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Nonviolence: Building Gospel-based Communities Addressing Situations of Violence Today

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In August of 1985 I was with Mary Lou Kownacki, O.S.B., then National Coordinator of Pax Christi USA, at the Nevada Desert Nuclear Weapons test site for a civil disobedience action which included trespassing onto the test site property, effectively stopping any testing of nuclear weapons at least that day. The action was part of an ongoing witness at the Nevada test site. Before we crossed the line, risking arrest with a large faith-based group, the two of us went off to the side and recited together the vow of nonviolence[1] which Pax Christi USA was just introducing.

The vow includes six points:

- By striving for peace within myself and seeking to be a peacemaker in my daily life;
- By accepting suffering rather than inflicting it;
- By refusing to retaliate in the face of provocation and violence;
- By persevering in nonviolence of tongue and heart;
- By living conscientiously and simply so that I do not deprive others of the means to live;
- By actively resisting evil and working nonviolently to abolish war and the causes of war from my own heart and from the face of the earth.

I had become a postulant with the Benedictine Sisters of Erie a month earlier and this vow of nonviolence was integral both to my monastic vocation and my discipleship journey as a Catholic Christian. I was not alone. Tens of thousands of Catholics have made the vow of nonviolence, for a period of time or for life. There have been retreats, liturgies, and nonviolent actions which included the opportunity to make a vow of nonviolence. It is a deeply personal spiritual practice and a communally supported commitment.

Pax Christi's vow of nonviolence is only one expression of Catholic nonviolent spiritual tradition and practice. There are many others. At the landmark Nonviolence and Just Peace conference, held in Rome in April 2016, participants were reminded of these and many other past and present Catholic nonviolent campaigns for peace and justice around the globe.

César Chávez's and Dolores Huerta's struggle for justice for farm workers included many prayer processions, usually led by the banner of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Solidarity in Poland was another struggle rooted in Catholic tradition, practice, and teaching. Large, public, Eucharistic liturgies in the Gdańsk Shipyard supported the labor union strikers and nourished them as nothing else could have. The U.S. civil rights movement was born, grew, and came to fullness in Christian churches; the songs of the nonviolent movement were Gospel spirituals which kept marchers focused and nonviolent as they faced beatings and water cannons.

The liberation movements in Central America were overtly faith-based movements, often originating and strengthened in Catholic communities and parishes. St. Archbishop Romero and his profound, prophetic calls to end the military repression followed by the witness of his martyrdom radically empowered the struggle for peace and justice in Central America and the U.S. The witness of the many martyrs of those liberation campaigns radicalized the churches in Central America, the U.S., and globally.

Gandhi is said to have meditated daily on the Sermon on the Mount; Jesus's teaching shaped his vision, his mission, and his strategy of *ahimsa*, love in action, and *satyagraha*, truth force or soul force.

In the midst of the world's greatest refugee crisis, and rising xenophobia in Europe and the U.S., the witness of Pope Francis washing the feet of those fleeing violence is powerful, deeply Catholic, and radically nonviolent gesture that greets the refugee with tenderness and, at the same time, critiques the political system that demeans and deports them.

Nonviolence and nonviolent actions have become part of the Catholic liturgical life, spiritual life, and communal outreach as well as memory. It ignites passion and participation at all levels of the faith community. It builds bonds around the globe and across interreligious divisions.

The reality of the rich and varied use of nonviolence by the Catholic community is only one of the advantages that the tradition of nonviolence has over just war theories.

In this article, I will reflect on the Gospel basis for nonviolence and Catholic social teaching, the central and essential teaching of the church, based in the life and words of Jesus. This is in

contrast to just war theories (JWT) which lack grounding in Gospel teaching and the example of Jesus. I will look also to critique just war theories as irrelevant to the major causes of violence, war, and oppression in our day, particularly our climate emergency. I will then identify an inherent flaw in Catholic just war logic since its origin: it creates a wedge dividing clergy from laity.

In reviewing the articles in *Expositions: Ethics in Focus: Special Issue on The Future of the Just War Theory in Catholic Social Thought*,[2] I noticed a surprising dearth of scriptural references for Jesus and nonviolence, even when referring to just peace and nonviolence. Noted were passages such as the injunction to love enemies, the Beatitudes, and the instruction to Peter to put away his sword.

But the biblical basis for nonviolence and also for the just peace framework is broader and deeper than that. It's important to understand this fuller Gospel basis for nonviolence and also for just peace, and thus, to see its most crucial difference from the JWT: its integrity to the Gospel message—both teaching and practice—of Jesus.

Pope Francis teaches in his 2017 World Day of Peace Message that "Jesus himself offers a 'manual' for this strategy of peacemaking in the Sermon on the Mount. The eight Beatitudes (cf. Matthew 5:3–10) provide a portrait of the person we could describe as blessed, good, and authentic. Blessed are the meek, Jesus tells us, the merciful and the peacemakers, those who are pure in heart, and those who hunger and thirst for justice. This teaching is also a program and a challenge for political and religious leaders, the heads of international institutions, and business and media executives: to apply the Beatitudes in the exercise of their respective responsibilities. It is a challenge to build up society, communities and businesses by acting as peacemakers. It is to show mercy by refusing to discard people, harm the environment, or seek to win at any cost. To do so requires 'the willingness to face conflict head on, to resolve it and to make it a link in the chain of a new process.'"[3]

With the context of the Beatitudes as the overall program, I will examine each of the seven principles of Catholic social teaching articulated by the USCCB[4] and then give a few examples of both the teaching and actions of Jesus which exemplify that principle.

Life and Dignity of the Human Person

This belief is the foundation of all the principles of Catholic social teaching and it is at the core of the Judeo-Christian tradition: all humans are daughters and sons of one Creator, all created in the

divine image, and so all have inherent dignity which is not to be violated. Pope Francis begins the 2017 World Day of Peace message with this greeting:

> I wish peace to every man, woman and child, and 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.[5]

The inherent dignity of all life is a basic teaching of nonviolence as well. For example, Gandhi translates *ahimsa* as "love for all living things."[6]

Teachings of Jesus which express the basic belief in the life and dignity of the human person:

- Matthew 5:45: "God makes the sun rise on bad and good alike."[7]
- Luke 10:25–37: In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus looks to the traditional enemy when creating his hero who models what it is to live the second great commandment—to love one's neighbor as oneself. He casts as antagonists a priest and Levite, both held in great esteem in his society.
- John 1:4–5: "In the word was life and that life was humanity's light—a light that shines in the darkness, a light that the darkness has never overtaken." John's Gospel message is summarized in this first chapter as the triumph of love over hate and violence for all humankind.

Some Actions of Jesus modeling this concept:

- Mark 10:14–15: In a surprising move, Jesus welcomes children who were being sent away by his well-meaning friends and disciples.
- Mark 1:40–42 (Matthew 8:2ff; Luke 5:12ff): Jesus touches lepers, healing them.
- Matthew 9:20–22: Jesus encourages and affirms the woman healed after reaching out to touch his garment—a forbidden act as she was considered "unclean." Jesus said simply, "Courage, daughter! Your faith has healed you."

- Luke 23:42–43: Jesus, as he dies, meets with compassion and reassurance the convicted person being executed who reaches out to him. And, he pointedly does not return insults to the other convicted and condemned man.

These examples show the variety of Jesus's actions and teachings on the inherent dignity of each human life. The strongest and the culmination of Jesus's teaching is that he accepts death at the hands of the Empire without retaliation or seeking to escape. As the "first born of those who rise from the dead" (Colossians 1:18), the witness of the resurrection is the triumph/transformation of violence and death by love. After his death, the disciples are empowered and inspired to follow his example, risking imprisonment and death in speaking and living the Gospel. In experience after experience, their acceptance of suffering is a point of conversion/transformation for others.

Call to Family, Community, and Participation

There is overlap in the principles of Catholic social teaching; many of these concepts are similar. This second principle recognizes that all persons are social as well as individual. In organizing economically and politically, we are to seek the common good and the well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable.

Nonviolence analyzes and critiques systemic economic, political, and/or social injustice. Nonviolence is a tool and a way of life that seeks to create just systems.

In Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s teaching, he described the Beloved Community as "a global vision, in which all people can share in the wealth of the earth. In the Beloved Community, poverty, hunger, and homelessness are not tolerated because international standards of human decency will not allow it. Racism and all forms of discrimination, bigotry, and prejudice will be replaced by an all-inclusive spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood."[8]

Jesus transformed systems of violence and oppression, rejecting violence and radically empowering the oppressed and vulnerable. *Examples of this which connect to this principle on the importance of the family, community, and participation include*:

- Luke 4:17–20: Jesus begins his public ministry by proclaiming from the Book of the prophet Isaiah, articulating his mission and the goals of his movement, announcing

jubilee: good news to the poor, liberty to captives, recovery of sight to the blind, release of prisoners, and a year of freedom for the land.

- Matthew 5:22–26: Jesus's teaching on overcoming anger at another person urges his followers to reconcile with sisters and brothers instead of using judicial institutions.
- John 13:35: "This is how all will know that you are my disciples: that you truly love one another."
- Matthew 12:46–50 (Mark 3:35; Luke 12:50): Jesus proclaims that whoever does the will of God are his mother and brothers and sisters when he is told that his family has come for him. In this, Jesus radically expands the closest bonds of kinship to include any doer of God's will.
- Matthew 25:14–30: The parable of the talents can be seen as nonviolent resistance to unjust economic system based on exacting interest on debts.
- Matthew 5:42: "Give to those who beg from you. And don't turn your back on those who want to borrow from you."

Actions of Jesus on the call to family, community, and participation:

- Luke 19:1–10: The tax collector, Zaccheus, in encounter with Jesus, promises to pay restitution to all those he has cheated and harmed.
- Matthew 21:12–13: Jesus cleanses the temple of the buyers and sellers, outraged because of their preying on the poor and violating God's commands.
- Acts 2:42ff: The Beloved Community is evidenced in the witness of the early Church, following Christ, being known for their love of all, sharing of goods, inclusive community and leadership, care for the vulnerable, and healing the sick.
- John 12:14 (Matthew 21:5; Mark 11:7; Luke 19:35): Jesus's triumphal entry into Jerusalem on a donkey contrasts to a military ruler arriving on a horse.

Rights and Responsibilities

The USCCB explains this third principle: "Every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to those things required for human decency. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities—to one another, to our families, and to the larger society."[9]

In King's teaching, nonviolence is active resistance to evil. It is assertive spiritually, mentally, and emotionally. Nonviolent campaigns work for justice without demonizing, harming, or defeating the enemy. In nonviolent actions, priority is given to the protection of all, especially the most vulnerable. And nonviolence believes that the universe is on the side of justice. The nonviolent resister has deep faith that justice will eventually win. Nonviolence believes that God is a God of justice.[10]

The responsibility to protect is one concept that some just war theorists claim as scriptural foundation for the just war principles. An excerpt from a recent Commonweal Magazine article by Mark J. Allman and Tobias Winright articulates this point:

> A number of just war theologians—from Ambrose and Augustine to the Protestant ethicist Paul Ramsey and others—anchor their theory of just war in Scripture, particularly Jesus's call for love of neighbor, including the enemy. The resort to force should truly be a last resort, but it can be a moral necessity if that is the only way left to protect the innocent neighbor. Out of respect for the human dignity of the aggressor, the use of force should be governed by the principles of proportionality and discrimination between combatants and noncombatants.[11]

Extending Jesus's command to love neighbor to include protecting the neighbor is not a stretch. Indeed, Jesus's parable of the Good Samaritan ascribes the role of model "lover of neighbor" to one of his historic enemies of his own people. And the Good Samaritan goes out of his way to protect the vulnerable: taking them to a safe place, binding their wounds, meeting their needs, and providing for them.

But to extend Jesus's command to love neighbor to include participating in war and killing to protect is to stretch beyond the breaking point.[12] Surely, the vulnerable were being killed in Jesus's time and violent revolutions occurred and were being planned around him. If there was a time for Jesus to protect not only himself, but the vulnerable with him, it was in the garden, in the dark of night, when a surprise attack might have interrupted the arrest and provided an opportunity to escape immediate danger and then hide. After all, the potential for the disciples being arrested with Jesus in the garden was strong. As Jesus was carefully planning for that final, special Passover meal with his disciples, he could also have planned a violent resistance to arrest. But that's not

what Jesus did; he went unarmed into the garden. And when Peter drew his sword violently confronting the armed arresting officials, Jesus not only rebukes Peter, but heals the ear of the servant harmed by Peter. Surely, this is a definite rebuke of the use of violence even to protect the vulnerable (Luke 22:47–50). Indeed, Jesus loves his enemy here by protecting them from Peter's sword and healing their wounds.

While this teaching of loving enemies is clear, it is far from the only example of Jesus protecting others while never resorting to violence.

Teaching:

- Matthew 5:10: All the Beatitudes exemplify this concept, but especially, "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of their struggle for justice: the kingdom of heaven is theirs."
- Luke 9:53–55: When a Samaritan town refuses to welcome Jesus and his band of disciples as they travel to Jerusalem, James and John ask, "'Rabbi, do you want us to call down fire from heaven and destroy them?' But Jesus turned and reprimanded them."
- Matthew 5:39: "When someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn and offer the other." In effect, this teaching is nonviolent resistance, stopping a superior from backhanding a victim, but also not threatening or retaliating against the oppressor.[13]
- Matthew 5:40: "If anyone wants to sue you for your shirt, hand over your coat as well." Jesus is teaching a way to dramatize and highlight the suffering and vulnerability of the debtor when they are sued for their very last possession, their shirt. The action would shame the loan shark into dropping their court suit. The teaching here gives oppressed people a way to resist creatively appealing to the oppressor without threatening or demonizing them.[14]

Actions:

- John 8:1–11: Jesus intervenes to protect the woman caught in adultery, with a creative action exposing the hypocrisy of the law and those who condemned her.

- Matthew 26:6–13; John 12:1–8: Jesus receives the extravagant anointing by Mary of Bethany and defends her and her action when Judas accuses her of waste. This is only one of many examples where Jesus intervenes when others are ridiculed, dismissed, or diminished.

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

This principle—that the basic moral test is how the least in society, the most vulnerable, are treated—could not be clearer in Jesus's teaching on criteria for judgment in Matthew 25:31–46. The needs of the poor and vulnerable come first.

Dr. King articulated the "triple evils of poverty, racism, and militarism" as interrelated and systemic forms of violence which exist in a vicious cycle and threaten our society.[15] Under these forms of violence, the most vulnerable and most in need of Gospel-based advocacy are the poor, people of color, and those affected by war.

Teaching of Jesus giving priority to the poor and vulnerable:

- Matthew 25: The final judgment is based solely on treatment of the most vulnerable with the clear message that those serving the "least among us" are serving Christ.
- Mark 9:35: Jesus calls the Twelve and says, "If any of you wants to be first, you must be the last one of all and at the service of all."
- Luke 4:16; Matthew 23:4: Religious leaders are excoriated by Jesus for adding burdens to the poor, widows, and orphans while they reap the benefits of oppression—expecting public places at banquets.

Actions of Jesus modeling care for those who are poor and vulnerable:

- Luke 13:10–17: Jesus sees a woman bent from illness and interrupts the Sabbath service to heal her. In this he models dealing with those who have internalized the messages of oppression and do not ask or expect freedom or participation in the community. Jesus defended her as a daughter of Abraham and Sarah and called out the hypocrisy of the religious leaders attacking her when her healing has interfered with the Sabbath service.

- Mark 5:40–42: Jesus raises the daughter of a synagogue official from the dead. Girls were the least in his culture and yet he interrupted his schedule and went immediately to the girl's aid.
- Matthew 14:15–21 (Mark 6:35–44; Luke 9:12–17): Jesus's compassion in repeatedly feeding large crowds of hungry and tired followers before dismissing them for their journey home is a strong witness of concrete care for the vulnerable. He also makes it clear to his closest disciples that it is their responsibility to provide nourishment for the crowd.

The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

Catholic social teaching holds that the dignity of work is to be protected, "that the rights of workers must be respected—the right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, to the organization and joining of unions, to private property, and to economic initiative."

Nonviolence critiques systemic violence and has been used in campaigns for worker rights, including the Memphis Sanitation Workers strike during which Rev. Dr. King was assassinated. Many of the victories of nonviolence have been over systemic injustice against workers.

Jesus's teachings and actions on the dignity of workers and their need for justice can be seen in stark relief when compared with the norms of his society, which practiced slavery, and strictly enforced hierarchy and oppression.

Teaching on work and workers:

- Luke 1:46–55: The canticles in Luke's Gospel are considered to be the oldest hymns of the early Christian communities. The words Luke puts in Mary's voice are the truth the early Christian community both announced and longed for: tyrants deposed and the lowly raised, while those hungry are filled with good things and the rich sent away empty.
- Matthew 5:41: "Should anyone press you into service for one mile, go two miles." The teaching of Walter Wink shows that this passage refers to the specific situation where a Roman soldier could command anyone in their occupied territories, which included Palestine, to carry their heavy packs for a mile. Jesus's suggestion that one willingly carry the pack for two miles is a nonviolent resistance which both critiques the injustice

and alters the relationship without violence or threat. The soldier demanding service is forced to ask a peasant to give back their pack.[16]

- Matthew 5:42: "Give to those who beg from you. And don't turn your back on those who want to borrow from you." This teaching of Jesus is a way out of the debilitating debt cycle of the Roman subjects of his time. The exacting taxes owed to Rome were the basis of the spiraling debt by which families defaulted on debt and subsequently lost their homes, their ancient plot of land, their possessions, and finally, their freedom. Loaning to those in need without interest was a way they might reverse the system and care for each other.

Actions on the dignity of work and justice for workers:

- Mark 6:3 Jesus was a common laborer who worked with his hands. It was not a vocation held in esteem, for Jesus was dismissed by his townsfolk: "Isn't this the carpenter, the son of Mary?"
- John 13:5–15: Jesus washes the feet of the disciples, taking the role of the lowest servant, overturning his culture's norm of hierarchical ordering of "master" and "disciple," modeling relationships of love and service. And then Jesus commanded his disciples to do as he had done.
- Luke 10:38–42: Mary, sitting at Jesus's feet, listening to him teaching. At the time, women were not permitted to study Torah. Their role was to be preparing the meal, serving. Martha, expecting her sister to share in the work of hospitality, protests her engaging in what was seen as men's purview: Torah discussion and debate. Jesus defends Mary's right to choose to study, thereby affirming Martha's right also to choose to join the teaching.
- John 20:11–18: Jesus commissions Mary Magdalene, sending her to proclaim his resurrection to the male disciples, and thus rejecting the system that refused testimony from woman as illegitimate. Jesus tasks her with the important role of witness and messenger bringing life-changing evidence to his disciples, including his closest associates. In this, Jesus rejects the oppressive constraints on women's role in his society. Jesus models relationships, and even leadership based in love and respect.

Solidarity

This principle of Catholic social teaching holds that we are one human family, whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. And we have obligations to each other. “Loving our neighbor has global dimensions in a shrinking world. At the core of the virtue of solidarity is the pursuit of justice and peace.”[17]

The possibility of forgiveness and reconciliation is the ever-present hope in nonviolence. Through encounter, enmity has the potential to be transformed. In the six steps of nonviolence, as taught by Martin Luther King, Jr, the sixth step is reconciliation.[18]

Love of enemies and forgiveness is a central Gospel message and foundational in the teachings in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 4:44–48). And Jesus models this in a variety of ways. In his relationship with his people’s traditional enemies, Jesus enters into dialogue and allows himself to be stretched and expands his ministry:

Teaching:

- Matthew 6:9–12: When asked for a teaching on prayer, Jesus responds with an instruction which includes, “And forgive us our debts as we hereby forgive those who are indebted to us.”
- 1 John 4:18–20: This section summarizes the teaching: “There is no fear in love, for perfect love drives out fear. To fear is to expect punishment, and anyone who is afraid is still imperfect in love. We love because God first loved us. If you say you love God but hate your sister or brother, you are a liar. For you cannot love God, whom you have not seen, if you hate your neighbor, whom you have seen.”

Actions:

- Mark 7:24–30: Jesus’s interaction with the Syrophoenician woman who convinces him, after his first refusal, to heal her daughter.
- John 4:4–26: Jesus’s encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well begins with suspicion and testing on both their parts but ends with her bringing all in her area into the encounter with Jesus, with truth.

- Luke 7:2–9: Jesus responds to requests to heal the servant of a Roman centurion, an occupier of Jesus's land. When Jesus receives the centurion's message, "just give the order and my attendant will be cured," Jesus replies, "I have never found this much faith among the Israelites." With this example, it's important not to misuse this passage as a justification for Christians to become soldiers. As the staff of the Catholic Peace Fellowship note, "Time and again, Luke shows that outsiders, those beyond the normal bounds of acceptability, often hear God's word with more attentiveness than the insiders."[19] Hence, Luke's message is more general in a way that is consistent with Jesus's teaching of nonviolence.
- Luke 22:19–21: In a final Passover love feast with his disciples, Jesus blesses, breaks, and shares bread and wine. Then he says, "Look! The hand of my betrayer is at this table with me." Jesus does not exclude his betrayer from the table or the meal but does directly confronts the betrayal, exposing that painful reality.
- Luke 23:34: Jesus, at his death, prays for forgiveness for those who torture and kill him.

Care for God's Creation

The current climate crisis has propelled this principle of Catholic social teaching to prominence. The USCCB explains this principle, "We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God's creation."[20]

Pope Francis's 2015 encyclical, *Laudato si': On Care for Our Common Home*, is an in-depth reflection on the dire predicament we all face on this planet. The section "The Gaze of Jesus" is a survey of the teaching and actions of Jesus in relationship to the natural world.[21] For example, Jesus reminds his disciples that God is parent of all creatures, treasuring the sparrow (Luke 12:6). The many references in parables to the natural world show Jesus "lending it an attention full of fondness and wonder."[22] The stilling of storms is another confirmation of Jesus's living in full harmony with creation.[23] Incarnation and resurrection speak most strongly of Christ's intimate and cosmic relationship with the created world: Christ's "becoming flesh and dwelling among us" (John 1:14), and after rising from the dead being present, risen and glorious, in all creation.[24]

This principle of Catholic social teaching shows the integration of the causes of violence and oppression and their solution. *Laudato si'* also includes a compelling analysis of the interconnections between the suffering of the poor and of the earth, linking it to the other principles

of Catholic social teaching, especially solidarity and the option for the poor: "The deterioration of the environment and of society affects the most vulnerable people on the planet: 'Both everyday experience and scientific research show that the gravest effects of all attacks on the environment are suffered by the poorest.'"[25]

Solutions for the climate emergency need to be integrated as well. The climate crisis is linked to devastating drought, storms, floods, and massive fires. These fuel the global refugee crisis and public health emergencies, as well as the collapse of infrastructure and economic systems. As Pope Francis writes, "These situations have caused sister earth, along with all the abandoned of our world, to cry out, pleading that we take another course."[26]

Addressing this global violence is included in Pope Francis's call for nonviolence in the 2017 World Day of Peace message, "Nonviolence: A Style of Politics for Peace": "May we dedicate ourselves prayerfully and actively to banishing violence from our hearts, words, and deeds, and to becoming nonviolent people and to building nonviolent communities that care for our common home. Nothing is impossible if we turn to God in prayer. Everyone can be an artisan of peace."[27] Notice that every person is included in this call for nonviolent action.

Laudato si' shows that Catholic social teaching and nonviolence point a way forward in addressing the climate crisis. In our climate emergency, a global violence threatening life on the planet, just war theories offer little if any guidance.

Climate emergency is not the only present issue of violence for which the JWT is unhelpful. In 1991, in an issue of the Pax Christi USA magazine after the Gulf War with reflections on the JWT and nonviolence, I noted that, in the time since the U.S. Catholic Bishops had issued *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response*, the U.S. government had "mined the harbors of Nicaragua and initiated military action against Libya, Grenada, Panama, and Iraq. None of those actions have been clearly questioned or condemned by the U.S. Catholic Church."[28] Indeed, Eileen Egan, co-founder of Pax Christi USA and friend of Dorothy Day, declared in the same issue, "Just war thinking has become in our time the great myth that we kill by."[29]

Nonviolence and Building the People of God

Nonviolence and just peace strategy invite, and rely on, participation of wide segments of the community. Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan studied nonviolent movements between 1900 and 2006 and found that "successful nonviolent resistance movements usher in more lasting

democracies, less likely to regress into civil war […]. In addition, campaigns of nonviolent resistance were more than twice as effective as their violent counterparts."[30]

In contrast to the unity of nonviolent movements, the just war theory, from its Christian inception, divides the Christian community into clergy and laity. Rene McGraw, O.S.B., offers an insightful analysis of this flaw:

> Augustine was the Christian thinker who formalized the understanding of the Christian to the State. His ingenious, but, from my perspective, fatal solution to the problem was to split the Christian community into those who were required to be discontinuous with the world around them and those who were more continuous with the world. Those who were henceforth to live as the full Christian were the clergy and the religious. Those who would take the slow road to salvation were the laity.[31]

Pope Francis has called out clericalism and the sense of entitlement that goes with it as being destructive of the Catholic community.[32] Having a two-tiered hierarchy of the followers of Jesus is the root of clericalism, which has no basis in the actions and teachings of Jesus. A question which the just war theorists must answer: If participation in war is detrimental to the souls of clergy and religious, why imperil the path of any followers of Jesus?

The division between clergy and laity is nonexistent in nonviolent movements. Indeed, one of the benefits of nonviolence is that all can participate. Each participates as they are able, and all methods of participation are valued. The examples I began with show the broad participation of the full Catholic community in nonviolent campaigns for justice.

Conclusion

The special issue of *Expositions: Ethics in Focus*: *On the Future of the Just War Theory in Catholic Social Thought*, explores primarily the benefits of continuing the JWT either with increased education or by strengthening its use. Given the depth and breadth of Jesus's teachings and actions which are foundational both for nonviolence and for Catholic social teaching, the basis for the just peace ethic, I believe that we are called as a Catholic Christian community to return to our Gospel roots and the traditions that flow from these roots. In addition, in our time, the violence we face

now and into the future as a global community have interwoven and linked causes, and so the solutions are found in integrated approaches. The climate emergency is a major driver of conflicts and the refugee crisis and will increase in the coming decades. While nonviolence and just peace offer helpful analyses, direction, and guidance for solutions, the JWT with its limited scope is irrelevant in this crisis of interwoven causes. Finally, using nonviolence in campaigns for peace and justice strengthens the bonds of community. In contrast, one of JWT's inherent flaws is the divide between the elevated followers of Jesus not permitted to participate in war, and those lesser followers of Jesus who could be expected to fight with violence.

In moving away from just war theories, the Catholic community can become a stronger, Gospel-centered people of God.

Notes

1. "Vow of Nonviolence," Pax Christi USA, https://paxchristiusa.org/resources/vow-of-nonviolence/.
2. *Expositions: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Humanities: Ethics in Focus: Special Issue on the Future of Just War Theory in Catholic Social Thought* 12.1 (2018), https://expositions.journals.villanova.edu/issue/view/159.
3. Pope Francis, "Nonviolence: A Style of Politics for Peace," The Holy See, January 1, 2017, §20, https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco_20161208_messaggio-l-giornata-mondiale-pace-2017.html.
4. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching," in *Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 1998) and *Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2003), http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/seven-themes-of-catholic-social-teaching.cfm.
5. Pope Francis, "Nonviolence: A Style of Politics for Peace" §1. This excerpt quotes Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* §228.
6. "Glossary," Mahatma Gandhi's Writings, Philosophy, Audio, Video, and Photographs, https://www.mkgandhi.org/gsr.htm.

7. This, and all Scriptural references and quotations, come from *The Inclusive Bible*: *Priests for Equality* (Lanham, MD: Roman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007).
8. Quoted in the section on "The Beloved Community" explaining Martin Luther King's philosophy on the website of The King Center, 2019, https://thekingcenter.org/king-philosophy/.
9. USCCB, "Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching."
10. "The Six Principles of Nonviolence," The King Center, 2019, https://thekingcenter.org/king-philosophy/. Principles are based on Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail" in *Why We Can't Wait* (New York: Penguin, 1963).
11. Mark J. Allman and Tobias Winright, "Protect Thy Neighbor: Why Just-War Tradition is Still Indispensable" *Commonweal Magazine* June 2, 2016, https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/protect-thy-neighbor.
12. Lisa Sowle Cahill also affirms that "killing is patently incompatible with love of neighbor and the example of Jesus" even as she names the dilemma in Catholic social teaching. In addition, Winright's and Allman's claim above that killing is consistent with human dignity when it is proportional and discriminatory is quite suspect, and it appears challenged by Pope John Paul and Lisa Sowle Cahill. See Pope John Paul II, "Homily at Drogheda, Ireland," The Holy See, September 29, 1979, §§18–20; http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/homilies/1979/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_19790929_irlanda-dublino-drogheda_en.html: "violence destroys what it claims to defend: the dignity, the life, the freedom of human beings." See Lisa Cahill, *Blessed Are the Peacemakers: Pacifism, Just War and Peacebuilding* (Fortress Press, 2019), viii, 33, 125.
13. Walter Wink, "Jesus and Alinsky," in *The Impossible Will Take a Little While: A Citizen's Guide to Hope in a Time of Fear*, ed. by Paul Loeb (New York: Basic Books, 2004), 149–160.
14. Ibid.
15. Martin Luther King, Jr., *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967).
16. Wink, "Jesus and Alinsky."
17. USCCB, "Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching."
18. "The Six Principles of Nonviolence."

19. Catholic Peace Fellowship staff, "On the (Mis)Use of Scripture for War," in *The Sign of Peace: Journal of the Catholic Peace Fellowship* 3.2 (Summer 2004), 14.
20. Ibid.
21. Pope Francis, *Laudato si': On Care for Our Common Home*, The Holy See, May 24, 2015, §§96–100, http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html.
22. Ibid. §97.
23. Ibid. §98.
24. Ibid. §§99–100.
25. Ibid. §48. Quoting the Bolivian Bishops' Conference, *Pastoral Letter on the Environment and Human Development*, 2012, §17.
26. Ibid. §53.
27. Pope Francis, "Nonviolence: A Style of Politics for Peace" §25.
28. Anne McCarthy, O.S.B., "Time to Wake Up," *Pax Christi USA* Winter 1991, 2. In the 1991 Iraq war the Catholic Bishops conference at least questioned it, but without clearly condemning it. Yet, once the war started some bishops clearly supported it. See Peter Steinfels, "War in the Gulf: Religious Leaders," *New York Times* January 26, 1991, https://www.nytimes.com/1991/01/26/us/war-in-the-gulf-religious-leaders-cardinal-says-iraqi-s-acts-prove-bush-right.html, and "War in the Gulf: The Home Front; Church Leaders Affirm Opposition to War," *New York Times* February 15, 1991, https://www.nytimes.com/1991/02/15/us/war-in-the-gulf-the-home-front-church-leaders-reaffirm-opposition-to-war.html.
29. Eileen Egan, "War: Reversing the Works of Mercy," *Pax Christi USA* Winter 1991, 6; reprinted in this issue.
30. Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan. *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011). The quote is from a summary of the book: https://www.ericachenoweth.com/research/wcrw.
31. Rene McGraw, O.S.B., "Benedictinism, Nonviolence, and the Rule," in *The Proceedings of the American Benedictine Academy Convention* (St. Joseph, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004), 34.

32. Cindy Wooden, “Clericalism: The Culture that Enables Abuse and Insists on Hiding It,” *Catholic News Service* August 22, 2018, https://www.catholicnews.com/services/englishnews/2018/clericalism-the-culture-that-enables-abuse-and-insists-on-hiding-it.cfm.