic violence.

Nonviolence should not be considered an option only for individuals and social movements but should be the first and principal response of the Church - and governments and international institutions - to violence, repression, and injustice. Nonviolence and peacebuilding should become a core element of Catholic identity, culture, and way of life. Governments should take seriously their obligation to develop institutions, strategies, and means of nonviolent conflict transformation. (*The Harvest of Justice Is Sown in Peace*, 5.) This would also reinforce the church’s long-term vision of strengthening international law, international institutions, and means of conflict transformation.

#### Commitment to and Promotion of Nonviolent Approaches

This new moral framework, rooted in the experience of those who have lived in contexts of war, destructive conflict, and violence, and reinforced by evidence of effective nonviolent alternatives, highlights the moral responsibility of the institutional church and its members to end war and other forms of violence, transform conflicts, and promote nonviolent strategies for ending oppression and addressing direct and structural violence. The Catholic Church as an institution will encourage its

followers to develop and promote strong, effective nonviolent alternatives to military force to protect vulnerable people, enhance inclusive security, and promote integral and inclusive peace. To be authentic and have any credibility, the Church must also confront its own contributions to violence.

As a witness to the in-breaking reign of God, the Church is called to urge humanity toward a reality (a just, sustaining peace) that enables the transformation and flourishing of each person and the whole earth community. Stirring the creative imagination of a human community that is mired in repeating cycles of violence with profoundly destructive consequences, the Church must become a community defined by its lived commitment to nonviolent means of transforming the social order in light of the Gospel. "I pray that the image and likeness of God in each person will enable us to acknowledge one another as sacred gifts endowed with immense dignity. Especially in situations of conflict, let us respect this, our "deepest dignity," and make active nonviolence our way of life."  
(Pope Francis, WDP 2017)

*This document has been developed through a consultative and participative process - to have done it any other way would not have done justice to the spirituality of nonviolence. The names of those who participated in the process are attached not to signify that every participant agrees with every word, but to demonstrate the broad range of expertise involved in the conversation about nonviolence:*

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