

The Sign of Peace 9.1

Reading Group Discussion Guide

A note about the Reading Guide:

This reading guide is intended to help parishes, schools, book clubs, and other interested parties facilitate reflection and discussion on the journal of the Catholic Peace Fellowship: *The Sign of Peace*. CPF intends that the journal not only be a source of information, but also an educational aid that edifies the Church by guiding discussion and faith formation on issues of war, peace, and conscientious objection. Hopefully this resource will help channel your discussion by applying specific questions to the distinct articles. Noting that there is ample material for multiple gatherings, please use whichever questions are most appropriate for your group and setting.

Opening Prayer: See Peace Prayer Resources

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

Pg. 2: About This Issue

1. Have you been involved in Catholic-Mennonite dialogue? For how long? What was the context?

Pg. 3: Editorial

2. Did you or someone you know attend the March for Life in January of this year? Did people know that Brown was pro-choice? What does this say about the inadequacy of party-based politics?
3. "These [Anabaptist] brothers and sisters of ours stretch our limited imagination of what it means to be political" (Par. 4). What does it mean, for you, to be political? Define "political engagement" (par. 5).

Pgs 4-5: Letters in Response to 8.2

4. Do you agree with Claire Schaeffer-Duffy's statement (p.4, col. 3, par.2) that "Enemy love is central to the Gospel, the most thoroughly 'pro-life' part of Jesus' teaching." Why/not? What does that mean for Christians?

Pg 6: Peace Briefs (News compiled by the CPF Staff)

5. Have you (or your children) played/seen the game *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2*? Check out the chilling trailer at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=429l13dS6kQ>. Discuss.
6. "The game [*Call of Duty*] had more impact on recruits than all other forms of Army advertising combined." How can we "recruit for peace" more actively?
7. Were you aware that playing the U.S. National Anthem before sporting events dates back only to 1931 as an effort to build support for the war? In your opinion, why is it played today?

Pgs 7-10: Peace is Patience, *The Sign of Peace* interviews Stanley Hauerwas

8. Would you describe "pacifism" as a "reality"? What about the Eucharist? How can these two "realities" bridge Catholics and Mennonites? (Refer to pg. 7, col. 1, par. 1)
9. Do Anabaptists see themselves as a "Catholic reform movement"? (pg. 7, col. 1, par. 2)
10. "The Church is a social ethic." Discuss. (pg. 7, col. 1, par. 3)
11. Did you know that the Matthew 18 reference of calling out another's sin and need for reconciliation is the context for the often-quoted, "Where two or three are gathered..."? How does that change its meaning? (see pg. 7, col. 2, par. 2)
12. Hauerwas praises the work of John Howard Yoder (pg. 8, col. 1). How familiar are you with Yoder's work? Do you have a favorite book or article? Have you ever read something (as Hauerwas read Yoder) and thought, "My God, this just changes everything!?" What was it?
13. How does the resurrection call us to pacifism? (See pg. 8, col. 2, par. 1)
14. What benefits does a ROTC discussion group on the ethics of war offer? Is there one near you? If not, discuss the possibility of starting one.
15. "One of the most important things that John taught me was never to be judgmental about people who haven't had the opportunity to be exposed to things to which we have been exposed" (pg. 9, col. 1, par. 3). Why is this important? Give a personal example.
16. In that same paragraph, Hauerwas is quoted saying, "Any of us committed to nonviolence must realize that we are every bit as compromised as anyone in the military." Do you agree? Elaborate.
17. "There is strong division among the Mennonites these days" (pg. 9, col. 2, par 1). Have you experienced this kind of division within your faith tradition? What is its source? Does it differ across faith traditions?

18. Stanley claims that Catholics, with their strong sense of the Church universal, fail at creating strong, local communities with sustainable formation. Have you seen examples that contradict this observation?
19. Do you support the option of restitution (or restorative justice) that Hauerwas mentions in his story of the teenagers who killed the Amish baby. Why/how is it different than penal punishment? Is it better? Why?
20. Can you think of other Catholic contributions not mentioned on pg. 10, col. 1?
21. Referring to Yoder's "problem with revolutions" (pg. 10, col. 2, par. 3), give some positive and negative examples of revolutions.

Pgs 11-14: *The Witness of Dirk Willem: A Lesson for Catholics* by the CPF Staff

22. If you are not from the Anabaptist tradition, what is the extent of your knowledge of Anabaptist principles and practices?
23. Are Anabaptist churches today still viewed as they were regarded during the Reformation (pg. 11, col. 3, par. 1) as: "socially disruptive, politically subversive"?
24. What does it mean for Catholic reconciliation that "Dirk Willem was horribly martyred under the authority of the Catholic Church" (pg. 12, col. 1, par. Cont'd from pg. 11)?
25. Does it make sense to you to compare the persecutions of the Reformation to the early church persecutions recorded in the *Acts of the Apostles*? Is it fitting to compare Catholics of the Reformation era to the Sanhedrin (the "jailers")? (see pg. 12, col. 3, par. 1-3) If you are Catholic, how does this affect your Catholic memory or understanding of history?
26. "The Problem of Constantinianism" section describes "the sharp contrast between Catholic and Anabaptist teaching on civil authority." With which tradition's teaching do you tend to agree?
27. "This Constantinian shift...signaled the movement of Christianity from a persecuted minority to a socially dominant, imperial religion...by the sixteenth century, the teaching of the Catholic Church affirmed that civil authorities had the duty to carry out the laws of the state" (pg. 13, col. 2, par. 3 through col. 3, par 2). Can these statements be used to describe Catholics in the United States today?
28. How have you witnessed (or been a part of) groups "unthinking the Constantinian Shift" (pg. 14, col. 1, par.1)
29. Is the development of which Baxter speaks (Catholic adhering more and more to nonviolence) a national trend, or restricted to certain pockets of the U.S.? (See pg. 14, col. 3, par. 1)

Pgs 15-17: *Proceeding Through Friendship: On the Journey of Bridgefolk* by Margie Pfeil & Biff Weidman

30. In what faith traditions (other than your own) have you felt "at home"?
31. Is there a Sant'Egidio community near you? If so, what is your experience with them? (pg. 15, col. 1, par. 3)
32. Answer the "anonymous" questions (pg. 15, bottom of col. 1, top of col. 2) as best you can.
33. How are Catholics today complicit in the 17th century persecutions? (pg. 15, col. 2, par. 1)
34. What rituals have been a way of healing in your life? (Refer to pg. 15, col. 2, par. 3 - healing the brokenness of the Christian Eucharistic table.)
35. If any of your group have participated in a Bridgefolk gathering, take time to share the fruits of these encounters with each other.
36. Have you read "Called Together to Be Peacemakers"? If not, plan to read it and discuss as a group.
37. Give an example of a friendship that crosses differences that would otherwise cause division.
38. "What resources has God given us, Mennonites and Catholics together, to serve a suffering world?" (pg. 16, col. 2, par 2)
39. Share reflections to the centering prayer written by Gerald Schlabach (pg. 17). How is Bridgefolk not just a "bridge" between Mennonites and Catholics, but a bridge from the present to a future of unity and peace?

Pgs 18-20: *Memos from Yoder: Recalling the Contribution of a Mennonite Theologian* by Michael Baxter

40. Did you know that "phone tax" originated as a war tax? (pg. 18, col. 1, par. 2)
41. Yoder revealed the story of St. Marcellus to the Notre Dame community in 1996. When did you first hear of St. Marcellus?
42. Upon Marcellus' sentence, he declared to Agricolanus, "May God bless you" (pg. 18, col. 2). How is this reminiscent of the Amish and other historic peace church responses to their persecutors?
43. With which "variety of Catholic peace theology" are you most familiar: Catholic Worker, Catholic professors and pastors, liberation theology? (see pg. 19, col. 2, par.1-2)
44. "When effectiveness becomes the ultimate measure, nonviolence is all too easily dismissed" (pg. 19, col. 2, par. 3). How does this stand against the world's emphasis on effectiveness?
45. The Incarnation (God: human & Divine) means that nonviolence is *normative* (and possible) for us as Christians. Why? Does that mean nonviolence is "effective" because of Christ? (Refer to pg. 20, col 1, top)
46. Has the 1983 "hope" that the Catholic Church was becoming a "peace church" been realized? (Pg. 20, col. 1,

par. 3) Discuss.

47. Why is it that nonviolent movements, like those of Gandhi, King, Dorothy Day, Dom Helder Camara) start small? (Pg. 20, col. 2, par 1-2) If nonviolent “must be our word now,” how will you make it YOUR word?

Pgs 21-24: *Learning to Live Like Christians: On the Peace Witness of the Early Church* by Alan Kreider

48. Have you read many writers of the early church? If so, who have been the most informative or enjoyable?
49. Kreider writes that around the time of Constantine, it became “socially advantageous” to become a Christian (pg. 21, col. 2, #4). In your opinion, is it still socially advantageous to be Christian?
50. Referring to #1 on pg. 22, is commitment to peace as important as obedience to chastity and non-idolatry?
51. Origen assumed that Christians knew well Isaiah 2:2-4 (pg. 22, #2). Does this assumption hold true today?
52. What is your understanding of the exchange of peace during liturgy? Why do it? Is there a difference between “sharing God’s peace” and “making peace” (see pg 22, #3)
53. How are violence and even wealth barriers to freedom? Are they barriers to being Christian? (pg. 23, #4)
54. “Soldiers who had the power to command the use of the sword were not admitted as catechumens unless they left the armed forces.” Could military officers *today* ever be denied the opportunity to become Catholic (or be baptized into another faith) unless they renounced killing? (pg. 23, #5) How would people react?
55. Is the consistent repudiation of killing still a conviction of your church tradition?
56. Tertullian claimed that “there could be ‘no agreement between...baptism and the soldier’s oath’” (pg. 24, end of par. From pg. 23). What is your response?
57. After Constantine, theologians adapted their teaching to “fit the realities of the empire that was being Christianized” (pg. 24, col. 2, par. 1). How does this happen today?
58. Kreider closes with a strong statement about Augustine that seems to contradict Msgr. Heintz’s portrait of the same theologian (pg. 24, col. 2, last par.). How do you characterize Augustine?

Pgs 25-28: *Augustinian Skepticism about a “Just War”*: Saint Augustine on the Lust for Mastery by Msgr. Michael Heintz

59. Many people have labeled Augustine as the “founder” of Just War Theory. Have you labeled him as such?
60. Do you find yourself “romanticizing about some gilded age of the ‘early Church’?” (see pg. 25, top of col 2)
61. How does the Christian idea of “manifest destiny,” apply to the USA today (pg. 26, top of col 1)?
62. Have you self-identified as a *paroiki* (pilgrim) on earth? (see pg. 26, co. 1, par. 4)
63. “At best, politics and government are simply necessary mechanisms to maintain a minimum of common good” (pg. 26, top of col. 2). Do you agree? Discuss.
64. Name an example of a war fought for empire-building and expansion that was named instead as a “defensive” war. (See pg. 26, col. 2, par 2)
65. Would Catholics still enlist in the military today if the same penance (abstaining from the Eucharist for three years) was applied to all enlisted soldiers? (See pg. 27, top of col. 1)
66. Did you witness any similar responses to the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center (as Heintz mentions on pg. 27, col. 1, par 2), such as “cool”? What does this say about our culture and forms of entertainment?
67. At the end of his article, Msgr Heintz places the “real shift in the justification of war” toward the end of the Middle Ages (pg. 28, col. 2, par. 2). Do you agree?

Pg 29: “Good Friday; The Penitent Speaks” By Daniel Berrigan, SJ

68. How are wounds “prestigious”? (stanza 1)
69. How can faith make us blind? (stanza 4)
70. What do you think “comeback” refers to in stanza 8?

Pg 30: On Earth as it is in Heaven: A Review of Amish Grace (by Anna Nussbaum Keating)

71. What does it mean that the Amish families of the victims who were killed *also* brought food to the gunman’s widow? (col. 1, par. 6). When was the last time you prepared a meal for someone in need? Who was it?
72. Is forgiveness ever “warranted”? (see col 2, par 3) Give an example of how forgiveness heals both the victim and the perpetrator.

Pg 31: To Our Readers

73. Do you agree that most Christians in the USA are “blank check” supporters of war? Elaborate.

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

The Reading Guide for 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.

Peace Prayer Resources

Prayer for Reconciliation

God of perfect peace,
Violence and cruelty can have no part with you.
May those who are at peace with one another hold fast to the good will that unites them;
may those who are enemies forget their hatred and be healed.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.
Amen. -- From The Sacramentary

Prayer for Peace -- Pope John XXIII

Lord Jesus Christ, who are called the Prince of Peace,
who are yourself our peace and reconciliation,
who so often said, "Peace to you," grant us peace.

Make all men and women witnesses of truth, justice, and brotherly love.
Banish from their hearts whatever might endanger peace.

Enlighten our rulers
that they may guarantee and defend the great gift of peace.
May all peoples on the earth become as brothers and sisters.
May longed-for peace blossom forth and reign over us all. Amen.



<http://peaceprayer.gn.apc.org/>

Franz Jägerstätter Prayer ¹

(Diocese of Linz, Austria)

Lord Jesus Christ, you filled your servant Franz Jägerstätter with a deep love for you, his family and all people. During a time of contempt for God and humankind you bestowed on him unerring discernment and integrity. In faith, he followed his conscience, and said a decisive NO to national socialism and unjust war. Thus he sacrificed his life. We pray that you may glorify your servant Franz, so that many people may be encouraged by him and grow in love for you and all people. May his example shine out in our time, and may you grant all people the strength to stand up for justice, peace, and human dignity. For yours is the glory and honor with the Father and the Holy Spirit now and forever. Amen.

¹ Franz Jägerstätter holy cards are available on the CPF website at www.catholicpeacefellowship.org