

Catholic Peace Fellowship - Reading Circle
Reading & Discussion Guide for *The Sign of Peace*

Opening Prayer: See *Peace Prayer Resources* (p. 5)

Q: After having read the recent issue of *The Sign of Peace* (SOP), what general reactions do you have?

Pg. 3 : Editorial

1. When you think of the U.S. current military involvement in Iraq, do you associate its beginning with 2003, or 1991? (Paragraph 1)
2. How does being a "safe distance away" from Iraq influence our role in, perception of, and responsibility for the war? (Paragraph 1)
3. What is the most un/convincing reasoning for this war to be "just"? (Par. 2)
4. How can we as Christians be in solidarity with Iraqis, especially Iraqi Christians? (Par. 5)
 - Is there a tension between U.S. military involvement in Iraq and our call to solidarity as Christians?
 - See pg. 33 for options on how you can get involved with alternative initiatives in Iraq. Pick one as a group to learn more about and discern how to support it.

Pgs. 4-5 : Peace Briefs (CPF Staff)

5. Which Peace Brief most interests you? Why?
6. Were any of them shocking or new concepts for you to think about?

Pgs. 6-10 : *The Challenge of Peace: 25 Years Later* (Symposium)

7. Had you read *The Challenge of Peace* before? Were you aware of the document in 1983 when it was issued?
 - What were some reactions to it? Was there a "buzz" about the Catholic bishops' stance?
 - Did those reactions differ among clergy/religious and the lay faithful?
8. What impact did the open, consensus-based drafting process of the *COP* have on the final version of the document, if any?
9. Did you know that both nonviolence and just war are included in our Catholic tradition? (Intro Par. 1)
 - How do you understand the difference between these two concepts?

"A Challenge That Cannot Be Met" by Paul J. Griffiths

10. Paragraph 2 reflects on political changes that have occurred in the 2.5 decades since the issuing of the 1983 pastoral. In your opinion, what national or international event (between 1983 and the present) most marked your life, or the lives of the people living in the U.S.? Why?
11. Griffiths argues that "Just war theory changes its complexion in a world where the principal weapons of war can bring all life to an end." (Par 3) -- Agree or disagree? Why might this be so? Discuss.
12. Based on (or in addition to) the suggestions Griffiths mentions in his closing paragraph, what are some concrete ways you can respond to this challenge of peace? Set 1 or 2 specific, active goals.

"From Submarines to the Seminary: Thoughts on Deterrence" by Rick Gribble CSC

13. Has your (or a close relative/friend's) participation in the U.S. military affected your reception of the *Challenge of Peace* and the Church's teaching on war and nuclear weapons?
14. How can you as a parishioner challenge the prevailing system, and be a "countercultural voice in our society", as Gribble urges in paragraph 4?
15. Gribble asks, "Is [MAD: Mutually Assured Destruction] a policy which Jesus the peacemaker would have suggested?" (par. 6) Is it? Discuss.

"Memories of *The Challenge of Peace* and the Distant Dream of Disarmament" by Molly Rush

16. Given that Rush was the only lay person among the three women who "presented testimony to the committee of bishops drafting the *COP*" (par 1) what role do the laity have in speaking up to our bishops about the Church's stance on war? -- How does this duty differ from the role of clergy/religious?
17. What is the argument supporting nuclear deterrence?
 - Why would someone be ok with nuclear deterrence or see it as morally acceptable?
 - What may be some dangers of this standpoint? (see par 3-6)
18. "Today the Soviet Union is gone, but the US continues to target Russia on a 15-minute alert. Putting war on a hair trigger" (par 9, top of pg. 9).
 - How does this fact impact the current conflict between Russia and Georgia and the U.S.'s role in it?

"Americans or Catholics? On Then and Now" by Frank Cordaro

19. In this article, Cordaro writes that the *Challenge of Peace* called for "a rediscovery and recovery of the nonviolent, pacifist character of its founder, Jesus."
-- Do you think of Jesus as a 'pacifist'? Can "Christ-like" and "pacifist" be synonyms? Why or why not?
20. Cordaro describes our Catholic just war tradition as "outdated, short-sighted, unworkable and unbiblical". (par 1) → Would you use these words to describe our just war tradition? What other words might you add?
21. Distinguish between conscientious objectors (CO) & selective conscientious objectors (SCO). Discuss. (par 2)
22. "Once the majority of the US Catholic bishops conference was made up of Pope John Paul II appointees, the issues of war and peace were tragically set aside for what they believed to be the more pressing concerns of "Catholic identity". (par 3) -- Do you agree with Cordaro on this?
-- What, in the place of war and peace, do you perceive to be a priority for the US bishops?
23. Based on your experience, how many Catholics know that the Iraq war was labeled "immoral, illegal, and unjust" by the Vatican? (par 4)
24. True or False: "Today a new generation of US Catholics knows nothing of this peace pastoral." (par 5)
25. Could the "Faithful Citizenship" documents (or even the phrase "faithful citizenship") narrow a Christian's worldly perspective to the goals of the nation instead of the ideals of a heavenly kingdom?
-- In other words, is there a danger that the "Faithful Citizenship" documents may lead us to see more with eyes of the earthly city than through the lens of the city of God?
-- Discuss the benefit of using terms like "Faithful Discipleship" or "Forming a Moral Conscience" instead.

"Taking the Bishops to School" by Kathy Kelly

26. Are you familiar with any of the models of nonviolence Kelly names throughout her article (i.e. Mohandas K. Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Dorothy Day, Karl Meyer, Roy Bourgeois, Helen Caldicott, Dom Helder Camara, Cesar Chavez)? Which ones? Focus on one and learn more about what s/he represents.

"Opportunities Lost and Gained: The Harvest of *The Challenge of Peace*" by Drew Christiansen, SJ

27. Even though "the Bush 41 administration named its invasion of Panama 'Operation Just Cause' " (par 1), did the people living in the US at the time view the Panama invasion as "just"? Why or why not?
-- How did the Church respond?
28. "Former president Jimmy Carter, a Southern Baptist, cast his opposition to the 2003 invasion of Iraq in just war terms" (par 1). -- Why is ecumenical dialogue important for discussions on just war, nonviolence, and peacemaking? -- What about interfaith dialogue?
29. When you hear "Catholic", do you automatically think "non-violent"? (par 4)
-- What religious denominations come to mind when you hear words like "nonviolence" and "pacifism"?
-- What makes Catholicism different from these faith traditions?
30. Have you ever participated in a Mennonite-Catholic Dialogue? (par 4)
-- Is there a natural link between these 2 traditions? Why/not?

"*The Challenge of Peace and Evangelium Vitae*" by Gerard V. Bradley

31. Distinguish between "stopping aggression" and "killing" as two separate intentions for violence. (par 1)
-- How does our society (particularly the media) misconstrue these?
-- How can this difference of intent and the idea of "intention" be taught to children?
32. Is "targeting and intending to kill military personnel morally permitted" because it is "public"? (par 3)
-- Discuss the moral difference between public and private actions of violence.
33. What similarities are there between capital punishment and just war?
-- How does capital punishment blur the line between "stopping aggression" and "killing"? (par 3-6)
34. Do you find Bradley's interpretation of the 5th commandment legitimate? (end of article)

"The Church Needs You" by Tom Cornell

35. In the first paragraph, Tom Cornell mentions his frequent visits to the State Department in D.C.
-- Do you know any Catholics/Christians who work for the State Department? Do they primarily identify themselves by their career, or their creed? Does their faith impact their job decisions?
36. "The Church needs you" was the message to Cornell from Ed Donahue (par 2). This message extends to us all. How does the Church *need you*? More specifically, how are you called to be a peacemaker?
37. In matters of morality and conscience, how do you understand the difference between intent and action? Is there a moral difference between the two? (par 3)

Pgs. 14-23 : Shepherding in a Time of Crisis (CPF Staff)

38. The first paragraph of the staff piece on the *Challenge of Peace* pastoral from the Bishops, the staff of the CPF note that “Catholics in the United States are divided along political lines” when it comes to presidential elections. -- How have you experienced this? How has it affected your relationships?
39. Have you read the US Catholic Bishops’ November 2007 document *Faithful Citizenship*? Reactions?
40. The section entitled “A Moment of Supreme Crisis” talks about the evolution/increase of nuclear weapons following Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August, 1945. Did U.S. residents at the time know what was going on? What do you remember of this time? How did people react to atom bomb testing, the hydrogen bomb, the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, etc?
41. Ronald Reagan, “upon taking office [...] referred to the Soviet Union as an ‘evil empire’.” How does Christ’s command to “love your enemies” impact our naming/viewing other countries as “evil empires”? -- What if a regime really is inherently evil or unjust? How are Christians to respond? -- Who may we view as the “evil empire” today?
42. In the first paragraph under the sub-heading “The Church”, the writers claim that Catholic teaching following WWII condemning the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki was “not widely understood and acknowledged by Catholics in the United States”. Do you agree with this observation?
43. Do you agree or disagree with Cardinal Ottaviani’s suggestion that “nuclear weapons make just war theory obsolete”? Can we still talk about “just war” in a world where nuclear warfare is now possible?
44. How were the Catholic peace movement and the Catholic neo-conservatism perspectives received and understood as they were developing? (p. 16)
45. P. Francis Murphy, Auxiliary Bishop of Baltimore, cited Franz Jägerstätter, Pope John Paul II, and George Zabelka as his inspirations for the pastoral letter on war and peace. -- *Who* or *What* has moved *you* to learn about—and work for—peace?
46. “Bernadin urged that proposed drafts [of the pastoral] be circulated and comments be solicited” to various “theologians, philosophers, politicians, and policymakers” (17, par 1). -- Why was this extension to the larger community so important for the drafting process? -- Was the process as important as the outcome?
47. Why is it important that the U.S. bishops identify themselves both religiously and nationally? -- How do you identify yourself? Specifically, what makes up your identity? (religion, family heritage/ancestors, groups/teams, causes, communities, interests, geographical location, etc.)
48. Which of the 4 topics delineated in the first paragraph in the 3rd column on p. 17 most interests you? -- or which one seems the most necessary today?
49. Why was the image of a warrior God useful/relevant in the Old Testament but not found in the New Testament? (column 3, par 2) Is the “warrior God” image helpful or relevant today?
50. What programs at your parish or school have “formation of conscience” as their goal? (see par 1 p.19)
51. Why is the word “challenge” used when talking about peace? (see columns 2 & 3 on p. 19)
52. What are the dangers of distinguishing between *intention* to attack and *threat* to attack? (2nd column, par 1 p. 20; see also the section “The Grisez Critique”)
53. How would the “better dead than red” phrase/mentality be updated to today’s current war situation? “Better dead than _____” (e.g. “a terrorist”, “an Islamic extremist”, etc.) -- What do you think about Grisez’s counter remark, “Better anything than mortal sin”—implying that nuclear war is mortal sin? (p. 21, col. 2)
54. Are you ready “to set aside the purpose of the United States” for the sake of peace? (p. 22, column 1) -- Why is this so difficult? Do you think there’s a place for singing patriotic songs at Mass/services?
55. Why is seeing the U.S. as a superpower so dangerous? Is it *our* country’s responsibility to provide security and democratic freedoms to other nations, specifically the Middle East? (par 2 under “Our Reading”)
56. What is wrong with attributing nonviolence and peace work to individuals alone, instead of groups? (see par 2, column 2, p. 23)
57. How have you been a witness to Jesus’ call to peace in both *mind* and *action*? (bottom of col 2, p. 23)

Pgs. 24-25 : The Pastor and the Pantex (Bishop Leroy Matthiesen)

58. How does Matthiesen’s translation of Psalm 33 reside with you? (see 2nd column, bottom p. 24)
59. What can you do to get the nuclear weapons question on the agenda for the next general assembly of U.S. Catholic bishops? (see last paragraph of Matthiesen’s article)
 - Why don’t bishops talk about issues of war and peace (and nuclear weapons) publicly?
 - Do you think bishops address issues of war and peace more or less today than 25 years ago?
 - What other issues may they be prioritizing instead?

Pgs. 26-28 : The Moral Implications of a Nuclear Deterrent (Germain Grisez)

60. "The intent—that is, the manifest will—essential to the nuclear deterrent is murderous."
-- How does this understanding of "intent" or "manifest will" expand your definition of the 5th commandment?
61. If returning good for evil is the universal call to *all people*, why is there special emphasis on Christians' responsibility to respond to evil with goodness and virtue? (see last paragraph on p. 28)
62. What parts of Grisez's article particularly emphasize that Christianity is not coterminous with the West, specifically the United States? (In other words, how does he stress that being a "Christian" supersedes being a "North American" with regards to moral decision making?)

Pgs. 29-31 : Augustine and the Presumption Against War (Michael Schorsch, CPF)

63. "Before the Fall there was no war, & after Christ comes in glory there will be no war." (par1, p.29) Discuss.
64. George Weigel claims that Catholic just war tradition need not begin with a 'presumption against war/violence'. How could someone with this viewpoint defend their belief against Jesus' command to "love your neighbor", which extends to love of enemies? (bottom of p. 29, column 1)
65. Do you see war as inherently different than other forms of violence? Why/not? (Par 3, col 2, p.29)
66. Is Weigel's argument that "Catholic tradition says that killing people is a morally neutral activity, as long as it happens during war" convincing or believable? (column 1, top of p. 30)
-- Does Catholic tradition support his viewpoint?
67. Augustine's letter to Faustus the Manichean would most support Weigel's argument to justify war within our Catholic tradition. (see column 1, p. 30) *But* who are we following... Augustine, or Christ? Reflect.
68. Did Mike Schorsch's article on Augustine help clarify for you the Church's teaching on the morality of war and/or our presumption against war? Why or why not?

Pg. 31 : Swords into Plowshares (poem, Daniel Berrigan, SJ)

69. How does poetry provide a medium to talk about war and peace? Do you have other favorite authors whose spiritual texts or poems speak especially of peace and nonviolence?

Pgs. 32-33 : Nonviolence and the Problem of Hitler (Karl Meyer)

70. Would Karl Meyer argue that a pacifist does not define the opposition as the "enemy"? (column 2, bottom of pg 32) -- Are we, as Christians, called to *refuse to be enemies*? (col 1, par 3, p. 33)
71. Is Meyer's "Nonviolent Alternative" plan realistic or possible? Or overly idealistic?
(The movie *Swing Kids* is a possible example of nonviolent resistance from German youth under the Nazi regime through the medium of swing dancing. Perhaps you could watch this together and discuss? If someone in the group has seen it, invite her/him to share insights with the group.)
72. How would Meyer's nonviolent alternative to Hitler apply to the U.S. situation today in the Middle East, and around the world? For example, should civil leaders (and/or religious leaders) in the U.S. be learning Arabic to enter into dialogues toward peace?
-- What local initiatives are you aware of that address global issues of peace and conflict resolution? For example, is there an opportunity for Christian/Muslim dialogue and prayer in your city?

[Under the "What is to be Done?" Section on the bottom third of the p.33, many organizations and options are listed regarding how to positively get involved in peace work and supporting peace groups. Check out catholicpeacefellowship.org for direct links to these organizations' websites. Pick one, find out more, get your parish, group, school, etc. involved.]

Pg. 34 : Review of Pope Benedict XVI's *On Conscience* (Jonathan Lace, CO)

73. If a Church teaching generates tension, does that prevent it from being infallible? (refer to par 1 under "Conscience and Truth")
74. How do you define *conscience*? How does your understanding of conscience compare to Jonathan Lace's definition of conscience as "both a remembering (*anamnesis*) of the image of God and a given judgment (*conscientia*) based on knowledge of that image"? → Does conscience as *event* make sense to you?

Closing Prayer: Intentions, Our Father, Exchange the sign of peace

The Reading & Discussion Guide for Catholic Peace Fellowship Reading Circles on The Sign of Peace is a new initiative for CPF to help facilitate group discussion stemming from the topics raised in our journal. We appreciate your feedback, suggestions, and evaluation of our efforts. Please direct comments to Aimee Shelide -- shelide@catholicpeacefellowship.org or 574.232.2811.