



UNITED STATES CATHOLIC MISSION ASSOCIATION

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Resolution to Endorse

“Appeal to the Catholic Church to Re-Commit to Centrality of Gospel Nonviolence”¹
2016 USCMA Annual Meeting

Preamble:

As missionaries, we see first-hand how powerful and transformational practices of creative nonviolence can be in situations of conflict and violence. We also see the immense suffering caused by violence and a failure to address the root causes of conflicts, which especially impacts the poor and marginalized in our communities as well as the environment.

Resolution:

The members of the United States Catholic Mission Association endorse and commit to implementing the “Appeal to the Catholic Church to Re-Commit to the Centrality of Gospel Nonviolence,” which was developed at the Rome Conference in April 2016. As an organization and as individuals we will seek concrete ways to implement the key elements lifted up in the appeal.

Rationale:

As Catholic missionaries, we encounter and often live in the peripheries. We have often been enabled to see with clearer eyes and more gentle hearts how the Spirit is moving in the signs of the times. As the appeal states, 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 missionaries and others engaged in work for peace around the world. We witness courageous negotiations with armed actors in Uganda and Colombia; accompaniment in Palestine; and nearly countrywide peace education in the Philippines, etc.

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.

In his own times, rife with structural violence, Jesus proclaimed a new 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). 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 in our daily lives.

Today, a notable trajectory is unfolding in recent Catholic social teaching. Pope John XXIII wrote that war is not a suitable way to restore rights; Vatican II and Pope Paul VI said it is “our clear duty to strain every muscle

¹ <https://nonviolencejustpeace.net/final-statement-an-appeal-to-the-catholic-church-to-re-commit-to-the-centrality-of-gospel-nonviolence/>
The website includes videos of the discussion, FAQ’s, and other resources.

as we work for the time when all war can be completely outlawed.”² Pope Paul VI also linked peace and development, and said “the Church cannot accept violence, especially the force of arms.” 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.”

Building on this trajectory, there is a need for the Catholic Church to develop and consider shifting to a Just Peace approach based on Gospel nonviolence.³ 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. We recognize that peace requires justice and justice requires peacemaking.

We also are inspired and appreciate that, among others, the Japanese Conference of Catholic Bishops and the JPIC Commission of the Union of Superior Generals (USG- men religious) and the International Union Superiors General (USIG- women religious) in Rome have each recently endorsed this appeal.

Suggested Actions:

1. Also endorse the appeal as an individual and consider requesting your organization (ex. mission committee, parish, school, religious order, etc.) to endorse the appeal by filling out the form [here](#).⁴
2. Share the appeal broadly within your communities and networks. Identify key people you have relationships with to approach about endorsing the appeal.
3. Identify a key nonviolent practice to help scale-up, such as nonviolent resistance movements, unarmed civilian protection, restorative justice, trauma-healing, etc.

² Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, 1965, par. 81. Pope Paul VI, World Day of Peace Message, 1975.

³ <http://catholicmoralthology.com/on-the-vatican-conference-and-just-peace/>

⁴ <https://nonviolencejustpeace.net/final-statement-an-appeal-to-the-catholic-church-to-re-commit-to-the-centrality-of-gospel-nonviolence/>