

Nonviolence and just peace

Template for small group reflection



The Catholic Nonviolence Initiative (CNI) was formed after the April 2016 Nonviolence and Just Peace conference; its goal is to promote the message of the conference and to assist the Catholic Church in spreading an understanding about and commitment to Gospel nonviolence. It is a project of Pax Christi International, the Catholic peace movement.

CNI invites local and regional groups to organize gatherings in order to grow and deepen the process that started at the April 2016 conference within your own context. You are invited to share your feedback and learnings with CNI.

Getting started

Establish a core group

- Identify a core group of co-organisers who can work with you, people who are good communicators, open to others, who can help you plan. You can work with them in advance of to clarify the following.
- Once you have identified your participant group you will need to identify some people who are good at facilitating groups and others who can take notes.

What do you want to achieve?

- Do you want the group to talk/reflect on the themes of violence and nonviolence?
- Do you want to start to build a resource base of people to work with on this issue?
- Or do you have other ideas/suggestions based on your context and needs?

Who do you want to involve? Between 10-20 participants would work well. (This could also be adapted for larger groups.) Possible participants include:

- Pax Christi members/partners in your region
- People involved in education and formation
- Grassroots activists/catechists
- Partners from other peace organisations
- Members of religious congregations
- Include people who are willing to be **reflectors**, who initiate input during each session. (*These can change from one session to another and may be drawn from the groups listed above.*)

How will you work?

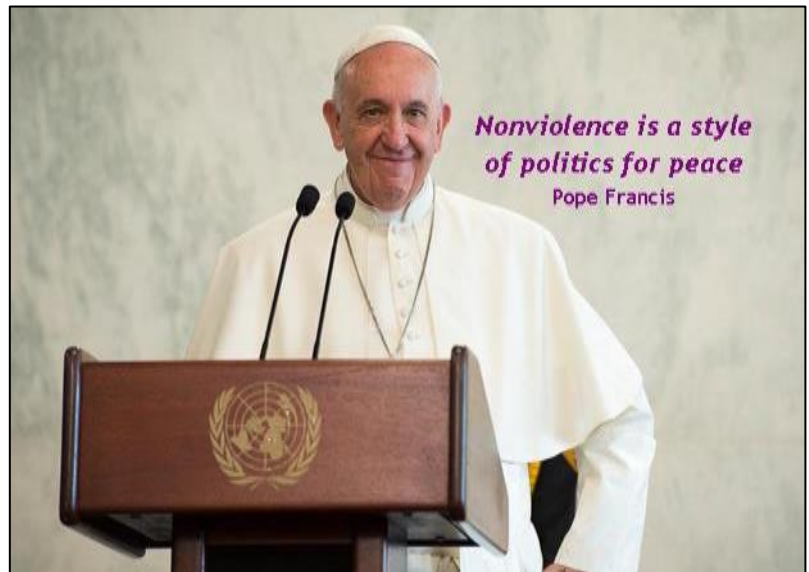
- These gathering will work best when people are most involved/engaged – so participation and listening are key!

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- How much time can people give to this? Models can vary, but at least **five sessions of two hours** would be needed. * **See *proposed sessions/themes in appendix***
- Propose some homework. Participants should read the [Rome Appeal](#) and the [2017 World Day of Peace \(WDP\)](#); they also will be encouraged to read/reflect on other articles and documents from the CNI website as the process evolves.



Format for sessions (with approximate times)

Setting

- You will need a space that allows for chairs to be moved (for small group work), and that allows for a semi-circle//circle of 5-6 chairs to be arranged within larger group//flip-chart and pens

Style of meeting

- You will need one key facilitator who welcomes everyone/sets ground rules/opening prayer/sets out the process (10 minutes)
- The reflectors (who are chosen from the participants) will start the discussion process for each session. (20 minutes)
- The process then opens up, allowing others to join the discussion (30 minutes)
- Break – informal sharing (15 minutes)
- Small group work – 4-5 people. Participants are given an opportunity to respond to what they have heard, identify key ideas and themes and capture these to bring forward to final session and share with CNI (20 minutes)
- Time for evaluation, what did we learn/how did we work? (10 minutes)
- What we need to prepare for next time/readings/theme for next time (5 minutes)
- Closing prayer/reflection (5 minutes)

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Guidelines for facilitators/reflectors/note-takers

Facilitator's role:

- Welcome the participants and, if it is the first session, asks the participants to introduce themselves (name, affiliation, what brought them to this session/what motivates them on this topic, etc.). Share an opening prayer.
- Keep an eye on the 'sharing' process, encourage people to keep to time, remind people to move from the 'empty' seats when they have finished sharing.
- Draw first sharing process to a close and then introduce group reflection work.
- Draw this to a close; take feedback.

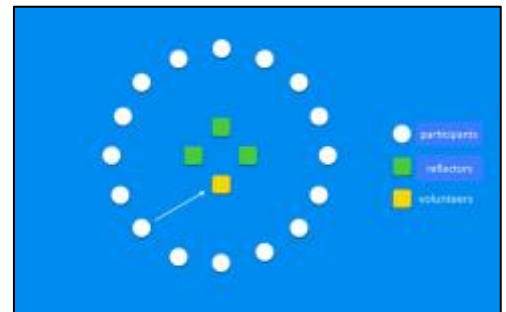
Small group facilitators' role: Help to keep conversation moving/ensure everyone has an opportunity to speak, help to keep on topic.

Reflectors' role: Prepare a presentation (five minutes maximum) giving your perspective on the theme of the session. Be prepared to enter a conversation with others once all reflectors have contributed.

Note-takers' role: Capture key outcomes/themes from the discussion/key outcomes from final session. This might be done on flip-chart for all to see.

Process for sharing: Notes for facilitator and reflectors

- Once welcome and introduction is complete, reflectors are invited to enter the center/semi-circle. In addition to the chairs for the reflectors, keep two extra chairs empty. Other participants sit around them in a circle. (see diagram)
- Introduce reflectors by name. Explain that each will speak for no more than five minutes on the theme of the session. Invite participants to hold on to themes/issues they may want to return to.
- Ensure that reflectors keep to their time; offer a one-minute warning.
- Once each has spoken, allow a few minutes for reflectors to raise questions/comments with one another.
- Other participants are then invited to step up to sit in one of the empty chairs in front of the Reflectors and can ask a question or offer a comment. Participants may stay for brief dialogue, and should leave when the dialogue slows or when they are asked to return to their seat.
- Lead reflectors can leave their seats at the front of the room and join the larger group of participants, and others can take their space and share their thoughts. They are to return to their seats when they have finished.



Please send comments and feedback to Judy Coode, j.coode@paxchristi.net

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Appendix

Suggested sessions – please change and adapt to reflect your needs/the issues you face in your context.

Session 1: Experiences of nonviolence: What are specific experiences of nonviolence in your life? What might we learn from such experience to provide soil for theological reflection and action planning? What works in your local context? Where are there gaps?

Session 2: Jesus' way of nonviolence: How do recent experiences of nonviolence help illuminate our understanding of Jesus' way of nonviolence, our understanding of how to engage conflict? How does Jesus help illuminate the roots of nonviolence? What do we know about Jesus' approach and practices for nonviolence and engaging conflict? How might we integrate recent theological reflection on nonviolence? How can we appropriate these insights into present day contexts OR what would it look like today to "embrace Jesus' teaching on nonviolence" (WDP 2017)? How can we "cultivate nonviolence in our most personal thoughts and values" and "daily gestures," as well as our structures and culture? (WDP 2017)

Session 3: Nonviolence and Just Peace: How are Catholic communities already embodying and practicing just peace? Are any of the following proven practices helpful for your local context: nonviolent resistance, restorative justice, trauma-healing, conflict transformation, unarmed civilian protection, and nonviolent civilian-based defense. What are the developments in theological reflection on just peace and how does this build on the scriptures and trajectory of Catholic Social Thought? How would a turn to just peace impact our moral analysis of conflicts, practices, and engagement with the broader society, including policy makers?

Session 4: Moving beyond war: Recall the mission of the Church and consider what role the Church might play in today's context. Recall Vatican II's call for Catholics to embrace our "clear duty to strain every muscle to outlaw war." If violence is "not the cure" and "at best leads to forced migrations and enormous suffering" (WDP 2017), then discuss additional reasons for and the ramifications of the Catholic Church moving beyond the language and reasoning of "just war" to a new moral framework. Grounded in the Sermon on the Mount (WDP 2017), discuss some key elements of a more fruitful ethical framework for engaging conflict and addressing the responsibility to protect situations by developing the themes and practices of nonviolent conflict transformation, nonviolent intervention and just peace.

Session 5: Spreading the message. How do we take this discussion and actions to a wider community. out into our parishes/communities/schools....? What has to happen in schools, parishes, adult formation to deepen an understanding of nonviolence. What resources do we need for this work? Who might our allies be?