



*Affirming the vision and practice of active nonviolence
at the heart of the Catholic Church.*

A project of Pax Christi International

Parish action guide for Gospel nonviolence

The [Catholic Nonviolence Initiative](#) was launched at the [Nonviolence and Just Peace Conference](#), which was held in Rome April 11-13, 2016 and co-sponsored by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, [Pax Christi International](#), and other international bodies.

The conference's [final statement](#) calls on the Church to, among other things: **Integrate Gospel nonviolence explicitly into the life, including the sacramental life, and work of the Church.**

Gospel nonviolence is a way of life marked by three foundational dimensions of Jesus' spirituality: unconditional love in action; rejection of violence; and the healing power of restorative justice.

Jesus calls us to this Gospel nonviolence in our relationships with one another, in our church, and in our larger world. Concretely, this means putting Gospel nonviolence into practice in our families, our parish, our work-places, our neighborhoods, our city, our society, our world, and in our relationship with the earth.

Gospel nonviolence in the parish

The local parish is the privileged site for nurturing Jesus' way of Gospel nonviolence. As the setting in which Catholics most often celebrate, learn about, and practice their faith, the parish is the place where this way of Gospel nonviolence can be discovered and nourished—liturgically, sacramentally, catechetically, and pastorally.

Many parishes already engage in the way of nonviolent love, especially in organizing particular ministries and in practicing the works of mercy. At the same time, most parishes can go more deeply into Jesus' way of Gospel nonviolence.

Getting started in the deeper work of Gospel nonviolence

Form a parish Gospel Nonviolence Committee to assist the parish in assessing how it could become more centered in Jesus' call to Gospel nonviolence.

Reflect on some or all of the questions below or use the questions in [this parish action kit](#) with parish leadership and the Gospel Nonviolence Committee as you create a vision for your parish:

- What would it mean for our parish to become a Gospel-based nonviolent community? What would it mean for us put Jesus' nonviolence into practice throughout our church?
- How would we treat one another?
- What would bringing nonviolence more clearly into our liturgy and sacraments look like?

- What would be involved in having someone on our pastoral team trained in conflict transformation or restorative justice?
- How would this impact the work we do in the church and in our larger neighborhood, city and world?
- What practical actions for change flow from this?

If possible, **organize listening sessions** with parishioners and use the same questions to gather the wisdom of the broader parish community.

Use the collected wisdom from your reflections to begin to plan concrete action steps in the following areas:

- Liturgy and preaching
- Sacraments: baptism, reconciliation, holy communion, confirmation, holy orders, marriage, anointing of the sick
- RCIA and ongoing faith formation (study groups, retreats, workshops)
- Clergy, pastoral team, and parish council trained in conflict resolution and restorative justice
- Ministries
- Where applicable, the parish school — students, teachers, administrators, parents
- Work in the larger neighborhood, city, world

Prayer and formation:

- Use this prayer service: [Commit to the centrality of Gospel nonviolence](#).
- Develop regular prayer intentions at Mass for conversion and advancing nonviolence and just peace; include nonviolent peacemakers and conscientious objectors in your parish's prayers of the faithful.
- Watch [the conference videos](#) and [the webinars](#) produced about the conference.
- Read the [Nonviolence and Just Peace conference final statement](#) and use these questions for reflection.
- Invite [a guest speaker associated with the conference](#) to speak at your parish.
- Include Gospel nonviolence and daily practices as part of formation programs on all levels.
- Set up regular trainings (monthly or bi-monthly) on different skills such as nonviolent communication, restorative circles, trauma healing, nonviolent resistance, and unarmed civilian protection/peace teams.

Policy advocacy

- Advocate all level of governments to integrate restorative justice processes into the justice system and school system.
- Advocate all level of governments to increase investment in peacebuilding and violence prevention programs (e.g. the Cure Violence model, [peace education](#) in schools).
- Advocate for police departments to require substantial, ongoing, frequent [nonviolence and de-escalation training](#) of police and to pilot deployments of unarmed police as is done in the UK, Norway, New Zealand, Ireland, etc.

Mobilization

- As a parish, [endorse the final statement](#) of the Nonviolence and Just Peace conference.
- If you are in the U.S., contact [Pax Christi USA](#) to learn how to start a Pax Christi group.
- Create and train a local or regional Catholic team to provide nonviolent presence in situations of social tension (e.g., [DC Peace Team](#).)
- Promote local programs of restorative justice, trauma healing, and conflict transformation as apostolic ministries of parishes.

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