



Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

2017
**LENTEN
REFLECTION GUIDE**

A JOURNEY WITH GOSPEL NONVIOLENCE

“I pledge the assistance of the Church in every effort to build peace through active and creative nonviolence.”

Pope Francis

ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

In this Lenten Reflection Guide, we offer reflections, questions, prayers, and actions based on each week's Gospel reading and the written reflections and recorded discussions by the 83 Catholic peacemakers who attended the Nonviolence and Just Peace conference in Rome in April 2016. Use this guide individually or in small groups to reflect upon your life patterns, to pray more deeply, and renew your spirit to face the realities of our world. Learn more about the conference and the appeal, and follow the ongoing Catholic Nonviolence Initiative at www.nonviolencejustpeace.net.

To learn more about the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, Maryknoll Sisters, Maryknoll Lay Missioners, or Maryknoll Affiliates, go to www.maryknoll.org

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ABOUT US

The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns (MOGC) represents Maryknoll missioners, who are Catholic men and women serving in impoverished communities around the world. The MOGC provides analysis and advocacy on issues of justice, peace and the integrity of creation that affect the countries and communities where Maryknoll missioners serve.

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ASH WEDNESDAY

“But when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret.
And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.”

MATTHEW 6:6

An invitation to prepare for a long journey

“**L**ent comes providentially to reawaken us, to shake us from our lethargy,” Pope Francis said. It is an invitation to a journey like Jesus’ journey into the wilderness for forty days, where he endured temptations from the devil and prepared himself to begin his ministry. Lent is not for the faint of heart, but for many of us, the timing couldn’t be better.

This present moment is a wilderness time. We are living in a world of uncertainty, insecure about what the future holds and unsure of our place in it. Just when we are feeling untethered and adrift, Lent invites us to a time of self-examination and reflection and offers us the tools – simple living, prayer, and fasting – to grow closer to God.

The journey of Lent can be tough – a time of repentance, of giving up things that tie us to this world and looking instead to the life and teachings of Jesus. But when we courageously examine within, name what is broken within us, turn away from it, and turn toward what is truly good, we will find ourselves living the fullness of life that God wants for each of us.

The life and teachings of Jesus help us understand what the fullness of life looks like: love, inclusion, forgiveness, mercy, sacrifice – and nonviolence.

“This word [nonviolence] most effectively characterizes Jesus’ way,” wrote Ken Butigan, director of Pace e Bene and Father John Dear, nonviolence activist, in a www.maryknollogc.org

background paper for the Nonviolence and Just Peace conference in Rome in April 2016, “a way that combines *both* an unmistakable rejection of violence *and* the power of love and truth in action for justice, peace and integrity of creation.”

“Nonviolence is a clearer way to understand Jesus’ vision than even love and peace by themselves, because we can use these terms but at the same time support violence and war. This is more difficult with nonviolence. The word nonviolence illuminates the heart of the Gospel – the proclamation of the Reign of God, a new nonviolent order rooted in God’s unconditional love.”

The word nonviolence may stir up many feelings. Welcome these feelings with openness and curiosity as the first steps on the Lenten journey, and trust in the Gospel message for Ash Wednesday: Privately practice the disciplines of almsgiving, prayer, and fasting “and your Father who sees in secret will repay you.”

Questions for Reflection

What feelings arise when you hear the word nonviolence?

What disciplines will you practice this Lent?

Prayer

Blessed are the peacemakers, you said,
O Lord, for they shall be called
children of God.

We ask you, Lord, to forgive us
for the times we've caused division or
misunderstanding in our communities.

We know that communion is not
achieved through coercion,
but through constant conversion.

We ask for the grace to not speak ill,
Not criticize, not to be sowers of strife,
So that peace can reign in our hearts.

From this conversion of the heart, Lord,
lead us to a version in actions.

First in our hearts, then in our world
Incarnate the power of gospel nonviolence.

Give us the imagination to overcome
All forms of violence with creative
nonviolence.

Revive in our church's theology of peace
The nonviolent message of Jesus,

That once again our churches may be centers of learning
for nonviolence and just peace,
centers of conversion from violence to
peace, and from loneliness to joy.
Amen.

— “A Prayer for Conversion to Gospel Nonviolence” by
the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative,
<https://nonviolencejustpeace.net/>

Fast

Turn off anything that supports violence on TV, movies,
and the internet.

Grow in peace with yourself by counting your blessing
instead of disappointments each day.



“Every year, a seminarian is with me during one month. [John] and I bicycled together to distant villages searching for children in need of hospitalization. As we explained our intention to be of use to poor children in need of surgery, a villager declared with astonishment: ‘I did not know there are people like you.’”

“[John] was impressed to see how positively Muslims respond to compassion shown to their needy ones by Christians. Those Muslims, by their tolerance for our religion and appreciation for persons who live merciful lives, enable us to evangelize by our love for the poor.”

— FATHER BOB McCAGHILL
Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers

Action

Adopt a nonviolent practice from the list “64 ways to practice nonviolence.” <http://bit.ly/64waysNonviolence>

Read Pope Francis' message for World Day of Peace entitled “Nonviolence: A style of politics for peace.” Then gather your faith community to ask: How might the Holy Spirit be calling us to be creative and active peacemakers?

<http://bit.ly/WorldDayofPeace2017>

Endorse the appeal to the Catholic Church to re-commit to the centrality of Gospel nonviolence, the final statement of the Nonviolence and Just Peace Conference held in Rome in 2016 <http://bit.ly/NVJustPeace2016>

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT



“Jesus said in reply, ‘It is written: ‘One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.’’”

MATTHEW 4:4

We are not alone on the journey

Who was Dayani Crystal? The body of an unidentified migrant was found in the Arizona desert a few years ago with this name tattooed across his chest. The U.S. Border Patrol only knew that he was a man who died while attempting to cross the U.S.-Mexico border through treacherous desert and mountain terrain.

But the documentary *Who was Dayani Crystal?* shows that he was much more than that – a member of a family and community in Honduras that is suffering and desperate to escape death from poverty and gang violence. And now Dayani Crystal is forever part of a full-blown humanitarian catastrophe as one of more than 7,000 “border crosser deaths” in the desert since the U.S. began to seal off easy-to-cross urban areas in the borderlands in 1994.

In this week’s Gospel reading Jesus goes to the desert to fast for 40 days. In the photo above, volunteers from the humanitarian group [No More Deaths/No Más Muertes](#) are carrying water to some of the most remote trails to help migrants like Dayani in the desert in Arizona.

While in the desert, the devil visits Jesus and tempts him with promises of materialism and power. Jesus rejects the devil’s offers and declares that he will serve and worship only God. In our contemporary world, the devil tempts us with materialism and power and we are left with violence.

We enable structural violence – injustice and exploitation built into our social systems. These include the violence of economic inequality, racism, sexism, environmental destruction, militarism, and immigration policy. We are blinded by cultural violence – prevailing attitudes, beliefs, and paradigms that justify and normalize structural violence. And we inflict direct violence – war, murder, assault, verbal attacks – that grows out of cultural and structural violence.

Within the crisis of violence along the U.S.-Mexico border is a voice for peace: Pietro Ameglio in Mexico, who in his youth was a student of Maryknoll Father Don Hessler and who attended the Nonviolence and Just Peace conference in Rome last year. In 2011, Pietro organized demonstrations for families of the dead and missing persons during ongoing violence in Mexico. The public witness spurred related demonstrations in 31 Mexican cities and 17 cities around the world. “The movement of victims and massive public denunciations made visible the dignity of these families,” Pietro said, “and the falsehood of the ‘war on drugs.’”

Questions for Reflection

Where do you see human dignity needing to be made more visible in your community?

In what way can you respond to this need during Lent?

Prayer

We travel in deserts and despair
As we focus on how Christ was crucified.
And is crucified in the world today.

We agree to make this journey, this pilgrimage,
And to leave life as usual, business as usual,
To pay attention, to be present to pain and suffering.

The journey to the Light of Easter can only go this way.
We choose to learn this hard truth,
To accept the ashes,
To witness the darkness,
To walk the way of the cross
As it happens in our world.

Let us journey together, open to the world,
So we may be renewed and help bring to all
The renewal of Resurrection. Amen.

—“Prayer on the Lenten Journey,” Education for Justice,
a project of Center for Concern,
<https://educationforjustice.org/>.



“There’s a lot of violence in the community [of Las Delicias in El Salvador] and our soccer program, called Playing for Peace, gives kids a safe alternative to the street. The youth join gangs because they want to belong to a group. Our program gives them a sense of belonging – but in a more positive environment.”

—LARRY PARR
Maryknoll Lay Missioners
(Pictured in red shirt, in El Salvador)

Fast

Consider letting go of habits that prevent you from listening without being defensive and speaking without judgement.

Action

Host a viewing of *Who was Dayani Crystal?* Gather with others to ask: How might the Holy Spirit be calling us to respond?

Watch online: <http://www.hulu.com/watch/685371>

Or organize a public screening:

<http://whoisdayanicristal.com/>

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT



“Lord, it is good for us to be here.”

MATTHEW 17:4

We are called to transform and be transformed

On the second Sunday of Lent, we hear the awesome story of Jesus' Transfiguration. The disciples – Peter, James, and John – went up a mountain and spent the night in prayer with Jesus. There they saw Jesus transformed in glory. “His face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light.” They saw the prophets of old talking with Jesus and heard the voice of God affirming Jesus as beloved.

The Transfiguration conveys two affirmations: God is with us and God can transform us. It is a personal call to leave behind all that is useless, rise toward God and say as Peter said: “Lord, it is good for us to be here.”

Nobel Peace laureate Mairead Maguire spoke at the Nonviolence and Just Peace conference in Rome about her personal transformation after three children of her sister were run over and killed by a car driven by a paramilitary fugitive who had been fatally shot by British troops. The children were eight years old, two years old, and six weeks old. In the days that followed, Mairead joined peace marches and co-founded Peace People, an organization which promotes ending violence through re-education – not more violence.

“I come from Northern Ireland and lived through the ‘troubles’ in Belfast, an area immersed in a violent ethnic and political conflict for over 30 years. More than 3,500 people were killed and thousands injured. In 1969, the UK government sent in troops, removed basic civil liberties and carried out internment without trial and torture. Many young people joined armed groups, often in reaction to humiliation by troops who ignored their dignity and removed their basic human and civil rights.

“One young man, Danny, told me he joined the armed struggle because it was a ‘just war’ struggle. The Catholic Church, he said, blesses just wars. This conversation, with a teenager, arguing the just war theory, had a profound effect on me. Although I was Catholic, I had never read the just war theory and had not been taught Jesus’s nonviolence, much less a clear moral calling to reject violence and follow the Sermon on the Mount.

“Living in the midst of state violence I asked myself ‘Can I ever use violence in the face of injustice? Is there such a thing as just war, just violence?’

“Finally, I went to the cross and there found my answer: ‘Love your enemy. Do not kill.’ Nonviolence is the way of Jesus. Jesus suffering on the Cross, calling us to love our enemies, is the greatest symbol of nonviolent love in action. I also came to know that my life and every human life is sacred and we have no right to kill each other but must seek alternatives to violence.

“Militarism and para-militarism didn’t solve our problems, but only deepened hatred and division. When we entered into dialogue and worked on forgiveness and reconciliation change began. Peace came to Northern Ireland when we rejected the bomb and bullet and believed that peace is possible, peace is a human right for all.”

Questions for Reflection

Have you had a personal experience of transformation?

Who is the enemy in need of your love?

Prayer

God of Nonviolence,

Thank you for the gift of your love and your peace.
Give me the grace to live the life of Gospel nonviolence
that I might be a faithful follower of the nonviolent
Jesus.

Send the Holy Spirit of nonviolence upon me that I will
love everyone,
from my neighbor to my enemies,
that I may see you in everyone, and know everyone as
my sister and brother,
and never hurt or fear anyone again.

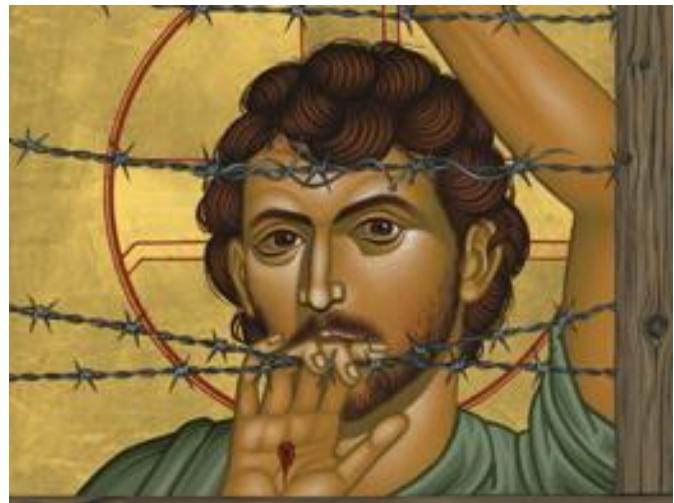
Make me an instrument of your peace,
that I might give my life in the struggle for justice and
disarmament;
that I may work for the abolition of war, poverty, and
nuclear weapons;
that I may always respond with love and never retaliate
with violence;
that I may accept suffering in the struggle of justice and
never inflict suffering or death on others;
that I may live more simply, in solidarity with the
world's poor,
that I may defend the poor and resist systemic injustice
and institutionalized violence,
that I may always choose life and resist the forces of
death.

Guide me on the Way of nonviolence.
Help me to speak the truth of peace, to practice
boundless compassion, to radiate unconditional love, to
forgive everyone who ever hurt me, to embody your
nonviolence, to walk with you in contemplative peace, to
be your beloved servant and friend.

Disarm my heart, and I shall be your instrument to
disarm other hearts and the world. Lead me, God of
nonviolence, with the whole human family, into your
nonviolent reign of justice and peace where there's no
more war, no more injustice, no more poverty, no more
nuclear weapons, no more violence.

I ask this in the name of the nonviolent Jesus, our
brother, and our peace. Amen.

– "Prayer of Nonviolence" by John Dear
http://www.fatherjohndear.org/articles/nonviolence_prayer.htm



"Celina, a prisoner with whom I work in São Paulo, Brazil, recently said, 'Sometimes I feel like the guards are in prison and I am free. I see them on their 12-hour shifts sitting in cold, dark spaces with so much anger that they try to take it out on us. I never let their negativity bring me down.'

"A native of Cape Verde, Celina is a teacher who is serving a five-year sentence for carrying drugs into Brazil. While in jail, she volunteers by co-facilitating a support group with me for new arrivals. Her reflections reminded me of the Robert Lentz icon titled "Christ in the Margins" (see photo above), which challenges us to reflect on the ways we all are imprisoned."

— KATHLEEN BOND
Maryknoll Lay Missioners

Fast

When facing a person with whom you are in conflict, put
"love your enemy" into practice by offering an act of
kindness.

Release your hostages today – forgive people you hold
hostage to the past.

Action

Host a viewing of *The Sultan and the Saint*, a film about St. Francis of Assisi. Gather with others to ask: How might the Holy Spirit be calling our faith community to be active peacemakers?
<https://www.sultanandthesaintfilm.com/>

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT



“But whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst; the water I shall give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

JOHN 4:14

God's mercy defies animosity and rivalry between people

On the third Sunday of Lent, we hear the conversation between Jesus and the woman at the well. She is a Samaritan, a woman, and we learn as their conversation continues, an outcast because of her “many husbands” – three strikes that make her one of the last people the disciples would expect to be speaking with Jesus. And yet, Jesus reveals himself to her as the Messiah.

The woman’s life is changed – she becomes a disciple. Her community is changed – many come to follow Jesus because of her evangelism. And the disciples are changed – they learn that God’s mercy is without limits.

Nora Arsenian Carmi, a Palestinian Christian with Armenian roots, shared her experience of mercy healing animosity at the Nonviolence and Just Peace conference in Rome in 2016. Born in Jerusalem a few months before the establishment of Israel, she became a refugee in her own city. She has been a staff member of Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center since 1993.

“My Armenian roots and my 69 years of Palestinian experience, have brought me to a strong conviction, that the Armenian Genocide, the Palestinian Nakba ‘catastrophe’ that made me a refugee, and the ongoing Israeli occupation and terrible injustice cannot be ‘just’ or be part of God’s ‘plans’ for those created in His image.

“The Nakba brought new dispossession and more suffering but without grudge or hatred, my family

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continued to serve all the communities with equity and Christian love. I inherited that legacy of not reacting to evil with evil.

“Concerted efforts of advocacy, political negotiations and rare implementation of international laws and decisions have still not yielded the aspired liberation of the cradle of three monotheistic religions proclaiming justice, peace, and reconciliation.

“However, this is the only way forward! We have learned the positive power of ‘not resisting with death but rather through respect of life.’ The Kairos document of 2009 clearly states ‘True Christian theology is a theology of love and solidarity with the oppressed, a call to justice and equality among peoples.’

“Nonviolence is not a tactic but a way that emphasizes the concept and sanctity of life. Not only does it resist all forms of evil with methods of love, but it also draws upon all energies to make peace … Lives are thus saved and protected from the ravages of wars and both the perpetrators and the victims of injustice are liberated.”

Questions for Reflection

When have you received love and solidarity in a moment of need?

In what ways can you offer mercy to someone this Lent?

Prayer

All-nourishing God, your children cry for help
Against the violence of our world:
Where children starve for bread and feed on weapons;
Starve for vision and feed on drugs;
Starve for love and feed on videos;
Starve for peace and die murdered in our streets.

Creator God, timeless preserver of resources,
Forgive us for the gifts that we have wasted.
Renew for us what seems beyond redemption;
Call order and beauty to emerge again from chaos.
Convert our destructive power into creative services;
Help us to heal the woundedness of our world.

Liberating God, release us from the demons of violence.
Free us today from the disguised demon of deterrence
That puts guns by our pillows and missiles in our skies.
Free us from all demons that blind and blunt our spirits;
Cleanse us from all justifications for violence and war;
Open our narrowed hearts to the suffering and the poor.

Abiding God, loving renewer of the human spirit,
Unfold our violent fists into peaceful hands;
Stretch our sense of family to include our neighbors;
Stretch our sense of neighbor to include our enemies
Until our response to you finally respects and embraces
All creation as precious sacraments of our presence.

Hear the prayer of all your starving children. Amen.

—“Prayer for a New Society,” Pax Christi USA

Fast

Take time to learn more about the Nakba.

<http://imeu.org/article/faq-on-the-nakba-the-nakba-and-palestinian-refugees-today>

Place a photo and quote in your prayer space of a peacemaker named by Pope Francis in his World Day of Peace message: Mahatma Gandhi or Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan in India, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in the U.S., Leymah Gbowee in Liberia, Saint Francis of Assisi, Mother Teresa of Calcutta, or Saint Therese of Lisieux. Make him or her the focus of your prayer this week.



“I feel inspired, especially when I see the dedication to the living Word of God on the part of the women’s groups, the catechists, communion ministers and delegates of the Word, because they put into practice in their own way what Jesus taught and because of their thirst to learn more about their Catholic faith and share it with others. I walk this path of God with the people in a land far from my own just to be with them and share with them the joys and sorrows of daily life, learning and growing together in what it means to be the people of God.”

—SISTER BARBARA NOLAND

Maryknoll Sisters

(Pictured standing on right)

Sister Barbara directs the Women’s Pastoral in San Andrés and other villages in Guatemala where the majority of men have migrated to the U.S. It is a program of monthly workshops to promote awareness of the equality of women and men; and to promote the formation and personal development of women, which is basic to a woman’s mission to her family and to her participation in community and Christian life.

Action

Learn more about Kairos Palestine, a Christian Palestinian movement, by reading and sharing their Easter Alert, a prayer and reflection guide from Easter to Pentecost <http://bit.ly/KairosPalestineAlerts>

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT



Jesus said, “I came into this world for judgment,
so that those who do not see might see, and those who do see might become blind.
JOHN 9:39

God is revealed in our brokenness

In today's Gospel, the disciples ask Jesus whose sin caused a man to be born blind – his own or his parents'. They cannot imagine any other answer to why such disability exists. Jesus does not answer directly but instead implies this situation is an opportunity for God's power to be revealed. Jesus says “While I am in the world, I am the light of the world” and he heals the man. Ironically, Jesus is judged by the Pharisees for healing the man on the Sabbath, yet the Pharisees are judged by the Light of the world, whom they don't recognize.

In life's greatest difficulties there rarely are answers to “why.” But there are opportunities for love and compassion to give birth to something new and good.

Jasmin Nario-Galace, a professor at the Center for Peace Education at Miriam College in Manila, shared this lesson from the four decades of war in Mindanao, a large island in the southern part of the Philippines. At the heart of the conflict lie deep-rooted prejudices against a minority Muslim and indigenous population – the Bangsamoro people.

“The cost of the war is enormous: 120,000 people dead; economic loss of 20 billion pesos on a daily basis; 982,000 people displaced in the year 2000 alone. The armed conflict has disrupted children's schooling, caused trauma, insecurity, fear, the loss of livelihood, and in particular, placed multiple burdens on women.

“Women bear the brunt of caring for the family when men are in the battlefield or have died. Women suffer
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from lack of health and sanitation facilities when in evacuation centers. And they have reportedly suffered from sex and gender-based harassment and violence.

“The peace process is a way to end this war – the cause of so much misery to so many. The nonviolent approach of the process also allows groups that had been historically marginalized – women, Muslims and indigenous peoples – to be consulted. New space has been opened to them.

“The peace process has created a space for the majority of the Filipinos to get to know the indigenous Bangsamoro people, a people whose narrative is almost entirely absent from Philippine history textbooks. It is an opportunity to transform mindsets and dispel stereotypes. It brings hope that soon, people will be leading a life of normalcy and stability.

“The women we consulted as part of the peace process are hopeful that doors will open for them to meaningfully participate in the public space, particularly in political affairs. It gives them and many others a chance to dream.”

Questions for Reflection

When have you felt positively engaged in your community?

How can you welcome others to become similarly engaged?

Prayer

Lord of Peace, we come to You in our need.
Create in us an awareness of the massive forces of violence and terrorism that threaten our world today.
Grant us a sense of urgency to activate the forces of goodness, of justice, of love and of peace in our communities.

Where there's armed conflict, let us stretch out our arms to our brothers and sisters.
Where there's abundance and luxury, let there be simple lifestyle and sharing.
Where there's poverty and misery, let there be dignified living and constant striving for just structures.
Where there's selfish ambition, let there be humble service.
Where there's injustice, let there be humble atonement.
Where there's despair, let there be hope in the Good News.
Where there are wounds of division, let there be unity and wholeness.
Where there are lies and deceit, let your Truth set us free.
Where there are thoughts of vengeance, let there be healing and forgiveness.

Help us to be committed to the Gospel of peace.
In spite of differences in faith traditions and ethnic roots,
Teach us Your spirit of mercy and compassion.
For it is only in loving imitation of you, Lord of Peace,
that we can discover the healing springs of life
that will bring about new birth to our earth
a new era of peace and a new harmony among all
Forever and ever. Amen.

—“Oratio Imperata for Peace” issued by the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines and prayed in all parishes during the month of March 2015, after a massacre on January 25 in Mamasapano, on the island of Mindanao.

Fast

Ask your family and friends what breaks their peace and what brings them peace. Think of a way you can make a difference for them.



“I first learned of the concept of accompaniment, of “walking with the people,” from the Maryknoll Sisters. This is the ministry to which I am called here in Nicaragua.

“Initially, my walk was with the farmworkers of the state coffee farm of La Fundadora in the mountains of Matagalpa. Then I began to accompany urban women who were developing a service for their pregnant sisters from the countryside. Rural women with high-risk pregnancies needed to give birth in the regional hospital in Matagalpa rather than at home in their communities. So we developed the Casa Materna, or Maternity House.

“The Casa provides food, shelter, medical care, education and transportation to and from the hospital and follow-up for mothers in their home communities. Now, as I walk with the pregnant mothers of the Casa, I still see my main ministry as accompaniment. It’s not so much the ‘doing’ as the ‘being with’ that is important.”

—CATHERINE (KITTY) MADDEN
Maryknoll Affiliates
(Pictured at right)

Action

Work for peace with racial justice in the U.S. Explore the resources offered by the Pax Christi USA Anti-Racism Team to dismantle personal and systemic racism.
<https://paxchristiusa.org/about/pax-christi-anti-racism-team/>

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT



“I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live.”

JOHN 11:25

We rise in love with peace

The Gospel reading invites us to reflect upon what it means to call Jesus the resurrection and the life. We hear that Lazarus, a good friend of Jesus, is dying. Mary and Martha, the sisters of Lazarus, send word to Jesus, asking him to come to Bethany to heal Lazarus.

But Jesus stays in Jerusalem, where tensions are rising. Large crowds respond to Jesus' preaching by pressuring him to announce himself as the Messiah. Jesus tells them to look at his works as evidence. Those who don't believe him attempt to stone him for blasphemy. Jewish leaders are observing all of this and growing hostile toward Jesus.

Then Lazarus dies. When Jesus comes a few days later, Martha says, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” Jesus replies “Your brother will rise.” Martha says, “I know he will rise, in the resurrection on the last day.”

Jesus tells her, “I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

Jesus goes to Lazarus' tomb where he prays and calls Lazarus out. It is a miracle. Jesus shows his power over death.

In the photograph above, two boys carrying water walk down a road next to an African Union military camp for “internally displaced people” near the town of Jowhar, Somalia in 2013. Fighting between clans had displaced more than 12,000 people there and some had sought safe shelter at the camp.

Bishop Giorgio Bertin, Apostolic Administrator of Mogadishu, Somalia, and Bishop of Djibouti, the country on Somalia's northeastern border, told participants at the Nonviolence and Just Peace conference in Rome in 2016 that “Somalia has become a land of violence.”

“I had been living in Somalia, and in particular in Mogadishu, from 1978 to 1991,” Bishop Bertin said. “The country was ‘peaceful’ though under a severe form of dictatorship. During the last years of the 1980’s political power became increasingly concentrated in the clan of the ruler at that time. This prompted the birth of different ‘liberation movements’ practically all with some sort of clan affiliation. When civil war broke out in 1990 the country went to pieces.”

Violence has left Somalia a failed state. War between clans has resulted in a million Somali refugees in neighboring countries, and 1.2 million internally displaced. Only one church remains intact and Bishop Bertin describes celebrating Mass there as “very dangerous.”

“Even if work has to be done silently,” Bishop Bertin said, “it is better to be here than not be here.”

“Our actions as Church are as Caritas,” Bishop Bertin said. The Catholic relief and development agency assists journalists to organize themselves and learn about human rights; produces “road shows” promoting nonviolence entitled “Put down the gun, take the pen,” and organizes interfaith prayer meetings. They also produce radio programs on Catholic social teaching and invite experts on conflict resolution to meetings among political and clan leaders. By promoting nonviolence, Bishop Bertin says “we are sowing the seed of the Gospel among the people.”

Questions for Reflection

Recall a time when you have offered and received kindness with a person who would consider you “the other.” How did it feel in the moment?

What do you see in the experience now?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Keep us from being preoccupied with worldly goods at the expense of justice.

"Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth." Help us not to be ruthless with one another, and to eliminate violence around us.

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." Let us not be impatient under our own burdens and unconcerned about the burdens of others.

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they shall be filled." Make us thirst for you and spread your love in our lives and in society.

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy." Grant that we may be quick to forgive and slow to condemn.

"Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God." Free us from our senses and desires, and fix our eyes on you.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God." Help us to make peace in our families, in our country, and in the world.

"Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of justice, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs." Make us willing to suffer for the sake of right rather than to practice injustice; and do not let us discriminate against our neighbors and oppress and persecute them.

Amen



"The church isn't a place; it's a way of being together. So even though we're in a Nuer tribe area of the U.N. camp, we intentionally invited Shilluk and Dinka tribes from other areas of the camp, especially the youth, to come here. It's a place where diverse people come to become one people, worshipping God together. Every time we gather on Sunday for worship, we are a family of God, not divided by tribe, at peace with each other."

— FATHER MICHAEL BASSANO
Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers

(Pictured at U.N. base in Malakal, South Sudan)

Fast

Pope Francis says in his World Day of Peace message that Jesus offers the Beatitudes as a "manual" for peacemaking. Take time for meditation on the Beatitudes. You may want to use this guide from the Archdiocese of Melbourne.

<http://bit.ly/BlessedAreYouMeditations>

Action

Name an opportunity you have in your church or community to be a peacemaker.

Sign up for the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns listserv, to receive our newsletter and action alerts about issues of peace and justice. www.maryknollogc.org

Follow the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative
<https://www.facebook.com/nonviolencejustpeace>



PALM SUNDAY

“Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord;
hosanna in the highest.”

MATTHEW 21: 9

Proclaiming the Good News

In the Gospel reading for the procession of palms, Jesus' journey finally reaches its destination – Jerusalem. Rome's representative, Pontius Pilate, has also arrived. Pilate rides into Jerusalem on a war horse past crowds shouting praise – an entrance befitting a conquering ruler.

But Jesus rides on a donkey. The scribes who wrote the Gospel of Matthew emphasize that Jesus is the fulfillment of Old Testament messianic prophecies. They include Zechariah 9: 9.

Shout for joy, O daughter Jerusalem! Behold, your king comes to you, meek and riding on an ass, and on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.

But they don't include the next verse from Zechariah:

He shall banish the war chariot from Ephraim, and the warhorse from Jerusalem. The warrior's bow shall be banished, and he shall proclaim peace to the nations. His dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.

Maybe the scribes didn't want to give the story away. It is told in the second Gospel reading for Palm Sunday – Jesus' Passion, death, and Resurrection. In dying and rising, Jesus redefines the good news a ruler brings – Jesus as the Suffering Servant has conquered not new lands but death itself, not with violence but with love; He has restored our relationship with God.

Jean-Jacques de Christ Nganya spoke at the Nonviolence and Just Peace conference in Rome in 2016 about the power of the good news in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where inter-ethnic and fratricidal wars have raged for more than twenty years. During years of what he described as “violent murderous madness” Jean-Jacque worked with “certain souls in love with peace and freedom” to found a local chapter of the Catholic

peace movement, Pax Christi, in Uvira, drawing on the experiences of the Pax Christi group in nearby Bukavu.

“As a living witness and a victim of the pangs of war in eastern DRC and the region,” Jean Jacque said, “I have resolved to contribute to the search for a peaceful way to solve and end the human barbarisms and widespread, systematic violations of human rights.”

“The task [of co-founding Pax Christi Uvira] was not easy for me,” Jean Jacque said. “It was a very difficult security situation and unsustainable socio-economic situation.” To simply communicate over the internet Jean Jacque had to travel by bicycle to the capital of the neighboring country Burundi.

“Despite difficulties – imprisonment, torture, insecurity, and being taken for a double agent by the political power in place – we held on to our commitment to peace and development by raising community awareness at all levels and for all strata of the population without distinction of sex, religion, ethnicity and race.”

“Nonviolence has become a culture and is gaining ground. Upholding nonviolence as the most appropriate way of life, recommended in the Bible, in the image of Jesus who is nonviolent, we are able to resolve conflicts. We still have a long way to go, but we are moving forward.”

Questions for Reflection

Imagine you were in Jerusalem at that time. Would you join the crowds welcoming Jesus or Pontius Pilate?

What can you do to promote peace as a culture in your life?

Prayer

Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
To be consoled as to console,
To be understood as to understand,
To be loved as to love;

For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
It is in dying to self that we are born to eternal life.

— “Peace Prayer” as known as the “Peace Prayer of St, Francis.”



“On one occasion after a bombing in our area of Narus, South Sudan, Sister Madeline McHugh and I sat under the trees with about 12 women for prayer and debriefing. We used the Scripture for the coming Sunday from Luke’s Gospel, chapter 6, where Jesus says we are to love our enemies. I asked the group how we would describe an enemy. Most of the women said that their enemy was the Khartoum fundamentalist Muslim government soldiers who were bombing them.

“Then one woman said: ‘I believe my enemy is someone who has wounded my heart, but whose wounds I do not know.’ She went on to say: ‘Maybe, if I can know the person’s story better, especially to know the person’s wounds, and the person can know my wounds, we would not be an enemy to each other.’ The theology of the Sudanese women has deepened my faith, compassion, and forgiveness.”

Fast

Fast from technology. Turn off your cell phone, computer, television. Use that time to care for your relationship with God, the earth, yourself, and others. Go for a walk, explore nature, seek out conversation with neighbors, especially those who are lonely.

Action

Join Pax Christi, the Catholic peace movement that seeks to model the Peace of Christ in our witness to the mandate of the nonviolence of the Cross.

If you are in the U.S., join Pax Christi USA, a membership organization that rejects war, preparation for war, every form of violence and domination, and personal and systemic racism. <https://paxchristiusa.org/>

For other locations, visit the website of Pax Christi International at <http://www.paxchristi.net/> and click “member organizations.”

—SISTER THERESA BALDINI
Maryknoll Sisters
(Pictured on left in Narus, South Sudan)

