

Just News

News that brings you the Social Justice teachings of Jesus Christ

Living Out Jesus' Third Way: **A Personal Experience of Non-Violent Action**

Mike Shawver

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." - Matthew 5:9

When I entered the Jesuit Novitiate in August of 2001, I never really gave this passage much thought. Little did

I know that it would greatly influence my life to follow Jesus' third way of active non-violence in working for peace, as Fr. Garcia, SJ described in his article in this newsletter.

Jesuit Martyrs

While taking a class on Catholic Social Teaching, I was outraged to read about six Jesuit priests who were killed in El Salvador on November 16, 1989, because of their use of the University of Central America (UCA) and its resources to be a voice for the innocent poor who were caught in the middle of

the civil war. They were advocating for an alternative to the violence and are examples of Jesus' third way.

The Jesuits and 75,000 innocent people in El Salvador were killed by military personnel, who were trained in these violent tactics at the US Army's School of the America's (SOA), located in Columbus, Georgia. I was shocked that our government would provide such brutal and inhumane training, yet these abuses are well documented in a UN Truth Commission Report in 1992.

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**"75,000 innocent people in El Salvador were killed by military personnel...
...who were trained at the US Army's School of the America's"**

Just War Doctrine: **Catechism of the Catholic Church**

Compiled by: Ed Monjaras

Article 5

The Fifth Commandment
III. Safeguarding Peace
Avoiding War

Catechism Paragraph 2307

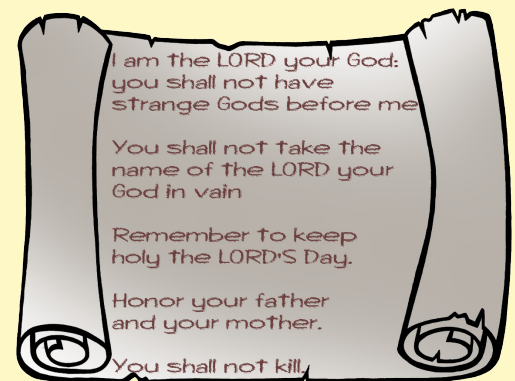
The fifth commandment forbids the intentional destruction of human life. Because of the evils and injustices that accompany all war, the Church insistently urges everyone to prayer and to action so that the divine Goodness may free us from the ancient bondage of war.

Catechism Paragraph 2308

All citizens and all governments are obliged to work for the avoidance of war.

However, "as long as the danger of war persists and there is no international authority with the necessary competence and power, governments cannot be denied the right of lawful self-defense, once all peace efforts have failed."

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Spirituality and Peaceful Action

Fr. Rafael Garcia, S.J.

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus states: “You have heard it said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth’. But I say to you, offer no resistance to one who is evil.” (Mt. 5: 38-39a) In the Beatitudes, he states, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God (Mt. 5: 9). During Jesus’ unjust arrest in Gethsemane, the following situation develops: “And behold, one of those who accompanied Jesus put his hand to his sword, drew it, and struck the high priest’s servant cutting off his ear. Then Jesus said to him. ‘Put your sword back into its sheath, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword.’” (Mt. 26: 51-52).

Was Jesus a Pacifist?

As Catholic Christians we profess that Jesus is our Savior and Lord. But also, he is our teacher and role model. The “Word became flesh”, among other things, to show us how to be truly human. Jesus is constantly teaching through his actions and words. We may rightfully ask the question: Was Jesus a pacifist?

The Gospels reveal that Jesus was neither a pure pacifist, nor the typical male, many of whom habitually act and react violently. He experiences anger when faced with injustice and oppressive religion, as promoted by leaders like the Scribes and Pharisees. With passion, Jesus overturns the tables of the money changers at the Temple. The Gospel does not say that Jesus hurt anyone! In this action, he also overturned the “seats of those who were selling doves” (cf. Mt. 21: 12ff). This is significant because doves were sold to poor persons for Temple sacrifices. Mary and Joseph offered doves when they presented the Child Jesus at the Temple (cf. Luke 2: 24). The rich offered lambs (cf. Lev. 12: 6ff)

Do you experience anger in the face of injustice? Hopefully we all do! If not, one is blind or numb to injustice. The challenge is transforming anger into positive energy.

A Third Way

An insightful, short book to read – and the title says it all – is *Jesus and Nonviolence – A Third Way*, by Walter Wink. In this book, Wink states, “There are three general responses to evil: passivity; violent opposition and the third way of militant non-violence articulated by Jesus.”

(pg 12). Wink states, “Jesus abhors both passivity and violence as responses to evil.” (pg 13).

This “third way” involves exposing the evil for what it is. It involves creativity and action. It involves prayer and discernment. It also involves a desire for a better society as well as a desire to convert the perpetrator, rather than crush or destroy him/her. One is not to respond “in-kind”, evil with evil, violence with violence.

Jesus is so creative in this! When Scribes and Pharisees virulently accuse the woman of adultery and want to stone her to death per the law, Jesus pauses and states “if you have no sin, cast the first stone”. No one dared to throw a stone! (cf. Jn. 8: 1ff). He also gives the men a “way out”, rather than retaliate right there! There was the hope that reflecting on what happened, the men could change. This is third-way conflict resolution!

Wink also insightfully explains how Jesus’ teaching on “offer the left cheek”, “give him your cloak as well” and “walk another mile” (cf. Mt. 5: 39b – 42) were meant to expose the evil, given the culture of the time. It’s not a teaching on passively accepting violence.

The high point of Jesus’ life is third way: His Passion and Crucifixion. He neither flees from Gethsemane nor fights back. He allows the “sin of the world” to be exposed and from his action comes Resurrection, New Life, a new way of living in the world. (A sin exposed is the drive for power and control irrespective of truth).

But Christians in the past and present opt more for the other two “ways”, passivity or violence. Militarism is typically not seen as being in conflict with Christianity; often, it is praised. Violence in entertainment is accepted and even liked by Christians. We are accept and are satisfied when the good person kills the bad one.

Given modern weaponry, it appears that we’re on a growing path to destruction unless we begin to practice this “third way”. The first and second way are leading to more hate, racism, violence, war, divisions, ethnic cleansing and destruction.

Cultivating a spirituality of and the corresponding action in the “third way” is quite a challenge: Don’t avoid the conflict or injustice, and don’t fight it in-kind. May we allow the Risen Christ and the Spirit to teach us, as we listen to our hearts and truly engage in the world with empathy.

“Blessed are the peacemakers”

Matthew: Chapter Five; Verse Nine

Hiroshima Bombing: A Catholic Response

Joseph Sandoval

August 6 marks the 66th “anniversary” of the destruction of the Japanese city of Hiroshima by an atomic bomb. There have been numerous discussions and even arguments about the necessity of this bombing. But where does the Catholic Church stand on this issue? Although the Magisterium did not immediately respond to the specific bombing incident, the Church’s response to the use of nuclear weapons can be found in Church documents, such as the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II) and the Catechism of the Catholic Church (see article on this issue). Two prominent Catholic leaders of the 20th Century also had important things to say on this.

The Vatican

There was not an immediate response from the Vatican directly about the Hiroshima bombing, but several popes have spoken up about the issue. Pope Paul VI called the U.S. use of atomic bombs “butchery of untold magnitude.” Pope John Paul II added it is “a self-destruction of mankind” and linked Hiroshima and Nagasaki with Auschwitz as “places marked by man’s sin that should now be places of pilgrimage.” The Catechism and Vatican II documents state that “any act of war aimed indiscriminately at the destruction of entire cities or extensive areas along with their population is a crime against God and man himself. It merits unequivocal and unhesitating condemnation.” The Catechism goes on to state that the danger of modern warfare is that it enables countries with nuclear weapons to commit crimes against God and man.

Fr. Pedro Arrupe, SJ

Pedro Arrupe was a Jesuit priest who witnessed the destruction first hand and ministered, both spiritually and medically, to the victims. In his book *Recollections and Reflections of Pedro Arrupe, S.J.* he recalls the days immediately after the destruction.

Recognizing his responsibility to serve the spiritual as well as medical needs of the victims that came to him crying “Father help me,” Fr. Arrupe celebrated Mass the morning after the bombing. But his responsibility as a medic still called him. The Jesuits took in 150 bombing victims, of which an amazing 149 survived.

Fr. Arrupe and his fellow Jesuits were some of the first westerners, and Christians, to respond to this tragedy. Their loving and heroic response may not have been an official response of the Catholic Church, but it demonstrated the true response that should be expected from anyone calling themselves followers of Jesus Christ.

Dorothy Day

Dorothy Day’s spiritual and social justice convictions inspired her to found the Catholic Worker movement in May of 1933. Her autobiography *The Long Loneliness* describes her response to the Hiroshima bombing.

Less than a month after the bombing of Hiroshima, Dorothy Day wrote a scathing position statement on the atomic bomb. In it she criticized President Harry Truman for his jubilation over the deaths of several hundred thousand Japanese citizens. She also reminded the American people of Jesus’ declaration that what you do unto the least of these my brethren, you do unto me.

The Prayer of Saint Francis

Attributed to the 13th-century saint Francis of Assisi

Make me a channel of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me bring your love.

Where there is injury, your pardon Lord,
and where there’s doubt, true faith in you.

Make me a channel of your peace.

Where there’s despair in life, let me bring hope.

Where there is darkness only light,
and where there’s sadness ever joy.

O Master, grant that I may never seek
so much to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved, as to love with all my soul.

Make me a channel of your peace.

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
in giving of ourselves that we receive,
and in dying that we’re born to eternal life.

Third Way (continued)

I wanted to do something to stand up for these innocent victims of violence. In November of 2002, I attended the first of my eight year annual non-violent protests at the SOA. It was great to be united with over 15,000 people, especially the students and staff from every one of the 28 Jesuit Universities, and numerous Jesuit high schools & parishes from all over the country and many fellow Jesuits.

The Jesuits hosted a Mass for the Ignatian Family and friends on Saturday night. It was powerful to pray & share the Eucharist for a common cause and purpose of peace in memory of the Jesuits and all those killed.



The Protest

The actual protest was very prayerful and extremely non-violent, so as not to be hypocritical of the violence we were protesting. The names of those killed were read and the crowd responded “presente”, meaning the people were present in spirit. Name after name was called for several hours, creating a very solemn and prayerful experience. We marched forward and placed wooden crosses in the fence of the SOA as a memorial.

Most recently, my wife Rosie and I attended the annual sack cloth and ashes protest in Los Alamos to remember all of the innocent people killed in the bombings of Hiroshima & Nagasaki and to call for an end of the use of nuclear weapons. People wear sack cloth as a way of repenting for the horrible killing of so many innocent lives. The event is sponsored by PaxCristi

(<http://paxchristiusa.org/> & <http://paxchristinewmexico.org/>), which is an organization working for the Catholic peace movement.

Peace and Justice

One of my favorite quotes is from Pope Paul VI, when he said, “If you want peace, work for justice.” To me, this means that the only true way to bring about peace is to put an end to hunger, poverty, preventable diseases, homelessness, and all other injustices in the world. As long as these exist, people will resort to violence and any other means possible to provide for their families.

Jesus worked for peace and non-violence in all of his actions throughout his entire life. I follow his example to do what I can to bring about a world without violence and injustice of any kind.

<http://paxchristiusa.org>

<http://paxchristinewmexico.org>

Just War (continued)

Catechism Paragraph 2309

The strict conditions for legitimate defense by military force require rigorous consideration. The gravity of such a decision makes it subject to rigorous conditions of moral legitimacy. At one and the same time:

- The damage inflicted by the aggressor on the nation or community of nations must be lasting, grave, and certain;
- All other means of putting an end to it must have been shown to be impractical or ineffective;
- There must be serious prospects of success;
- The use of arms must not produce evils and disorders graver than the evil to be eliminated. The power of modern means of destruction weighs very heavily in evaluating this condition.

These are the traditional elements enumerated in what is called the “just war” doctrine.

The evaluation of these conditions for moral legitimacy belongs to the prudential judgment of those who have responsibility for the common good.