

The Catholics for Nonviolence Pledge

Faithful to the transforming vision of Jesus Christ and no longer willing to accept violence in our homes, in our schools, on our streets, or in our global community:

I pledge to practice Gospel Nonviolence to heal the violence and conflict in our lives, our families, our parishes, our schools, our communities, and throughout all of God's creation;

I pledge to cultivate peace by proclaiming the Christian message of healing and hope, of renewal and reconciliation, of life and love to all people;

I pledge to address the root causes of violence that continues to affect people throughout the Archdiocese of Chicago so that we can end the cycle of violence and create a more just and peaceful city and world.

Catholics for Nonviolence
Archdiocese of Chicago



Catholicism and Gospel Nonviolence

The modern foundations of a Catholic turn toward peacemaking and nonviolence began with Pope John XXIII's 1963 encyclical *Pacem in Terris* that "questioned all warfare and opened the door to a church of nonviolence." In the documents of Vatican II and succeeding meetings, the Catholic Church articulated a central commitment to peacemaking rooted in justice that addresses the causes of war.

In 1983, the US Catholic Bishops pastoral letter, *The Challenge of Peace*, "proposed a theology of peace, explored the scriptural basis of peacemaking, imagined Jesus as a peacemaker and elevated nonviolence as a real Christian option."

Ten years later, the US Catholic Bishops issued a letter entitled *The Harvest of Justice Is Sown In Peace* in which they wrote: "Although nonviolence has often been regarded as simply a personal option or vocation, recent history suggests that in some circumstances it can be an effective public undertaking as well. Dramatic political transitions in places as diverse as the Philippines and Eastern Europe demonstrate the power of nonviolent action, even against dictatorial and totalitarian regimes... These nonviolent revolutions challenge us to find ways to take into full account the power of organized, active nonviolence." (US Bishops' Conference. *The Harvest of Justice Is Sown in Peace* (Washington, DC, 1993), 10-11.)

Source: John Dear, SJ, *Persistent Peace* (Loyola Press, 2008).

More recently, Pope Benedict XVI reflected on Christian nonviolence:

"This page of the Gospel is rightly considered the 'magna carta' of Christian nonviolence; it does not consist in surrendering to evil -- as claims a false interpretation of "turn the other cheek" (Luke 6:29) -- but in responding to evil with good (Romans 12:17-21), and thus breaking the chain of injustice. It is thus understood that nonviolence, for Christians, is not mere tactical behavior but a person's way of being, the attitude of one who is convinced of God's love and power, who is not afraid to confront evil with the weapons of love and truth alone. Loving the enemy is the nucleus of the 'Christian revolution.'"

-- Pope Benedict XVI, "Pope Benedict XVI Calls for a 'Christian Revolution,' Invites Faithful to Respond to Evil With Good," Public Address in Vatican City, www.Zenit.org, Feb. 18, 2007.

"Above all we want to make the voice of Jesus heard. He was always a man of peace. It could be expected that, when God came to earth, he would be a man of great power, destroying the opposing forces. That he would be a man of powerful violence as an instrument of peace. Not at all. He came in weakness. He came with only the strength of love, totally without violence, even to the point of going to the Cross. This is what shows us the true face of God, that violence never comes from God, never helps bring anything good, but is a destructive means and not the path to escape difficulties. He is thus a strong voice against every type of violence. He strongly invites all sides to renounce violence, even if they feel they are right. The only path is to renounce violence, to begin anew with dialogue, with the attempt to find peace together, with a new concern for one another, a new willingness to be open to one another. This is Jesus' true message: seek peace with the means of peace and leave violence aside."

-- Pope Benedict XVI, Good Friday, 2011