

Gospel nonviolence for a *Laudato Si'* future

An initial proposal for the *Laudato Si'* Action Plan from Pax Christi International

Marie Dennis (marie.dennis@paxchristi.net) and Ken Butigan (kenbutigan@gmail.com)

Introduction

The *Laudato Si'* Action Plan envisions seven goals for seven sectors of the Catholic community on the *Laudato Si'* journey over the next seven years. Below, the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative offers a brief explanation of why nonviolence is essential to reaching each of the seven goals and suggests how “Gospel nonviolence for a *Laudato Si'* future” might be concretely advanced in each sector, assuming cultural and contextual differences. The theology and practice of nonviolence are at the core of the Gospel. Nonviolence combines unconditional love in action with a constant effort to oppose violence. It is a spirituality, a way of life, a strategy for changing the world, a method for protecting the vulnerable and a universal ethic. Key to achieving a *Laudato Si'* future is grounding our efforts in the power of active nonviolence.

Goals of Gospel nonviolence for *Laudato Si'*

Goal 1. Response to the Cry of the Earth (greater use of clean renewable energy and reducing fossil fuels in order to achieve carbon neutrality, efforts to protect and promote biodiversity, guaranteeing access to clean water for all, etc.)

The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life. (LS2)

The Cry of the Earth is a global, anguished call for nonviolent solutions to the violence of climate change, loss of biodiversity, destruction of habitat, the lack of access to clean water, and [the enormous impact of human violence](#) on the biosphere. Violence in every form—direct, cultural and structural—is assaulting our common home and compounding the growing crisis that threatens the very survival of our planet. The earth is suffering from the violence of indifference and domination, war and militarisation, and destructive extractivism. In many countries, violence is also used to suppress environmental defenders, thus disrupting our capacity to respond to the Cry of the Earth. Ecological destruction is systemic and structural violence.

Research has shown that war, preparations for war and other military activities are particularly [fossil fuel intensive](#), contribute very substantially to [climate change](#) and have a tremendous [negative impact on the physical environment](#). Vast areas of planet earth have been [rendered uninhabitable and unproductive](#) during war and violent conflict by landmines, bombs, pollution, [destruction of forests](#) and the destruction of habitat as well as many diverse species of plants and animals.

A single nuclear warhead [could cause devastating climate change](#), resulting in widespread drought and famine that could cost a billion lives. At the same time, around the world [nuclear weapons facilities have already contaminated land and water](#) with radioactive waste lasting 100,000 years. The [dangerous](#)

[legacy](#) of nuclear weapons testing and the disposal of nuclear waste have impacted people of colour, particularly indigenous people and Pacific Islanders, in a clear and tragic illustration of [environmental racism](#).

At the same time, [extractive projects imposed on communities](#) for example, in Latin America, have increased the criminalisation of communities protecting their land and water. As of June 2020, the Latin American mining conflict observatory (OCMAL) recorded 277 socio-environmental conflicts associated with mining in the region, of which five are transnational.

Response to the Cry of the Earth must be characterised by a conversion to nonviolence that accompanies ecological conversion to encourage sustained and courageous actions to bind up the wounds we have inflicted on the earth. Because this profound shift will require unprecedented unity and unparalleled cooperation in addition to conversion of heart, well-prepared nonviolent struggle and the fullness of nonviolent love will be necessary to heal our wounded planet and nourish a “civilisation of love.” (LS 231) Such a response to the Cry of the Earth actualizes the [just peace norm](#) of ecological sustainability.

Goal 2. Response to the Cry of the Poor (defence of human life from conception to death and all forms of life on Earth, with special attention to vulnerable groups such as indigenous communities, migrants, children at risk through slavery, etc.)

Today, however, we have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. (LS 49)

The Cry of the Poor calls us to engage in a vast, nonviolent struggle for the well-being of the most marginalized people and communities of life around the world. This effort requires us to recognise and address the structural and cultural violences that threaten human life, perpetuating poverty and exclusion, cruelty to animals, and loss of critical biodiversity.

For example, the violences of [racism, xenophobia and discrimination attack the core of a person’s dignity](#), divide the human family, and result in negative economic, social and cultural consequences including [poverty, marginalisation, social exclusion and economic disparities](#). Too often political and legal structures or institutions perpetuate marginalisation and, [in many cases, constitute an important factor of discrimination in the exclusion of migrants and people of colour](#).

The violent subjugation of indigenous people, whose worldview honours [alternative possibilities for existence](#) based on right relationships between humans and nature, has contributed to unsustainable ways of life and led to ongoing, destructive militarism. A globalisation of solidarity rooted in nonviolence is urgently needed to promote sustainable communities based on economies of “enough” and to foster inclusive human security based on social, economic and ecological justice.

Furthermore, massive investments in arms and preparations for war by rich countries and poor countries alike; economies that depend on the development, production and sale of weapons; and companies and countries that profit from marketing arms and the tools of war illustrate the human community’s appalling failure to hear or respond to the Cry of the Poor who so often lack the most basic necessities of life, including food, clean water, safe housing, meaningful employment/a basic income

and health care. Nonviolent strategy encompasses the social weapons of the powerless or “the weapons of the weak,” all tools that will be needed for a revolution of values for a *Laudato Si’* future.

Violence is also evident in the exploitation and mistreatment of animals, whether for food or pets, research or entertainment and [up to one million species currently face the threat of extinction](#), more than at any other time in human history. Human imposition on other species has had huge ecological consequences that have long been of deep concern to people of conscience, including Buddhists and Jains.

[The United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals](#) represent important steps toward a just, peaceful and nonviolent planet. But the transformation they represent will only be achieved through the mobilisation of vast political will, spiritual commitment, nonviolence education, training and skill-building in the philosophy and strategies of active nonviolence and grassroots organizing at every level of every society. Such responses to the Cry of the Poor actualize the just peace norms of economic justice, racial justice, ecological justice, relationality and education in key nonviolent skills.

Goal 3. Ecological economics (sustainable production, fair-trade, ethical consumption, ethical investments, divestment from fossil fuels and any economic activity harmful to the planet and the people, investment in renewable energy, etc.)

“... an economy that gives life and does not kill, includes and does not exclude, humanizes and does not dehumanize, takes care of creation and does not plunder it.”
Economy of Francesco (19 to 21 November 2020)

Ecological economics is a nonviolent economic order rooted in right relationships within the whole earth community that promote sustainable communities and economies of “enough” and foster inclusive human security based on social, economic and ecological justice. Ecological economics breaks the logic of violence and exploitation that has been characteristic of a profit and consumption-driven, economic model based on the assumption of unlimited economic growth and the externalisation of environmental and labour costs.

Learning nonviolence and practicing to live nonviolently will help us to understand and accept such a major shift in economic life. Nonviolence stands against violence, but is also the antidote to violence. In these times of crisis, it is important to expand exponentially our understanding of and ability to use nonviolence by applying it in our own lives, building its infrastructure, creating a constructive nonviolent alternative economic system designed to safeguard humanity and the earth – and generating the people-power to bring these systems into being. The field of Nonviolent Political Economy has much to teach here, with particular wisdom from Buddhist traditions.

Ecological economics will also of necessity be demilitarised at a local, national and global level. It will not invest in preparations for war or militarised security, the production and marketing of military equipment or weapons, including nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. A sustained, long term campaign for economic conversion from militarised economies is essential to addressing the climate crisis.

Catholic workers and owners involved in the production of weapons and related businesses should be encouraged to examine the ethical and moral dimensions of that work based on a universal ethic of nonviolence and to develop a strategy for shifting to alternative work in the green economy. The deep

experience of many Catholic religious communities, organisations and dioceses with socially and environmentally responsible investment could facilitate investment in projects that align with a nonviolence/integral ecology ethical perspective.

Goal 4. Adoption of simple lifestyles (sobriety in the use of resources and energy, avoid single-use plastic, adopt a more plant-based diet and reduce meat consumption, greater use of public transport and avoid polluting modes of transportation, etc.)

Many things have to change course, but it is we human beings above all who need to change. We lack an awareness of our common origin, of our mutual belonging, and of a future to be shared with everyone. This basic awareness would enable the development of new convictions, attitudes and forms of life. A great cultural, spiritual and educational challenge stands before us, and it will demand that we set out on the long path of renewal. (LS 202)

The path of renewal must include a conversion to nonviolence. “Violence is a tendency that pulls us back, away from the recognition of unity; nonviolence pulls us forward, toward the recognition of unity... Nonviolence is connected with higher consciousness or love ... Nonviolent behaviour is central to who we humans are ... Nonviolence is not only at home in this new story of unity. Nonviolence *is* the new story and the way to get there.” (Michael Nagler, *Third Harmony*)

Nonviolence is a spirituality and a courageous way of life that actively challenges violence and all forms of injustice with creativity, imagination and love. Nonviolence is a path for conversion, for deep personal and societal transformation from the “old story” of domination and exploitation to the “new story” of universal communion.

Nonviolence is a constructive process applicable at a personal, interpersonal, and social-structural level. It includes nonviolent resistance and nonviolent action for social change. It also activates everyday techniques and practices, including nonviolent communication, compassionate listening, restorative justice peace circles, peaceful parenting, trauma healing, anti-racism training and nonviolent community-building. It is an essential basis for simple living. Such movements toward simplicity actualize the just peace norms of forming nonviolent communities and spiritual disciplines.

Goal 5. Ecological education (re-think and re-design educational curricula and educational institution reform in the spirit of integral ecology to create ecological awareness and action, promoting the ecological vocation of young people, teachers and leaders of education etc.)

There is a nobility in the duty to care for creation through little daily actions, and it is wonderful how education can bring about real changes in lifestyle. (LS211)

Humans, instead of caring for the earth that nurtures us, have damaged its ability to sustain life. Thus, we are now faced with ecological problems that threaten the destruction of the earth’s life support systems. We must learn to become good, nonviolent partners with the earth to ensure the well-being of our ecological whole.

To build the capacity globally for nonviolent lives, relationships, strategies and movements for social change, which are needed to navigate the climate crises, promote ecological economics and foster simple lifestyles, will require massive conscientisation as well as the mobilisation of nonviolent people power worldwide to support national and international policies establishing a just, nonviolent

sustainable global economy. This conscientisation begins by including the term “nonviolence” and the terminology of nonviolence strategy, ethics, and spirituality in all *Laudato Si’* teaching. The term invites inquiry and is a key to opening a rich treasury of wisdom and practice from within the Church and other traditions.

Fundamental formation, education, training and skill-building in the philosophy and strategies of active nonviolence is urgently needed in every corner of the world. Bring the margins, where nonviolence is practiced out of necessity or choice, to the centre of Catholic education. Education in the principles and practices of Gospel nonviolence for Catholic parishes, religious communities, Catholic universities, Catholic organisations and 1.3 billion Catholics worldwide, could make a tremendous contribution to a new way of being in relationship with other humans and with the earth in lieu of entrenched violences, including ecological violence, that too often define our societies.

Such training advanced by the Church could build the capacity of civil society and popular movements to comprehend and spread the principles, strategies and methods of nonviolent social change that are necessary for a future envisioned in *Laudato Si’*. Careful, often long-term, preparations and planning are fundamental to effective nonviolent people power movements. This includes developing the skills to transform conflict, to interrupt environmental violence, violence against non-human species and violence against environmental defenders, and to organise systems, structures and policies that contribute to cultures of nonviolence for the well-being of the whole earth community. Such education actualizes the just peace norm of training in key nonviolent skills.

Goal 6. Ecological spirituality (recover a religious vision of God’s creation, encourage greater contact with the natural world in a spirit of wonder, praise, joy and gratitude, promote creation-centred liturgical celebrations, develop ecological catechesis, prayer, retreats, formation, etc.)

An integral ecology is also made up of simple daily gestures which break with the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness. In the end, a world of exacerbated consumption is at the same time a world which mistreats life in all its forms. (LS 230)

The human community is facing a spiritual, ecological and social crisis inflamed daily by a worldwide culture of violence and war. As articulated in *Laudato Si’*, ecological conversion “entails a loving awareness that we are not disconnected from the rest of creatures, but joined in a splendid universal communion.” (# 220) Nonviolence is a process for nurturing such an ecological conversion to right relationships among humans and between humans and the rest of the natural world - from the old way of domination and exploitation toward a “civilisation of love.” (*Laudato Si’* #231) It is personal, interpersonal, social-structural and ecological.

“Gospel nonviolence is not simply a subtopic in the field of ethics or a significant tactic in the politics of peace and revolution.” Instead, “nonviolence is a way of talking about the essential mystery of God as revealed and embodied in Jesus Christ and about God’s active transformation of humanity into God’s nonviolent reign of peace and justice...”¹

In addition to being a practical method for confronting violence, and fostering justice, without violence, nonviolence is a paradigm of the fullness of life that reaches into all the dimensions of life. Bishop Robert McElroy said, “We need to mainstream nonviolence in the Church. We need to move it from the

¹ John Dear, “Notes for a Theology of Nonviolence,” July 17, 2017, unpublished manuscript.

margins of Catholic thought to the centre. Nonviolence is a spirituality, a lifestyle, a programme of societal action and a universal ethic.”²

As a universal ethic, nonviolence offers the Church a theological, pastoral and strategic foundation for the long-term work of struggling for and building the future envisioned in *Laudato Si'*. It is a paradigm of the fullness of life with which we are called to respond to monumental contemporary challenges, from the destruction of the Amazon to the threat of nuclear weapons and climate change; from the systemic oppression of migrants to the unspeakable suffering caused by human trafficking; from the violence of rampant poverty and excessive consumption to the catastrophe of war and the destruction of our beautiful planet. Nonviolence is a theological and practical framework that cuts across these and many other forms of violence.

At the core of Christian nonviolence stands the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus’ blueprint, vision and instruction for mature Christlike discipleship, with its new commandments of nonviolence. Gospel nonviolence is much more than a political strategy; it is a spirituality through which we see and interpret life, a set of virtues and principles for personal and social change.³ Nonviolence is not passive. It is not only the cessation of killing, although that is a clear starting point. Rather, nonviolence speaks truth in a global struggle for integrity, just peace and ecological sustainability. It is transformation and healing of our lives and our world.⁴ Such a shift actualizes the just peace norms of sustaining spiritual disciplines and virtuous habits.

Goal 7. Emphasis on community involvement and participatory action to care for creation at the local, regional, national and international levels (promote advocacy and people’s campaigns, encourage rootedness in local territory and neighbourhood ecosystems, etc.)

People and their movements are called to cry out, to mobilise and to demand - peacefully, but firmly – that appropriate and urgently-needed measures be taken. I ask you, in the name of God, to defend Mother Earth.

-- Pope Francis, World Meeting of Popular Movements address, 2015

The unprecedented global transformation that is urgently needed to achieve a *Laudato Si'* future will depend on mobilising worldwide people-power movements for change using active nonviolence that is “strategic, courageous, love-centred and organised.”⁵ The universal ethic of nonviolence can provide a

² Bishop Robert McElroy: Statement, “Path of Nonviolence: Toward a Culture of Peace,” symposium, Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, Vatican City, April 4-5, 2019.

³ For example, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s six principles of nonviolence: Nonviolence is a way of life for courageous people; nonviolence seeks to win friendship and understanding; nonviolence seeks to defeat injustice, not people; nonviolence holds that voluntary suffering can educate and transform; nonviolence chooses love instead of hate; and nonviolence believes that the universe is on the side of justice.

⁴ In his book *Healing Resistance: A Radically Different Response to Harm*, Kazu Haga writes, “When we view nonviolent resistance as part of a process of healing our collective wounds; when we work to cultivate compassion for all beings, including those who perpetuate systems of injustice; when we begin to see that our ultimate goal is not only to change unjust structures but also to change cultures, value systems, and to repair relationships—that is when we begin to enter into the *shugyo* [Japanese term for “practice”] of nonviolence.” (Parallax Press, 2020).

⁵ In a recent interview with *Vatican News*, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s daughter Bernice King said that, if he were alive today, he would urge us “to embrace nonviolence, which is strategic, courageous, love-centered and organised, in order to realise the Beloved Community, which includes the eradication of what he called the Triple Evils of racism, poverty, and militarism.” Alessandro Gisotti, “Bernice King: The Pope and my father, united in the same dream,” *Vatican News*, June 6, 2020. <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/world/news/2020-06/interview-bernice-albertine-king-george-floyd-discrimination.html>

clear and stable foundation for that “cultural revolution” (*Laudato Si’* #114) toward “justice, peace, love and beauty.” (*Laudato Si’* #246)

The Catholic Church, with its religious and civil society partners around the world, can play an extremely important role in support of this shift by energising nonviolent people-power movements for structural change (including in the areas of climate change, biodiversity and ecological sustainability) as well as nonviolent social organising skills and decision-making practices that make it possible to build up a new world in the shell of the old. The Church can provide critical training in the theology and philosophy of nonviolence and in a wide spectrum of nonviolent approaches to social transformation, encouraging people’s movements to prepare well and to develop the discipline necessary for sustained engagement.

Rooted in the life and teachings of Jesus, nonviolence is the most faithful and effective way forward in our turbulent and violent world. Nonviolence clearly rejects violence; creates openings for lament, confession, forgiveness, reparation, and reconciliation; and applies strategies for critically-needed structural and systemic change. Nonviolence is key to our journey toward a *Laudato Si’* future.

In urging us to respond to the harrowing challenge of the climate crisis, the pope has underscored the spirit and dynamic of nonviolence. Pope Francis demands that we defend Mother Earth, and to do so in a powerful, nonviolent spirit: “peacefully, but firmly.” Nonviolence is not simply a stance or an ideal; it is a relentless *process* of struggle and transformation that resolutely challenges violence without using violence; transforms and resolves conflict; and seeks justice, peace and reconciliation for all.

This will require setting in motion an unprecedented global movement for change. This initiative will succeed to the extent that community involvement and participatory action for integral ecology at the local, regional, national and international levels are nonviolent. Explicit nonviolent strategies are twice as effective as violent ones because they are more likely to generate and sustain the people-power required for social change.⁶ Such emphasis actualizes the just peace norms of participatory processes, robust civil society and nonviolent direct action.

This shift to a nonviolent future will not be easy or quick. It requires enormous organizing, training and discipline over time. But it is not only possible—it is likely to be the most effective path forward to meet the huge challenges over the next decades.

⁶ According to research conducted by Maria J. Stephan and Erica Chenoweth, which culminated in their 2011 book, *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict* (Columbia University Press), nonviolent resistance against formidable opponents, including those with predominant military power, has been twice as successful as armed struggle. They examined 323 violent and nonviolent campaigns against incumbent regimes and foreign military occupations from 1900-2006 and found that the nonviolent campaigns succeeded, in terms of stated political objectives, about 54 percent of the time, compared to 27 percent for violent campaigns.

Gospel nonviolence for a *Laudato Si'* future: Sectors of the Catholic Church

1. Families

Families are the building blocks of integral ecology, especially when they are rooted in the vision and practice of Gospel nonviolence. *Laudato Si'* families will deepen and enrich their commitment and action to heal our common home rooted in and applying the vision and tools of active nonviolence, including in the following ways:

- Emphasize at all stages of family life the transformative power of Gospel nonviolence in all of our relationships, including with planet Earth.
- Support the development of right relationships within the family, the parish, the larger community, with the Earth, and with the self.
- Foster ways of living nonviolently within the family, the parish, the community, and the larger world.
- Learn together how to communicate nonviolently.
- Learn nonviolent parenting skills to foster conflict transformation.
- Engage in and support nonviolent peace education within the family, schools and the parish.
- Reflect on the Church's teachings on nonviolence and how they can move us to respond to the climate crisis and protect biodiversity in persistent and constructive ways
- Discuss in developmentally appropriate ways the great challenge of violence to the earth and our calling to create nonviolent solutions.
- Do projects together that contribute to nonviolent solutions to the climate crisis.

2. Dioceses and parishes

Bishops and episcopal conferences can play a key role in integrating Gospel nonviolence into the life of the Church to support the healing of the earth. Following are steps dioceses could take to spread the power of active nonviolence for challenging the climate crisis and promoting ecological conversion:

- Host diocesan conferences on "Gospel nonviolence for a *Laudato Si'* future".
- Integrate courses on "Gospel nonviolence for a *Laudato Si'* future" in diocesan educational systems, including universities, schools, seminaries, catechesis etc.
- Hold seminars on "Gospel nonviolence for a *Laudato Si'* future" for the clergy and lay leaders serving in the diocese.
- Provide formation in Gospel nonviolence for priests, deacons, sisters or other ministers so that they in turn form congregations and communities, especially the young, with the nonviolent Jesus at the heart of their faith, a just peace ethic to shape moral reasoning and effective nonviolence skills, practices, habits and approaches for transforming conflict, protecting the Earth and promoting environmental justice.
- Promote restorative justice, arbitration and mediation at the diocesan level to show that conflicts can be transformed in a nonviolent way. Appropriately transparent conflict transformation processes should be normalised within all Church institutions and organisations.
- Bishops' *Ad Limina Apostolorum* visits to the Vatican that also involve meetings with the various dicasteries could include on their agenda an exchange on "Gospel nonviolence for a *Laudato Si'* future." This may apply in particular to the meetings with representatives of the Secretariat of State and the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development.
- Issue statements or pastoral letters that include not only clear Catholic teaching, but also examples of nonviolent practices in local communities and actions the Church plans to take to promote the

nonviolent transformation of a given conflict, including conflicts related to environmental destruction, environmental racism and eco-justice.

- Develop advocacy positions and language consistent with nonviolent approaches and the well-being of the environment, as well as illustrating their intersectionality. Focus on just peace norms in supporting such positions.
- Model civility, nonviolent communication and respect at all times, clearly indicating that respect for the dignity of the other can accompany differences in beliefs.
- Talk with and join Catholics and others involved in frontline nonviolent campaigns for care for the earth; be willing to support or promote ethical obstructive tactics such as strikes, boycotts, civil disobedience.

Parishes

- Integrate “Gospel nonviolence for a *Laudato Si’* future” throughout the life of the parish through formation, catechesis, education, bible study, liturgy, preaching, sacraments and ministry.
- Renew the Church by exploring an explicit commitment to Jesus’ nonviolence and to living the nonviolent life (rejecting violence; promoting restorative justice; creating openings for forgiveness and reconciliation; and applying strategies for peacebuilding) as a basis for the journey to a *Laudato Si’* future.
- Develop Gospel nonviolence guilds at the local level that intentionally respond to the Cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor
- Create opportunities to learn about ecological violence and active nonviolence from the lived experience of the local community.
- Support training in parenting skills, including to help children understand their own value and dignity and to equip them with the capacity to cope nonviolently with the challenges of life on a threatened planet.
- Educate parishioners about the different forms of violence, including direct violence, cultural violence, structural violence, ecological violence.
- Always include in intercessory prayers victim and perpetrator, those in unarmed civilian accompaniment and people protecting the earth in dangerous situations, as well as the Cry of the Earth.
- Lift up nonviolent peacemakers as heroes, heroines and saints of the Church, including those who have taken nonviolent action to care for the earth.
- Organise forums, community-based training and popular education programmes on “Gospel nonviolence for a *Laudato Si’* future,” illuminating how nonviolence is a spirituality, a way of life in harmony with nature and an effective approach to conflict transformation and social change.
- Collaborate locally to create peace teams which can deploy unarmed civilian protection units in situations where efforts to protect the earth are threatened.
- Create an information hub on local, national and international nonviolent actions for responding to the climate crisis and loss of biodiversity where knowledge and information can be shared quickly about successful civic organizing in different contexts.
- Offer safe meeting spaces for people to come together, begin organizing, exchange ideas, conduct fundraising and come up with approaches for nonviolent civil resistance actions.
- Make people aware of the advantages of nonviolent civil resistance in situations when resignation/passivity, violence or even methods of conflict transformation alone are unlikely to be effective or may be counterproductive for the safety and long-term well-being of a group.

Sacraments and liturgy

- At the heart of the life of the Church, liturgical celebrations can be a powerful expression of the way to embrace our mission to follow in the footsteps of the nonviolent Jesus in confronting the great challenges of our time, including the climate crisis, loss of biodiversity and other forms of ecological violence.
- In the lectionary, the celebration of the Eucharist and other sacraments and prayers of the Church, give witness to the centrality of the teaching and actions of Jesus as a nonviolent leader. In homilies, written reflections and study groups, highlight examples of nonviolence in the Gospels and in other scriptural passages.
- Develop a martyrology of nonviolent defenders of the earth and honour them liturgically.
- Develop the Sacrament of Reconciliation to include a deep examination of conscience relating to our personal, communal and societal obligation to care for creation.
- Allow more freedom in the composition of liturgical texts and Eucharistic prayers, especially examples with more direct mention of Jesus's rejection of violence in relation to violence against the non-human natural world.
- Encourage liturgists, musicians and authors to reference nonviolence and care for creation in prayers and songs and to share their creative work with parishes, dioceses, religious communities and others.
- Contribute the power of prayer, liturgical and sacramental witness to nonviolent actions in defence of Mother Earth.

3. Educational institutions

Schools

Essential to the paradigm shift needed to heal our common home is infusing the vision and tools of Gospel nonviolence as integral to care for creation in all forms and levels of Catholic education—from seminaries and universities to secondary and primary schools as well as in catechesis and the formation of religious. Explicit training in the spirituality and practice of Gospel nonviolence for healing the earth is critical to this Kairos moment.

- Make peace and nonviolence education, including “Gospel nonviolence for a *Laudato Si'* future.” a priority, beginning with the rediscovery of and recommitment to Jesus's nonviolence and including Catholic teaching on just, integral peace as necessary to healing the earth.
- Include programmes on nonviolence as well as on nonviolence and integral ecology in the basic curriculum and required courses.
- Model nonviolent practices in the school's institutional life and connect those practices to respect for the integrity of creation.
- Centre the wisdom of Indigenous communities in Catholic teaching on nonviolence and integral ecology.
- Give social media more importance as a tool for nonviolence education; use it to make more visible the relationship between violence and climate change, violence and loss of biodiversity, violence and destruction of the planet, as well as between nonviolence and defence of Mother Earth.

Universities

- Integrate nonviolence and peace in the mission and values of the university, in order to concretely guide the decisions about programming and curricula in light of advancing nonviolence across the university and to be a nonviolent institution for a *Laudato Si'* future. Explicitly establishing nonviolence and peace as a core value of the university can have wide impact on the corporate

identity of the institution and create a foundation for educational priorities, programming, and a culture attuned to formation, research and training. It also prepares all people associated with the university to be part of local, national and global initiatives for confronting violence, including ecological violence.

- Develop a “Gospel nonviolence leadership corps for a *Laudato Si’* future” that would include both an academic program on integral ecology and nonviolence skill-training, such as nonviolent communication, bystander intervention, restorative circles and nonviolent resistance to ecological violence.
- In Catholic moral theology and ethics courses explore a new moral framework for just peace that rejects war and violence and consistently promotes integral ecology.
- Organise a global conference on peace and nonviolence education, including “Gospel nonviolence for a *Laudato Si’* future.”
- Encourage global educational organisations such as the International Federation of Catholic Universities to make “Gospel nonviolence for a *Laudato Si’* future” the theme for their global conferences.
- Make a preferential option for traditional peoples to centre and support within the university their teaching, culture, and practices and concretely support their efforts for preservation of language, culture and land.
- Look for close collaboration with the most influential Catholic organisations in the field of education, discussing with them the best methods to integrate nonviolence and its link to integral ecology in the life and work of Catholic educational institutions.
- Encourage academic research and dialogue about the connection between different forms of violence and environmental destruction as well as between nonviolence, care for the earth and integral ecology. Shift investments and research away from developing weapons technology and fossil fuels.
- Offer skills-based training in nonviolence and conflict transformation for the broader community, both religious and secular, that includes a focus on ecological violence. Publicise the results of this training using radio, TV, newspapers and social media so that the whole community can utilise nonviolent language, alternative dispute resolution, and develop a working knowledge and vocabulary in nonviolence, just peace and the integrity of creation.
- Explore how Catholic aid and development agencies, such as Caritas, Catholic Relief Services and Jesuit Refugee Service, working with others, could develop and implement a nonviolent peacebuilding curriculum that focuses on “Gospel nonviolence for a *Laudato Si’* future.”

4. Hospitals/health care centres

COVID-19 has demonstrated clearly that a healthy ecosystem and well-resourced healthcare systems are essential to protecting humanity from the threat of communicable diseases that readily transcend borders and boundaries. Yet, preparedness to respond to COVID-19 has been hindered by war and ongoing violence, including direct attacks on health care facilities and workers, and by annual spending on weapons and preparations for war.

Research is also revealing connections between violence to the earth and [trauma](#) or climate anxiety, adding to the long list of [diseases associated with environmental destruction](#). Furthermore, violence itself transmits, clusters, and spreads just [like a contagious disease](#) and can be stopped using the same strategies employed to fight epidemics.

Hospitals and health care centres could:

- Promote trauma-informed practices at every level of health care, especially practices that recognize [ecological stress disorder](#) and the personal and collective trauma emerging from [human violence toward the earth](#).
- Study the potential for nonviolent communication and other nonviolent practices to mitigate conflict over climate change and loss of biodiversity and improve a community's response to the Cry of the Earth.
- Educate health care professionals, political decision-makers and the general public about the impact of war and violence, and the resulting environmental destruction, on a community's health and on its health care system.
- Support calls for ceasefires and disarmament as essential to overcoming disease and promoting a healthy planet.
- De-link medical research from military research.
- Invest in ecologically sound medical infrastructure and architecture to promote human and environmental healing.
- Help peacebuilders understand protocols for arresting the spread of communicable diseases in order to apply that knowledge to stopping and preventing violence, including ecological violence.

5. Economy: Businesses/cooperatives/farms

Work or job-related violence robs the worker of human dignity or life itself; it destroys or unsustainably exploits the earth's resources, whether minerals, soil or water. Work-related violence is visible in jobs that fail to pay a living wage or provide benefits; in work that is demeaning, that exploits other people, that promotes or perpetuates violence and war, that is destructive to the earth and the natural world.

The universal ethic of nonviolence (including its foundations of interconnectedness, human dignity, "right" relationships and resistance to injustice) can strengthen societal values, policies and practices that guarantee decent work within an ecological paradigm for the post-pandemic context.

In addition to respecting the integrity of creation in their business practices and products, business people, including farmers, could learn about and adhere to Catholic social teaching on the dignity of work and nonviolent jobs. They could:

- Identify marks of a nonviolent *Laudato Si'* economy based on "techo, tierra, and trabajo" to prioritise in their business practices.
- Study and apply to their business practices Catholic social teaching on the dignity of work and nonviolent jobs that promote integral ecology.
- Invest in research on and the development of green energy; shift their businesses to green energy. Move money away from investments in fossil fuels, natural gas, and nuclear energy. (LS 165)
- Learn about and support the ILO Decent Work agenda and nonviolent jobs that promote integral ecology in the post pandemic process.
- Examine the ethical and moral dimensions of producing and marketing of weapons; develop a strategy for shifting to alternative production in the green economy based on a universal ethic of nonviolence.

- Examine the ethical and moral dimensions mining and extractive industries; rigorously adhere to ILO Convention 169, learning from indigenous communities how to establish a nonviolent relationship with Mother Earth and adjust business plans accordingly.
- Study ILO Convention 190 and Recommendation No. 206 that recognise the right of everyone to a world of work free from violence and harassment. Learn about the impact on workers of engaging in work that is destructive to the earth and the non-human natural world.
- Learn about nonviolent witnesses like Chico Mendes (Brasil), Sister Dorothy Stang, SNDdeN (USA/Brasil), Berta Caceres (Honduras) and Ken Saro-Wiwa (Nigeria), whose lives weave together a commitment to the dignity of the person, respect for the planet and nonviolent approaches to dialogue and change in the world of work.

6. Organisations (NGOs, movements, groups, foundations, etc.)

The *Laudato Si'* Action Platform envisions an unprecedented global movement for change. This initiative will succeed to the extent that community involvement and participatory action for integral ecology at the local, regional, national and international levels are nonviolent. It will require enormous organizing, training and discipline over time.

Catholic organisations, movements, networks and foundations are extremely important and can make a vital contribution to the future envisioned by *Laudato Si'*. Catholic organisations with nonviolence expertise and Catholic organisations with ecological expertise could work together on a consistent and ever-deepening basis to promote a *Laudato Si'* future in local communities, nationally and internationally. They could:

- Create resources and educational materials that explicitly make the link between violence, climate change, loss of biodiversity and other forms of environmental destruction, as well as between nonviolence and rebuilding respect for the integrity of creation.
- Develop an integrated long-term strategy for working together that is rooted in grassroots experience and the wisdom of communities struggling at the intersection of violence and environmental destruction.
- Create workshops, webinars and other resources to help parishes, religious communities, dioceses and educational institutions integrate a deeper understanding of ecological violence and the role of nonviolence in their commitments to heal the earth and care for creation.
- Build advocacy campaigns that bring together broad-based coalitions to support nonviolent strategies, programs and investments along with ecological justice, such as green energy, nonviolent civilian-based defence, reducing military spending, integral disarmament and the call from Vatican II to outlaw war.

7. Religious orders

Religious communities have tremendous transformative potential in promoting Gospel nonviolence in the life of the Church and in helping the Catholic community to understand the essential link between nonviolence and care for the earth. With their global reach and the depth of their networks they touch the lives of the faithful in significant and formative ways. In ways appropriate to their own charism and context, religious communities could:

- Integrate nonviolence and integral ecology together into formation and ongoing formation programmes.
- Encourage members and affiliates living in areas of conflict and/or violence to share their stories

about the human and environmental impact of violence and about effective nonviolent efforts to transform conflict, protect vulnerable communities and heal the earth.

- Prioritise Gospel nonviolence and care for creation in outreach and promotional materials being sent to prospective members and benefactors.
- Advocate consistently nonviolent approaches to protecting and healing the earth in the local, national and international spheres.
- Be present to, take part in or support community acts of resistance and nonviolent witness in response to ecological violence or threats of violence, offering solidarity and accepting the consequences of such actions.

Nonviolence: A transformational process

Pope Francis has called the Church and the world to nonviolence in many statements and documents, including the 2017 Word Day of Peace message, “Nonviolence: A Style of Politics for Peace.” The spirit of nonviolence is at the heart of the great themes of Pope Francis’ papacy, including solidarity, fraternity, mercy, encounter, peace, reconciliation and care of creation.

Nonviolence rejects the way of violence and unleashes the power of love in action. It is at the heart of two realities that must be at the centre of the great shift toward a healed world and a transformed humanity: *conversion* and *organizing*. What is needed now is a deep change of heart and commitment to a new way of life (conversion) and a comprehensive emergence of organised people-power worldwide to put that change of heart into concrete practice for initiating a more just, peaceful and sustainable process (organizing).

Active nonviolence is core to both of these. Why? Because nonviolence is not simply a stance or an ideal; it is a *process* that can actively transform the challenges we face and can create openings for life and healing. Nonviolence is an ongoing *metanoia* from the lie of violence and injustice to the way of truth and justice all. It is a force for good that can propel the crucial, historic shift to a world where the infinite worth of every person is prized and where our common home is honoured and protected. Nonviolence—rejecting violence; struggling for restorative justice; creating openings for forgiveness and reconciliation; and applying strategies for peacebuilding and integral human development—is the journey to a *Laudato Si’* future.



Catholic Nonviolence Initiative

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