

- nonviolence@paxchristi.net):
 - Can you name a context/contexts of conflict, violence or war that has prompted your determination to seek nonviolent responses?

A story shared at the Second African Synod in Rome. During the first African Synod in 1994 there was Genocide in Rwanda and the Bishops were not able to attend the Synod. At the Second African Synod, there was a Sister who was participating at the Synod who shared her personal story.

She worked in prison ministry after the Genocide and in the prison met a person who killed her father and some of her family members. Meeting him face to face was a big challenge for her. She said she was preaching about forgiveness and trying to engage the prisoners in the conversation. This man whom she recognized as the killer of her family, told her that he was sure to be executed, but would die in peace if he would be forgiven by this sister. He begged her to forgive him for what he has done. She said she began to shiver with anger, and was challenged to nonviolence as a response. She broke into tears, and finally decided to forgive him. It was not easy to embrace him... a gesture of forgiveness. One of the theme of forgiveness for the 2nd African Synod came out of this story. This has really inspired me to seek nonviolent responses in conflict situations.

I also experienced the refugees from Rwanda, (both Hutus and Tutsis) were hosted in our convent in Zambia. We found them to be so tensed and not able to share the stories of their experience. We did not know how to help these religious sisters. It was only later that I discovered that they belonged to the two tribes and were afraid of each other, the hatred was so much, the pain was great and tested at the situation as being sisters, and of different tribes in this time of war and genocide.

These experiences have awakened me to depth of hatred in times of war, where emotions and religious values are tested. The story of a woman whose son was killed by a young man, was forgiven by the mother and adopted this young man as her own son, was another example of nonviolent response.

Ofcourse we have examples of Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela who were able to have the nonviolent approach to bring about freedom to the countries.

Being in Africa, I am aware, that there is an impact of slave trade and its impact on people even now. The memories and the hatred that is in our collective consciousness of being oppressed by nations who colonized other nations. Over the years, women have suffered with the system of patriarchy, even in the church. It is difficult to forgive.

- **Strengths and opportunities created by active nonviolence in the face of violence and war?**
- Jesus resisted evil to the end: he contended with Pilate, he warned women of Jerusalem that things would be worse for them than it was for him if the system was allowed to remain the same, he questioned Pharisees his whole life, and he broke every law that made love impossible. What he did not do was to become what he sought to change. He did not become destructive. He did not become vindictive. He did not become mean. He became a resister who refused to bite back. And his resistance changed the world.

The recent picture of migrants crossing the river in Macedonia comes to my mind. The

people created a human chain to help the migrants cross the river, instead of riots and violence. They kept the value to help the migrants, a positive action. If we can do what is possible and positive, in a creative way, instead of being blocked by violence which only creates hatred .

- Non violent resistance brings the force of conviction and self sacrifice , a force that no force can match. Nonviolent resistance becomes the only possible response for those who do not wish to become what they hate.
- Non violent resistance insists that evil must not be repeated in the effort to defeat it. Injustice done in the name of justice is still injustice.
- The strength of nonviolent resistance lies in its determination to do no harm to the other in the course of resisting harm.
- Nonviolent resistance is committed to making friends out of enemies. The goal of nonviolent resistance is to concentrate on issues rather than on belittling, demeaning, destroying the people who hold positions different from our own.
- Nonviolent resistance condemns systems, ideas, policies that oppress but never launches personal attacks against individuals who are the agents of those systems.
- Maleness is not the problem; patriarchy , that cluster of ideas and assumptions which makes men the center of the system, is the problem.
- Nonviolent resistance absorbs physical attack without striking back physically.
- Nonviolent resistance refuses to sow hate for the enemy .

Feminism rejects exclusion, harm, oppression as ways to defend ourselves from the world around us . Centered in the nurturance of life and all its processes, Christian feminism offers the spirituality of nonviolence to a world that uses one generation to satisfy the inability of another one to make peace.

Where and how do you feel we need to invest energy in moving towards a deeper and wider practice of nonviolence within the Catholic community?

- We need to look at the theology we practice as Church community. What is our experience of God today? What is the image of God? We need to question our dualistic thinking and approach. We need to think wholistic.
We need to be committed to inclusion, sacredness of the body, to defense without violence, to spiritual integrity .
- We need to look at the rules and doctrines which does not serve anymore, which does not promote the experience of God.
- We need to Question the separateness of body and soul.
Feminism, with its awareness of the wholeness of creation and its valuation of the female on equal terms with the male, offers us a chance to look again at the sacredness of the body, of all bodies. The bodies of women everywhere. The bodies of Syrian children. The bodies that are abused sexually, the persons that are

trafficked for sexual pleasures of men and greediness of a few. The bodies of unborn babies, the bodies of men who are used on the battlefields of the world to maintain the systems of the world against the people of the world. When the body is valued for its filtering of the divine, aggression against it has no place.

- Shifts that needs to happen in our Church communities.

During this year of Mercy, Church reconcile with different other group and within the Church Community.

Seminary formation, to respect and develop the feminine

the awakening of the Common home , Pope Francis talks about, to a ecological conversion, so that we may know the values that bring us harmony and peace. More in contact with nature and learn the wisdom from nature.

From Ego to Essence, to recognise the uniqueness of each person and living being.

That we come out of our separateness and dualistic worldview .

Work with couples to recognise the dignity , equality and humanity of each person.

Zero tolerance of gender based violence.

From knowing about God to promote experiencing of God.

Approach to our Catechesis: From doctrines and rules to experiencing the spirit of God . Body , mind, soul meditation.

Respect for Earth and recognise the destruction we have done and ask pardon from God.

Build and deepen our relationship with nature, one another and God.

Deal with the issue of power struggle, which is contributed by the Hierarchical church.

Power over to power within.

Meditations groups to be strengthened to create harmony and peace.

Submitted by sr. Lynette Rodrigues