“At the Crossroads: Active Nonviolence in a Time of Crisis and Opportunity”

CALL TO OPENING PRAYER  
Bob Podzikowski

OPENING SONG – Last Night I Had the Strangest Dream  
Julie Beutel

Last night I had the strangest dream, I’d ever dreamed before.
I dreamed the world had all agreed to put an end to war.

I dreamed I saw a mighty room, filled with women and men,
And the papers they were signing said, they’d never fight again.

And when the papers all were signed, and a million copies made,
They all joined hands and bowed their heads, and grateful prayers were prayed.

And the people in the streets below were dancing ‘round and ‘round.
And the guns and swords and uniforms, were scattered on the ground.

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OPENING PRAYER  
Michele Matuszewski

God of love beyond measure, we hear your call to open our arms wide to let the suffering of the world come into our lives. We cannot remain passive in the midst of the challenge. We desire to live your love with total abandon without counting the cost or the reward. We long to care deeply for all of your creation and to make a difference where we can. Help us to dedicate ourselves prayerfully and actively to banishing violence from our hearts, words and deeds, to becoming nonviolent people and to building nonviolent communities that care for our common home. Grant us strength and wisdom; we pray to live in justice and peace every moment, everywhere. Amen.

CALL TO CLOSING PRAYER

Bob Podzikowski

CLOSING SONG – A Song of Peace (Finlandia)

Julie Beutel

1) This is my song, a song for all the nations. A song of peace, for lands afar and mine. This is my home, the country where my heart is, here are my hopes my dreams, my holy shrine. But other hearts in other lands are beating, with hopes and dreams as true and high as mine.

2) My country’s skies are bluer than the ocean, and sunlight beams on clover leaf and pine. But other lands have sunlight, too, and clover, and skies are everywhere as blue as mine. Oh hear my song, oh God of all the nations. A song of peace for their land and for mine.

CLOSING PRAYER

Mary Power

Lord God of peace, hear our prayer! We have tried so many times and over so many years to resolve our conflicts by our own powers and by the force of our arms. How many moments of hostility and darkness have we experienced; how much blood has been shed; how many lives have been shattered; how many hopes have been buried… But our efforts have been in vain. Now, Lord, come to our aid! Grant us peace, teach us peace; guide our steps in the way of peace. Open our eyes and our hearts, and give us the courage to say: "Never again war!"; "With war everything is lost." Instill in our hearts the courage to take concrete steps to achieve peace. Lord, God of Abraham, God of the Prophets, God of Love, you created us and you call us to live as brothers and sisters. Give us the strength daily to be instruments of peace; enable us to see everyone who crosses our path as our brother or sister. Make us sensitive to the plea of our citizens who entreat us to turn our weapons of war into implements of peace, our trepidation into confident trust, and our quarreling into forgiveness. Keep alive within us the flame of hope, so that with patience and perseverance we may opt for dialogue and reconciliation. In this way may peace triumph at last, and may the words "division", "hatred" and "war" be banished from the heart of every man and woman. Lord, defuse the violence of our tongues and our hands. Renew our hearts and minds, so that the words which always bring us together will be "brother" and "sister," and our way of life will always be that of: Shalom, Peace, Salaam! Amen.

- Pope Francis, June 4, 2014 -
VOW OF NONVIOLENCE

Recognizing the violence in my own heart, yet trusting in the goodness and mercy of God, I vow for one year to practice the nonviolence of Jesus, who taught us in the Sermon on the Mount:

“Blessed are you who are peacemakers, for you shall be called the sons and daughters of God ... You have learned how it was said, ‘You must love your neighbor 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.”

Before God the Creator and the Sanctifying Spirit, I vow to carry out in my life the love and example of Jesus:

By striving for peace within myself and seeking to be a peacemaker in my daily life;
By accepting suffering rather than inflicting it;
By refusing to retaliate in the face of provocation and violence;
By persevering in nonviolence of tongue and heart;
By living conscientiously and simply so that I do not deprive others of the means to live;
By actively resisting evil and working nonviolently to abolish war and the causes of war from my own heart and from the face of the earth.

God, I trust in your sustaining love and believe that just as You gave me the grace and desire to offer this, so You will also bestow abundant grace to fulfill it. Amen.

From Pax Christi USA

2021 Pax Christi Michigan State Conference Keynote Speakers

Ken Butigan  Jean Stokan
Clearly, the Word of God, the witness of Jesus, should never be used to justify violence, injustice or war. We confess that the people of God have betrayed this central message of the Gospel many times, participating in wars, persecution, oppression, exploitation, and discrimination.

We believe that there is no “just war”. Too often the “just war theory” has been used to endorse rather than prevent or limit war. Suggesting that a “just war” is possible also undermines the moral imperative to develop tools and capacities for nonviolent transformation of conflict.

We need a new framework that is consistent with Gospel nonviolence. A different path is clearly unfolding in recent Catholic social teaching. Pope John XXIII wrote that war is not a suitable way to restore rights; Pope Paul VI linked peace and development, and told the UN “no more war”; Pope John Paul II said that “war belongs to the tragic past, to history”; Pope Benedict XVI said that “loving the enemy is the nucleus of the Christian revolution”; and Pope Francis said “the true strength of the Christian is the power of truth and love, which leads to the renunciation of all violence. Faith and violence are incompatible”. He has also urged the “abolition of war.”

We propose that the Catholic Church develop and consider shifting to a Just Peace approach based on Gospel nonviolence. A Just Peace approach offers a vision and an ethic to build peace as well as to prevent, defuse, and to heal the damage of violent conflict. This ethic includes a commitment to human dignity and thriving relationships, with specific criteria, virtues, and practices to guide our actions. We recognize that peace requires justice and justice requires peacemaking.

**Living Gospel Nonviolence and Just Peace**

In that spirit we commit ourselves to furthering Catholic understanding and practice of active nonviolence on the road to just peace. As would-be disciples of Jesus, challenged and inspired by stories of hope and courage in these days, we call on the Church we love to:

- Continue developing Catholic social teaching on nonviolence. In particular, we call on Pope Francis to share with the world an encyclical on nonviolence and Just Peace;
- Integrate Gospel nonviolence explicitly into the life, including the sacramental life, and work of the Church through dioceses, parishes, agencies, schools, universities, seminaries, religious orders, voluntary associations, and others;
- Promote nonviolent practices and strategies (e.g., nonviolent resistance, restorative justice, trauma healing, unarmed civilian protection, conflict transformation, and peacebuilding strategies);
- Initiate a global conversation on nonviolence within the Church, with people of other faiths, and with the larger world to respond to the monumental crises of our time with the vision and strategies of nonviolence and Just Peace;
- No longer use or teach “just war theory;” continue advocating for the abolition of war and nuclear weapons; and,
- Lift up the prophetic voice of the church to challenge unjust world powers and to support and defend those nonviolent activists whose work for peace and justice put their lives at risk.