

The Charism of the Passionists and Non-violence

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Jesus' public witness to truth, and unconditional and inclusive love, was for Him not to return evil for evil. Through the three years of public life in the face of rejection, abandonment, threats, disappointment, betrayal, torture and death he would not return evil for evil.

The Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ is the basis for a nonviolent response to the causes of suffering in the world. There is no compromising the essential nature of the Eucharist as the celebration of the Lord's death reconciling us to God and to one another. We worship a nonviolent God whose unconditional love seeks to unite all enemies.

The vows of religious life are the underpinnings for a non-violent stance to that which is counter to the plan of God – living justly, creating the beloved community, and service for the sake of the dignity of all..

We vow to live simply. In the face of the powers that threaten the loss of everything, we stand with nothing to lose. We vow to love wholesomely with honesty. In the face of the threatened loss of human love we stand with an affectionate love for the dignity of others, even the enemy. We vow obedience to the will of God. In the face of the popularity of approval from the masses, we respond to the voice within, affirmed by the voice of leadership, which moves us toward the most abandoned. And, a non-violent response to all forms of violence is promoting devotion to the suffering love of Jesus Christ crucified.

“Jesus is no draughtsman of political blueprints; he is the one who vanquished evil through suffering. It looked as though evil had triumphed on the cross but the real victory belonged to Jesus. And the cross is the only justification for the precept of non-violence, for it alone can kindle a faith in the victory over evil which will enable men to obey that precept. And only such obedience is blessed with the promise that we shall be partakers of Christ's victory as well as of his sufferings.

The Passion of Christ is the victory of divine love over the powers of evil and therefore it is the only supportable basis for Christian obedience. Once again, Jesus calls those who follow him to share his passion. How can we convince the world by our preaching of the passion when we shrink from that passion in our own lives? On the cross Jesus fulfilled the law he himself established and thus graciously keeps his disciples in the fellowship of his suffering. The Cross is the only power in the world which proves that suffering love can avenge and vanquish evil. But it was just this participation in the cross which the disciples were granted when Jesus called them to him. They are called blessed because of their visible participation in his cross.”

[The Cost of Discipleship](#), Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Macmillan Books, 1970, p. 161.

The Culture of Violence has many facets. Not only in physical expressions such as wars, fights, beatings, rapes murders, etc., but the more “passive” violence, where we hurt people without using physical force. Wasting resources, over-consumption, hate, prejudice, and other acts that hurt people even unconsciously are the lethal expression of “passive” violence.

To respond in a nonviolent manner is a natural capacity that we all possess. The capacity is revealed in meditation, research and application, both individually and communally. Mahatma Gandhi was want to say, ***“we must become the change we wish to see in the world.”***

Nonviolence makes the suffering love of Jesus on the Cross an instrument of reconciliation, mediation and peace making. It is the outgrowth of our Passionist Charism.