

Prayer for the Beginning of the 40-Day Fast for Gospel Nonviolence

July 1, 2021

Introduction

The Fast for Gospel Nonviolence, for Jesus' Nonviolence, was initiated by Fr. Emmanuel Charles McCarthy decades ago as "a prayer and a plea that the Universal Church gather in Ecumenical Council in the not too distant future and declare once and for all that violence is not the Christian Way, that violence is not the Gospels' Way, that violence is not the Apostolic Way, that violence is not the Holy Way, that violence is not the Way of Jesus, that violence is not the Way of God.... Thereby, the Church will at last be what it was in the beginning for all humanity, and what Jesus intended it to be, namely, the extension in time and space of the Nonviolent Jesus Christ of the Gospels, who teaches as the Way of God and as the Way to peace a Way of Nonviolent Love of all—friends and enemies—no exceptions."

Fr. McCarthy proposed that the fast God wants is meant "to move one's mind and will to conformity with the very mind and will of the Eternal God," to "making a person more of a human being, more fully alive, more reflective of the true God's image and likeness," and to serve "as a genuine step in the Way to Eternal Life for oneself and for all people."

He set the fast to begin on July 1st and to end on August 9th, a very somber anniversary. On August 9th, St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein) was killed at Auschwitz, Blessed Franz Jaegerstaetter was beheaded for refusing to serve in Hitler's army, and the United States dropped an atomic bomb on Nagasaki, the largest and oldest Christian community in Japan, killing 140,000 people and destroying the city.

Pax Christi Metro New York has adopted and observed this fast, along with countless others, for many years, and it would seem it has borne some fruit. In April, 2016, Pax Christi International and the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace hosted a meeting in Rome that produced "An Appeal to the Catholic Church to Re-commit to the Centrality of Gospel Nonviolence." From that has grown the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative which has reawakened discussion, study, and work toward a new Just Peace Theory. Since then, two more meetings have occurred with the Vatican, one specifically on nuclear nonproliferation, and more are in the planning stage, along with other meetings happening at the UN and in many other countries across the globe.

But this is only a first step. There is much still to do, and our prayers and fasting must continue.

And so we fast. And so we pray. And so we pledge to act for peace.

Opening Prayer (from a prayer service prepared by Sr. Catherine Arata, SSND)

We live in a time of tremendous suffering, widespread trauma and fear linked to militarization, economic injustice, climate change and other forms of violence.

In this context of systemic violence, we are called to recognize the centrality of active nonviolence in the vision and message of Jesus, to the life and practice of the Catholic Church, and to our long-term vocation of healing and reconciling both people and the planet.

First Reading (Colossians 2:6-7)

And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness.

Prayer by Kate Compston

Take our hatreds: make them into handshakes
Take our prejudices: make them into peace-offerings
Take our arguments: make them into alliances
Take our battles: make them into bonds
Take our misunderstandings: make them into music
Take our divisions: make them into dances
Take our schisms: make them into songs.
AMEN.

Second Reading (John 15:12)

This is my commandment: Love one another as I love you.

Prayer (adapted from a prayer service prepared by Sr. Catherine Arata, SSND)

I pray now for the areas of our world that need peace today.

For ___, Lord, make me a means of your peace.

(Possible places to raise up in prayer include Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine, Syria, Yemen, Sudan, South Sudan, Venezuela, Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, Korea, and the southern border of the United States of America.)

Third Reading (Hebrews 12:14)

Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy.

Prayer (adapted from a prayer service prepared by Sr. Catherine Arata, SSND)

Having prayed for our world, in a spirit of peace, I commit myself to furthering Catholic understanding and practice of active nonviolence on my own road to just peace. As a disciple of Jesus, I commit to:

- Live the call to Gospel nonviolence in our homes and communities
- Promote nonviolent practices and strategies in our lives, our ministries and our world
- Continue advocating for the abolition of war and nuclear weapons
- Support and defend those nonviolent activists whose work for peace and justice put their lives at risk.
- Protect the earth to ensure its fruitfulness for coming generations.

In particular, in this time of fasting, I make this **Statement of Commitment:**

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, have mercy on me a sinner. I, _____, accept the call to repent and to return to the truth that violence is not the Christian way, that violence is not the way of Jesus. As a response to that call, I will join my sisters and brothers in fasting on _____.

(Please let PCMNY know when you are fasting, if you have not already done so, so we can have a record of the 40 days. Thank you.)

Fourth Reading (James 1:22-25)

Be doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For whoever looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, will be blessed in their doing.”

Closing Prayer (adapted from *Living a Nonviolent Life* from the Marianites of Holy Cross Decade of Days January 20-29, 2018)

Gracious God, time and again throughout history you have blessed your servants and sent them on mission to speak your word to the poor, to heal the sick, to free captives—always renewing the face of the earth. We pray that you bless us again, compassionate God. Make us a sign of peace and of healing, a sign of justice and of tenderness. We pray that by this blessing our hands and hearts might be strengthened for the work that lies ahead, that we might be compassionate to human need, nonviolent in our response to one another, and faithful to the commitments we have made. Amen!