

# Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation News

## Congregation of the Sisters of Bon Secours



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### *United Nations International Day of Living Together in Peace* May 16

Living together in peace is all about accepting differences and having the ability to listen to, recognize, respect and appreciate others, as well as living in a peaceful and united way.

In 2017 the UN General-Assembly declared May 16<sup>th</sup> the **International Day of Living Together in Peace**, as a means of regularly mobilizing the efforts of the international community to promote peace, tolerance, inclusion, understanding and solidarity. The day aims to uphold the desire to live and act together, united in differences and diversity, in order to build a sustainable world of peace, solidarity and harmony.

As Sisters of Bon Secours, committed to working to “eliminate violence in all forms”, we partner with Pax Christi International in our efforts to create peace in our world. This issue of JPIC News will focus on the efforts of Pax Christi International in their global efforts to help us all become artisans of peace.

#### **Path of Nonviolence: Towards a Culture of Peace**

This past month the Vatican and Pax Christi International organized a workshop on the theme, “Path of Nonviolence: Towards a Culture of Peace” as part of the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative.

Participants from around the world engaged in dialogue about the root causes of violence, the hope for peace and reconciliation, and reflected on paths to a conversion to nonviolence. They noted that nonviolence is not only a method but a way of life, a way to protect and care for the conditions of life for today and tomorrow. Participants’ reflections will be shared with Pope Francis with the hope for a possible encyclical that will address these issues and challenges and will promote nonviolent initiatives as a way for mediation, rights, hope and love.

As members of Pax Christi International, the Sisters of Bon Secours applaud these actions to advance peace and commit ourselves to promote a spirituality and practice of active nonviolence in our lives.

Peace is a challenge. . .  
It entails a conversion of heart and  
soul; it is both interior and communal.

Pope Francis



#### **An Appeal to the Catholic Church to Re-commit to the Centrality of Gospel Nonviolence**

The Congregation of Bon Secours has committed ourselves to live this statement that was formulated by Pax Christi International after the historic Just Peace Conference in 2016. This Easter Season offers us an opportunity to reflect on this statement and live it out in our daily lives. The statement accompanies this Newsletter in English, French and Spanish.

May  
JPIC Days of Remembrance

May 1  
Feast of St. Joseph the Worker  
International Workers’ Day

May 15  
Anniversary of Papal Encyclicals  
Rerum Novarum (1891)  
Quadragesimo Anno (1931)  
Mater et Magistra (1961)

May 16  
International Day of  
Living Together in Peace

May 22  
International Day for Biological  
Diversity  
Celebrating 25 Years of Action  
for Biodiversity

May 24  
Anniversary of *Laudato Si’* (2015)

May 29  
International Day of  
United Nations Peacekeepers

## This Is What Nonviolence Looks Like . . .

### Democratic Republic of Congo

Inter-ethnic and fratricidal wars have plagued the Democratic Republic of Congo. Pax Christi is helping to build peace through school programs that promote human rights, teach democratic culture and train young people in active nonviolence. They are reaching across ethnic boundaries and practicing inter-ethnic reconciliation as the first step toward replacing a culture of violence with a culture of peace. This work extends to refugee camps where Burundian refugees and local Congolese children attend classes and, as pictured here, jump rope together. (Pax Christi International)



### South Sudan

April 11<sup>th</sup> concluded a two-day retreat at the Vatican for South Sudan's political leaders. Pope Francis kisses the feet of South Sudan President Salva Kiir as he prays and begs for peace in that country and that the leaders, Preside Kiir and Vice President Riek Machar, give peace a chance. (CNS photo/Vatican Media via Reuters)

**"We need to be artisans of peace, for building peace is a craft that demands serenity, creativity, sensitivity and skills."**

Pope Francis, Gaudate et Exultate

### Being an Artisan of Peace

#### For reflection and conversation

- What does the phrase "gospel nonviolence" mean to you?
- Notice, sit with and feel the normalized and systemic violence that is part of the culture in your area. Where do you see this? How does this aspect of our culture challenge you?
- What does it mean for you to personally commit to "end violence in all forms?"
- How can the Bon Secours Family help the church promote nonviolence?



### Latin America

Pax Christi International calls upon governments, the European Union, the Organization of American States, the United Nations and the Vatican, who have put the problem of extractives and their impact on their agendas, to exert more pressure on Latin American governments and transnational corporations to respect human rights and environmental standards and to heed the voices of affected communities.



### Europe

#### Pax Christi International Releases "The Europe We Want": A Manifesto on the May Elections of the European Parliament

On the occasion of the election of the members of the European Parliament (23-26 May 2019), Pax Christi International issued a manifesto encouraging candidates and citizens to choose for a renewed European project based on solidarity, fraternity and peace. Rather than spending huge amounts on a newly established "European Defense Fund", the manifesto urges the EU to instead invest its resources in:

- Holding the Earth's temperature rise below 1.5° C through courageous and socially responsible limitation policies inside Europe's boundaries as well as in poor and developing countries which are equally exposed to climate change, in line with the Paris climate agreement.
- Developing a culture of peace and nonviolence in conflict-ridden areas through social and sustainable economic development, justice and peacebuilding initiatives, and peace training and education.
- Promoting and ensuring nuclear disarmament, including European states signing and ratifying the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons which has been adopted at the UN.



Be sure to read the latest **UNANIMA International News from the UN & Around the World** that is posted on the Bon Secours International website and JPOTEL. The main, but not only, focus of the 22 Member Congregations of UNANIMA (representing about 23,000 Sisters in 81 countries) is Homelessness/Displacement as it relates to women and children. The reality of homelessness is a result of so many factors to which we as Sisters of Bon Secours and the Bon Secours family are committed: The Effects of Violence in every form, Economic Disparity/Injustice, Environment/Climate Change, Migration/Immigration of peoples and ultimately assaults of every type on human dignity.

Our Executive Director, Jean Quinn DW, is asking that all of us continue to share with UNANIMA our stories of homelessness/displacement in our own countries. Stories can be emailed to Sr. Fran Gorsuch at [Fran.Gorsuch@bshsi.org](mailto:Fran.Gorsuch@bshsi.org).

### International Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation Committee

- Sr. Teresa Margot Benites Montero, CBS (Peru)
- Sr. Fran Gorsuch, CBS (USA)
- Sr. Mary Beth Hamm, SSJ Co-chair
- Sr. Mary Leamy, CBS (Ireland)
- Sr. Anne Marie Mack, CBS (USA) Chair
- Sr. Noelia Lara Núñez, CBS (Peru)
- Sr. Marguerite Provost, CBS (France)
- Sr. Alice Talone, CBS (USA)
- Sr. Katherine Tierney, CBS (Ireland)
- Sr. Yolanda Morales Valiente, CBS (Peru)
- Sr. Chris Webb, CBS (USA)

## **An appeal to the Catholic Church to re-commit to the centrality of Gospel nonviolence**

As Christians committed to a more just and peaceful world we are called to take a clear stand for creative and active nonviolence and against all forms of violence. With this conviction, and in recognition of the Jubilee Year of Mercy declared by Pope Francis, people from many countries gathered at the Nonviolence and Just Peace Conference sponsored by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and Pax Christi International on April 11-13, 2016 in Rome.

Our assembly, people of God from Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and Oceania included lay people, theologians, members of religious congregations, priests, and bishops. Many of us live in communities experiencing violence and oppression. All of us are practitioners of justice and peace. We are grateful for the message to our conference from Pope Francis: “your thoughts on revitalizing the tools of nonviolence, and of active nonviolence in particular, will be a needed and positive contribution”.

### **Looking at our world today**

We live in a time of tremendous suffering, widespread trauma and fear linked to militarization, economic injustice, climate change, and a myriad of other specific forms of violence. In this context of normalized and systemic violence, those of us who stand in the Christian tradition are called to recognize the centrality of active nonviolence to the vision and message of Jesus; to the life and practice of the Catholic Church; and to our long-term vocation of healing and reconciling both people and the planet.

We rejoice in the rich concrete experiences of people engaged in work for peace around the world, many of whose stories we heard during this conference. Participants shared their experiences of courageous negotiations with armed actors in Uganda and Colombia; working to protect the Article 9, the peace clause in the Japanese Constitution; accompaniment in Palestine; and countrywide peace education in the Philippines. They illuminate the creativity and power of nonviolent practices in many different situations of potential or actual violent conflict. Recent academic research, in fact, has confirmed that nonviolent resistance strategies are twice as effective as violent ones.

The time has come for our Church to be a living witness and to invest far greater human and financial resources in promoting a spirituality and practice of active nonviolence and in forming and training our Catholic communities in effective nonviolent practices. In all of this, Jesus is our inspiration and model.

### **Jesus and nonviolence**

In his own times, rife with structural violence, Jesus proclaimed a new, nonviolent order rooted in the unconditional love of God. Jesus called his disciples to love their enemies (Matthew 5: 44), which includes respecting the image of God in all persons; to offer no violent resistance to one who does evil (Matthew 5: 39); to become peacemakers; to forgive and repent; and to be abundantly merciful (Matthew 5-7). Jesus embodied nonviolence by actively resisting systemic dehumanization, as when he defied the Sabbath laws to heal the man with the withered hand (Mark 3: 1-6); when he confronted the powerful at the Temple and purified it (John 2: 13-22); when he peacefully but determinedly challenged the men accusing a woman of adultery (John 8: 1-11); when on the night before he died he asked Peter to put down his sword (Matthew 26: 52).

Neither passive nor weak, Jesus' nonviolence was the power of love in action. In vision and deed, he is the revelation and embodiment of the Nonviolent God, a truth especially illuminated in the Cross and Resurrection. He calls us to develop the virtue of nonviolent peacemaking.

Clearly, the Word of God, the witness of Jesus, should never be used to justify violence, injustice or war. We confess that the people of God have betrayed this central message of the Gospel many times, participating in wars, persecution, oppression, exploitation, and discrimination.

We believe that there is no "just war". Too often the "just war theory" has been used to endorse rather than prevent or limit war. Suggesting that a "just war" is possible also undermines the moral imperative to develop tools and capacities for nonviolent transformation of conflict.

We need a new framework that is consistent with Gospel nonviolence. A different path is clearly unfolding in recent Catholic social teaching. Pope John XXIII wrote that war is not a suitable way to restore rights; Pope Paul VI linked peace and development, and told the UN "no more war"; Pope John Paul II said that "war belongs to the tragic past, to history"; Pope Benedict XVI said that "loving the enemy is the nucleus of the Christian revolution"; and Pope Francis said "the true strength of the Christian is the power of truth and love, which leads to the renunciation of all violence. Faith and violence are incompatible". He has also urged the "abolition of war".

We propose that the Catholic Church develop and consider shifting to a Just Peace approach based on Gospel nonviolence. A Just Peace approach offers a vision and an ethic to build peace as well as to prevent, defuse, and to heal the damage of violent conflict. This ethic includes a commitment to human dignity and thriving relationships, with specific criteria, virtues, and practices to guide our actions. We recognize that peace requires justice and justice requires peacemaking.

### **Living Gospel Nonviolence and Just Peace**

In that spirit we commit ourselves to furthering Catholic understanding and practice of active nonviolence on the road to just peace. As would-be disciples of Jesus, challenged and inspired by stories of hope and courage in these days, we call on the Church we love to:

- continue developing Catholic social teaching on nonviolence. In particular, we call on Pope Francis to share with the world an encyclical on nonviolence and Just Peace;
- integrate Gospel nonviolence explicitly into the life, including the sacramental life, and work of the Church through dioceses, parishes, agencies, schools, universities, seminaries, religious orders, voluntary associations, and others;
- promote nonviolent practices and strategies (e.g., nonviolent resistance, restorative justice, trauma healing, unarmed civilian protection, conflict transformation, and peacebuilding strategies);
- initiate a global conversation on nonviolence within the Church, with people of other faiths, and with the larger world to respond to the monumental crises of our time with the vision and strategies of nonviolence and Just Peace;
- no longer use or teach "just war theory"; continue advocating for the abolition of war and nuclear weapons;
- lift up the prophetic voice of the church to challenge unjust world powers and to support and defend those nonviolent activists whose work for peace and justice put their lives at risk.

In every age, the Holy Spirit graces the Church with the wisdom to respond to the challenges of its time. In response to what is a global epidemic of violence, which Pope Francis has labeled a "world war in installments", we are being called to invoke, pray over, teach and take decisive action. With our communities and organizations, we look forward to continue collaborating with the Holy See and the global Church to advance Gospel nonviolence.