



International Solidarity Reflection

Peace and Non-Violence

Shalom

October 2020

Introduction

Amid crises that have shaken our world, we are awakened to the urgent need to heal our relationships with creation and each other.

Call to Prayer

I ask God to help all of us to cultivate nonviolence in our most personal thoughts and values. May charity and nonviolence govern how we treat each other as individuals, within society and in international life. When victims of violence are able to resist the temptation to retaliate, they become the most credible promoters of nonviolent peacemaking. In the most local and ordinary situations and in the international order, may nonviolence become the hallmark of our decisions, our relationships and our actions, and indeed of political life in all its forms. *(Pope Francis for the celebration of the 50th World Day of Peace Jan. 1, 2017)*

Experience

The coronavirus has laid bare the deep roots of the ills of our world: racism manifested in cultural violence, economic injustice, warring factions, climate change and environmental disasters that could destroy the community and our planet. Response to the pandemic requires a fundamental shift away from the “unjust normal” of systemic and structural violence across the globe. A change from systems which destroys, dehumanizes and diminishes, to a culture of solidarity that seeks the fullness of life for all.

The killing of George Floyd by police officers in the United States mirrors similar tragedies illustrating centuries of racism in Western Europe, Australia, South America, and Asia. This violence is so deeply ingrained that it endures despite legal rulings and civil rights laws. Police brutality is, of course, just one of countless ways minorities and people of color suffer structural inequality and discrimination. The United States is, justifiably, the focus of intense anger, frustration, and disappointment from people across the world. Racism not only disrupts relationship between nations like the US and Mexico but also within nations like China thus threatening the lives of many people. Some political leaders, including Americans, proudly justify the use of authoritarian tactics to stifle protest against the abuse of power.

Reflection

Pope Francis wrote in his message celebrating of the Fiftieth World Day of Peace: “Christ’s message in this regard offers a radically positive approach. He unfailingly preached God’s unconditional love, which welcomes and forgives. He taught his disciples to love their enemies (*Matthew 5:44*) and to turn the other cheek (*Matthew 5:39*). When he stopped her accusers from stoning the

woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11), and when, on the night before he died, he told Peter to put away his sword (Matthew 26:52), Jesus marked out the path of nonviolence.”

Pause and then Response: “Lord, make us a means of your peace.”

In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis challenges us with these words.

“To act in this way means to choose solidarity as a way of making history and building friendship in society. Active nonviolence is a way of showing that unity is truly more powerful and more fruitful than conflict. Everything in the world is inter-connected.”

Pause and then response: “Lord, make us a means of your peace.”

Directional Statement 2017 “*Love Gives Everything*”

“The Triune God impels us into the heart of the world to be women of **peace**, hope and love.”

Pause and then response: Lord make us a means of your peace.

Action

Active nonviolence, as spirituality or a way of life, is key to the global shift laid out in *Journeying for the Care of Our Common Home* and envisioned in *Laudato Si'*. Both speak clearly: “No” to the multidimensional violence that plague our world and “yes” to human dignity and respect for the integrity of creation.

Here are examples of how we can practice nonviolence with one another in our day-to-day Interactions:

- Make this a day when you do not take people for granted. [Acknowledgement]
- Sincerely apologize to someone you may have hurt. [Amends]
- When your plans seem delayed, choose to be patient by identifying at least three ways that you can constructively use this time to support your goal. [Patience]
- Make this a day when you do not take people for granted. [Acknowledgement]
- Today, focus on what you appreciate most about the person you like the least. [Love]

Closing Prayer

✦ **Lord**, you asked for my hands that you might use them for your purpose. I gave them for a moment, then withdrew them, for the work was hard.

✦ **Lord**, you asked for my mouth to speak out against injustice. I gave you a whisper that I might not be accused.

✦ **Lord**, you asked for my life that you might work through me. I gave a small part that I might not get too involved.

✦ **Lord**, forgive my calculated efforts to serve you only when it is convenient for me to do so, only in those places where it is safe to do so, and only in those who make it easy to do so.

✦ **Lord**, forgive me, renew me, heal me, nurture me, empower me, send me out as an instrument of your peace and justice that I might take seriously the meaning of servant-leadership. Amen. (*Joe Seramane, Christian Aid Lifelines, South Africa*)