



Office of the Archbishop
835 North Rush Street
Chicago, IL 60611-2030
312.534.8230
archchicago.org

April 4, 2019

Dear Friends in Christ,

As you gather for "Path of Nonviolence: Toward a Culture of Peace," a workshop co-sponsored by the Holy See's Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development and Pax Christi International's Catholic Nonviolence, I send you my sincere greetings. I was grateful to be invited by the dicastery to take part in this landmark gathering in Rome, but, unfortunately, I have a long-standing commitment that prevented me from joining you. Nevertheless, I am happy to share a brief reflection on the critical importance of this assembly.

In our time of tremendous suffering, we are called to take a clear stand for active nonviolence and against all forms of violence. Violence is not simply specific acts of cruelty but the structures and global systems that dehumanize our brothers and sisters, robbing them of their God-given dignity. These structural forms of violence range from military systems to violent entertainment; from racism and sexism to economic injustice and the growing climate crisis. In the midst of this pervasive culture of violence, we are called to turn clearly and deliberately to the faithful nonviolence of Jesus.

We are grateful for the prophetic leadership of Pope Francis, who has called the Church and the world to pursue the way of nonviolence for justice, peace and care for creation.

We are extremely thankful for his message for the 2017 World Day of Peace, "Nonviolence: A Style of Politics for Peace," which brought important attention to the power of active nonviolence, and for his ceaseless call for nonviolent solutions throughout the world.

Following in the footsteps of Jesus and inspired by Pope Francis' vision, the Church is called to be a global leader of nonviolence. As they have taught, violence will not solve the monumental challenges we, as the human family face. Only active and creative nonviolent solutions will do this.

Therefore, I invite us to boldly integrate Gospel nonviolence at every level of the Church—dioceses, parishes, religious orders, seminaries, universities and schools—through formation, preaching, pastoral life, advocacy and education, including peace and nonviolence studies programs.



Path of Nonviolence: Toward a Culture of Peace

April 4, 2019

Page Two

Moreover, I invite us to initiate a global conversation on nonviolence—within the Church, with people of other faiths, and with the larger world—on how to respond to the monumental crises of our time with the vision and strategies of active nonviolence.

In the Archdiocese of Chicago, we have committed ourselves to address the problem of violence in our communities by fostering a culture of nonviolence. We recently established the Violence Prevention Initiative, which is mobilizing and supporting nonviolent solutions. When we launched this effort, Pope Francis encouraged us by writing: "I assure you of my support for the commitment you and many other local leaders are making to promote nonviolence as a way of life and a path to peace in Chicago. ... a culture of nonviolence is not an unattainable dream, but a path that has produced decisive results. The consistent practice of nonviolence has broken barriers, bound wounds, healed nations—and it can heal Chicago." We are taking Pope Francis' words of encouragement seriously.

During this gathering in Rome, I invite you to reflect deeply on key insights about nonviolence as we call on the Church we love to follow more closely in the footsteps of the nonviolent Jesus:

- Nonviolence is at the heart of the Gospel
- Nonviolence is the calling of the Church
- Nonviolence is a way of faith *and* a method for action
- Nonviolence is constructive
- Nonviolence is effective
- Nonviolence applies to all aspects of life, and
- Nonviolence is at the heart of a culture of peace

As Pope Francis said in his 2017 World Day of Peace message, "To be true followers of Jesus today...includes embracing his teaching about nonviolence." He committed the Church to translate this teaching into action when he declared, "I pledge the assistance of the Church in every effort to build peace through active and creative nonviolence."

It is my prayer that this gathering in Rome will advance this growing initiative for nonviolence in our Church and our world.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Blase Cardinal Cerny".

Archbishop of Chicago