



Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

2018
Lenten
REFLECTION GUIDE

Embracing Jesus' Practice of Nonviolence

“The consistent practice of nonviolence has broken barriers, bound wounds, and healed nations.”

————— *Pope Francis* —————

About this resource

In commemoration of the 50th anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination, we offer reflections, questions, prayers, and actions for the season of Lent based on each week's Gospel reading and the six principles of nonviolence offered by Dr. King in *Stride Toward Freedom*, his memoir of the 1957 Montgomery bus boycott. According to Dr. King, the book is "the chronicle of 50,000 Negroes who took to heart the principles of nonviolence, who learned to fight for their rights with the weapon of love, and who in the process, acquired a new estimate of their own human worth." Use this guide individually or in small groups to reflect upon your life patterns, to pray more deeply, and renew your spirit to face the realities of our world.

To learn more about the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, Maryknoll Sisters, Maryknoll Lay Missioners, and Maryknoll Affiliates, go to www.maryknoll.org

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About us

The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns (MOGC) represents Maryknoll missioners, who are Catholic men and women serving in impoverished communities around the world. The MOGC provides analysis and advocacy on issues of justice, peace and the integrity of creation that affect the countries and communities where Maryknoll missioners serve.

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ASH WEDNESDAY

When you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you may not appear to others to be fasting, except to your Father who is hidden. And your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you.

MATTHEW 6:17-18

An invitation to a new path

We begin the season of Lent with the same Scripture readings each year, in which Jesus teaches about almsgiving, prayer, and fasting. We often share with family and friends what we are “giving up” for the next forty days to give ourselves more time and clarity for God. Many children choose to fast from chocolate. Some brave adults pick coffee.

More than a change in habits, Lent calls Christians to a radical and lasting turning of hearts – a conversion. The traditional Lenten practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving are to be part of the Christian life during every season, but during the season of Lent, we are invited to renew our commitment and start afresh.

The journey of Lent can be difficult – a time of repentance, of giving up things that tie us to this world and looking instead to the life and teachings of Jesus. But when we courageously examine within, name what is broken within us, turn away from it, and turn toward what is truly good, we will find ourselves living the fullness of life that God wants for each of us.

The life and teachings of Jesus help us understand what the fullness of life looks like: love, inclusion, forgiveness, mercy, sacrifice – and nonviolence. We invite you to spend the six weeks of Lent reflecting on Scripture and the six principles of nonviolence as defined by Dr. Martin Luther King. Each week, this guide offers suggestions for prayer, fasting, and action as

well as stories from Maryknoll Missioners in communities on the margins around the world.

“Serving as a Maryknoll Lay Missioner with my wife and three daughters in a slum in Venezuela, I learned about the power and beauty of nonviolence from the women leaders of base Christian communities,” said Gerry Lee, director of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns. “In our ten years in the *barrios*, we witnessed their creativity, courage and resilience against a government that labeled their community ‘illegal squatters’ and a Church that denied them Eucharist for being single mothers or not married in the Church.”

“Like Dr. Martin Luther King, these women discovered, while living through the actual experience of protest against structures that offered them nothing but misery and even death, that nonviolence is more than the approved method for change; it is a commitment to a way of life and a light in the darkness. With nonviolence, we each can be a light today.”

Questions for Reflection

What do you want to turn away from and toward this Lenten season?

How do you respond to the invitation to a philosophy of nonviolence - a new path?

Prayer

Blessed are the peacemakers, you said,
O Lord, for they shall be called
children of God.

We ask you, Lord, to forgive us
for the times we've caused division or
misunderstanding in our communities.

We know that communion is not
achieved through coercion,
but through constant conversion.

We ask for the grace to not speak ill,
not criticize, not to be sowers of strife,
so that peace can reign in our hearts.

From this conversion of the heart, Lord,
lead us to a version in actions.

First in our hearts, then in our world
incarnate the power of Gospel nonviolence.

Give us the imagination to overcome
all forms of violence with creative
nonviolence.

Revive in our church's theology of peace,
the nonviolent message of Jesus,

That once again our churches may be centers of learning
for nonviolence and just peace,
centers of conversion from violence to
peace, and from loneliness to joy.
Amen.

– “A Prayer for Conversion to Gospel Nonviolence” by
the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative,
<https://nonviolencejustpeace.net/>

Fast

Turn off anything that supports violence on TV, movies,
and the internet.

Grow in peace with yourself by fostering a spirit of
gratitude instead of focusing on disappointments.



“Among the Ilocano in the northern part of the Philippines where I come from, we greet each other with “*Adda kayo*,” which literally translates to, “You are here.” It also means, “I acknowledge your presence.” When responded to with a yes, a nod, or a smile, the initial greeting would be followed by: “*Naimbag met ta adda kayo*.” “It is good that you are here.” The greeting speaks of appreciating, honoring, and valuing one another.

Acknowledging someone’s presence is essential to being fully present to that person. This mutual recognition of each other’s presence suggests the acceptance of one another and consequently, creates a feeling of belonging, of inclusion, of oneness and a well-being that is an experience of peace.”

– SISTER REBECCA MACUGAY
Maryknoll Sisters

*Pictured in center, with Sister Nena Heramil
(right) at a permaculture farm in Panama.*

Action

Adopt a nonviolent practice from the list “64 ways to practice nonviolence.” <http://bit.ly/64waysNonviolence>

Explore the website of The King Center for Nonviolent Social Change founded in 1968 by Coretta Scott King to promote the philosophy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. <http://www.thekingcenter.org/>



FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.

MARK 1:15

The first step takes courage

On the first Sunday of Lent, the Gospel reading each year is about Jesus' temptation in the desert. The forty days that Jesus spent in the desert are a reference to the forty years that the Israelites wandered in the desert after being led from slavery in Egypt and the forty days and nights the prophet Elijah also traveled in the desert.

Lent is an opportunity for us to set aside forty days for a time of repentance, of giving up things that tie us to this world and looking instead to the life and teachings of Jesus.

In Mark's Gospel, we hear that Jesus went into the desert immediately after his baptism, led by the Spirit. The desert marks the beginning of Jesus' confrontation with evil. Our Lenten practices are a beginning for us as well, to shine light on whatever temptations we struggle to resist. This is no easy task; it requires courage.

In 1957, in his first book, *Stride Toward Freedom*, Martin Luther King Jr. described the six principles of nonviolence that he learned during the historic bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama. The first principle is "Nonviolence is a way of life for courageous people." It is active nonviolent resistance to evil.

The courage to resist evil requires overcoming the fear of consequences one may incur while doing good: contempt, disapproval, or even physical or emotional opposition.

"We who engage in nonviolent direct action are not the creators of tension," Dr. King wrote six years later in *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*. "We merely bring to the surface the hidden tension that is already alive. Injustice must be exposed, with all the tension its exposure creates, to the light of human conscience at the air of national opinion before it can be cured."

An example of this principle occurred during the civil war in El Salvador, when *campesinos* moved back to their land after being displaced by the military. Many had been living in refugee camps and were simply tired of doing nothing, waiting for the war to end.

"Their action was completely nonviolent," recalls Marie Dennis, co-president of Pax Christi International. "Thousands went back to their villages within a few months. They knew moving home was dangerous; it was an active war zone. They knew they could be killed. We saw their remarkable courage and determination but we also saw their faith, their willing entry into the suffering of the cross – even death."

Questions for Reflection

Think of time of suffering in your life. What gave you courage to persevere?

How can you be a source of courage for others who are suffering?

Prayer

Jesus, you renounced violence, loved everyone, practiced nonviolence, embodied peace, resisted injustice, and gave your life in perfect nonviolent love for humanity. God of peace, have mercy on us.

ALL: "God of peace, have mercy on us."

Jesus, you call us to renounce violence, love everyone, practice nonviolence, oppose war, dismantle nuclear weapons, resist injustice, embody peace and love our enemies. God of peace, have mercy on us.

ALL: "God of peace, have mercy on us."

Jesus, you are our Lord and Savior, our Brother and friend, our life, our hope, our peace. God of peace, have mercy on us.

ALL: "God of peace, have mercy on us."

God of peace, be with us now as we repent of our violence and hear your word of peace. Help us to become your holy people of Gospel nonviolence, that we might follow the nonviolent Jesus, love one another, love our enemies, reconcile with everyone, resist injustice and pursue a new world without war, poverty, nuclear weapons, global warming or violence, your reign of nonviolence in our midst. We ask this in the name of the nonviolent Jesus, our brother and our peace.

– Excerpt from “Prayer for International Nonviolence Day” by John Dear, published by the National Catholic Reporter on August 11, 2009.

Fast

Consider letting go of habits that prevent you from listening without being defensive and speaking without judgement.

Make time this week to read a meditation by the late Father Dean Brackley, S.J., called “Meeting the victim, falling in love,” published in America Magazine in 2011. <https://www.americamagazine.org/content/all-things/meeting-victim-loving-poor>



“I am finishing my ninth year in El Salvador living and working with youth in the small town. It has been such a blessing to able to accompany the youth in their journey for a better future.

“The reality of the youth in El Salvador continues to be very difficult, as they struggle to go forward with few opportunities for education and employment. Many kids are dropping out of school in the 6th and 7th grade, and very few have the chance to go to the university. There is also a lot of violence and many youth are caught in the middle of a war between the gangs and the police/military.

“One of our projects is called “Tutoring Program Father Dean Brackley S.J.,” where we have 30 young people going to the Jesuit University, UCA, every Saturday to get tutoring and formation, so that they are able to compete for scholarships to the university. It has been amazing to see the looks on the faces of the students as they walk around the university. This program also helps with their self-esteem and reminds them that if they work hard they can achieve their dreams.”

– LARRY PARR

Maryknoll Lay Missioners

(Pictured on right with students in El Salvador)

Action

Learn more about Maryknoll Lay Missioners tutoring program in El Salvador <http://bit.ly/2B5D7So>

Listen to Father Brackley teach about “Who is calling what from me?”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZqifWkax75g>



SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

*A cloud came, casting a shadow over them; from the cloud came a voice,
"This is my beloved Son. Listen to him."*

MARK 9:7

The Beloved Son and Beloved Community

This week we hear the awe-inspiring story of Jesus' Transfiguration. Peter, James, and John went up a mountain and spent the night in prayer with Jesus. There they saw Jesus transformed in glory and the prophets of old talking with him. "Then from a cloud came a voice: 'This is my beloved Son. Listen to him.'"

The Transfiguration conveys two affirmations: God is with us and God can transform us.

When Peter says to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here," Jesus gives him a firm rebuke. Maryknoll Father Stephen Judd in Bolivia points to the teaching of Spanish Scripture scholar, José Antonio Pagola, on the message of the Transfiguration: Listen to Jesus' words and apply them in creating the kinds of right relationships that build communities in the here and now. "Peter's mistaken attitude is one of exclusion, wanting to hoard the presence of Jesus for a select group of followers," Father Judd says.

Father Judd also reminds us of Pope Francis' warning against exclusivity in our relationships, which the pope calls 'the globalization of indifference'. "How many of us, myself included, have lost our bearings; we are no longer attentive to the world in which we live; we don't care; we don't protect what God created for everyone, and we end up unable even to care for one another!" Pope Francis said.

This fits well with Dr. King's second principle of nonviolence: Nonviolence seeks to win friendship and understanding. The end result of nonviolence is redemption and reconciliation and the purpose of nonviolence is the creation of the Beloved Community.

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As explained by The King Center, "Dr. King's Beloved Community is a global vision in which all people can share in the wealth of the earth." Fundamental to the concept of the Beloved Community is inclusiveness, both economic and social. At the same time, Dr. King believed "conflicts could be resolved peacefully and adversaries could be reconciled through a mutual, determined commitment to nonviolence."

The central vision of world history in the Bible is that all of creation is one, Walter Brueggemann writes in *Living Toward a Vision: Biblical Reflections on Shalom*. "Every creature in community with every other, living in harmony and security toward the joy and well-being of every other creature." ... "That persistent vision of joy, well-being, harmony, and prosperity is not captured in any single word or idea in the Bible; a cluster of words is required to express its many dimensions and subtle nuances: love, loyalty, truth, grace, salvation, justice, blessing, righteousness. But the term that in recent discussion has been used to summarize that controlling vision is shalom."

When asked years later what he saw as a vision of shalom for Christians today, Brueggemann said, "I think it means peaceable life together among the nations and tribes and religious traditions, and economic justice so that everybody has enough resources to live a life of safety and dignity."

Questions for Reflection

- Where do you see the Beloved Community in your life?
- What inspires you toward a vision of shalom?

Lenten Reflection Guide – Second Sunday, February 25, 2018

Prayer

When the world spins crazy,
spins wild and out of control
spins toward rage and hate and violence,
spins beyond our wisdom and nearly beyond our faith,
when the world spins in chaos as it does now among us...

We are glad for sobering roots that provide ballast in the storm.
So we thank you for our rootage in communities of faith,
for our many fathers and mothers who have believed and trusted as firm witnesses to us,
for their many stories of wonder, awe, and healing.

We are glad this night in this company
for the rootage of the text,
for the daring testimony,
for its deep commands,
for its exuberant tales.
Because we know that as we probe deep into this text...
clear to its bottom,
we will find you hiding there,
we will find you showing yourself there,
speaking as you do,
governing,
healing,
judging.

And when we meet you hiddenly,
we find the spin not so unnerving,
because from you the world again has a chance
for life and sense and wholeness.
We pray midst the spinning, not yet unnerved,
but waiting and watching and listening,
for you are the truth that contains all our spin. Amen.

“When the World Spins Crazy” by Walter Brueggemann,
written shortly after 9/11, from *Awed to Heaven, Rooted in Earth: Prayers of Walter Brueggemann*

Fast

When facing a person with whom you are in conflict, put “love your enemy” into practice by offering an act of kindness.

Take special care of your relationship with water, a sacred and essential part of life to be shared by the Beloved Community. Examine your use of water and conserve.



“My own experience living for more than 10 years in what is now South Sudan revealed to me a deep reality of living with trust and without it – especially between Muslims and non-Muslims.

“Often the trust that Jesus speaks about is found on the individual level or among members of smaller groups. It can begin with common courtesies like a greeting, a sign of respect, or an offer of some water to quench one’s thirst and go forward from there developing into a true friendship in which there is understanding and dialogue. This is what Jesus means when he says ‘if you can trust a person in little things, you can trust that person in greater.’

“In cases where there is little or no trust then there is the chance of creating enemies – very often leading to great fear and harm to others. The relationship of distrust between two persons or groups of people is against God’s plan of creation. We were not created to oppose or oppress others but to live in harmony, and this is only possible when there is trust.”

–FATHER THOMAS TISCORNIA
Maryknoll Father and Brothers

(Pictured on right in vestments in South Sudan)

Action

March 22 is World Water Day.

- Learn about the sacred role of water for all life: <http://bit.ly/MaryknollWater>
- Find resources for taking action on March 22: <http://www.worldwaterday.org/>
- Watch “The Story of Bottled Water” <http://bit.ly/StoryBottled>



THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

*At this the Jews answered and said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?"
Jesus answered, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up."
JOHN 2:18-19*

Let us defeat injustice rather than each other

In this week's Gospel reading we hear about Jesus' reaction when he enters the temple in Jerusalem and finds the people have turned God's house into a marketplace. The temple is bustling with the buying and selling of animals used as sacrifices and services by money changers who help people make their purchases.

Known as the cleansing of the temple, Jesus "made a whip out of cords and drove them all out of the temple area, with the sheep and oxen, and spilled the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables, and to those who sold doves he said, "Take these out of here, and stop making my Father's house a marketplace."

The people, naturally, are appalled by Jesus' action because buying and selling in the temple had become the norm. They ask Jesus "What sign can you show us for doing this?" Jesus replies that he will destroy the temple and raise it up again.

The Gospel of John concludes, "But he was speaking about the temple of his body. Therefore, when he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they came to believe the Scripture and the word Jesus had spoken."

Let's look at the third principle in Dr. King's six principles of nonviolence: Nonviolence seeks to defeat injustice not people. Nonviolence recognizes that evildoers are also victims and are not evil people.

"Nonviolence liberates the oppressed and the oppressors," John Dear wrote in *Living Peace: A Spirituality of Contemplation and Action*. Jesus took a stand against immoral action in the temple without hate for the people and went on to call for love for everyone. "Jesus offered the ultimate teaching on nonviolence: Instead of killing your enemies, love your enemies," Dear said.

"Life continuously reveals to us how deep our own violence lies within us. We will never become perfectly nonviolent because we have been thoroughly socialized into a culture of violence. But we can turn away from violence, seek peace, practice heartfelt compassion toward others, and publicly participate in the world's nonviolent transformation."

"As we make peace with ourselves and welcome the God of peace who lives within us, we will learn to make peace with those around us and with others throughout the world. The challenge is to do both: to pursue peace within and to pursue peace with the whole human race."

Questions for Reflection

Think of a conflict in your life. How can you interject 'heartfelt compassion' and 'publicly participate' in transforming the conflict through nonviolent action?

Prayer

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.
Amen.

– Peace Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi

Fast

Release your hostages today – forgive people you hold
hostage to the past.

Place a photo and quote in your prayer space of a great
peacemaker: Mahatma Gandhi or Khan Abdul Ghaffar
Khan in India, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in the United
States, Leymah Gbowee in Liberia, Saint Francis of Assisi,
Mother Teresa of Calcutta/Kolkata, or Saint Therese of
Lisieux. Make him or her a part of your prayer this week.

Action

Join Pax Christi, the Catholic peace movement that
seeks to model the Peace of Christ in our witness to the
mandate of the nonviolence of the Cross.

If you are in the U.S., join Pax Christi USA, a
membership organization that rejects war, preparation
for war, every form of violence and domination, and
personal and systemic racism. <https://paxchristiusa.org/>

For other locations, visit the website of Pax Christi
International at <http://www.paxchristi.net/> and click
“member organizations.”



“When Nelson Mandela emerged from prison in South Africa after 27 years, he not only made peace with his captives and those who benefited from apartheid, he invited them to join his government because, he said, ‘the oppressor must be liberated just as surely as the oppressed.’

“I witnessed this truth when I joined a team of observers at the historic 1994 elections in South Africa that brought Mandela to power. Mandela was scheduled to address a pre-election rally but a rival political party was threatening violence.

“A group of local leaders approached us with an unexpected request. ‘Go to the army headquarters in the Zulu capital and ask for protection for the people at the rally,’ they said. We were dismayed and astounded. This was the enemy we were being asked to approach – the apartheid army that often fired on civilians and killed indiscriminately. Yet how could we refuse their request? In trepidation we went to the base and spoke with the commanders.

“They were as surprised as we were by the request. After conferring with one another, they agreed and invited us to sit with them and hear their hopes and fears for the future. They opened our eyes to see the common humanity – the Spirit dwelling within – that is in every person. They seemed to know that they were also prisoners. This same spirit of peace prevailed at the elections the following week.”

–SISTER JANICE MCLAUGHLIN
Maryknoll Sisters
(Pictured with flag of Zimbabwe in 2017)

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so everyone who believes in him might have eternal life.

JOHN 3:16

Rejoice in the middle of Lent

This Sunday is traditionally called “Laetare” Sunday for the first words of the opening of the Eucharistic Liturgy: “Laetare, Jerusalem,” – “Rejoice, O Jerusalem.” We rejoice on this day that is half way between remembering our death on Ash Wednesday and our life through Resurrection on Easter Sunday.

“We rejoice knowing in faith that our brother Jesus lived, died, and still lives among us,” Maryknoll Father Jack Sullivan, a longtime missionary in Hong Kong, says. “Despite our infidelities, Jesus continues to send us messages, warnings, and hope, calling us to love Jerusalem, the City of God, which is our whole earth itself, with all its people and creatures, even when we understand so little, fall short repeatedly, and suffer without cause.”

Today’s Gospel reading tells about Nicodemus, a Pharisee who seems to want to follow Jesus. One night, he approaches Jesus to acknowledge Him as someone who has come from God but, in the dialogue that follows, Nicodemus misunderstands Jesus at every point.

It doesn’t matter, though, because John’s gospel includes a theological reflection on Jesus’ words to Nicodemus, including an observation about human sinfulness. Jesus is the light that has come into the world, but people prefer the darkness. Jesus has come into the world to reveal and die for our sins so that they may be forgiven. This is the Good News; it is our reason for rejoicing during the season of Lent and throughout our lives.

In his six principles of nonviolence, Dr. King named the fourth principle to be: Nonviolence holds that suffering, like Christ dying on the cross, can educate and transform. Nonviolence accepts suffering without retaliation. Unearned suffering is redemptive and has tremendous educational and transforming possibilities.

“This doesn’t mean that suffering itself is good,” wrote Mika Edmonston in *The Power of Unearned Suffering: The Roots and Implications of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s Theodicy*. “But in the light of the cross of Jesus Christ, believers have held that God’s omnipresent goodness will have the final say over every form of suffering, no matter how severe.” ... “For King, the cross of Christ represented the definitive proof of God’s purpose to bring redemptive good out of suffering, and the guiding example of how to actively engage suffering toward a redemptive goal.”

James Cone, in *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, offers the lynching tree as a viable symbol for reflection on the cross of Christ. According to Cone, understandings of the cross and lynching tree can explain how events of trauma and injustice can still inspire hope for the African American community and all marginalized communities.

Questions for Reflection

Where do you see the redeeming power of suffering in your life?

Prayer

May you be blessed in the holy names of those who carry our pain up the mountain of transfiguration.

May you know tender shelter and healing blessing when you are called to stand in the place of pain.

May the places of darkness within you be surprised by light.

May you be granted the wisdom to avoid false resistance and when suffering knocks on the door of your life, may you be able to glimpse its hidden gift.

May you be able to see the fruits of suffering.

May memory bless and shelter you with the hard-earned light of past turmoil, may this give you confidence and trust.

May a window of light always surprise you.

May the grace of transfiguration heal your wounds.

May you know that even though the storm might rage, not a hair on your head will be harmed.

–“For Suffering” by John O’Donohue in *To Bless the Space Between Us*.

Fast

Ask your family and friends what breaks their peace and what brings them peace. Think of a way you can make a difference for them.

Action

Endorse the appeal to the Catholic Church to re-commit to the centrality of Gospel nonviolence, the final statement of the Nonviolence and Just Peace Conference held in Rome in 2016 <http://bit.ly/NVJustPeace2016> and follow the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/nonviolencejustpeace/>



A group of Catholics from California were accompanying Bishop Macram Max Gassis of the Sudanese Catholic Church on a pastoral visit to a village in the Nuba Mountain area of the Sudan when it came under attack. Luckily, the bombs fell outside the village and no one was killed. Later, the stunned Californians asked the bishop about the violence.

For years the Church in the Sudan has been a receiving church, Bishop Gassis explained. Missionaries brought the Good News and outside assistance is still needed to survive. But the Church in the Sudan is also a donor church, the bishop said.

Through war, drought, and persecution this church has experienced suffering like that which the Son of God endured, suffering that is redemptive. Even though Christians in the U.S. had never met Christians in the Sudan, the bishop said, the Sudanese, through their redemptive suffering, have an impact on them. “This is what we, the Sudanese, give to the Church. It is our hidden gift,” he said.

Several years later, Bishop Gassis came to visit a parish near my home in Minnesota to thank the people there for their support. After Mass I was surprised when few people stopped to say hello to him. Prophets are without honor everywhere, I mused. But then a teacher approached the bishop and told him that since his visit last year, her second graders had been transformed. “They say meeting you was as close as they would get to meeting Jesus.” So the children recognized a prophet among them.”

–FATHER DAVID SCHWINGHAMER
Maryknoll Father and Brothers

(Pictured: Bishop Macram Max Gassis in Nuba Mts.)



FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Whoever serves me must follow me, says the Lord; and where I am, there also will my servant be.
JOHN 12:26

Love is the heart of nonviolence

In today's first reading from Jeremiah we hear that God wants a "new covenant" with us human beings. The old covenant bond between God and people, with laws carved in stone, had not worked out well. The Lord offers to forgive and forget our failings and to build a more intimate relationship, with His laws written upon our hearts.

"Let us look at our hearts," Maryknoll Sister Connie Krautkremer says. "A healthy heart is strong and it is soft. Because of its ability to adapt to changing circumstances, it beats sometimes fast, sometimes more slowly. Our lives depend on that flexible faithfulness. So, how is a law in my heart different from one carved in stone? We responsibly obey just laws that govern our lives. But more is expected from a law that is ruled by the heart. Not just obedience, but also compassion and forgiveness are required of us. These are a lot more demanding than simply following a rule."

In the gospel of John, Jesus uses a grain of wheat to teach about obedience. The seed must fall into the ground and die in order to produce more seeds – food in abundance. This means dying to self, letting go of being so sure I am always right, that my way is the best way. Instead we are to be ready and willing to forgive and ask forgiveness. Our hearts are softened when we forgive, and, at the same time, the heart must be soft in order to forgive."

The fifth of the six principles of nonviolence defined by Dr King is "Nonviolence chooses love instead of hate." Nonviolent love is spontaneous, unmotivated, unselfish and creative. "The nonviolent resister not only refuses to shoot his opponent; he also refuses to hate him. At the

center of nonviolence stands the principle of love, Dr. King wrote in *Stride Toward Freedom*.

"The nonviolent resister would contend that in the struggle for human dignity, the oppressed people of the world must not succumb to the temptation of becoming bitter or indulging in hate campaigns. To retaliate in kind would do nothing but intensify the existence of hate in the universe."

Cutting off the chain of hate "can only be done by projecting the ethic of love to the center of our lives." Love means "understanding, redemptive goodwill toward all people."

For King, this love is the power of God working within us, explains William D. Watley in *Roots of Resistance: The Nonviolent Ethic of Martin Luther King, Jr.* That is why King could exhort us to the highest possible, unconditional, universal, all-encompassing love. King the preacher believed God worked through us when we used the weapon of nonviolent love.

Questions for Reflection

Where have you seen unselfish and creative nonviolent love? How does this make you feel?

Like the grain of wheat, what in your life must die so that "food of abundance" may grow?

Prayers

Descend,
Holy Spirit of Life!
Come down into our hearts,
that we may live.
Descend into emptiness,
that emptiness
may be filled.
Descend into the dust,
that the dust may flower.
Descend into the dark,
that the light may shine in the darkness.
Amen.

Be born in us,
Incarnate Love.
Take our flesh and blood,
and give us your humanity;
take our eyes, and give us your vision;
take our minds, and give us your pure thought;
take our feet and set them in your path;
take our hands,
and fold them in your prayer;
take our hearts
and give them your will to love.
Amen.

– Two prayers by Caryl Houselander included in *The Spiritual Path of Caryl Houselander* by Joyce Kemp.

Fast

Pope Francis says in his 2017 World Day of Peace message that Jesus offers the Beatitudes as a “manual” for peacemaking. Take time for meditation on the Beatitudes. You may want to use this guide from the Archdiocese of Melbourne. <http://bit.ly/BlessedAreYouMeditations>

Action

Name an opportunity you have in your church or community to be a peacemaker.

Sign up for the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns listserv, to receive our newsletter and action alerts about issues of peace and justice. www.maryknollogc.org



“Two women came to a seminar I was facilitating at their parish in a farming village in Tanzania. Because of drought food was scarce and trees were cut to make charcoal to sell to buy food. The environment was stressed and people were stressed. The two women, once friends, had had a falling out and had turned against one another. But at the seminar everything changed.

“The theme of the seminar was anger. Anger often turns to resentment and bitterness, makes us sick and destroys relationships. The group prepared short plays about real situations in their lives. The two women recognized their anger being reenacted and want to change. To forgive was the only way.

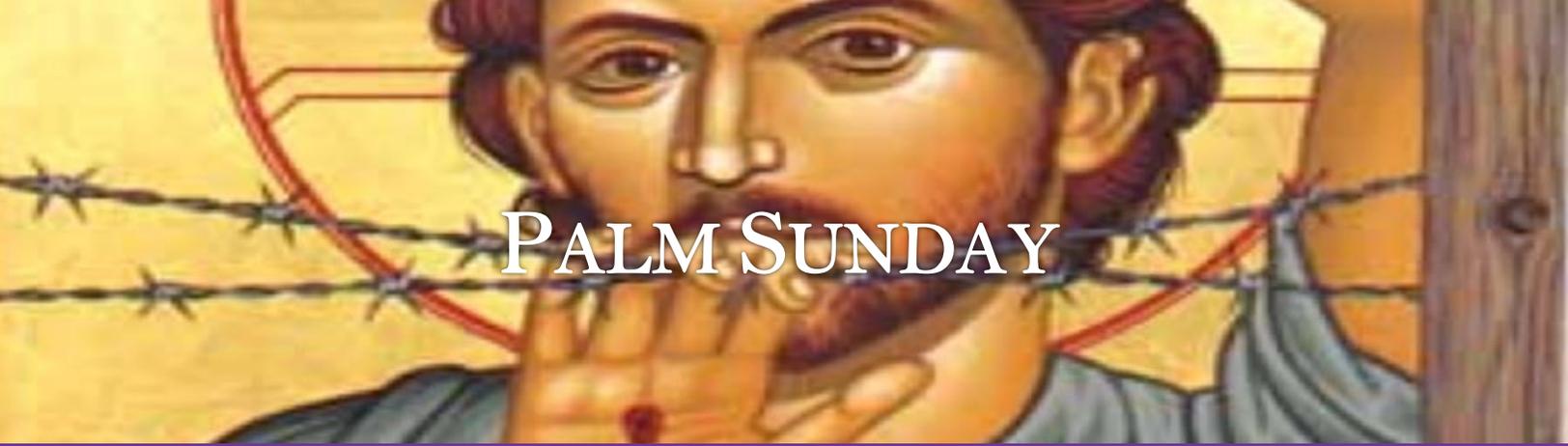
“What happened next was truly a grace. Their hearts were softened; they forgave one another right then and there. Their faces lit up with joy as they told the whole group about the new life they were feeling.

“I had nearly cancelled the seminar that day. When I learned the government would distribute food to the village, at a greatly reduced cost, I assumed the need for food was more critical than the seminar. How could anyone come to a seminar about “spiritual” matters, like anger and resentment, when desperate for food? But many women had gathered and we decided to go ahead.

“I learn that day that broken relationships are almost as unbearable as a food shortage, that forgiveness is as life-giving as flour. The grain of wheat dies when we forgive, and food in abundance fills our lives.”

– SISTER CONNIE KRAUTKREMER
Maryknoll Sisters

(Picture: Women farmers in Tanzania)



PALM SUNDAY

*Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!
Blessed is the kingdom of our father David that is to come! Hosanna in the highest!*
MARK 11:9-10

Announcing the Good News

In the Gospel reading, Jesus' journey finally reaches its destination – Jerusalem. Rome's representative, Pontius Pilate, has also arrived. Pilate rides into Jerusalem on a horse past crowds shouting praise – an entrance befitting a conquering ruler.

But Jesus rides on a donkey. In eastern cultures, like the one in which Jesus lived, the donkey was considered an animal of peace; the horse was a war animal. A king riding a horse intended to wage war, and one who rode a donkey was conveying a message of peace. Riding a donkey into Jerusalem symbolized Jesus' entry as the Prince of Peace.

The reign of God that Jesus announces during his ministry is a reign of peace and nonviolence. The first reading is from Isaiah, chapter 50, and is part of the third Song of the Suffering Servant: "I gave my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who plucked my beard; my face I did not shield from buffets and spitting."

The second reading from Philippians continues with: "[Christ] emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness, and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

The reading of the Passion on Palm Sunday completes this reflection. In his book *Jesus, An Historical Approximation*, Father José Antonio Pagola reflects on the death of Jesus and concludes, "Jesus understands his death as he always understood his life: as a service to God's reign for the benefit of all. Day by day he has poured out his life for others; now if necessary he will die for them."

Those of us who receive our palm branches, who attempt to follow Jesus and announce the reign of peace, are called to this same commitment to serve others, without reliance on great sources of funds, without the use of manipulations, with respect for the dignity of our neighbors, and without weapons of destruction, like the latest missiles and drones.

The sixth and final principle of nonviolence defined by Dr. King in *Stride Toward Freedom* is: Nonviolence believes that the universe is on the side of justice. The nonviolent resister has deep faith that justice will eventually win. Nonviolence believes that God is a God of justice.

We all know someone who, despite tragedy and hardship, gives of herself or himself with such dedication and cheerfulness, that you wonder how they do it. Where do they find the strength and the determination to go on?

Often in being humbled by life's losses and suffering, we are offered the gift of faith, and with it, the love that sustains and calls us to be more than we think we are. For Maryknoll's founders, the heart of being a missionary is love expressed with joy. In serving, in being humbled by our vulnerability when immersed in a strange culture, we lose ourselves – only to encounter Jesus in new ways.

Questions for Reflection

Remember a time when you have suffered a loss. Did you receive the gift of faith and a sustaining love in some way? What did you learn?

Prayer

God of surprises, help each of us to find, as matryred Maryknoll Sister Ita Ford said in a letter to her neice on the occasion of her sixteen birthday, “that which gives life a deep meaning.”

“Something worth living for,”

“maybe even worth dying for,”

“something that energizes you, enthuses you, enables you to keep moving ahead.”

“I can't tell you what it might be – that's for you to find, to choose, to love.”

“I can just encourage you to start looking, and support you in the search.”

Oh, Wounded Healer, we pray for courage and strength to start looking, and for the support of Sister Ita and the communion of saints as we keep moving forward on the path of peace. Amen.

Fast

Fast from technology. Turn off your cell phone, computer, television. Use that time to care for your relationship with God, the earth, yourself, and others. Go for a walk, explore nature, seek out conversation with neighbors, especially those who are lonely.

Action

Learn more about the work of the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR). The Maryknoll Sisters and the Maryknoll Fathers & Brothers are members of this coalition of shareholder advocates who view the management of their investments as a catalyst for change. ICCR members engage hundreds of corporations annually in an effort to promote greater corporate accountability on questions such as climate change, corporate water stewardship, sustainable food production, human trafficking and slavery in global supply chains and increased access to both financial and health care services for communities in need. <http://www.iccr.org/>



“Cambodia is a country with one of the highest economic growth rates in the world. But in a country plagued by corruption, such growth does not mean a more manageable standard of living. Rather, it means a growing divide between the haves and have-nots. Pedaling though the streets of Phnom Penh, I pass women carrying baskets of produce on their heads to earn \$30 a month as I dodge luxury cars whose owners paid \$100,000 for their prize.

“Complicit in this are other nations, near and far, who pull on ends of the supply-demand chain. Entrepreneurs with eyes on Cambodia’s resources build roads sufficient to haul out anything above and below the surface that is of value—trees and rice, gold and copper, power from her rivers and oil from below her waters, cheap factory work from her daughters and sweat labor from her sons.

“We think we need products so we need the resources—materials, power, people—to make them.

“This has dire consequences for the Cambodian people and their land. Maryknoll works with those who live in the path of development projects and are forced to relocate. Thanks to deforestation, there is hardly a cool season and flood waters rise every year, threatening harvests and livelihoods. Families are forced to sell their land—and their daughters.

“Do we see the connection between our demand for products and the ramifications for nations like Cambodia?”

– MARIA MONTELLO
Maryknoll Lay Missioner

(Pictured on right with a student in Cambodia)