

A Non-Violent Christmas

SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMISSION

Christianity began amidst a maelstrom of violence. Look at the Church's calendar:

- Dec 26 **St. Stephen**, stoned to death for preaching the Gospel.
- Dec 27 **John the Baptist**, beheaded for being a herald of Jesus and challenging King Herod.
- Dec 28 **Holy Innocents**, children killed as collateral damage in a political-motivated manhunt.
- Dec 30 **Holy Family**, become refugees in Egypt to escape Herod's persecution.
- Jan 6 **Epiphany**. The Magi risk their lives to avoid colluding in state-sponsored terrorism.

Yet Christ comes into this world bringing fulfilling the "unpractical" and "naïve" promise of peace and calling his followers to actively but non-violently resist the powers of war, aggression, and violence around them.

"And you, child,
will be called the prophet of the Most High;
for you will go before the Lord
to prepare his ways,...
to give light to those who sit in darkness
and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace."

Luke 1:76f

Might Christmas this year bring YOU an invitation to *live and give* Jesus' message of non-violent love?

We invite you to consider:

**What one decision or action
can I make this Christmas season
to actively and intentionally promote
the non-violent love brought into the world
in the birth of Jesus?**

We recognize that many of us at St. Therese are *already* living the non-violent love of Christ

This Christmas we invite you to take an *extra* step, make a deeper commitment. We the people are at war with another nation, and these times call for a visible witness for peace.

Some ideas are listed on the back.
Please look them over

The Vow of Non-Violence

from Pax Christi

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 the peacemakers, for they 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 sons and daughters of your Creator in heaven.'"

Before God my Creator and His 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.



Here are some ideas.

We invite you to pick ONE and commit to it!

Some reflection questions for this season:

- How can I pray to actively reflect my share of the responsibility for peace?
- Am I giving toys that somehow make violence look harmless, normal, or even fun?
- Am I giving toys that make war a game?
- Am I seeking reconciliation in my relationships (family, friends, work) this season?

The arena for in my life for non-violent action might be in:

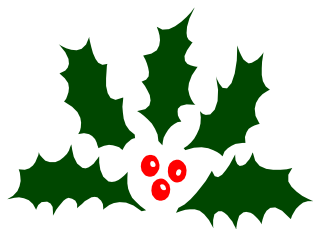
- What I purchase
- Where I seek entertainment
- The conversations I enter or leave
- The books I read or invite others to read

For Families

1. Peace Begins at Home available for \$5 from Pax Christi USA. This packet contains ideas for promoting non-violence in your family, with 6 evenings of reflection for family prayer time. Give your family the packet this Christmas, and use it for your Lenten prayer! www.paxchristiusa.org or 1-814-453-1343

2. Whose Birthday is it Anyway? A wonderful booklet that helps families plan and celebrate the true meaning of Christmas. Still available and helpful through Epiphany. Available for \$3 from Alternatives, a organization that links simple living and non-violence with Christian faith.

www.simpleliving.org or 1-800-821-6153



For Everyone

Who doesn't like to receive a good book? Have you thought of giving a book that helps introduce a non-violent perspective? Try these, all in paperback and available from Episcopal Bookstore in Seattle:

The Powers That Be: Theology for A New Millennium by Walter Wink

Violence Unveiled: Humanity at the Crossroads by Gil Bailie

Jesus Before Christianity
by Albert Nolan, OP

The Church Before Christianity,
by Wes Howard-Brook

Prophets: Words of Fire, by Megan Mckenna

The Prayer of Saint Francis: A Message of Peace for the World Today, by Leonardo Boff

Some More Helpful Websites:

www.responsibleshopper.org

Want to buy a sweater, but not support the inhuman violence of a sweatshop? This site enables you to check out hundreds of manufacturers and brand names before purchasing.

www.nonviolence.org

What can we do to guide our feet into the way of peace? What are the non-violent alternative to the War in Afghanistan? This site of the Fellowship of Reconciliation has resources on non-violence action, words, and thinking.

"The violence of war begins in the heart, and that is where it will end."

Dorothy Day