

Gospel of Nonviolence: the Way of the Church

Presented at 2018 Kansas City Provincial Assembly by Gabino Zavala, Peace & Justice Ministry Director

The Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM) passed a resolution in their annual meeting last August challenging us to live Gospel nonviolence. This resolution commits and calls members to “use both our individual charisms and experience as religious leaders 1) to build up nonviolent practices and a culture of nonviolence; 2) to invite Pope Francis to offer an encyclical on nonviolence, which would include a shift to a just peace approach to transforming conflict.” The resolution reminds us that “Jesus calls us to love our enemies and be peacemakers (Mt. 5:7)... We need a deeper understanding of Gospel nonviolence to better live out our faith, transform our societies, and ‘build bridges’ as well as cultures of just peace.”

As Precious Blood Members, Companions, Volunteers, and Amici, how do we use our charism of renewal and reconciliation to live out, as a community and as individuals, a culture of nonviolence?

Since this resolution was passed overwhelmingly by CMSM we have seen on-going wars in Syria, Afghanistan, and Yemen. Terrorism continues to be an assault on our lives. Shootings have sadly become an almost daily occurrence in our country. There have been 33 school shootings since August 3, 2017—and we can’t forget the horrendous shooting in Las Vegas. Human trafficking is a worldwide tragedy. We continue to have the death penalty as the law of the land in 35 states. Our prisons are violent warehouses in our broken criminal justice system. Violence against women—sexual, emotional and physical—is a daily reality in our society. Our actions and our lifestyle are an assault on our common home not caring for the gift of creation.

Violence is not just a result of guns and weapons of war. There is violence in our words and attitudes. It is evident in racist behavior. We can see violence in the treatment of those that are different as we see the treatment of the LGBTQ community as well as immigrants and refugees. Our policy of separating immigrant children from their parents is a violent policy. We experience bullying and neighborhood and family disputes.

Violence does not bring about peace. In war there are no winners. We don’t need to kill the killers to

show that killing is wrong. The answer to stopping violence in school is not arming the teachers and proliferating the use of guns in our gun culture.

Precious Blood Spirituality

Our spirituality of the Precious Blood calls us to build community through the inclusion of the marginalized, to walk in solidarity with those who suffer, and to seek reconciliation in a divided world.

We are united by the bond of charity and rooted in the spirituality of the Blood of Christ. We are called to participate in the renewal of the Church, collaborating as incorporated members and Companions to promote conversion and reconciliation, pursuing justice and peace. You can say that Gospel nonviolence is not only the way of the Church, it is the way of the Precious Blood Missionary.

Pope Francis—World Day of Prayer 2017

In his annual statement on the occasion of the World Day of Prayer for Peace Pope Francis wrote:

“True followers of Jesus embrace his teachings about nonviolence. May charity and non-violence govern how we treat each other within society and international life. May nonviolence become the hallmark of our decisions, our relationships and our actions. The last century we experienced two World Wars, the threat of nuclear war, and other wars. Now we fight war throughout the world piecemeal. We fight war on different kinds of levels: abuses suffered by migrants, devastation of the environment, terrorism, all kinds of acts of violence. Violence is not the cure for our broken world!”

The CMSM Resolution calls us to:

- Pray for conversion to Gospel nonviolence, confront violence in our own lives, and reach out to those we find difficult to love or consider enemies
- Educate ourselves about the Gospel of nonviolence and a just peace approach to conflict resolution

- Significantly build up nonviolent practices in skills training, advocating for nonviolence and the investment of resources
- Offer accompaniment and protection to vulnerable populations and other marginalized persons along with all of God's creation
- Build up alternatives to war and to other forms of direct violence and to move away from justifying war

Questions

Let us pray and reflect on the following questions:

How do I intentionally practice nonviolence in my life at home and in the work place?

How have we, the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, used both our charism and experience as religious leaders, to significantly build up practices and a culture of nonviolence?

In what specific ways have we responded and can we respond to this resolution as individual members and Companions and leaders of faith communities? ✠