Pax Christi International’s Catholic Nonviolence Initiative invited members and friends to share their thoughts and concerns for the Synod process during a series of 10 virtual listening sessions between March and June 2022. Sessions were held with about 200 participants registered from 26 countries: Canada, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, UK, Ireland, Belgium, France, Austria, Portugal, Palestine, Kenya, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Australia, New Zealand, Philippines, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Myanmar, Fiji, and the United States.

During all the listening sessions participants were invited to discuss the following questions:

- If the Church were to adopt nonviolence as a way of life, how would relationships in the Church change?
- How can the Church best promote nonviolence and just peace?
- Can you share an example of how the Church promotes or undermines nonviolence and just peace in your community?

The collected notes from each session were integrated into a draft of this document, which was made available to all participants for their review to make sure the integration of so many different conversations was faithful to their experience of the sessions.

The Beloved Community

Participants were invited to reflect on the impact of a ‘Church-wide and parish deep’ commitment to nonviolence. One participant said that if the Church were really filled with love, oneness, humanity, respect - what the Gospel calls us to - that would change the world. That was a common sentiment throughout the many conversations.

A commitment to nonviolence would lead the Church back to the person of Jesus Christ, who himself was a victim of violence and who is the foundation of nonviolence and just peace. The Beatitudes would become our ‘manual’, our way of life, bringing about peace and understanding, tolerance, justice and a preferential option for those who are impoverished.

The Holy Trinity provides us with a model of agape love wherein we begin to see our own interdependence, interconnectedness, oneness and how critical each of us is to the whole, to the Beloved Community.

A nonviolent Church would be welcoming, loving and compassionate to all brothers and sisters; it would be closer to the people - a listening people of God, following Jesus who established boundary-breaking friendships with those on the margins. Collaboration would be the anchor of our spirituality.

The Church would model just relationships of equals, humility, respectful dialogue within the Church and with people of other faith traditions. The Church would change its relationship to women, welcoming the gifts of women to benefit all aspects of life in the Church.

The hierarchical structure of the Church would change. The structure would be more collaborative, more participatory, open to a closer dialogue with and participation of the laity, allowing the laity to cooperate and lead. More open and inclusive decision-making processes in which all voices matter would become the norm and
A nonviolent Church would be welcoming, loving and compassionate to all brothers and sisters; it would be closer to the people - a listening people of God, following Jesus who established boundary-breaking friendships with those on the margins.

A nonviolent Church engaged in the world

Participants shared many examples where the local Church is actively promoting the social mission (see Appendix 1), but they also made clear that was not universal and repeatedly emphasized that Catholic social teaching should be at the forefront of a nonviolent Church.

Liturgies, prayers of the faithful, homilies and faith formation should reflect a commitment to nonviolence.

Significant concern was expressed that Pope Francis’ encyclicals and statements are not being shared in schools, including at bishops’ conferences and synods, at parish and diocesan meetings, through the Church’s media, and by giving it a priority in the seminar curriculum.

The Church should include Catholic social teaching in catechesis and adult formation and make it more prominent during the celebration of the Eucharist and other sacraments. Priests should talk about nonviolence and peace, linking Christianity with the love of the land and the deep unity we share with the earth. Seminary training should help priests prepare to preach about social justice even when it is not popular. Priests should practice nonviolence as a way of life and as a positive example; they also should be close to the people in order to understand their needs.

Church leaders should be involved in social movements and speak out for the marginalized. The Church should be a transforming agent in the world, acting on behalf of justice. Locally and internationally the Church should be independent, an antagonist to the societal norm of violence.

In some places the Church is considered the conscience of the state, engaging in politics for the common good and speaking up for human rights. But there is a disconnect between what is said by the Church and what is practiced - for example, on the worth and dignity of all people. This is undermining the Church’s credibility.

Some participants said that a nonviolent Church would do more good in the world. One person noted that during the pandemic, when we were unable to go to church - too many turned to online Mass, not to charity or social justice. At the same time, respect is evident for those who lead the way to action on critical social and ecological issues such as climate change, biodiversity protection, refugee and migrant support, economic justice and opposition to war.

There are far too many examples of treating symptoms while ignoring root causes. For example, people are often keen to help refugees, support food banks, and so on, but have very little understanding of and action against the causes of forced displacement or hunger. Pope Francis invites us to see patterns and processes, root causes and ripple effects, not just events.

The Church’s voice is muted on certain issues and there is a conflict of interest when the Church collaborates with people or groups that promote or engage in activities that go against Christian values. Too often the Church has been aligned with the empire; rather, the Church needs to align with the prophets (Gandhi, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Dorothy Day). We believe that there is a strong reluctance to ‘rock the boat’.

The Church should use its global stage to speak specifically about nonviolence as a way of life, a spirituality that is never passive in the face of social injustice and to advocate actively for nonviolence and just peace, challenging institutions that promote war and dialoguing with the proponents of the war system. Applying a just peace framework would help the Church engage conflict constructively, breaking cycles or dynamics of violence and building a more sustainable peace.

In Fratelli Tutti, Pope Francis said that it is ‘very difficult nowadays to invoke’ the just war tradition and more recently that ‘there is no such thing as a just war’.

The whole Church, including the local Church, should be much more active in criticizing militarism and all its serious consequences for humanity. We should hear talk from the pulpit about reallocating military resources to peaceful purposes, promoting nonviolent alternatives and meeting human needs. Too often the Church supports the military, and Catholic schools promote military service.

Some participants said that churches should not have military flags on the altar, glorify the military or have collections for military chaplains. Military chaplains should not bless the weapons of war. In the United States, the Church should address the gun culture, mass shootings and the second amendment to the U.S. Constitution, as well as violent language, including from bishops, and the persistent struggle for power and control.

Laudato Si’ ought to be central to the synodal way and ecology, the new evangelization. The entire Church should be engaged with others in dealing with the violence to the earth and ecological aggression, taking care of the earth that is our home, rejecting the ‘throw-away, disposable culture’ and practicing the circular economy in parishes.

Prolife should include the defence of life for all.
Experiences of the Church in different contexts

Most often, participants based their contributions to the Synod process on their own experience of Church. Among their observations were the following:

What Jesus teaches should be the basis for a community shaped by love, reconciliation and healing. Instead of striving to value, develop and sustain ‘co-governance’, the Church has developed a structure of power. Rather than studying, understanding and practicing ‘servant leadership’, the notion of ‘infallibility’, despite its circumscribed application, generally continues to pervade the life of the Church. All this can of course change if there is a genuine desire to listen, acknowledge failings and respond with metanoia.

Many participants spoke about dominance by the hierarchical structure over non-clerical members, the vast majority, who are denied the right to engage and participate in decision-making, an attribute that is central to being human. A denial of this is a form of violence at the very heart of the Church.

Too often ‘Church’ has come to signify only the hierarchy or priests. The laity are not being utilized to the extent they could be. Priests are spread too thin. The hierarchy or priests. The laity are not being utilized to participate, whether in parishes or in other diverse spaces.

One participant asked if the model of ‘Jesus people meet on Sunday’ truly reflects the Jesus of inclusion, love, mercy, community? The attention of the Church should be on marginalized communities. Funds are being used to ensure fancy buildings for the wealthy; they should be devoted to the needs of the poor. Priests are so concerned to maintain buildings and paying the bills that wealthy donors have excessive influence.

Others expressed a concern about financial corruption in the Church. One person shared the experience of her grandfather’s family whose land was forcibly taken over by a parish leader. Clean, transparent systems whereChurch operations are needed to gain and maintain the trust of the community.

Some have experienced a strong tendency to exclude people who have different opinions or who practice other religions. LGBTQ+ people do not feel welcome, which is very hurtful. Some priests/ministers do not follow God’s message of mercy and compassion; they are not channels of God’s love during sacramental celebrations.

At times the Church has undermined local cultures – such as, for example, in Africa saying ‘don’t dance in Mass’, even though African practices can merge with Christianity in a way that honours one culture without undermining the other. At the same time, others experienced a Church that promotes unity in diversity and respects interculturality.

Some noted that their experience of preaching in the Church is not good. The theology is often simplistic/childish. Scripture is not highlighted. Preaching is focused on the Church instead of the Gospel. They are not invited to reflect on the Scriptures themselves.

In Japan to object to anything is understood as ‘violence’ and is suppressed, is [Japanese society not accustomed to ‘objection-criticism’ or is the Church not accustomed to it?] The voices of those who have suffered violence tend to be emotional because of the very violence they have suffered, but their emotional voices are considered violent.

One person said that Mass feels like a battleground. The separation is personal, societal, spiritual, global. Many on both sides of any conflict think the other side is evil.

We are the Church

Even as they were honest in sharing concerns about the Church, participants also expressed in different ways a recognition that we, the People of God, are the Church. They said:

Christ is present in the community gathered, not only in the clergy and religious. We are all called to be ‘other Christs’. The Church is made up of individuals, it is not a building or an institution. We are the Church and are called to live the Beatitudes as part of the Church. To adopt nonviolence as a Church every person in the Church should adopt nonviolence as a way of life. And if that process occurs, relationships in the Church would be more meaningful and would represent Christ more fully.

We need humility, relationships with others as equals in which we accept each other as we are. We realize that violence and discrimination are present within ourselves. Nonviolence is about loving one another and the enemy. How much are we willing to be open to others who have different beliefs, rather than thinking we are better than others? We need ongoing formation programs in parishes (such as Ignatian Spiritual Exercises and meditation) to help us become a Church that lives by the Word.

For example, we preach peace, yet live violence, sometimes in the structures of the Church and sometimes in culture. No one should be afraid to speak out, especially about violence against women and the marginalised. We need to challenge the structures and cultures that prevent the Church from being prophetic. To be nonviolent is to be prophetic.

We need to respect and include more indigenous values that promote the well-being of the community and listen more to the grassroots through small-group, community-level structures that foster loving communities, reduce adherence to power-based law and authority and return power to the people. How well do we listen to the voices of those who have truly been hurt and have left the Church?

It is important that we lay it out in practice a culture of nonviolence, moving from criticism of the institutional Church, despite many valid reasons, to a more active and nonviolent participation, whether in parishes or in other diverse spaces.

Participants in the April 8 Pax Christi listening session for South Korea and Japan
Violence in the Church

Violence in the Church was described in many different ways by participants from around the world, including violence in Church history - slavery, violence based on the Doctrine of Discovery, violence of Indian residential schools and more. Many spoke about hypocrisy in the Church, about contemporary violence through the sex abuse crisis, the criminal abuse of innocents, the exclusion of women, the marginalization of the LGBTQ+ community. They said that stories of survivors of clerical abuse should not be hidden. The Church needs to be transparent and accountable and engage in reparations.

Violence in the Church, along with clericalism. The first violence is that we do not include women in the priesthood. That violence used and even jokes made. Patriarchy is prevalent in the Church, making it difficult to promote a call to justice and Security agenda. It is time to open up to everyone in the Parish as community from metaethical responsibility.

Deep concern was expressed about embedded racism in the Church. The Church has a racist history, with unuttered intonations of racism; cultures are dismissed. Who leads, who is there, whose voice matters, who is part of the conversation are critical questions. We need to respect and include more indigenous values which are essentially based on the well-being of the community. Some U.S. participants suggested that the Church must restructure itself; that white privilege is a need to restructure the institution to address clericalism, hierarchy, inequality, and paternalism. The key word is relationships – a shift from power to power over to power with. The Church can develop more healthy relationships by modelling nonviolence. We should listen to Earth, our mother, and to people of all faith traditions and none, including especially indigenous traditions, about what it means to be human in relationship with all of life’s systems.

Cases of abuse, sexual and otherwise, humiliate the Church, making it difficult to promote a call to justice and peace. A closed group of men cannot correct this; there is a real need for co-governance and less hierarchical control. Abuse is not just about sexual abuse, but the power of the ordained to dismiss and devalue the contribution of the non-ordained.

One woman who participated said, ‘As a woman, I do not feel part of the Church’. She pointed to the language used and even jokes made. Patriarchy is prevalent in the Church, along with clericalism. The first violence is that we do not include women in the priesthood. That violence also takes a toll on priests – many are severely stressed, get burned out, etc. Another participant said that we have so many people with talents and skills among the laity. Why do we pretend or insist the clergy have all the skills?

Many others shared similar concerns. They said that Pope Francis is inviting us to see that everyone matters. Women bring a richness to the Church, but Scripture is used to justify the exclusion of women. This is violence.

Women’s voices are rarely heard or respected. When they are, it is so refreshing; they have different insights. It is critical that women preach. Women make the bread, bring to birth etc., yet are completely brushed over. Could we imagine an open Eucharistic table, open ambo (all preachers welcome), ordination of women and those of any sexual orientation who are called to the priesthood, democratic rather than hierarchical leadership?

Many women find it hard to trust priests. There is a need to restructure the institution to address clericalism, hierarchy, inequality, and paternalism. The structures in the Church are damaging and sometimes abusive, although the reality is different in different countries. For example, in Scotland, only one diocese out of eight had the problem. Nothing fundamental can change until certain ‘non-negotiables’ are changed like women’s ordination, same sex marriage, and married priests. The Church is top down, male dominated. Women are in subversive roles. Some older laity and some young ones don’t want change; they are just as clerical as the clergy. Participation and inclusivity are key. Whenever women are involved in peacemaking, diplomacy, etc., it is more successful. It would be good for the Church to adopt the model of the UN Women, Peace and Security agenda. It is time to open up to everyone in the body of Christ. More effort with inclusive language is also needed.

Leadership in the Church

Many interventions were about leadership in the Church with specific suggestions leading to Church as community rather than hierarchical structure. The emphasis was on shared, collaborative decision making - consensus decision making based on recognizing and valuing the equality of all people within the Church:

Some participants said that inside the Church, the problem is not so much physical violence, but the violence of hate speech, gossip, discrimination, exclusion, and prejudice. Do priests see others as human beings like themselves? Often, newcomers are not valued, and there are unequal relations between men and women so that women’s suggestions and ideas are often ignored.

Others said that we are too often preached at in the Church: condemning people, condemning groups and talk about going to Hell. This is violence. One person said that there are ‘metaphorical executions’ within the Church despite a ban on the death penalty.

One participant described the theological concept of sin as undermining nonviolence and just peace by, for example, promoting an ineffective manner of conflict resolution; reducing subliminal self-esteem; contributing to an ‘us versus them’ mentality; and removing the human community from metaethical responsibility.

In some places domestic violence is common. Many abused women do not feel they can go to Church for help because they too often feel accused due to the hierarchal or patriarchal attitudes. Anger in the community, domestic violence and violence in our world are connected. Relationships between women and men in the Church should be nonviolent, more respectful. That could help mitigate the abuse that is happening to women religious.

Others described the violence of a culture of snitching in seminaries; circles of power rallying against outspoken voices; suppression and intimidation encircling the minority voice; the isolation of mandatory celibacy; treating issues related to human sexuality, including abortion, as absolutely black and white.

The distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’ has its roots in violence. Regulations or even ‘service’ can separate people. If all are equal in Christ Jesus, we need to be very careful that charity is built on relationships of respect and welcome all to the table, even if it means bypassing some regulations that cause separation.

The Church in Portugal for many years was linked to the power of the dictatorship. It is psychological violence when people are not allowed to express themselves and if they express themselves they are not taken seriously. Also, in some countries there is a culture of competition between groups and movements.

The key word is relationships – a shift from power over to power with. The Church can develop more healthy relationships by modelling nonviolence. We should listen to Earth, our mother, and to people of all faith traditions and none, including especially indigenous traditions, about what it means to be human in relationship with all of life’s systems.

Leaders should foster a spirit of inclusion, simplify the transactions and procedures of the Church and create opportunities to understand the reality of people’s lives. Evangelical living requires not only compassion for the socially vulnerable, but also deep learning about society’s issues. By moving out of diocesan and parish offices into the wider than Catholic community, listening to real people, affirming the wonderfully good things that people are doing, the Church will be recognized as authentic in promoting nonviolence.

Activities that reach out directly to vulnerable people are easily accepted in the Church, but the study of structural evils and work for social justice are often shunned. One group said that Pope Francis has already introduced radical changes in the Church, but that a lot more needs to be done, although with prudence since there are values and traditions that need to be protected as well.

Others suggested that local Church communities should be able to appoint who will serve them – so that priests are accountable to the communities they serve. Some thought the priest should be a volunteer alongside others who work for the Church. Also, parish councils should be more than advisory bodies; they should have decision-making roles.

Listening goes from top to bottom in the institution. The Church must be in dialogue with many actors in order to build nonviolence; the challenge is immense. One participant said that people need to be able to meet and share ideas, not just sit in the pews and be talked at.
The curriculum of seminaries should include education about a synodal church, Vatican II and Catholic social teaching ...
not by parish, so the input was lessened; elsewhere there was a three-minute limit on what was said, so people left.

In Scotland, the Synod process was slow but there were some positive reports of inspiring meetings. Scottish bishops, clergy and the Synod facilitators made an effort to reach out to marginalized people. In Belgium, young people were included in the dialogue. In Germany, the Church was already in discussion at another level, for example, about electing bishops.

A participant in Japan said that the Church is not taking the Synod seriously: ‘When I asked how the parishes were working on the Synod, the response was that they were praying for the Synod, so I couldn’t get anywhere, and when I emailed the diocese, they replied that they were trying to get the “parishes” to summarize the Synod. ... The slogan “synodality” may be a noble one, but the current situation is that we have stumbled over how to actually absorb the voices of the people. The Church community has not been willing to have a frank discussion with each other. Let’s talk! but they don’t know how to do it, do they?’

Others called for the Church to go out to people where they are. Their experience of the Synod process in parishes was that it was too clergy-led and excluded those who are not regular Church attendees. They said that we need to ask those who no longer come to Church, why? If Synodality is to mean anything, dialogue with everyone, especially youth, women, religious and lay, and ‘listening’ should be at the heart of Church life shaping it in the service of the broader community. It could be like the disciples listening to the Lord on the road to Emmaus - we should be alert to His voice.

Pax Christi International is a Catholic peace movement that promotes peace, respect for human rights, justice and reconciliation throughout the world. Grounded in the belief that just peace is possible and that vicious cycles of violence and injustice can be broken, Pax Christi International promotes active Gospel nonviolence and just peace, addressing the root causes and destructive consequences of violent conflict, social injustice, environmental destruction and war. Pax Christi’s network includes over 100 member organizations working in their own contexts on every continent to create a more just and peaceful world.

Pax Christi understands nonviolence to be a spirituality, a way of life, a global ethic and a spectrum of proven-effective approaches to preventing or interrupting violence, protecting vulnerable and threatened communities and promoting a Laudato Si’ future based on social justice, human dignity and the integrity of creation.

Appendices

1. The Church is already promoting nonviolence and just peace
2. Verbatim reflections of youth from six countries
3. What does Pax Christi Toronto want the Church to know?
4. Journeying Together Towards Justice and Peace Synod: Response from Pax Christi USA

Appendix 1: The Church is already promoting nonviolence and just peace

Many examples of the Church promoting nonviolence and just peace were shared by participants:

- Catholic Sisters act on Jesus’ message more consistently than do most Catholic priests. For example, they dedicate their land for climate/creation sanctuaries. Communities of Catholic Sisters could be models for the Church.
- In some places the Church is open to calls such as the World Week to Pray for Peace, the Kairos Document and the Human Fraternity Document.
- Churches have worked with the local municipalities to build housing, including senior housing, on Church-owned land.
- The 16 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide opportunities at all levels to promote just peace. Many of the values undergirding most SDGs reflect Church teaching and also generally mirror values that have moulded indigenous communities.
- Kenya: Jamu jamu is a Swahili word for small Christian communities. Here they meet to pray, share their spiritual journey and everyday life in general. The jamu jamu are instrumental in supporting dialogue in parishes and encouraging new and existing Christians in the Gospel.
- DR Congo: In Kinshasa, the residence of Cardinal Fridolin Ambongo was attacked in 2021, and some Catholic parishes in the Grand Kasai area were looted, vandalized, but the Episcopal Conference of the DR Congo (CENCO) and the Episcopal Justice and Peace Commission (CEJP) launched an appeal for peace, not to react, no revenge, keep calm and Christians have followed this path of nonviolence.
- DR Congo: Archbishop Christophe Muzihirwa of Bukavu is called the Romero of the DRC. He was killed on 29 October 1996 because he preached active nonviolence and peace, instead of war. The Association of African Bishops Conferences (ACEAC) set up an Institute of Peace and Reconciliation in Bukavu to promote nonviolence and peace.
- During the arrival of Rwandan Hutu, the Church of Bukavu urged the population to avoid violence toward the Hutu refugee population. The bishops of Kivu called on the armed groups to cease the violence against the civilian populations in the east of the DR Congo, especially in Butembo, in Fizi, Mwerenga, Shabunda, the plain of the Ruzizi.
- Burundi: The Church sends messages to denounce and to avoid violence. At the Centre Jeunes Kamenge in Buumburu, the priest brought young people together to protect them during the crisis in 1993 and was awarded the alternative Nobel Prize in 2002. In 1995, at the minor seminary of Buda, the rebels attacked the school and tried to separate the young people by ethnicity; they refused and 40 young people were killed.
- Also in Burundi, in 1993 people who had participated in a massacre came to hide at the archdiocese. Soldiers came to look for them and the archbishop of Gitega said no; he told the soldiers to kill him before killing these people. The people were arrested by the rebels to kill them and the archbishop started shouting loudly so the rebels let them go. This archbishop saved human lives; it is a testimony of the actions of the Church in favour of active nonviolence and peace. We nicknamed this archbishop Joachim (the faithful pastor).
- Philippines: The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) has made various pronouncements on nonviolence and peace over the years, and has shared prayers related to issues (e.g. Prayer for the Elections 2022). Dioceses and parishes have social action ministries where the Church is able to reach out to and serve not just the Catholics, but others as well. The Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines (CEAP) issued an important statement prior to the election on the qualities of a leader and promoted nonviolent peaceful, honest elections, including through the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCCRV). (There is less of a unified voice when it comes to issues such as extrajudicial killings [SPG].)
- In the Philippines, a local parish organized a Meet the Candidates’ Voice your Values’ forum and invited all the different faith communities in our area to come … Christians of all varieties, Buddhist, Muslim, Hindu and people of all faiths and none. The parish is also organizing a new parish council seeking cooperation between clergy and laity listening to one another.
- Philippines: Miriam College offers a general education elective, ‘Justice and Peace in the Church and Society’.
- Brazil: The Pastoral de Campo of the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT) defends communities when their land...
rights are violated. CPT helped to differentiate invasion and occupation - many times it was the landowners who attacked the peasants who owned the land. In recent years CPT and its partners have applied nonviolent resistance principles, defending the land without weapons, although the situation continues to be very violent.

- The nonviolent approach marks a roadmap for priests and the entire pastoral in Latin America, to be able to link more and more sectors. It is the exercise that Pax Christi International has been developing since 2013, bringing together various actors in Latin America, in order to resolve socio-environmental conflicts nonviolently.

- In Colombia, the Church has provided intervention in critical moments of the conflict and journey toward peace. The bishops of the Colombian Pacific -- especially the bishop of Quibdó, Chocó, Juan Carlos Barreto -- have denounced the presence of paramilitarism in the region, the links between the army and the paramilitaries and the planting of mines by the ELN.

- Peru: The Church promotes human rights, nonviolence, peace and trains pastoral agents to defend the land and water.

- El Salvador: St. Oscar Romero's legacy of work for human rights, ecological struggles and accompaniment of local communities continues.

- Venezuela: The Church has been active through its social action network, meetings of peace builders, diplomas to train community leaders, a chair of peace agents for high school boys and accompanying families of migrants and political prisoners.

- Mexico: In Chiapas, nonviolence has been practiced for several years and is promoted by the Catholic Church. The Church works with organizations that promote human rights and trains pastoral agents in peacebuilding.

- New Zealand: On Holy Thursday night the service was led by women with two women carrying the cross. The priest was very open to women's role in these services.

- Australia: Australian bishops in the Plenary Council process listened to the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Council. The Social Justice Sunday Statement 2021-2022, 'Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor' is excellent. At least two bishops mentioned that climate change action and support for asylum seekers is part of being Easter people.

- In Ukraine, people who are committed to a nonviolent way of life are raising their voices.

- In Japan, when we organize actions in front of embassies and other places, the police and authorities intervene, however, they do not intervene if we gather to pray.

- In Korea, Mass is often celebrated or prayer services held for those who have been victimized by state violence.

- The Church in Ireland was an advocate for peace and nonviolence. The archbishop of Dublin spoke out strongly about synodality and the care of the earth.

- Scotland: The bishops have for 40 years been outspoken on the issue of nuclear weapons. Bishops regularly attended protests and vigils at the nuclear submarine base in Scotland. Pax Christi Scotland has regular online events addressing a range of nonviolence/peace issues (from gender violence to nuclear weapons) at which clergy and bishops speak and give generously of their time. The Church in Ireland and Scotland has welcomed many Ukrainian refugees.

- United States: In Chicago, Cardinal Cupich organized a march with the Stations of the Cross on Good Friday to address gun violence. The Church in South Dakota protested the Doctrine of Discovery that led to the colonization of indigenous peoples and for which we have never asked forgiveness. The Church in Evanston, IL has participated in a concrete plan for reparations for African Americans. A local Pennsylvania parish managed a food bank for the area and weekly soup kitchens. Parishes in Detroit, MI have explored 'Voice of the Earth: The dioceses of El Paso and San Antonio, TX reached out to refugees.

- Canada: The Catholic Women's League has included social justice work as one of three pillars.

- One person described participating for nearly 20 years in a pastoral space focused on professionals, where the institutional Church offers a space for participation, recognizing that the Church has failed to generate a greater openness so that Catholic professionals can make proposals and carry them forward.

- For more than six years, Pax Christi International's Catholic Nonviolence Initiative has carried out an internal review exercise to engage the magisterium of the church to move nonviolence to the centre of Church teaching on war and violence.

Appendix 2: Shared reflection of youth from six countries

Youth UK, Ireland, Philippines, Taiwan, Fiji, Myanmar shared the following responses to Pax Christi's questions. These responses are very close to verbatim:

If the Church were to adopt nonviolence as a way of life, how would relationships in the Church change?

- Nonviolence challenges the hierarchy, promotes gender equality, welcomes diversity of cultures and sexual orientation. Acceptances of our differences and appreciation or celebration of our uniqueness.

- The relationships within the Church would not change; but it would change how people relate with the Church and with one another.

- Nonviolence has been lived within the Church for so long; Jesus's sacrifice taught us to love one another – if there's no love, there would not be peace.

- In this time, people are challenged to change and prefer nonviolence. It must begin within ourselves and then we will be able to share it with others.

- The Church is a good place to be as there is not much violence in the Church. It is the people in the Church who need to change.

- The Church has long been practicing nonviolent ways. Individuals need to live out nonviolence.

- If the Church continued to live out nonviolence as a way of life, it would significantly change the relationship between the Church and the community. It would also help build a nation of peace-loving people.

- Nonviolence would be a great way to unite people. It would bring about harmony and peace.

- Violence in my country (Philippines) has been a big issue. The Catholic Church has been allegedly involved with the communist party. They are people who have principles and who fight for their rights, but that should be done in a peaceful way. This divides people and affects young people.

- Relationships among people will flourish if nonviolence is a way of life in the Church.

- It would be nice to acknowledge that everybody is a child of God no matter what side of the fence you are on.

- It would change relationships for the better. It will prevent all kinds of violence e.g. physical, emotional, spiritual.

- We could freely go to church without fear of being judged.

- Greater mutual understanding. Greater respect. It would heal nations, beginning at home.

How can the Church best promote nonviolence and just peace?

- Internally – through renewal of the Church, sharing of power and authority. Injustices in the church must be addressed. Rejection, such as of LGBTQ communities, is a form of violence inside the Church.

- Externally – by reaching out to others, welcoming others, dialogue, becoming the voice of the unheard and unseen, giving opportunities for parishioners to meet each other after Mass.

- Through the Gospel, the hymns selected for the liturgies, studying the lives of the saints, knowing and living out the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

- By looking up to Jesus as a role model; he desired peace; being able to talk about our differences rather than bursting into arguments.

- By encouraging the Church to live out Catholic values so that people in our community will know that we are of God just as we are taught.

- People from different backgrounds could be made to feel welcomed and able to belong; the Church is not just the building but the people in it.

- Intensify the promotion of inclusivity because sadly there are still cases where people are driven away from the Church because of a few factors.

- We need to promote peace ourselves as well.

- The best way to promote nonviolence is for the Church to create an interfaith dialogue.
• The Church has sessions like this to eliminate violence and promote peace.
• The Church has to be neutral. It must promote nonviolence and not side with any groups. The Church has been involved in many partisan groups during the past election. The Church must remember the 1987 constitution— the separation of the state and the Church.
• To have interfaith/religious programs.
• The Church must stop discrimination.
• The Church can be the voice to communicate freedom, for people to be able to speak freely.
• Peaceful living can be promoted by the Church.
• To have the ears to listen.
• Homilies of the priests could speak about nonviolence.
• Practice the way of love. Small gestures of peace and friendship make a difference.
• Unconditional love and action should be the way of life.
• Fully embrace the Gospel message of nonviolence that affects patterns of behavior and, most importantly, emotions.
• Encourage nonviolence and respect.
• Gospel commitment to peace.

Can you share an example of how the Church promotes or undermines nonviolence and just peace in your community?

• We have many different denominations in the community and not just Catholics. We have Islam and Iglesia in Cristo and others. We have this inter-religious ministry where every month we have a day to visit the mosque and have a dialogue with the Islamic leaders.
• We participated in the Mindanao week of peace, including a caravan for peace with the parish priest. It was a nice welcoming event.
• The problem in our parish community is that the different ministries have misunderstandings and quarrels among each other, e.g Knights of the Columbus, Legion of Mary, etc. The parish priest must take action to unite these groups.
• The Church should be neutral.
• Another interfaith/religious dialogue including our Muslim brothers and sisters will be happening soon in our community.
• Our Church creates social activities that promote unity among all. In our Catholic school we have Muslim students, born again etc. but we respect them and we welcome them to the school community.
• People join the pilgrimage of a Sister towards power plants and celebrate Mass together when they reach a church.
• In Pakistan, there are many child laborers. The Church provides them with food and access to education. We are the best examples of nonviolence.
• Put our effort towards resolving violent issues in the Church, appointing a priest to look after sexual-harassment problems. Each parish or community has a hotline to report abuses.
• Reduce the gap between communities, especially between the minorities and the majority religion or culture. Do not be afraid to take the lead in promoting peace.
• Participate in protests and provide a safe place for workers - migrants who are abused by employers and human trafficking.
• Aborigine ministry to promote their rights (Taiwan)
• Drug-rehabilitation centre (Myanmar)
• Prayer ministry, praying for each other.
• Presence of the Church in social media (provide good and true information, Christian values) is an example of addressing violence in social media, sharing about our faith not forcing it on people. Our voice is small but we need to keep speaking.

• I usually start my day with prayer. I noticed that within the prayer, we are invited to pray for peace and mercy.
• In small Christian Communities Sunday readings are shared; In the 'faith in action' part of the sharing, we are encouraged to identify an action where we can engage with other members in the community.
• Attending interreligious dialogues is a good avenue to promote and show our understanding and acceptance of other denominations.
• Interfaith dialogue (I am part of the minority, in terms of religion, here in my community), getting into a good relationship with others, inviting them to join our activities. This enables us to show how we follow Christ. We also encourage them to tell us what we need to know about their religion.
• This year's national elections (Philippines) brought about different feelings. I really admired the outgoing vice president because even though she lost the race, her message of inclusivity and love still rang throughout the hearts of the people. Moreover, she emphasized that peaceful and right ways will make the message of the campaign louder and more concrete. Her mission-spirited campaign kind of shows the Christian values taught by the Church.
• Practice interfaith living.
• Invite other people into activities organized within the community.