

SUGGESTED ACTIONS FOR THE CATHOLIC NONVIOLENCE DAYS OF ACTION

The climate crisis is growing more urgent with each passing day. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) recently released a [report](#) declaring “a code red for humanity.” The Vatican’s Dicastery for Promotion of Integral Human Development announced a seven-year pursuit of total sustainability, with [seven specific goals](#).

Inspired by the *Laudato Si’* Action Plan, two members of the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative’s executive committee, Marie Dennis, Pax Christi International senior adviser, and Ken Butigan, professor at DePaul University, have prepared [Gospel nonviolence for a Laudato Si’ future](#). This paper draws connections between each piece of the Laudato Si’ Action Plan and the which explains how each piece of the Laudato Si’ Action Plan can integrate nonviolence. Their analysis moves beyond the theoretical and highlights action steps that each of us can take in our communities.

The points below may serve as inspiration for you as you discern how to live out your commitment to nonviolence -- specifically in relation to the climate -- as we begin the Catholic Nonviolence Days of Action.

GOSPEL NONVIOLENCE FOR A *LAUDATO SI’* FUTURE: SECTORS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

1. Families

- Learn together how to communicate nonviolently.
- Discuss in developmentally appropriate ways the great challenge of violence to the earth and our calling to create nonviolent solutions.
- Do projects together that contribute to nonviolent solutions to the climate crisis.

2. Dioceses and parishes

Bishops and episcopal conferences can play a key role in integrating Gospel nonviolence into the life of the Church to support the healing of the earth. Following are steps dioceses could take to spread the power of active nonviolence for challenging the climate crisis and promoting ecological conversion:

- Issue statements or pastoral letters that include not only clear Catholic teaching, but also examples of nonviolent practices in local communities and actions the Church plans to take to promote the nonviolent transformation of a given conflict, including conflicts related to environmental destruction, environmental racism and eco-justice.
- Develop advocacy positions and language consistent with nonviolent approaches and the well-being of the environment, as well as illustrating their intersectionality. Focus on just peace norms in supporting such positions.
- Talk with and join Catholics and others involved in frontline nonviolent campaigns for care for the earth; be willing to support or promote ethical obstructive tactics such as strikes, boycotts, civil disobedience.

> *Parishes*

- Develop Gospel nonviolence guilds at the local level that intentionally respond to the Cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor
- Create opportunities to learn about ecological violence and active nonviolence from the lived experience of the local community.
- Collaborate locally to create peace teams which can deploy unarmed civilian protection units in situations where efforts to protect the earth are threatened.
- Create an information hub on local, national and international nonviolent actions for responding to the climate crisis and loss of biodiversity where knowledge and information can be shared quickly about successful civic organizing in different contexts.
- Offer safe meeting spaces for people to come together, begin organizing, exchange ideas, conduct fundraising and come up with approaches for nonviolent civil resistance actions.

> *Sacraments and liturgy*

- In the lectionary, the celebration of the Eucharist and other sacraments and prayers of the Church, give witness to the centrality of the teaching and actions of Jesus as a nonviolent leader. In homilies, written reflections and study groups, highlight examples of nonviolence in the Gospels and in other scriptural passages.

- Develop the Sacrament of Reconciliation to include a deep examination of conscience relating to our personal, communal and societal obligation to care for creation.
- Encourage liturgists, musicians and authors to reference nonviolence and care for creation in prayers and songs and to share their creative work with parishes, dioceses, religious communities and others.

3. Educational institutions

Essential to the paradigm shift needed to heal our common home is infusing the vision and tools of Gospel nonviolence as integral to care for creation in all forms and levels of Catholic education—from seminaries and universities to secondary and primary schools as well as in catechesis and the formation of religious. Explicit training in the spirituality and practice of Gospel nonviolence for healing the earth is critical to this Kairos moment.

> *Schools*

- Model nonviolent practices in the school's institutional life and connect those practices to respect for the integrity of creation.
- Centre the wisdom of Indigenous communities in Catholic teaching on nonviolence and integral ecology.

> *Universities*

- In Catholic moral theology and ethics courses explore a new moral framework for just peace that rejects war and violence and consistently promotes integral ecology.
- Encourage academic research and dialogue about the connection between different forms of violence and environmental destruction as well as between nonviolence, care for the earth and integral ecology. Shift investments and research away from developing weapons technology and fossil fuels.
- Offer skills-based training in nonviolence and conflict transformation for the broader community, both religious and secular, that includes a focus on ecological violence. Publicise the results of this training using radio, TV,

newspapers and social media so that the whole community can utilise nonviolent language, alternative dispute resolution, and develop a working knowledge and vocabulary in nonviolence, just peace and the integrity of creation.

4. Hospitals/health care centres

COVID-19 has demonstrated clearly that a healthy ecosystem and well-resourced healthcare systems are essential to protecting humanity from the threat of communicable diseases that readily transcend borders and boundaries. Yet, preparedness to respond to COVID-19 has been hindered by war and ongoing violence, including direct attacks on health care facilities and workers, and by annual spending on weapons and preparations for war.

Research is also revealing connections between violence to the earth and trauma or climate anxiety, adding to the long list of diseases associated with environmental destruction. Furthermore, violence itself transmits, clusters, and spreads just like a contagious disease and can be stopped using the same strategies employed to fight epidemics.

Hospitals and health care centres could:

- Promote trauma-informed practices at every level of health care, especially practices that recognize ecological stress disorder and the personal and collective trauma emerging from human violence toward the earth.
- Educate health care professionals, political decision-makers and the general public about the impact of war and violence, and the resulting environmental destruction, on a community's health and on its health care system.
- Support calls for ceasefires and disarmament as essential to overcoming disease and promoting a healthy planet.
- De-link medical research from military research.

5. Economy: Businesses/cooperatives/farms

Work or job-related violence robs the worker of human dignity or life itself; it destroys or unsustainably exploits the earth's resources, whether minerals, soil or water.

Work-related violence is visible in jobs that fail to pay a living wage or provide benefits; in work that is demeaning, that exploits other people, that promotes or perpetuates violence and war, that is destructive to the earth and the natural world.

The universal ethic of nonviolence (including its foundations of interconnectedness, human dignity, "right" relationships and resistance to injustice) can strengthen societal values, policies and practices that guarantee decent work within an ecological paradigm for the post-pandemic context.

In addition to respecting the integrity of creation in their business practices and products, business people, including farmers, could learn about and adhere to Catholic social teaching on the dignity of work and nonviolent jobs. They could:

- Study and apply to their business practices Catholic social teaching on the dignity of work and nonviolent jobs that promote integral ecology.
- Invest in research on and the development of green energy; shift their businesses to green energy. Move money away from investments in fossil fuels, natural gas, and nuclear energy. (LS 165)
- Learn about nonviolent witnesses like [Chico Mendes \(Brasil\)](#), [Sister Dorothy Stang, SNDdeN \(USA/Brasil\)](#), [Berta Caceres \(Honduras\)](#) and [Ken Saro-Wiwa \(Nigeria\)](#), whose lives weave together a commitment to the dignity of the person, respect for the planet and nonviolent approaches to dialogue and change in the world of work.

6. Organisations (NGOs, movements, groups, foundations, etc.)

The *Laudato Si'* Action Platform envisions an unprecedented global movement for change. This initiative will succeed to the extent that community involvement and participatory action for integral ecology at the local, regional, national and international levels are nonviolent. It will require enormous organizing, training and discipline over time.

Catholic organisations, movements, networks and foundations are extremely important and can make a vital contribution to the future envisioned by *Laudato Si'*. Catholic

organisations with nonviolence expertise and Catholic organisations with ecological expertise could work together on a consistent and ever-deepening basis to promote a *Laudato Si'* future in local communities, nationally and internationally. They could:

- Create resources and educational materials that explicitly make the link between violence, climate change, loss of biodiversity and other forms of environmental destruction, as well as between nonviolence and rebuilding respect for the integrity of creation.
- Develop an integrated long-term strategy for working together that is rooted in grassroots experience and the wisdom of communities struggling at the intersection of violence and environmental destruction.
- Create workshops, webinars and other resources to help parishes, religious communities, dioceses and educational institutions integrate a deeper understanding of ecological violence and the role of nonviolence in their commitments to heal the earth and care for creation.
- Build advocacy campaigns that bring together broad-based coalitions to support nonviolent strategies, programs and investments along with ecological justice, such as green energy, nonviolent civilian-based defence, reducing military spending, integral disarmament and the call from Vatican II to outlaw war.

7. Religious orders

Religious communities have tremendous transformative potential in promoting Gospel nonviolence in the life of the Church and in helping the Catholic community to understand the essential link between nonviolence and care for the earth. With their global reach and the depth of their networks they touch the lives of the faithful in significant and formative ways. In ways appropriate to their own charism and context, religious communities could:

- Integrate nonviolence and integral ecology together into formation and ongoing formation programmes.
- Be present to, take part in or support community acts of resistance and nonviolent witness in response to ecological violence or threats of violence, offering solidarity and accepting the consequences of such actions.