



CATHOLIC SOCIAL  
TEACHING SERIES



**Guest Speaker: Jim McGill**

**December 4 and 11, 2025  
10-1130am  
Upper Room**

**The topics of Nonviolence, Peace, War, and the Kingdom of God are explored**

**-- Foundational roots in Scripture, Tradition, and History**

**-- Characteristics of the Kingdom of God on Earth**

**-- Their importance for our understanding, faith, and a just and peaceful world**



# Prayer

- “where 2 or more are gathered ... “
- “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.”
- “Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth ...”
- “This is my commandment: love (agapao) one another as I love you!” (John 15:12)

# **Catholic Social Doctrine gives a Framework for Making Moral Decisions**

- 1. Introduce basics of Catholic Social Doctrine**
- 2. Provide a framework to inform/form conscience based on the Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church**
- 3. Provide guidance to apply Social Doctrine to old and new moral and social issues that we face daily**

# Themes of Catholic Social Doctrine

Catholic Social Teaching (CST) is the social doctrine of the Church. The scope includes truth of revelation about human life, dignity, solidarity, and principles of justice and peace.

Care for Creation – Laudato Si  
-- Stewardship

Life and Dignity of  
Human Person

Family, Community, Participation

Rights and Responsibility

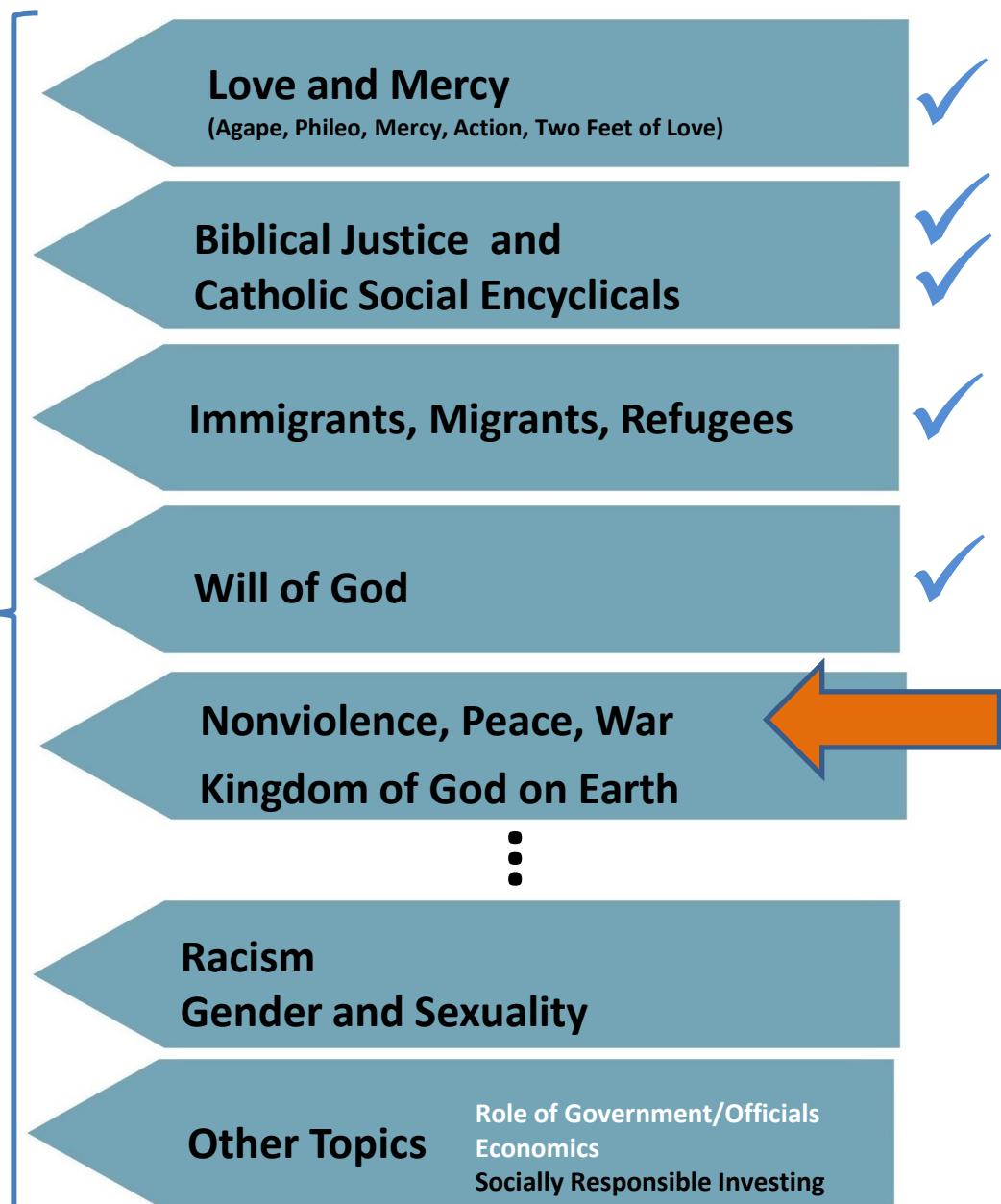
Global Solidarity and  
Common Good

Preferential Love for the  
Poor and Vulnerable

Dignity of Work and  
Worker Rights

# Catholic Social Doctrine Related Topics ...

**Catholic Social Teaching (CST)** is the social doctrine of the Church. The scope includes truth of revelation about human life, dignity, solidarity, and principles of justice and peace.



# Jim McGill

- Jim holds an MA in Theology and a BA in Philosophy
- Experienced in Ministry since 1980
  - Director of Parish Adult Religious Education (1980-1989)
  - Instructor of Theology and Sacred Scripture in the Greco Institute (1989-2007) and University of Dallas (2007-2022)
  - Regular Adjunct Professor at University of Dallas Biblical School (2022-present)
  - Instructor in Deacon Formation for the Diocese of Dallas
- Jim has engaged and guided adult learners in scriptural and pastoral study as they journey in faith at Good Shepherd for many years.

# The Challenge and Virtue of Living Nonviolently

“They shall beat their swords into plowshares  
and their spears into pruning hooks;  
One nation shall not raise the sword against another, nor  
shall they train for war again.”

Isaiah 2:4

Like Thomas Aquinas in his arguments for the reasonableness of belief in God, I want to first notice the reality of violence in our lives, in our human history and in the Bible.

The subject of non-violence cannot be approached in a “Pollyannaish” way. It is a difficult topic that requires a serious study and reflection. I may not be able to provide that today, but I want to offer some thoughts.

# Violence in Nature

Animals compete violently for reproductive and nutritional advantages.

"Nature, red in tooth and claw."

Tennyson

# Personal Violence

As individual people, all of us are capable of violently harming others by what we do or fail to do – and being victims of the violence perpetrated by others.

- Abuse
- Neglect
- Revenge
- Hatred
- Oppression
- “Road Rage”

At the heart of violence is the sense of an “us” versus a “them.”

When we are the “us” that feels the oppression of “them,” we cry out that this is unjust, criminal and wrong.

But when we are the “us” conquering, oppressing or dominating the “them,” it feels just, fair and right.

## Exodus 5:14 (Us as victim)

- The Israelite foremen, whom the taskmasters of Pharaoh had placed over them, were beaten, and were asked, “Why have you not completed your prescribed amount of **bricks** yesterday and today, as before?”

## 2 Samuel 12:31 (Us as oppressor)

- He (David) deported the people of the city and set them to work with saws, iron picks, and iron axes, or put them to work at the **brick**mold. He dealt thus with all the cities of the Ammonites. Then David and his whole army returned to Jerusalem.

# History

Human history is a litany of wars, persecutions, pogroms, genocides, etc.

American history is punctuated by **wars** (Revolutionary, 1812, Civil, Spanish-American, WW I, WW II, Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan).

The great **empires** of the world from the Sumerians to the Egyptians to the Romans to the Chinese are all predicated on violent conquest.

**Colonialism** is often a process of violent subjugation of indigenous people.

**Slavery** is built on the capture and use of human beings to do the work of others.

# Bible

And perhaps most disturbing is the enormous amount of violence in the entire Bible originating from God and Israel on their enemies.

God acts violently against humanity, the enemies of Israel and Israel itself.

# God's Violence

- **The Great Flood (Genesis 6-8):** God floods the earth to cleanse it of widespread wickedness, sparing only Noah, his family, and the animals aboard the ark.
- **Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19):** These cities are destroyed by fire and sulfur due to their grave sins, though Lot and his family are spared.
- **The Ten Plagues of Egypt (Exodus 7-12):** God sends plagues upon Egypt to compel Pharaoh to release the Israelites from slavery, culminating in the death of the firstborn in Egyptian households.
- **The Conquest of Canaan (Joshua 6-11):** God commands the Israelites to conquer and destroy various cities in Canaan as they claim the Promised Land. The Haram is especially violent.
- **God sends the Assyrians and later the Babylonians** to attack and exile Israelites for their failure to live up to the covenant.

# Israel's Violence

- **The Conquest of Jericho (Joshua 6):** Under Joshua's leadership, the Israelites marched around Jericho for seven days before its walls fell. They then destroyed the city and its inhabitants, as commanded by God.
- **The Battle Against the Amalekites (Exodus 17:8-16):** The Israelites fought and defeated the Amalekites, with Moses raising his hands in prayer during the battle.
- **The War Against the Midianites (Numbers 31):** Moses led the Israelites in a campaign against the Midianites, resulting in the destruction of their cities and the death of many.
- **The Civil War Against the Tribe of Benjamin (Judges 20):** After a grievous crime committed by some Benjaminites, the other tribes of Israel waged war against the tribe of Benjamin, leading to significant loss of life.
- **Israel's Wars (II Samuel 12:26-31):** David's conquests and subjugation of neighboring peoples. “Brick making!”

# New Testament Violence

- **The Death of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11):** This couple lied about their donation to the apostles, and they were struck dead as a result, demonstrating God's immediate judgment.
- **The Final Judgment (Matthew 25:31-46):** Jesus describes the separation of the righteous from the wicked, with the latter being cast into eternal punishment. The threat of eternal, violent punishment is a frequent image in the NT.
- **The Book of Revelation:** This text is filled with vivid depictions of divine wrath, including plagues, cosmic battles, and the destruction of the wicked. For instance, Revelation 19:17-21 describes birds feasting on the flesh of those defeated in battle.
- **The Wrath of God:** Those who do not obey God or believe in his Son, will be tortured forever in hell. “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever disobeys the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains upon him.” John 3:35.

# Church Violence

- **The Crusades (11th–13th centuries):** A series of military campaigns initiated by European Christians to reclaim the Holy Land from Muslim control. These wars resulted in significant bloodshed and destruction.
- **Anti-Semitism:** Throughout Church history.
- **The Inquisition (12th–19th centuries):** A system of tribunals established by the Church to root out heresy. It led to the persecution, imprisonment, and execution of many individuals.
- **The European Wars of Religion (16th–17th centuries):** Conflicts like the Thirty Years' War were fueled by tensions between Protestant and Catholic factions, resulting in widespread devastation.
- **Colonial Conquests:** During the Age of Exploration, Christian missionaries often accompanied European colonizers, leading to forced conversions and violence against indigenous populations.

# Warrior Archetype: A Transition between Violence and Nonviolence

The warrior archetype represents strength, courage, discipline, and the ability to fight for what matters. In stories, psychology, or mythology, this archetype is often associated with honor, perseverance, and protection. It's the embodiment of someone who takes action, defends, and confronts challenges head-on.

Warriors aren't just physical combatants; they're also individuals who fight for their beliefs, values, or a cause larger than themselves. They can appear in various forms—be it the knight in shining armor, the fearless freedom fighter, or even the modern-day advocate pushing for change in society.

Their shadow side, however, can manifest in aggression, dominance, or an inability to back down when needed, risking harm to themselves or others. Balancing the power of the warrior with wisdom and compassion is essential for a fully-realized archetype.

# Jesus as Warrior

- Jesus as warrior on Palm Sunday, in the Garden of Gethsemane.
- Jesus' teachings on love of enemy and turning the other cheek in Sermon on the Mount.
- Witness of the Christian martyrs in every era of history.

# Palm Sunday: Two Processions

At Passover time, Pilate leaves his comfy seaside villa at Caesarea and treks forty miles inland to dusty, hilly Jerusalem.

He brings a sizeable squadron of soldiers, horses and weapons and parades into Jerusalem in a show of imperial power to reinforce the Roman Fortress of Antonia built right into the Temple complex.

The Kingdom of this world has arrived.

Jesus arranges a different kind of procession. Another “king” is entering Jerusalem, but this one enters on a donkey and his follows have palm branches not weapons.

Jesus has come to “reinforce” the sacredness of Jerusalem.

The Kingdom of God has arrived.

## Retaliation

Jesus is not advocating passivity or weakness here. He is rejecting violence as a way of responding to violence, to evil.

a. To turn the other cheek is to force your opponent to slap you as an equal not as a slave thus confronting your opponent with your equal dignity.

- b. Since the poor only had two articles of clothing, to give your cloak to someone who has sued you for your tunic makes you naked. Standing naked in court violates so many taboos that it confronts your accuser with the injustice of taking your tunic in the first place.
- c. Roman soldiers forced people to carry supplies for a mile. Volunteering for a second mile confronts the oppressor with the reality of the deed.

d. Give freely to others without binding them, as was customary, to later give you something back.

The point of these examples is to show how the poor and the victimized could retain their dignity while non-violently confronting their oppressors with the evil of their conduct.

## Loving enemies

Like most people Israel was bound to love (prefer) neighbor, relative, fellow town resident, but not those far away and especially not the enemy. Jesus says that both those near and those far are to be loved equally. Love here is not an emotion but an attitude and a decision.

The enemy may not be changed by this love. That's not the point. We love because God loves his enemies, because we do more than pagans and publicans who calculate the benefits of who they love, and because we are to be perfect as God is perfect.

# Christian Martyrdom

In his book The Rise of Christianity, Rodney Stark asks the questions: How much did it cost to be a Christian? What did Christians get here and now? In short, was Christianity a “good deal”?

Why did so many Christians willingly endure social rejection, torture and death in exchange for risky, intangible religious rewards? How could a rational person do this?

First of all many Christians did not endure such evils for several reasons. Some are known to have recanted their Christian faith or to have seen that there was no inherent contradiction to a superficial worship of pagan gods as a social or cultural custom.

Second persecutions rarely occurred. And when they did they tended to be local rather than empire wide. Furthermore persecutions usually targeted bishops and others in publicly prominent positions of leadership.

Still, many Christians went unhesitatingly to terrible deaths rather than recant.

Martyrdom occurred in public, usually before large audiences, and often as the culmination of a long process of interrogation and trial by the pagan authorities and support and adulation from the Christian community. Ignatius of Antioch is an excellent example of this.

Extraordinary fame and honor attached itself to martyrdom. Amazingly even today we know the names of thousands of Christian martyrs over four centuries because their contemporaries made a great effort to record their endurance and holiness (The Martyrology).

## Early Christian Martyrs

- **Saint Stephen** (1st century) – The first Christian martyr, stoned to death for preaching about Jesus.
- **Saint Peter** (1st century) – Crucified upside down in Rome under Emperor Nero.
- **Saint Paul** (1st century) – Beheaded in Rome for spreading Christianity.
- **Saint Perpetua and Saint Felicity** (3rd century) – Two women who were executed in Carthage for refusing to renounce their faith.
- **Saint Polycarp** (2nd century) – Burned at the stake for refusing to deny Christ.

## Medieval Martyrs

- **Saint Alban** (4th century) – The first British Christian martyr, executed for sheltering a Christian priest.
- **Saint Joan of Arc** (15th century) – Burned at the stake for her role in leading French forces under divine guidance.
- **Saint Thomas More** (16th century) – Executed for opposing King Henry VIII's separation from the Catholic Church.

## Modern Martyrs

- **Dietrich Bonhoeffer** (20th century) – A German pastor executed for resisting the Nazi regime.
- **Saint Oscar Romero** (20th century) – Archbishop of San Salvador, assassinated for speaking out against injustice.
- **Saint Maximilian Kolbe** (20<sup>th</sup> century) – Gave his life to save another man's life.

Stark contends that the blood of the martyrs was indeed the seed of the Church (Tertullian!). The example given in the apostolic generation by the deaths of James the brother of the Lord, Paul and Peter is key. These are the most revered figures from the first generation. They all believed in an imminent Parousia. They could all have easily avoided death. Yet in the face of a delayed Parousia, extremely small numbers of followers, and the ease of escape, they all embraced death in fidelity to Christ.

According to Stark there is almost no other religious movement whose earliest leaders acted in this way. They are dying like Jesus: with no evidence that their death will accomplish anything. It is the most radical kind of faith – based on complete trust that God has the power to bring good out of evil!

In addition Christians had produced an enormously secure and supportive communal life. They indeed did love one another. As a result, the poor, the sick and other marginal groups (especially women) enjoyed a level of confidence in the future that was not widely shared by a culture that felt the fates controlled one's destiny (fatalistic). This too contributed to the courage of the martyrs. They did not die alone. They died with great love and support surrounding them. They died within the life of the Church, within the Body of Christ.

# Just War Theory

The elements of Catholic just war theory are divided into **two key categories**: the conditions for entering a war (*jus ad bellum*) and the moral guidelines for conducting a war (*jus in bello*). Together, these principles aim to ensure that any engagement in armed conflict is morally justified, restrained, and aimed at restoring peace. Here's a breakdown:

## **Jus ad Bellum (Justice Before War)**

These criteria help determine whether it is morally permissible to go to war:

- **Just Cause:** War can only be waged to confront a grave and certain injustice, such as defending innocent lives, resisting tyranny, or restoring peace.
- **Legitimate Authority:** Only those entrusted with legal and moral responsibility (e.g., governments, rulers) can declare war.
- **Right Intention:** The aim of the war must be to achieve justice and peace, not to pursue vengeance, gain territory, or exploit others.
- **Probability of Success:** War should only be undertaken if there is a reasonable chance of achieving the desired outcome; futile conflicts are immoral.
- **Proportionality:** The anticipated harm caused by war must not exceed the injustice being addressed. The good achieved must outweigh the destruction and suffering.
- **Last Resort:** All nonviolent alternatives—such as diplomacy, negotiation, or sanctions—must have been exhausted before resorting to armed conflict.

## **Jus in Bello (Justice During War)**

These principles govern how war should be conducted to limit harm:

- **Discrimination:** Combatants must distinguish between military targets and noncombatants. Civilians, the wounded, and prisoners of war must be protected.
- **Proportionality:** The use of force must be measured and never excessive, avoiding unnecessary destruction and suffering.
- **Avoidance of Evil Means:** Actions such as torture, genocide, or the targeting of civilian populations are strictly forbidden.
- **Respect for Life and Human Dignity:** Even in the midst of conflict, the intrinsic worth of every person must be recognized and upheld.
- **The Ultimate Goal**
- The overarching aim of these elements is to restore peace and justice as swiftly as possible while minimizing harm. War is always seen as a tragic necessity rather than a desirable outcome. Thus, Catholic teaching strongly emphasizes the importance of exhausting all peaceful means before resorting to violence.
- This framework serves as a moral compass in situations of conflict, helping Catholics discern the appropriate response in complex and difficult circumstances. In modern times, there has been increasing emphasis on nonviolent approaches, but the just war theory remains a reference

# Pope Francis on Nonviolence

Papal statements on nonviolence, particularly from Pope Francis, emphasize the importance of peace and active nonviolence as central to Christian life. Here are some key highlights:

- **World Day of Peace Message (2017):** Pope Francis released a message titled "*Nonviolence: A Style of Politics for Peace*", where he called for nonviolence to be a guiding principle in personal, social, and international relations. He stated that true followers of Jesus must embrace His teachings on nonviolence.
- **Prayer Intention for Nonviolence (April 2023):** Pope Francis urged the global community to adopt nonviolence as a way of life and to reduce reliance on arms. He described nonviolence as a transformative approach to addressing global challenges.
- **Encyclicals and Teachings:** In documents like *Laudato Si'* and *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis linked nonviolence to care for creation, social justice, and universal fraternity. He consistently advocated for addressing systemic issues like poverty and war through peaceful means.
- **Practical Advocacy:** Throughout his papacy, Pope Francis emphasized nonviolence in action, urging the Church and individuals to engage in reconciliation, healing, and justice without resorting to violence.

# Recent Popes on Nonviolence

Over the past two centuries, various Popes have made significant statements advocating for nonviolence and peace. Here are some highlights:

- **Pope Leo XIII (1878–1903):** In his encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891), Leo XIII emphasized social justice and the importance of resolving conflicts peacefully, particularly in the context of labor and economic disputes.
- **Pope Pius XII (1939–1958):** During World War II, Pius XII called for peace and condemned the violence of war, urging nations to seek reconciliation and justice.
- **Pope John XXIII (1958–1963):** His encyclical *Pacem in Terris* (1963) was a groundbreaking document advocating for peace, human rights, and the resolution of conflicts through dialogue and mutual understanding.
- **Pope Paul VI (1963–1978):** Paul VI famously declared "No more war, war never again!" during his address to the United Nations in 1965, emphasizing the need for nonviolence in international relations.
- **Pope John Paul II (1978–2005):** John Paul II was a vocal advocate for peace, opposing war and violence in various contexts, including the Gulf War and conflicts in Eastern Europe. His encyclicals, such as *Centesimus Annus* (1991), highlighted the importance of solidarity and nonviolent solutions.
- **Pope Benedict XVI (2005–2013):** Benedict XVI emphasized the role of faith in promoting peace and nonviolence, particularly in his encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* (2009).
- **Pope Francis (2013–2025):** Francis has been a strong proponent of nonviolence, as seen in his 2017 World Day of Peace message, *Nonviolence: A Style of Politics for Peace*. He has consistently called for nonviolent approaches to global challenges, including poverty, war, and environmental crises.

# American Bishops on Nonviolence

"Confronting a Culture of Violence: A Catholic Framework for Action" is a 1994 pastoral message that emerged from the U.S. Catholic Conference (the precursor to the USCCB). The document offered a theological and practical response to the pervasive impact of violence in American society. Here are some of its key aspects:

- **A Moral Call to Conversion:** The document begins by painting a stark picture of a society torn apart by violence—whether it's seen in domestic settings, community environments, or broader cultural contexts. It calls on Catholics to undergo a personal and communal conversion, urging them to **reject the normalization of violence** and to instead embrace a renewed commitment to the dignity of life.
- **Respect for Life as a Foundational Principle:** Central to the framework is the principle that **respect for life must guide all choices and actions**. This respect is not merely a slogan; it forms the ethical core from which the Church builds its response to societal violence. In this view, every policy and personal decision should prioritize human dignity over destructive behaviors.

- **A Comprehensive Framework for Action:** The message does not propose a single solution but rather outlines a range of responsibilities across different sectors of society. It offers guiding principles for individuals, families, parish communities, educators, and policymakers. These include:
  - Encouraging direct personal actions that contribute to a culture of **peace**.
  - Mobilizing faith communities to create safe spaces and support **networks**.
  - Advocating for public policies that protect human life and promote equitable **justice**.
- **Emphasis on Community and Social Responsibility:** The document reflects a belief that transformations must occur not just at the individual level but also within communities. By highlighting initiatives already underway in various dioceses, parishes, and schools, it calls for the Church to support and amplify these grassroots efforts to counteract the culture of violence.

The framework provided in this document is significant because **it situates the challenge of violence within both the personal and public spheres**, recognizing that cultural change requires a collective movement toward nonviolence and justice. Over the years, its ideas have continued to influence how American Catholic leaders approach issues of violence, peace, and social ethics.

# Personal Nonviolence

## **Foster Inner Peace:**

- Practice mindfulness, meditation, or prayer to cultivate calm and self-awareness.
- Address personal anger or resentment through self-reflection and forgiveness.

## **Promote Nonviolent Communication:**

- Speak and listen with empathy, avoiding language that can harm or escalate conflict.
- Focus on understanding others' perspectives before reacting.

## **Resolve Conflicts Peacefully:**

- Address disagreements directly but respectfully.
- Seek solutions that promote mutual understanding rather than "winning" an argument.

## **Practice Compassion in Action:**

- Engage in acts of kindness, such as volunteering or supporting those in need.
- Advocate for marginalized or oppressed communities.

## **Lead by Example:**

- Model nonviolent behavior in relationships, work environments, and public interactions.
- Encourage others to adopt peaceful practices by demonstrating them yourself.

## **Choose Nonviolence in Advocacy:**

- Participate in peaceful protests or movements that seek justice without aggression.
- Promote change through education and constructive dialogue.

## **Simplify Lifestyle Choices:**

- Avoid supporting industries that perpetuate harm, such as exploitative labor practices or environmental degradation.
- Opt for ethical and sustainable products when possible.

## **Engage in Lifelong Learning:**

- Educate yourself on nonviolence principles, such as the teachings of figures like Jesus, Mahatma Gandhi, or Martin Luther King Jr.
- Share these insights with others to inspire a collective culture of peace.

## **Support Restorative Justice:**

- Promote healing and accountability rather than retribution when addressing wrongs.
- Advocate for systems that prioritize rehabilitation and reconciliation over punishment.

## **Be an Advocate for Peace:**

- Encourage peaceful resolutions in your community, whether through dialogue, collaboration, or outreach programs.
- Build bridges between people of differing perspectives or backgrounds.

By adopting these practices, we can create a ripple effect of nonviolence that transforms not only our own lives but also the lives of those around us.

# Questions for Jim?

# Homework (1 of 2)

## 1. Visit USCCB War and Peace web page

<https://www.usccb.org/committees/international-justice-and-peace/war-peace>

+ Catechism paragraph 2258 and “Safeguarding Peace” (2302-2317)

## 2. Between now and New Year Eve, think about and resolve to do 1-2 (or more) specific things to increase the nonviolence in your life

- Thoughts
- Words
- Deeds

## 3. Take the Vow of Nonviolence

<https://paxchristiusa.org/resources/vow-of-nonviolence/>

# Homework (2 of 2)

*“... whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.”*  
*Matthew 25:40*

## 4. Sign up for action alerts, discern God’s will, and respond

Advocacy Requests	Link to Advocacy Signup
US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)	<a href="https://www.votervoice.net/USCCB/register">https://www.votervoice.net/USCCB/register</a>
USCCB Justice and Peace	<a href="https://usccb.us11.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=75c0c9953e20885f1295adc0f&amp;id=3758e6e5cd">https://usccb.us11.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=75c0c9953e20885f1295adc0f&amp;id=3758e6e5cd</a>
USCCB Justice for Immigrants (MRS)	<a href="https://justiceforimmigrants.org/join-us/">https://justiceforimmigrants.org/join-us/</a>
Catholic Charities USA	<a href="https://www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/advocacy-1/action-center/#/">https://www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/advocacy-1/action-center/#/</a>
Catholic Climate Covenant	<a href="https://catholicclimatecovenant.org/join-us/">https://catholicclimatecovenant.org/join-us/</a>
Catholic Relief Services	<a href="https://www.crs.org/ways-to-help/advocate/take-action">https://www.crs.org/ways-to-help/advocate/take-action</a>
Catholic Mobilizing Network	<a href="https://catholicsmobilizing.org/join/">https://catholicsmobilizing.org/join/</a>
Catholic Labor Network	<a href="https://catholiclabor.org/">https://catholiclabor.org/</a>
Pax Christi USA	<a href="https://paxchristiusa.org/join/#individual">https://paxchristiusa.org/join/#individual</a>

**NEXT WEEK:**

**How would you know the**

**Kingdom of God**

**if you experienced it?**

# Closing Prayer

## Calling on God as our Liberator

...

*“walk humbly with your God  
... love goodness  
... and do justice”*

*(Micah 6:8 adjusted ... for the Earth that we live on with  
the 8 billion other people who are also created in God’s  
image and likeness)*