

## Lenten Reflection 2013

*During Lent, we are invited to fast from the violence that so pervades our culture—as well as the daily violence in our own lives, manifested in thought, attitude, and spirit.*

In 2007, the Conference of Major Superiors of Men; Education for Justice; Center of Concern; Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, Office for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation; and the Franciscan Friars, Holy Name Province composed a weekly series of reflections that encouraged a Lenten Fast from Violence. Sadly, we continue to live in a culture of violence in which such a fast is most appropriate. Happily, the season of Lent continues to offer us an opportunity to repent of our violent ways and to turn to peace.

We can begin our Fast from Violence by reading the Gospels where we learn from our finest Teacher, Jesus, that the greatest commandment is Love: love of God, love of neighbors, even love of enemies; Jesus who stood up to a murderous mob on behalf of a prostitute, restored the ear of a soldier about to arrest him under false charges, and forgave those who tortured and executed him without just cause; Jesus who blessed peacemakers and those who hunger for justice; Jesus who is the ultimate model of nonviolence.

We can also be informed by Catholic Social Teaching which tells us that “each person’s life and dignity must be respected, whether that person is an innocent unborn child in a mother’s womb, whether that person worked in the World Trade Center or a market in Baghdad, or even whether that person is a convicted criminal on death row” (USCCB Administrative Committee, *Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility*, p. 13). Similarly, it tells us “we show our respect for the Creator by our care for creation” (USCCB Administrative Committee, *Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility*, p. 15).

To Fast from Violence, we must draw from these teachings and abandon our fears and the anger that tempts us to vengeance. We must replace arrogance with humility, suspicion with trust, greed with generosity, indifference with empathy, hatred with love. Whether we are taking a stand on gun violence or drone warfare,

racial profiling or ethnic cleansing, domestic violence or human trafficking, we must keep these teachings foremost in our minds and let them guide our words and deeds so that violence diminishes as peace grows.

A Fast from Violence is not like any fast from favorite foods; it is much harder. Here are some additional suggestions to nourish you along the way.

- ❖ Follow the full Lenten reflection series for a Fast from Violence. It can be found on the web.
- ❖ Celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Pope John XXIII’s encyclical, *Pacem in Terris* (Peace on Earth) by reading it at the Vatican website.
- ❖ Commemorate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the U.S. Catholic Bishops’ pastoral letter, *The Challenge of Peace: God’s Promise and Our Response*, by reading it at the old U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops website.
- ❖ Learn more about Catholic Social Teaching by visiting the new U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops website.
- ❖ Pray.
- ❖ Speak kindly, act compassionately, and advocate for corporate practices and government policies that put human dignity and the sanctity of creation before a lust for power and a passion for profit.

Finally, join Pax Christi Metro New York on its 31<sup>st</sup> annual Good Friday Way of the Cross/Way of Peace across Manhattan on March 29<sup>th</sup>. Commemorate Jesus’ passion and on-going suffering in the world today. The Walk begins at Dag Hammarskjold Plaza, 47<sup>th</sup> Street between First and Second Avenues, across from Holy Family Church, at 8:30 AM and proceeds to and along 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, ending near Holy Cross Church between Eighth and Ninth Avenues.

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