

FROM Violence TO Wholeness

*a ten part
process
in the
spirituality
and practice
of active
nonviolence*

Ken Butigan
In Collaboration with Patricia Bruno, O.P.
Pace e Bene Nonviolence Service

FROM VIOLENCE TO WHOLENESS

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Pace e Bene Nonviolence Service.

From violence to wholeness: a ten-part process in the spirituality and practice of transformative nonviolence

Pace e Bene Nonviolence Service

Pace e Bene (pronounced *pah-chay bay-nay*) means "peace and all good" in Italian. St. Francis of Assisi used this expression as a greeting and as a means of proclaiming the way of nonviolence in the midst of a violent world.

Pace e Bene Nonviolence Service is based in Las Vegas, Nevada, with offices and program staff in Oakland, California; Olympia, Washington; Montreal, Quebec; Perth, Australia; and a growing network of collaborators in North and South America. Pace e Bene offers resources to assist in the journey of personal and social transformation, such as retreats, workshops, presentations, classes and a variety of publications, including its quarterly newsletter, *The Wolf of Pace e Bene*.

Pace e Bene's staff and animating group engage in nonviolent action and work with a wide range of nonviolent movements for justice and peace.

We are available to lead one-day and weekend *From Violence To Wholeness Workshops* and the weekend *From Violence To Wholeness Facilitator's Workshop* in local communities.

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Introduction

*Healing
Our Woundedness:
The
Transforming
Power of
Active
Nonviolence*

Introduction

Healing Our Woundedness: The Transforming Power of Active Nonviolence

From Violence To Wholeness is a ten part study and action program that explores nonviolence as a creative, powerful and effective process for addressing and resolving the conflicts in our lives and in the life of the world. Drawing on the vision of Jesus, Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., Shelley Douglass and many others, this program offers your church, community, or group resources to deepen the journey from fear to freedom, from despair to hope, from violence to wholeness.

Facing Violence

Whether we like it or not, most of us are enrolled in a class called “Violence 101.”

This class is not confined to a particular setting or time of day. Nobody asks if we want to attend. We don’t need letters of reference or a high grade point average. It is taught everywhere, open to all. Our teachers are the media, with their flow of violent images and messages, and our society’s values of consumerism, rugged individualism and superiority. Sometimes we receive *extra* tutoring from our family and co-workers. We take *special* workshops when our country goes to war or when violence erupts in the streets. Consciously or not, we are continually being schooled in the logic and practice of emotional, verbal, physical or structural violence.

What do we learn in this class? First, we are taught that the world is a dangerous place and that human beings are intrinsically violent. This is especially true of our enemies, who are the *most* violent and are beyond redemption or change. Faced with these cold facts, we learn our second lesson: the only way to deal with violence is to accommodate it, avoid it, or use violence ourselves. Television, our families, and the policies of the government teach us these methods, which we then try out in real life. With every conflict, we rehearse these three “scripts” by going along with violence, by running from it, or by throwing a physical or verbal punch.

The great illusion of violence is that it will solve our problems decisively. Unfortunately, conflicts often do not end when violence is used; they generally continue to smolder or escalate.

Violence 101’s ultimate lesson is that violence feeds on itself and cannot be extinguished; there is always residual resentment and injustice. What is our society’s answer to this spiral of violence? *More violence*. From this point of view, being human means becoming chronically suspicious of a world populated with real and potential enemies where unre-

solved anger and hurt are forever mounting.

The world *can* be dangerous, *and* we face conflicts our whole lives. But are we condemned to an endless cycle of retaliation and domination? The traditional responses to violence often make matters worse because they fail to address root causes and they lose sight of the integrity of those in conflict. They are fundamentally unreliable and ineffective. They also keep us from seeing what violence truly is: *emotional, verbal or physical behavior that dominates, diminishes or destroys ourselves and others.*

Violence crosses boundaries without permission. Violence disrupts authentic relationships. Violence separates us from others. It defiles the human person and desecrates the image of God. It is a process of economic, gender, racial, social or cultural domination. To become truly human and to faithfully worship the God of Love means challenging this violence. Transforming these patterns of destructiveness is a sacred journey from fear to freedom, from despair to hope, from violence to wholeness.

The Nonviolent Alternative

Jesus, Gandhi, Dorothy Day, Martin Luther King, Jr. and many others have declared with their lives an alternative to the treadmill of violence. They have preached and practiced active nonviolence as a way to resolve conflict humanely and effectively, to become genuinely human, and to be faithful to the Nonviolent God.

Woundedness lies at the roots of violence in ourselves, in others, and in our culture. Active nonviolence comes face to face with these wounds. This includes identifying and gradually transforming our personal and social “scripts” that keep us in the rut of violence. But even more profoundly, active nonviolence makes contact with *the sacredness that lies deeper than our wounds.* This sacredness is the presence of the God who longs for our wholeness. It is where our truest selves live, the depths where we receive the gift of our richness, our authenticity, and our capacity for compassion. It is the spiritual center where we come to our senses, recover our balance, and reclaim our humanity.

By facing our woundedness and acknowledging our sacredness, active nonviolence prepares us to address the conflicts we face in our lives and in the life of our world. We are able to see the woundedness and the sacredness of those with whom we struggle. We are able to:

- Let go of our traditional scripts and allow our truest self to be fully present
- Creatively interrupt the cycle of retaliatory violence
- Acknowledge and safeguard the humanity of the opponent as well as our own, and
- Identify and struggle nonviolently for an agreement that respects all parties.

From Violence To Wholeness: "Active Nonviolence 101"

From Violence To Wholeness is a ten-part study and action program that explores the spirituality and practice of active nonviolence. Produced by Pace e Bene Franciscan Nonviolence Center, *From Violence To Wholeness* offers a theological vision of nonviolence *and* a toolbox of techniques that we can use in our daily lives. Local churches, campus ministries, Catholic women's and men's religious congregations, and Pax Christi USA groups have used this series. Through presentations, small group reflections, scripture, readings, and keeping a nonviolence journal, participants explore how to use active nonviolence in their lives. The program explores how:

- Nonviolence is an act of faith in the God of Love and Justice
- Human beings are called to love and be loved
- Reality is connection; we are called to transform all that divides human beings from themselves, from one another, and from the Earth
- Active nonviolence is an effective way to break the spiral of retaliatory violence and to create options for a more humane world.

The Structure of the *From Violence To Wholeness* Program

There are many ways to enter the spiritual journey of nonviolent transformation. The following curriculum — ten sessions, two hours per session — is offered as a framework for exploring the spirituality and practice of active nonviolence. Each session generally includes:

- ***Opening prayer or meditation***
Samples are provided — you may want to create your own.
- ***Reflections on personal issues or experiences that have arisen since the previous session***
- ***Small group reflection on our life experience***
- ***Discussion of the session's topic and readings***
- ***A role-play***
- ***Reflection on that session's reading. (The readings are found at the end of each of the ten sessions.)***
- ***Shared entries from the participants' "nonviolence journals."***
The nonviolence journal is a good way for people to reflect on the issues, memories and questions that emerge for them during the course of the program. The nonviolence journal is confidential, but people are encouraged to voluntarily share one or more entries with the group if they feel comfortable doing so.

Notes to the Facilitator

- In this guide, the facilitator is provided with a suggested curriculum for

each two hour session. Each session is introduced by an agenda which outlines the topics that are dealt with during that gathering. This agenda indicates suggested times for each item, although often a topic may spark a great deal of discussion; we invite you to consider adjusting the agenda if this happens. Generally we have often provided more material than can often be dealt with in two hours. This allows you to choose from a range of possibilities in finalizing the agenda. Also, at the end of most of the sections you are provided with additional material; you may want to use some of this in place of the standard agenda, or use it in future sessions if the group wants to continue this process after Session Ten is completed.

- Each session includes suggested comments, prayers, presentations and instructions for the participants. Feel free to use them as printed or to put them into your own words.
- Please review the material for each session beforehand.
- Ask people to prepare for each session by reading all of its material: its lesson plan, supplemental material, and article(s). (All the materials for each session are found together.) Generally, this represents between ten and fifteen pages.
- For many sessions, you will need large pieces of paper taped on the wall and felt markers to record ideas coming from the group discussions.
- This book is designed so that facilitation may be shared. If it is appropriate, encourage the participants to facilitate one or more sessions.
- We encourage you to use music during these sessions.
- Participants are encouraged to watch videos on nonviolence between sessions.
- The *From Violence to Wholeness* team is available to answer any questions with regard to facilitating this program. Please feel free to contact us!

Acknowledgments

In 1993, Ken Butigan created a pilot project for the *From Violence To Wholeness* program, writing the original curriculum. In 1994, Patricia Bruno, O.P. joined the project. Their collaboration included the mutual development of the shape and content of parts of the present volume. Out of this creative, interactive process, Ken wrote this book while Patricia contributed to its editing and revision; she also assembled four of the readings that accompany the sections of these texts. In addition, she played a major role in the creation and promotion of this book by her enormous work on the project as its co-director for three years.

This curriculum draws directly on the thought and work of the entire PACE e Bene Franciscan Nonviolence Center community, including Alain Richard, OFM, Rosemary Lynch, OSF, Louis Vitale, OFM, Michele Fischer, SC, Mary Litell, OSF, Peter Ediger, Julia Occhiogrosso and Mary Morton. Much of the structure and content of this program has emerged

from a series of week-long retreats Pace e Bene has hosted since 1992.

A special thanks to Cynthia Okayama Dopke and Christine Wilcox for copy-editing this manuscript.

Finally, we wish to acknowledge the many known and unknown women and men who have engaged in countless acts of active nonviolence. It is their examples of faith, love and passionate commitment which ground our ongoing experiment in this way of becoming more deeply human.

Additional Recommended Reading

- John Dear, *The God of Peace: Toward a Theology of Nonviolence* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994).
- Richard Deats, "The Global Spread of Nonviolence," *Fellowship* (July/August 1996). Concise overview! Reprints available from FOR, Box 271, Nyack, NY 10960. 1 copy/\$1.00.
- Leonard Desroches, *Allow the Water: Anger, Fear, Power, Work, Sexuality, and the Spirituality and Practice of Nonviolence* (Toronto, Ontario: Dunamis Publishers). Address: 407 Bleeker St., Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4X 1W2.
- James W. Douglass, *The Nonviolent Coming of God* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991).
- Eileen Egan, *Peace Be With You: Justified Warfare or the Way of Nonviolence* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999).
- Bernie Glassman, *Bearing Witness* (New York: Bell Tower, 1998).
- Pam McAllister, *You Can't Kill the Spirit: Stories of Women and Non-violent Action* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1988).
- Philip McManus and Gerald Schlabach, eds., *Relentless Persistence: Nonviolent Action in Latin America* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1991).
- Bill Moyer, *The Practical Strategist*. (This is a superb resource -- it is available for \$3.00 from the Social Movement Empowerment Project, 723 Shrader St., San Francisco, CA 94117.)
- Michael Nagler, *Is There No Other Way? The Search for a Nonviolent Future* (Berkeley, CA: Berkeley Hills Books, 2001).
- Angie O'Gorman, ed., *The Universe Bends Toward Justice: A Reader on Christian Nonviolence* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1991).
- Roger S. Powers and William B. Voegelé, eds., *Protest, Power, and Change: An Encyclopedia of Nonviolent Action from ACT-UP to Women's Suffrage* (New York, London: Garland PublishingCo, 1997).
- Alain Richard, *Concerning Nonviolence and the Franciscan Movement* (Occasional Paper Series, No. 1, Las Vegas: NV: Pace e Bene, 1992 [1987]).
- Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza and Shawn Copeland, editors, *Violence Against Women* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994).
- Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992).
This is an especially important book! We strongly encourage participants to read this book during the *From Violence To Wholeness* Program.
- Walter Wink, ed. *Peace is the Way: Writings on Nonviolence from the Fellowship of Reconciliation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000).

Session 1

*Beginning
Our Journey
From
Violence
To
Wholeness*

Session 1

Beginning Our Journey from Violence To Wholeness

Agenda

- A prayer as we begin our journey [2 min.]
- Introductions [15 min.]
- Milling exercise [5 min.]
- Small groups [20 min.]
- Large group [15 min.]

- The goals and process of the *From Violence To Wholeness* program [3 min.]
- Starting points [10 min.]

- Violence and nonviolence: an initial exploration [20 min.]
- Describing active nonviolence [20 min.]

- Conclusion [10 min.]

Supplemental Materials

- A. Seven Starting Points
- B. Supplementary Exercise on the Qualities of Nonviolence
- C. Session 1 Reading:
 - "The Decalogue for a Spirituality of Nonviolence,"
by Rosemary Lynch, OSF and Alain Richard, OFM

Session 1

Beginning Our Journey From Violence To Wholeness

A Prayer As We Begin Our Journey -- 2 min.

Spirit of God,
we long to mend the broken circle.
We long to heal the fractures in the world around us
and within our own souls.
To learn from one another the ways of living fully alive.
To transform those parts of ourselves and our world
that block our making contact with our deepest reality and with the
deepest, richest and most sacred dimensions of all other beings.

Spirit of God, we long to see reality.
To contact our deepest yearning for a world pulsing with justice and truth.
To dream of a society where we all sit down at the Great Banquet,
where every person eats until they are full.

Spirit of God, we long to discover anew the courage deep within us.
To see and to listen. To discover our true selves.
To take steps to stop the cycle of violence
in our homes, in our work-places, in our neighborhoods, in our country,
and in our entire world.

Introductions — 15 min.

Tape several pieces of paper on the wall. Invite each person one at a time to come forward and use a felt-tip pen to write out their full name. Ask them to explain briefly where each name came from and what they prefer to be called. Ask people to take a minute or so. To get the ball rolling, it's a good idea for the facilitator to model this.

The advantage of this process of introductions is that people get a chance to share something personal, but not too personal. It creates a sense of commonality and usually good feeling — often people relate humorous facts about their names. And it is a simple but powerful way to bring into the room our families and heritages.

After the last person has shared, comment on how this sharing has called to mind our families, our roots, and all who have gone before us. Explain how, by sharing in this way, we have recalled their experiments in resolving the dilemmas of life in human and nonviolent ways, and we

imagine how they long for us to help create a more human and nonviolent world now.

If the group is larger than 10 people, do this reflection in two groups.

Milling Exercise — 5 min.

Milling is a way to form small groups of four persons each. Ask people to stand up and begin milling about, as if they are on a busy and crowded street corner. After 30 seconds, have them stop. Ask each person to join with one other person in silence. Ask them to be present together, but not in an uncomfortable way (e.g., they should not feel forced to look into each other's eyes). Read the first statement in the milling section below; have people begin the process again, and then read the second statement. Ask the current couple to join another one, thus forming a group of four.

After the first milling, say:

- The person standing before you has likely experienced the harshness of life, with its difficulties, its times of unfairness, and its moments of sorrow and loss. This person has likely experienced some forms of violence — perhaps emotional violence, perhaps verbal violence, perhaps physical violence. Be quietly aware of the life journey of the person standing before you, especially her or his likely experiences of violence. *(A moment of silence)* ...Now, acknowledge this person in some way, and then let us start our milling again.

After the second milling, say:

- The person standing before you has been on a spiritual journey all through her or his entire life. Faced with adversity, with loss, with her or his own woundedness, they have been on a journey toward wholeness and meaning. They have been on a journey toward the fullness of love. They have been experimenting with love, even in the most difficult of times. Let us quietly be aware of the length and breadth and depth of their journey toward becoming human. *(A moment of silence)* ...Now, let us acknowledge this person in some way.

Now, I invite each couple to join with another couple in order to form a four-person group.

Small Groups — 20 min.

Ask the small groups to reflect on the following questions. Invite them to share at whatever level they feel comfortable.

- Why do you want to learn more about nonviolence?

- When you think back over your life, do you recall an experience which had anything to do with this question of violence or nonviolence?

Large Group Discussion — 15 min.

Ask people to reassemble in the large group and share an experience or insight that emerged during the small group reflection.

The Goals and Process of From Violence To Wholeness -- 3 min.

*Take this time to introduce the **From Violence To Wholeness** program:*

From Violence To Wholeness is a step-by-step process which helps us deepen our knowledge of nonviolence and to assemble a kit of nonviolent tools which we can use every day to put that knowledge into practice.

Through this program, we explore ways to address the conflicts in our lives and the life of the world. Our goal is to become familiar with ways to resolve these conflicts by using creative, persistent, and grounded nonviolence.

This program consists of ten sessions. In each session, we will cultivate our grounding in nonviolence through prayer, reflection on scripture, small group discussions, role play, selected reading, and presentations. We ask that you attend all the sessions and do the basic reading. We also encourage you to keep a nonviolence journal during the program.

Drawing on Christianity's peace and justice tradition, Christian feminism and Gandhi's nonviolence of "soul-force," this program explores ways through which we can give expression to our true selves in every part of our lives.

This program honors your life experience. It assumes that, one way or another, you have been making choices for nonviolence throughout your life. You may not have called it "nonviolence," but there have been experiences in your life when you have addressed conflict with creativity or when you have taken initiative to break the cycle of violence. This program recognizes that we stand at the midpoint of this nonviolent journey rather than at the beginning.

Finally, you are invited to participate in this program at whatever level you feel comfortable. Nonviolence often calls us to reflect on our experience. We seek to create a safe space in which to do this. In that spirit, we ask you to share only what you freely wish to share. The facilitator, in general, is not a trained psychotherapist or a counselor. We are not here to psychoanalyze one another. *This is not therapy.* We are people of faith working together to become more deeply grounded in nonviolence. If something comes up for you that goes beyond the scope of this program, we invite you to address this with a professional therapist.

Starting Points — 10 min.

Share and invite discussion of the following two "starting points." These two points are part of a larger list found in this section's "Supplemental Material." Invite people to read the entire list of "Starting Points" (pp. 16-17) between now and the next session.

**1. We don't have to be perfectly nonviolent before we can take action!
Nonviolence is something we grow into.**

Fr. Alain Richard — Pace e Bene staff member and a Franciscan priest who has been engaged in nonviolent activities for much of his life — says, "Just because I talk about nonviolence doesn't mean that I *am* nonviolent. I will probably not be *really* nonviolent until fifteen minutes after I am dead!" What he is indicating is that nonviolence is something we construct and grow into. It is not a state of idealistic perfection. As Gandhi stressed, nonviolence is a continual series of "experiments with truth" through which we gradually learn how to become more human.

2. Active nonviolence is a spiritual journey.

Addressing the violence in our lives and the life of the world launches us on a journey which brings us face to face with our illusions as well as the source of love and compassion which transforms and heals all wounds. It is a journey from despair to hope, from fear to grace, from fragmentation to our truest selves. It is therefore not something purely mechanical, where one simply applies a particular technique. Tools are useful — and we will explore them in this program — but ultimately they must be rooted in the ground of being, the merciful and replenishing love of the Nonviolent God who longs for our wholeness as individuals and as a community.

Violence and Nonviolence: An Initial Exploration — 10 min.

Ask a participant to read the following passage from John 14: 27 (New American Bible) as a way of centering our exploration of violence and nonviolence:

"Peace I leave with you;
my peace I give to you.
Not as the world gives do I give it to you.
Do not let your heart be troubled or afraid."

John 14:27 (New American Bible)

Begin this exploration with a large group discussion of the elements of violence. First read aloud:

Active nonviolence does not pretend that we live in a world that is free of violence. Instead, it seeks to confront and transform the violence in our lives and all around us. Thus, it is important to understand what violence is and how it works. Let's brainstorm on what characterizes violence.

Record ideas on large sheet of paper or blackboard. After the group has come up with several dimensions of violence, ask a participant to read the following descriptions of violence:

- *Violence* is emotional, verbal, or physical behavior which dominates, diminishes, or destroys ourselves or others.
- *Violence* crosses boundaries without permission, disrupts authentic relationships, and separates us from other beings.
- *Violence* is often motivated by fear, unrestrained anger, or greed to increase domination or power over others. It can also be motivated by a desire for justice in the face of injustice: a longing to put things right, to overcome an imbalance of power, to end victimization or oppression. Often, those who perpetrate violence do so with the conviction that they are overcoming a prior violence or injustice. In this program, we will explore whether or not there are alternative ways to achieve true justice.
- *Violence* often provokes new violence. This spiral of retaliatory violence is often propelled by social or personal scripts that are enacted in situations of conflict.

Describing Active Nonviolence -- 20 min.

Introduce this section with the beginning paragraph and ask participants to read the following descriptions of active nonviolence:

Active nonviolence is a process which seeks to resolve conflict in a humane and effective way. Thus, as we begin our program together, let us consider some of the elements of this definition of active nonviolence, into which we will delve more deeply in the coming sessions:

- Active nonviolence is a creative, powerful, and effective process for addressing and resolving conflict.
- Active nonviolence seeks to break the spiral of violence and to create options for a more human alternative.
- Active nonviolence is an act of faith in the Nonviolent God; it is a powerful means of experiencing this God.
- Active nonviolence holds that human beings are meant to love and be loved.
- For active nonviolence, reality is one. The nonviolence practitioner therefore yearns to transform all that separates human beings from themselves, from one another and from the earth.
- Active nonviolence seeks the truth: the opponent's truth as well as one's own.

- Active nonviolence acknowledges the woundedness, the violence, and the sacredness of ourselves and others.
- Active nonviolence is a process of repentance and transformation.
- Active nonviolence is a spiritual journey from fear, despair and greed to compassion, balance and wholeness.

Invite the group to reflect on these descriptions of active nonviolence.

Then reflect on the "The Decalogue for a Spirituality of Nonviolence," by Rosemary Lynch, O.S.F. and Alain Richard, O.F.M., located at the end of this section.

Conclusion — 10 min.

Nonviolence Journal

- *Encourage participants to keep a nonviolence journal during this program. Ask them to write on any topic related to violence and non-violence, especially their own experiences, issues, struggles.*
Although these journals are confidential, encourage them to occasionally share an entry if they feel comfortable doing so. As you will notice in the agenda for each session, there is a time for sharing at the beginning.
We have provided topics in each session on which the participants can work.

Offer this nonviolence journal topic for the next session:

Please reflect on two experiences:

1. One where you inflicted violence, and
2. One where it was inflicted on you.

Readings

- *Ask participants to read all the material for the next session:*
 - 1) The lesson plan for Session 2
 - 2) The supplemental material of both Session 1 and Session 2, and
 - 3) Session 2's reading: John Dear, "Forgetting Who We Are"

Evaluation

- *Hold a brief evaluation of this session:*
 1. First, ask people to share the things that worked well, and
 2. Ask them to share things that could be improved.

Ask people to stand and form a circle. In the spirit of prayer, close with the following:

In this program, we will explore the vision and techniques of nonviolence. These are important, but by themselves they are useless. Ultimately, they must be animated and guided by the power of God's reconciling love. The spirit of the unifying God is present when conflict is resolved; when the script of violence is re-written to allow us to embrace the sacredness of those against whom we struggle; when creativity is used to break the spiral of retaliation.

The techniques discussed in this program flourish when they are rooted in the spirituality that Jesus taught and lived. This spirituality proclaims that all beings are in the embrace of the Nonviolent God, the One who longs for our wholeness and unity. This spirituality testifies that God is our foundation, our source, the Ground of our being and all Being. This spirituality maintains that nothing is impossible for God, including the healing of the deepest violence and injury. This spirituality announces that our vocation as Christians is to be instruments of peace and justice in every moment of our lives. It asserts that the church is the place where ordinary women and men ought to gather to learn, and receive support for carrying this ministry of nonviolence out into our lives and the life of the world.

In the following sessions, we will explore together how to bring this spirituality of active nonviolence, love and justice alive. Amen.

Session 1: Supplemental Material

A. Seven Starting Points

1. We don't have to be perfectly nonviolent! Nonviolence is something we *grow into*.

Fr. Alain Richard — Pace e Bene staff member and a Franciscan priest who has been engaged in nonviolent activities for much of his life — says, “Just because I talk about nonviolence doesn't mean that I *am* nonviolent. I will probably not be *really* nonviolent until fifteen minutes after I am dead!” What he is indicating is that nonviolence is something we construct and grow into. It is not a state of idealistic perfection. As Gandhi stressed, nonviolence is a continual series of “experiments with truth” through which we gradually learn how to be human.

2. Nonviolence does not assume that the world is nonviolent.

Sometimes we think that for nonviolence to be effective, the whole world has to somehow become nonviolent. Active nonviolence does not hold to this illusion. In fact, it assumes that the world is often violent and unjust. Real nonviolence does not attempt to create a world where there is no conflict. *It recognizes that we face conflict all through our lives.* This program explores the ways in which nonviolence is a more effective means of addressing and resolving conflict than violence.

3. Active nonviolence takes the reality of evil very seriously. But it takes the reality of good even more seriously.

Nonviolence does not pretend that evil does not exist. Nevertheless, it does not subscribe to the belief that evil is the bottom line, that it is the ultimate reality. Active nonviolence maintains that the picture we receive every day from the media is *not* the entire truth. Active nonviolence challenges this incomplete and false picture of life and maintains that, while violence is a fact, the world also rings with love, courage and grace which are ultimately greater than violence and are capable of transforming it.

4. Nonviolence begins with taking responsibility for our own state of mind, feelings, and actions.

In most conflicts, we have two different ways of responding. The first is to react defensively. Often we do this by instantaneously acting out deeply ingrained “conflict scripts.” The second way is to allow our true self to take action. This is the way of active nonviolence.

Nonviolence is not primarily a way to armor ourselves against others. This can produce feelings of victimization and this, in turn, can justify our using violence in return. Instead, it is a means of creating a situation that stops the immediate violence, clarifies the real issues, and produces a resolution. Ultimately, this means taking responsibility for our own behavior, no matter what others do.

5. Active nonviolence can be used to respond to every level of violence.

We are challenged to experiment with active nonviolence in the face of many manifestations of violence. These include interpersonal violence, violence in the work place, violence between differing communities, violence against the Earth. These also include the overarching structures of violence that consciously and unconsciously shape and inform our personal and social lives in profoundly disturbing ways, including economic violence, racism, and sexism. The nonviolence practitioner seeks creative and relentlessly persistent ways to use nonviolent methods to transform these conditions and their underlying assumptions and attitudes.

6. We need support to put active nonviolence into practice.

Nonviolence is a process of seeing and challenging patterns of violence and injustice. To do this well, we need each other. We need communities of people who are seeking to transform their own violence and the violence around them. We need safe space to reflect on this process with others. We need allies with whom we can practice these methods, and people with whom we can debrief. We need companions when we take nonviolent action. In general, nonviolence is not a solitary activity.

7. Active nonviolence is a spiritual journey.

Addressing the violence in our lives and in the life of the world in a deeply human and nonviolent way means undertaking a journey which brings us face to face with our illusions as well as the source of love and compassion that transforms and heals all wounds. It is a journey from despair to hope, from fear to grace, from fragmentation to our true selves. It is therefore not something purely mechanical, where one simply applies a particular technique. Tools are useful — and we will explore them in this program — but ultimately they must be rooted in the ground of being, the merciful and replenishing love of the Nonviolent God who longs for our wholeness as individuals and as a community.

B. Exercise on the Qualities of Nonviolence

Ask the large group to share various stereotypes which people in our society have about nonviolence and the people who practice it. (For example: “passive,” “door-mat,” “ineffective,” “utopian,” “unpatriotic,” “unrealistic,” “unemployed.”) Write them on a large piece of paper on the wall. Reflect with the group about this list. Point out that it is important to identify these judgments for two reasons:

1. A certain kind of nonviolence has sometimes contributed to these attitudes. It is therefore important to distinguish between stereotypes about nonviolence and the active nonviolence we want to explore in this program; and
2. Most of us, at some level of awareness, share some or all of these interpretations. It is important therefore to raise them and address them, rather than pretending that these objections do not exist. Often, it is these attitudes which subvert and destroy a genuine nonviolence.

Next, ask people to articulate a list of qualities or attributes of people who practice nonviolence. (Often, such a list includes qualities like “courageous,” “creative,” “centered,” “determined,” “passionate,” “disarming.”) Underline the contrast between the two lists. Reflect on what the second list suggests about the depth and richness of active nonviolence.

The Decalogue for a Spirituality of Nonviolence

By Rosemary Lynch, OSF and Alain Richard, OFM

Active nonviolence calls us:

1. To learn to recognize and respect “*the sacred*” (“that of God” as the Quakers say) in every person, including in ourselves, and in every piece of Creation. The acts of the nonviolent person help to free this *Divine* in the opponent from obscurity or captivity.
2. To accept oneself deeply, “who I am” with all my gifts and richness, with all my limitations, errors, failings and weaknesses, and to realize that I am accepted by God. To live in the truth of ourselves, without excessive pride, with fewer delusions and false expectations.
3. To recognize that what I resent, and perhaps even detest, in another, comes from my difficulty in admitting that this same reality lives also in me. To recognize and renounce my own violence, which becomes evident when I begin to monitor my words, gestures, reactions.
4. To renounce dualism, the “we-they” mentality (Manicheism). This divides us into “good people/bad people” and allows us to demonize the adversary. It is the root of authoritarian and exclusivist behavior. It generates racism and makes possible conflicts and wars.
5. To face fear and to deal with it not mainly with courage but with love.
6. To understand and accept that the *New Creation*, the building up of the *Beloved Community* is always carried forward with others. It is never a “solo act.” This requires patience and the ability to pardon.
7. To see ourselves as a part of the whole creation to which we foster a relationship of love, not of mastery, remembering that the destruction of our planet is a profoundly spiritual problem, not simply a scientific or technological one. *We are one.*
8. To be ready to suffer, perhaps even with joy, if we believe this will help liberate the *Divine* in others. This includes the acceptance of our place and moment in history with its trauma, with its ambiguities.
9. To be capable of celebration, of joy, when the presence of God has been accepted, and when it has not been to help discover and recognize this fact.
10. To slow down, to be patient, planting the seeds of love and forgiveness in our own hearts and in the hearts of those around us. Slowly we will grow in love, compassion and the capacity to forgive.