



Catholic Nonviolence
Days of Action
21st September- 2nd October

What is nonviolence?

Respects the
lives of
others

Challenges
what is not
fair or just

Offers
alternatives
to violence
and war

Nonviolence in action- Liberia

For more than 20 years Liberia suffered from brutal civil wars - until a group of women decided they'd had enough.

Leymah Gbowee coordinated the Women in Peacebuilding Network in Liberia and brought Christian women together in 2003 to pray and work for peace, soon joined by Muslim women. 2,500 women picketed President Charles Taylor's motorcade every day with signs reading 'The women of Liberia want peace now'.



Taylor agreed to peace talks with opposition warlords and a delegation of women then kept vigil outside the negotiations in Ghana. After seven weeks and no cease-fire they escalated their nonviolent protest, forming a human barricade across the doors, so the male negotiators could not leave until agreement was reached. When security guards tried to arrest the women they threatened to undress - a cultural taboo for the guards to witness. Three weeks later a peace deal was signed.

The women went on to work alongside UN Peacekeeping Forces, persuading fighters to hand over their weapons and go back to school. Their voter registration campaign in 2005 increased the proportion of women voters from 15% to 50%. Liberians elected President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf who, together with Leymah Gbowee, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2011.

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1. How are these women acting nonviolently?
2. Why do you think they chose to act nonviolently? Was this important?
3. Why do you think it was effective?

**Nonviolence is the key to creating a
peaceful world**



Agree

Disagree

'One can never be sure that one is completely on the side of nonviolence or that the other person is completely on the side of violence.

Nonviolence is a direction, not a separating line.'

Thich Nhat Hanh

'Nonviolence, for Christians, is not mere tactical behaviour 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.'

Pope Benedict XVI, Feb 2007

'People try nonviolence for a week and when it 'doesn't work' they return to violence, which hasn't worked for centuries.'

Theodore Roszak

1. What do you understand from these quotes?
2. What are they trying to say about nonviolence?
3. Do you agree with the quotes? Why/Why not?

Active nonviolence is a way of showing that unity is truly more powerful and more fruitful than conflict.

Pope Francis, WPD 2017

Jesus gives us many examples of how we should live peacefully with one another.

Read the piece of scripture below. What do you think Jesus is telling us about how we should live? Why might this be a call to nonviolence?

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons and daughters of God...You have learned how it was said, ‘You must love your neighbour and hate your enemy’; but I say to you, Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you. In this way, you will be daughters and sons of your Creator in heaven.”

Matthew 5:9, 43-45

Where do we see violence in our communities?
What do you think is the cause of this violence?

Where do we see nonviolence in our communities?
What is its effect?

How can we act in more nonviolent ways?

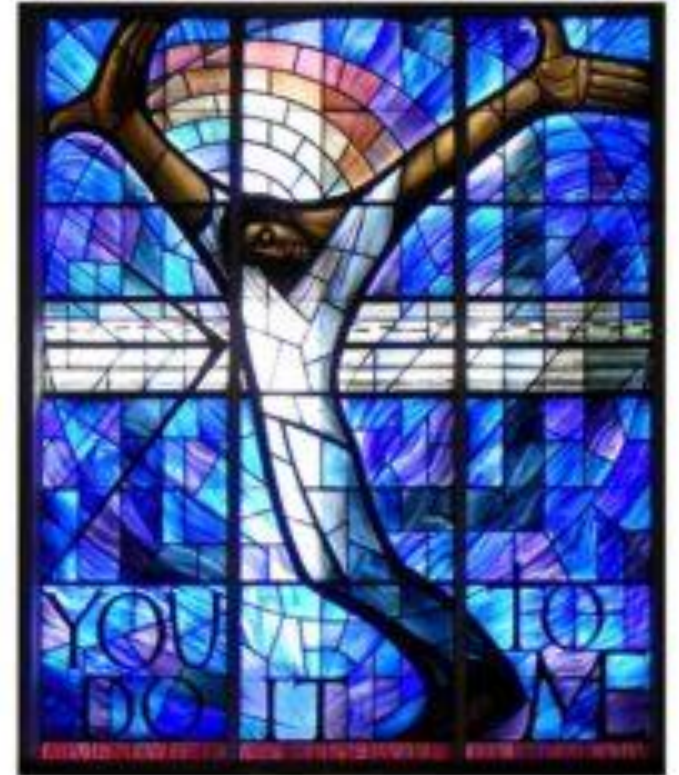
What would a nonviolent world look like?

Prayer

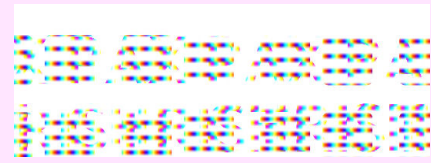
Dear Lord,

Help me to follow the example of Jesus by working for peace in my daily life. Help me to act nonviolently, recognising that all I meet are also children of God. Help me to be open to others and to forgive. Help me to reject violence, trusting in your goodness and mercy.

Amen



In John Petts' window in Birmingham, Alabama, his black Jesus shows the two hands of nonviolence: one stopping oppression, the other reaching out in forgiveness and reconciliation.



To continue exploring nonviolence other resources that may be useful are:

- Elements of peace cards:
<https://paxchristi.org.uk/peace-education/secondary/lessons-workshops/elements-of-peace/>
- Nonviolence educational resources (including the *Two hands of nonviolence and Petts window*) available at:
<https://paxchristi.org.uk/resources/nonviolence-in-action/educational-resources-for-nonviolence/>
- Other resources are available on our website at:
<https://paxchristi.org.uk/resources/nonviolence-in-action/>
- The Catholic Nonviolence Initiative website also has a range of resources:
<https://nonviolencejustpeace.net/>

The image on the front of this PowerPoint is a stained glass window by artist John Petts at 16th Street Baptist Church, Birmingham, Alabama.

The story of nonviolence in action in Liberia comes from the resource ‘Nonviolence in Action 2’