



PEACE IS THE WAY

4th Theological Reflection

One of the many names for Jesus, the Incarnate Word, was the “Prince of Peace” (Eph 2:14 and Is 9:6). In this time of Advent as we prepare to welcome the Prince of Peace into the world anew, we take a few minutes to reflect on this concept of peace in our own lives, our communities, and our world.

Jesus came to bring peace to the world. The first message of the risen Christ to his disciples was, *“Peace be with you”* (Lk 24:36). We exchange these greeting with one another during our weekly celebration of the Eucharist: “Peace of Christ be with you.” So what is this peace of Christ? The Peace Christ revealed in the Scriptures is not just about the absence of war, but rather the fullness of life.

Think about the words of the prophet Isaiah that Jesus said he came to fulfill, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” (Lk 4:17-21) This is the peace we are called to help co-create with the Spirit of God.

*“To be at peace, humankind must be in right relationship with one another and with God.”*¹ The work of peace, justice, and the care of creation all seeks to bring healing and wholeness to these broken relationships between ourselves, the planet, and God. We can see how all of the areas are interwoven, and how we will not be able to achieve the peace of God, without first achieving justice in our world.

Looking at the realities facing us today, we have a lot of work to do to realize the peace and justice of God. We are inundated with news and stories of violence and injustice in our world today. This violence can take many forms whether physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual. All that denies the dignity and equal worth of all God’s creation is a form of violence.

One of the most blatant forms of physical and psychological violence is the perpetual warfare and exorbitant military spending of the U.S. government. How can we ignore the pain and final messages of the people in Aleppo experiencing violent confrontations and bombings? And there are many other parts of the world experiencing the same violence of war and conflict.

“America Has Been At War 93% of the Time – 222 Out of 239 Years – Since 1776.”² 54% of the Federal Discretionary Budget in 2016 went to Military and Defense. Gun violence continues to plague our communities, with over 13,000 deaths and over 26,000 injuries from firearms in 2015.³

In Mexico, it is now going on ten years since the start of the “war against drug trafficking”⁴ (2006), and even if the main Mexican drug kingpins have been detained, *their capture or abasement by the federal forces has not translated into a decrease of violence in the country or a weakening of the drug cartels*. In reality, there were 172,876 reported homicides from 2007-2016, according to the statistics of the National Public Security

¹ Vogt, Christopher. *The Promotion of Peace*. Catholic Moral Theology.

² <http://www.washingtonsblog.com/2015/02/america-war-93-time-222-239-years-since-1776.html>

³ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-34996604>

⁴ LA DECADA VIOLENTA. Reporte Indigo, 7 Diciembre 2016. www.reporteindigo.com



System (SNSP), and 28,937 people were disappeared, according to the National Registry of Missing or Missing Persons.

Although the internal war in Peru ended in 2000, remnants of terrorist groups and drug trafficking operating in the valley of the Apurímac, Ene and Mantaro rivers (VRAEM) have become a priority for the State which is why they continue to strengthen the institution of the Armed Forces. And while some countries have reduced spending on defense, in Peru defense spending has increased 1.7 billion soles between 2012 and 2016.⁵

The face of victims of violence in Peru is that of a young woman. A recent study by the Catholic Pontifical University in Peru⁶ indicates that at the national level that 7 out of 10 women between the ages of 18 to 29 have been victims of violence; and in Lima-Callao it is as high as 9 out of 10. In fact, on average, 11 femicides and 23 attempted murders are reported each month, *the highest figures in the last seven years* according to the Ministry of Women.⁷

Selfishness, hard heartedness, intolerance, fundamentalism... the world is hurting. Humanity has turned against itself. We need to ask for forgiveness for the destruction of so many lives. We need to rethink our relationships. We need to work for peace; life depends on it.

So what can we do to be artisans of peace? Earlier this year⁸ representatives from around the world gathered to discuss experiences of nonviolence, Jesus' way of nonviolence, how Nonviolence and Just Peace is already being lived out in communities, and how to move beyond unending wars – replacing the doctrine of “Just War” with “Just Peace.”

The final statement coming out of this gathering is titled: “An Appeal to the Catholic Church to Recommit to the Centrality of Gospel Nonviolence.” Some of the highlights of that appeal include: incorporating nonviolence explicitly into the life and work of the Church, training ourselves in nonviolent practices and strategies, initiating a global conversation on nonviolence, rejecting “just war theory,” and being a prophetic voice to challenge unjust world powers.

Pope Francis for the World Day of Peace also calls us to recognize: “*Non-Violence: A Style of Politics for Peace*.”⁹ This is because as people of faith we cannot remain indifferent. We must commit ourselves to incarnating the Peace of Christ in the world.

What if we each made a commitment for this coming year to support an environment of “just peace” through active non-violence? What kind of impact might we be able to have collectively?

“Jesus, the Incarnate Word, called his disciples to love their enemies (Mt 5:44), which includes respecting the image of God in all persons; to offer no violent resistance to one who does evil (Mt 5:39); to become peacemakers; to forgive and repent; and to be abundantly merciful (Mt 5-7). Neither passive nor weak, Jesus' nonviolence was the power of love in action.”¹⁰

⁵ PRESUPUESTO DEL MINISTERIO DE DEFENSA. El Comercio, 19 febrero 2016. www.elcomercio.pe

⁶ AUMENTA LA VIOLENCIA. Instituto de Opinión Pública, 3 diciembre 2016. www.entornointeligente.com

⁷ FEMINICIDIOS EN PERÚ. GRUPO RPP, 25 noviembre 2016. www.rpp.pe

⁸ CONFERENCIA DE NO VIOLENCIA Y PAZ JUSTA. Roma del 11 al 13 de abril de 2016.

⁹ JORNADA MUNDIAL DE ORACIÓN POR LA PAZ, para este 1 de enero del 2017.

¹⁰ Appeal to Catholic Nonviolence, <https://nonviolencejustpeace.net/final-statement-an-appeal-to-the-catholic-church-to-re-commit-to-the-centrality-of-gospel-nonviolence/>



Please, take some time to pray with an image of the Incarnate Word, asking him to teach you his way of peaceful love in action.

Biblical Text: Mt 5:38-42

- How do you understand Jesus' proposed third way of nonviolence?
- What does it mean to return good for evil?
- How do you seek to understand someone who is different from you?
- How do you confront those who are violent or promote violence?

We have been called to promote practices and strategies of nonviolence.

- How can you learn more about nonviolent strategies and skills and incorporate them into your own life and ministry?
- How is Nonviolence and Just Peace connected to our incarnational spirituality, recognizing Jesus, the Incarnate Word, is the Prince of Peace?

We end this reflection asking the God of Life to give us all we need to realize God's peace, the peace that has been sown into our very being.

Give us your peace – *Pedro Casaldaliga*

Give us, Lord, that strange Peace
That sprouts in the midst of struggle
Like a flower of fire;
That breaks in the middle of the night
Like a hidden song;
That arrives in the midst of death
Like a longed for kiss.

Give us the Peace of those always walking,
Stripped of any advantage,
Clothed in the wind of nebulous hope.
That Peace of the poor
Who have already overcome fear.
The Peace of the free
Who cling to life.
The Peace that is shared
In fraternal equality
Like water and the Host.