

Blessed Are the Peacemakers
Sunday, October 27, 2019
Martin de Porres Center and Interactive Video

1:00 – 2:00 Part 1: Beginning Our Journey

- Rooted in the Gospel “Peace Be with You”
- What is violence?
- The Myth of Redemptive Violence
- Description of Violence; Scripts of Violence

2:00-3:00 Part 2: The Power of Gospel Nonviolence

- Stereotypes and Qualities of Nonviolence
- The Two Hands of Nonviolence
- Jesus: Challenging the Myth of Redemptive Violence and Proclaiming a Nonviolent Order Free of Violence

3:00-3:10 Break

3:10-4:30 Part 3: Tools for Gospel Nonviolence

- Dr. King’s Six Principles of Nonviolence
- Process for Nonviolent Engagement CLARA: Center, Learn, Articulate, Receive, Accomplish

4:30-5:00 Part 4: Bringing Gospel Nonviolence Home -- In Our lives, Our Churches, Our Neighborhoods, Our City and Our World

Blessed are the Peacemakers:

Gospel Nonviolence for Justice and Peace

In Our Lives,

Our Communities,

and Our World

An Afternoon Workshop

Peace Be With You

...the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked...Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.'

John 20: 19-22

Our Agenda

- Part 1: The Challenge of Violence
- Part 2: The Power of Gospel Nonviolence
- Part 3: Tools for Gospel Nonviolence
- Part 4: Bringing Gospel Nonviolence Home

Shared Agreements

- Participate at whatever level you feel safe and comfortable
- Be open to feeling uncomfortable when that might help facilitate my growth
- Honor confidentiality in small groups the large group
- Practice sensitivity to all forms of difference and recognize and respond to power dynamics
- Listen actively
- Use “I” statements

Part 1: The Challenge of Violence

The Good Samaritan

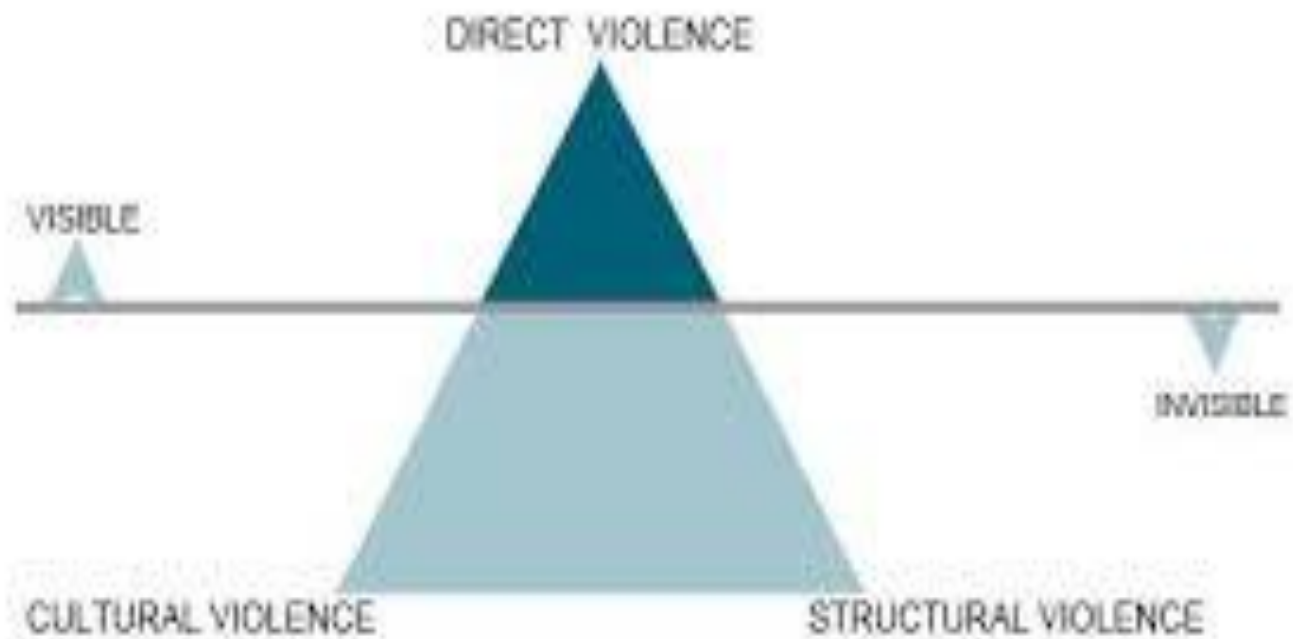
²⁸ . . . “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”

²⁹ But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

³⁰ In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. .

Luke 10:25-37

VIOLENCE TRIANGLE GALTUNG



Violence Iceberg

What is Violence?

Any

physical, verbal, institutional, or structural
behavior, attitude, policy or condition
that disrespects, dominates, dehumanizes,
diminishes, or destroys
ourselves, our fellow beings, or our world

The Myth of Redemptive Violence



Walter Wink:

The belief that violence “saves” is a “religion” that demands from its devotees an absolute obedience unto death.

Love Your Enemies

“You have heard that it was said, You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons and daughters of your Father who is in heaven.”

Matthew 5: 43-47

The One with the Withered Hand

Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, “Stand up in front of everyone.”

Then Jesus asked them, “Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?”

But they remained silent.

Mark 3: 1-6

Jesus Answers Violence

Violence

- The violence of division
- Institutional violence—keeps some people outside the circle of well-being
- Worship that seeks to appease a vengeful God

Jesus' Vision of Nonviolence

- **God's inclusive love** (e.g. sharing a common table.)
- **Universal healing**
- **Worship the god of life**, not the god of death.

From "The Faithful Nonviolence of Jesus" by Nancy Shreck, OSF

Part 2:

The Power of Gospel Nonviolence

What are some typical beliefs or stereotypes that people in our society have about nonviolence?

Stereotypes of Nonviolence

What are the attributes or qualities of people who have tried to put nonviolence into practice?

Attributes or Qualities of Nonviolence

Traditional Scripts

Survival strategies

- Fear
- Deception
- Hatred

Scripts for dealing with conflict and violence

- **Avoidance**
- **Accommodation**
- **Counter-violence**

Question for reflection: What is our own script?

We need a new script:

Neither Fight nor Flight,
but a **Third Way**.

Active Nonviolence

The Two Hands of Nonviolence

Nonviolence has “two hands” that are in creative tension:

Noncooperation with injustice

Steadfast regard for the opponent as a human being.

What is Nonviolence?

- Nonviolence is a force for justice, peace and the well being of all that is neither violent nor passive.
- Nonviolence is the love that does justice (Martin Luther King, Jr.)
- Nonviolence is transforming power (Alternatives to Violence)
- Nonviolence is love in action (Dorothy Day)
- Nonviolence is cooperative power (Jonathan Schell)

The Gospel Nonviolence Mural

Brainstorm examples of nonviolence in the Gospels.

The Hard Sayings of Jesus

³⁸ “You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’^[a] ³⁹ But I tell you, do not violently resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. ⁴⁰ And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. ⁴¹ If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles.
⁴²

Matthew 5: 38-42

The Nonviolent Jesus

In his age, which like ours was rife with violence, Jesus proclaimed the Reign of God, a nonviolent order rooted in God's unconditional and inclusive love and justice.

Put Down Your Sword

“Put your sword back in its place,”
Jesus said to him, “for all who draw
the sword will die by the sword.”

Matthew 26: 47-56

Part 3:

Tools for Gospel Nonviolence

Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Principles of Nonviolence

- Nonviolence is a way of life for courageous people.
- Nonviolence seeks to win friendship and understanding.
- Nonviolence seeks to defeat injustice, not people.
- Nonviolence holds that voluntary suffering can educate and transform.
- Nonviolence chooses love instead of hate.
- Nonviolence believes that the universe is on the side of justice.

Reflect: Name one example of these principles at work in your life.

CLARA

A Process for Nonviolent Engagement

- Center
- Learn
- Articulate
- Receive
- Accomplish

1. Center myself

- What is really happening within myself?
- Prepare to respond, not simply to react, to the conflict.
- Examples of centering techniques:
 - Breathing
 - Changing your posture
 - Silently repeating a sacred word or mantra
 - Naming one's emotional state

2. Learn

- Learn about the conflict
 - Are we misperceiving each other?
 - Are we projecting or creating narratives that are not real?
 - What is my own piece of the truth?

Observation

Understanding

Insight

3. Articulate my truth

- What am I truly feeling and needing in this moment?
- Speak out of this feeling, not out of an urge to win.
- Disarm myself so that the other person can feel less defensive.
- Model the behavior you desire.

4. Receive the truth of the other

- Listen deeply with our hearts to the other person's truth: what do they feel or need?
- What is the other's piece of the truth?
- Use questions not to cross-examine or trap, but to really learn something.

5. Accomplish an outcome

- Find ways to put the two truths together
- Are their points you both agree on?
- Agree to disagree on what can't be resolved.
- Agree on how to go forward with each other on this issue.

CLARA Scenario

You are having dinner with family/friends/fellow parishioners.

You describe that the community (Dominican Sisters of Peace) has a corporate stance against capital punishment and is working to abolish the death penalty.

One of the diners tells you that survivors of murders deserve to have closure/relief from their relative's murder.

One of the diners states that the murderers deserve to be killed for what they did.

How do you respond?

Part 4:

Bringing Gospel Nonviolence Home

Bringing Gospel Nonviolence Home

How can we use these lessons to help us:

- Engage in difficult conversations?
- Talk to our lawmakers?
- Work together in church or community settings?

*A society that lacks people of vision
is a society certain of its end.
Perhaps the crisis in our country,
our church, our world today
is a result of a lack of dreamers...
to open our minds...
to strengthen our hearts...
and to employ new energies
to change our society.*

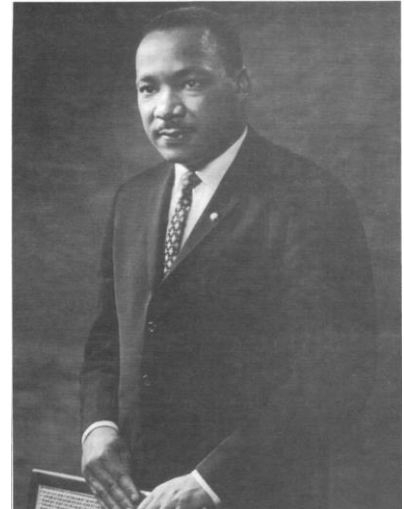
--Leonardo Boff

Closing song

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cw0gMW6gk0w>

Six Principles of Nonviolence

by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



1. Nonviolence is a way of life for courageous people.

It is active nonviolent resistance to evil. It is aggressive spiritually, mentally and emotionally. It is always persuading the opponent of the righteousness of your cause.

2. Nonviolence seeks to win friendship and understanding.

The end result of nonviolence is redemption and reconciliation. The purpose is the creation of the Beloved Community.

3. Nonviolence seeks to defeat injustice, not people.

Nonviolence recognizes evil doers as also victims and not evil people. The nonviolent resister seeks to defeat evil, not people.

4. Nonviolence holds that suffering can educate and transform.

Nonviolence accepts suffering without retaliation.

Nonviolence accepts violence if necessary, but will never inflict it.

Nonviolence willingly accepts the consequences of its acts.

Unearned suffering is redemptive and has tremendous educational and transforming possibilities.

Suffering has the power to convert the enemy when reason fails.

5. Nonviolence chooses love instead of hate.

Nonviolence resists violence of the spirit as well as the body.

Nonviolent love is spontaneous, unmotivated, unselfish and creative.

Nonviolent love gives willingly, knowing that the return might be hostility.

Nonviolent love is active, not passive.

Nonviolent love is unending in its ability to forgive in order to restore community.

Nonviolent love does not sink to the level of the hater.

Love for the enemy is how we demonstrate love for ourselves.

Love restores community and resists injustice.

Nonviolence recognizes the fact that all life is interrelated.

6. 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.

From "Pilgrimage to nonviolence" in Dr. King's Stride Toward Freedom, Harper & Row, 1958.

CLARA: A Five-Step Process for Nonviolent Engagement

Center, Learn, Articulate, Receive, Accomplish

This way of approaching conflict stems from a foundation of compassion, truth, and love, including agape, or loving your “enemy.” It is grounded in Mahatma Gandhi’s concept of Satyagraha, or Soulforce, which means integrating three aspects: speaking the truth, loving the enemy, and noncooperating with injustice and violence.

CLARA -- Center, Learn, Articulate, Receive, and Accomplish -- is a five-step process for nonviolent engagement and transformation. CLARA means “clear” in Spanish. This process is a way to become clear in a conflict and relate face-to-face with others in a nonviolent way, and is also a method for understanding how nonviolent action in social movements happens. We seek to use nonviolent approaches rather than avoid, accommodate, or use violence to meet violence. Our intention is to expand our understanding of the truth and allow win/win scenarios to emerge.

Step One: Center Myself

Centering helps me make contact with what is really happening within myself. By anchoring myself in my heart, I am prepared to respond, not simply to react, to the conflict I am facing. I may decide to protect myself. I may decide to engage. In either case, I can act from a place where I am most truly who I am, and not simply from a worn-out and potentially destructive script.

Centering and Grounding is done at two levels, one before you get together to address the conflict, and the other in the moment of the conflict itself. Before you meet with the other person to work through the conflict, some practices include: Prayer/meditation, walking, being in nature, talking/role-playing with friends.

In the moment, some centering techniques include:

- Breathing -- and focusing on one’s breath
- Asking the other person to sit down
- Silently repeating a meaningful or sacred prayer, word, mantra, or name
- Recognizing and naming one’s emotional state in that moment (fear, anger, sadness, etc.)

Step Two: Learning About the Conflict, Including My Piece of the Truth in It

When we get into conflicts we are quite often misperceiving each other. We are often projecting or creating narratives that are not real. Learning my truth helps me to get clear what my truth is independent of my projections and the other’s true story.

This involves a 3-step process: *Observation, Understanding, and Insight (OUI)*. We clear the ground and get to a broader view with many more options and possibilities.

OBSERVATION: Observe and notice the visible and physical elements of a conflict, including:

- Inner and outer sensory observation
- Discovering the facts without evaluation.
- Emotions in ourselves and in the other.
- What does emotion trigger in the body?
- Seeing what is happening in the environment.

UNDERSTANDING: Obtain further knowledge of the conflict by investigating relationships, attitudes, behaviors, and contradictions.

INSIGHT: Penetrate into a situation to apprehend the inner nature of the conflict, including the different kinds of power, cultures, and identities involved. See the conflict intuitively. Go beyond narrow understanding.

Step Three: Articulating My Truth

What am I truly feeling and needing in this moment (besides needing to be right)? Speak out of this feeling or need rather than out of an urge to win. I believe in cooperation, AND I will not cooperate with injustice. I need to learn how to speak my truth without violating the truth of my 'opponent', or anyone else for that matter. I don't want to engage in a power struggle, but believe I can reach a win-win solution. By being open, direct, vulnerable, and inviting, I am disarming myself so that the other person can feel less defensive. Go first...model the behavior you desire.

Helpful suggestions:

- Relax body posture and facial expression
- Speak slowly and softly
- Use "I" statements, such as "I feel" or "I believe"
- Keep in mind the deeper needs underneath what I am feeling.

Step Four: Receiving the Truth of the Other Person

Listen deeply with our hearts to the other person's truth: what do they feel or need? We must be truly interested in this person and her or his position. What is the other's piece of the truth? There is a reason that the other is holding a position different from the one you are; try to get to it. Our commitment should be to the Truth, more than our version of the truth. Our opponent often has piece of the truth that we are missing. Use questions not to cross-examine or trap the other, but to really learn something.

- Listen actively without thinking what I will say next
- Ask questions with curiosity. Lower your voice at the end of a sentence.
- Do not cooperate with any injustice in the situation
- Check out any of my own assumptions concerning the situation

Step Five: Accomplishing an Outcome

Find ways to put the "two truths together" and discover the points of agreement where the needs of both parties are met. Point out the elements you both agree on. Agree to disagree on the elements that are clearly in opposition to each other. Agree on how you will go forward with each other on this issue.

Some possible ways to do this:

- Propose the elements where you see that you both agree on
- Ask the other person's feedback and any places of agreement they see
- Ask the other person if each of you can consider the truth of the other and can agree on any of those additional pieces of the truth
- Agree to disagree on the elements that are clearly in opposition to each other
- Come to a final agreement and restate so you are both clear about it
- Take some silent time for each person to see how the agreement feels to see if each person feels satisfied about getting at least some of his/her needs met
- Write down the final agreement if it makes sense
- Discuss with the other person how the agreement changes your relationship
- Consider accountability: Talk about how you will check in with each other from this point onwards (when and where) to see how the new agreement is working for you both and if any adjustments may have to be made

Facing the Myth of Redemptive Violence

By Walter Wink

http://www.ekkleisia.co.uk/content/cpt/article_060823wink.shtml

The belief that violence “saves” is so successful because it doesn’t seem to be mythic in the least. Violence simply appears to be the nature of things. It’s what works. It seems inevitable, the last and, often, the first resort in conflicts. If a god is what you turn to when all else fails, violence certainly functions as a god. What people overlook, then, is the religious character of violence. It demands from its devotees an absolute obedience- unto-death.

This Myth of Redemptive Violence is the real myth of the modern world. It, and not Judaism or Christianity or Islam, is the dominant religion in our society today. When my children were small, we let them log an unconscionable amount of television, and I became fascinated with the mythic structure of cartoons. This was in the 1960s, when the “death of God” theologians were being feted on talk shows, and secular humanity’s tolerance for religious myth and mystery were touted as having been exhausted.

I began to examine the structure of cartoons, and found the same pattern repeated endlessly: an indestructible hero is doggedly opposed to an irreformable and equally indestructible villain. Nothing can kill the hero, though for the first three quarters of the comic strip or TV show he (rarely she) suffers grievously and appears hopelessly doomed, until miraculously, the hero breaks free, vanquishes the villain, and restores order until the next episode. Nothing finally destroys the villain or prevents his or her reappearance, whether the villain is soundly trounced, jailed, drowned, or shot into outer space.

Few cartoons have run longer or been more influential than Popeye and Bluto. In a typical segment, Bluto abducts a screaming and kicking Olive Oyl, Popeye’s girlfriend. When Popeye attempts to rescue her, the massive Bluto beats his diminutive opponent to a pulp, while Olive Oyl helplessly wrings her hands. At the last moment, as our hero oozes to the floor, and Bluto is trying, in effect, to rape Olive Oyl, a can of spinach pops from Popeye’s pocket and spills into his mouth.

Transformed by this gracious infusion of power, he easily demolishes the villain and rescues his beloved. The format never varies. Neither party ever gains any insight or learns from these encounters. They never sit down and discuss their differences. Repeated defeats do not teach Bluto to honour Olive Oyl’s humanity, and repeated pummellings do not teach Popeye to swallow his spinach before the fight.

Something about this mythic structure rang familiar. Suddenly I remembered: this cartoon pattern mirrored one of the oldest continually enacted myths in the world, the Babylonian creation story (the Enuma Elish) from around 1250 BCE. The tale bears repeating, because it holds the clue to the appeal of that ancient myth in our modern media.

In the beginning, according to the Babylonian myth, Apsu, the father god, and Tiamat, the mother god, give birth to the gods. But the frolicking of the younger gods makes so much noise that the elder gods resolve to kill them so they can sleep. The younger gods uncover the plot before the elder gods put it into action, and kill Apsu. His wife Tiamat, the Dragon of Chaos, pledges revenge.

Terrified by Tiamat, the rebel gods turn for salvation to their youngest member, Marduk. He negotiates a steep price: if he succeeds, he must be given chief and undisputed power in the assembly of the gods. Having extorted this promise, he catches Tiamat in a net, drives an evil wind down her throat, shoots an arrow that bursts her distended belly and pierces her heart. He then splits her skull with a club and scatters her blood in out-of-the-way places. He stretches out her corpse full-length, and from it creates the

cosmos. (With all this blood and gore, no wonder this story proved ideal as the prototype of violent TV shows and Hollywood movies).

In this myth, creation is an act of violence. Marduk murders and dismembers Tiamat, and from her cadaver creates the world. As the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur observes (*The Symbolism of Evil*, Harper Collins 1967), order is established by means of disorder. Chaos (symbolised by Tiamat) is prior to order (represented by Marduk, high god of Babylon). Evil precedes good. The gods themselves are violent.

The biblical myth in Genesis 1 is diametrically opposed to all this (Genesis 1, it should be noted, was developed in Babylon during the Jewish captivity there as a direct rebuttal to the Babylonian myth). The Bible portrays a good God who creates a good creation. Chaos does not resist order. Good is prior to evil. Neither evil nor violence is part of the creation, but enter later, as a result of the first couple's sin and the connivance of the serpent (Genesis 3). A basically good reality is thus corrupted by free decisions reached by creatures. In this far more complex and subtle explanation of the origins of things, violence emerges for the first time as a problem requiring solution.

In the Babylonian myth, however, violence is no problem. It is simply a primordial fact. The simplicity of this story commended it widely, and its basic mythic structure spread as far as Syria, Phoenicia, Egypt, Greece, Rome, Germany, Ireland, India, and China. Typically, a male war god residing in the sky fights a decisive battle with a female divine being, usually depicted as a monster or dragon, residing in the sea or abyss (the feminine element). Having vanquished the original enemy by war and murder, the victor fashions a cosmos from the monster's corpse. Cosmic order requires the violent suppression of the feminine, and is mirrored in the social order by the subjection of women to men and people to ruler.

After the world has been created, the story continues, the gods imprisoned by Marduk for siding with Tiamat complain of the poor meal service. Marduk and his father, Ea, therefore execute one of the captive gods, and from his blood Ea creates human beings to be servants to the gods.

The implications are clear: human beings are created from the blood of a murdered god. Our very origin is violence. Killing is in our genes. Humanity is not the originator of evil, but merely finds evil already present and perpetuates it. Our origins are divine, to be sure, since we are made from a god, but from the blood of an assassinated god.

Human beings are thus naturally incapable of peaceful coexistence. Order must continually be imposed upon us from on high: men over women, masters over slaves, priests over laity, aristocrats over peasants, rulers over people. Unquestioning obedience is the highest virtue, and order the highest religious value. As Marduk's representative on earth, the king's task is to subdue all those enemies who threaten the tranquillity that he has established on behalf of the god. The whole cosmos is a state, and the god rules through the king. Politics arises within the divine sphere itself. Salvation is politics: the masses identify with the god of order against the god of chaos, and offer themselves up for the Holy War that imposes order and rule on the peoples round about.

In short, the Myth of Redemptive Violence is the story of the victory of order over chaos by means of violence. It is the ideology of conquest, the original religion of the status quo. The gods favour those who conquer. Conversely, whoever conquers must have the favour of the gods. The common people exist to perpetuate the advantage that the gods have conferred upon the king, the aristocracy, and the priesthood.

Religion exists to legitimate power and privilege. Life is combat. Any form of order is preferable to chaos, according to this myth. Ours is neither a perfect nor perfectible world; it is theatre of perpetual conflict in which the prize goes to the strong. Peace through war, security through strength: these are the

core convictions that arise from this ancient historical religion, and they form the solid bedrock on which the Domination System is founded in every society.

The Babylonian myth is far from finished. It is as universally present and earnestly believed today as at any time in its long and bloody history. It is the dominant myth in contemporary America. It enshrines the ritual practice of violence at the very heart of public life, and even those who seek to oppose its oppressive violence do so violently.

We have already seen how the myth of redemptive violence is played out in the structure of children's cartoon shows (and is found as well in comics, video and computer games, and movies). But we also encounter it in the media, in sports, in nationalism, in militarism, in foreign policy, in televangelism, in the religious right, and in self-styled militia groups. What appears so innocuous in cartoons is, in fact, the mythic underpinnings of our violent society.

The psychodynamics of the TV cartoon or comic book are marvelously simple: children identify with the good guy so that they can think of themselves as good. This enables them to project out onto the bad guy their own repressed anger, violence, rebelliousness, or lust, and then vicariously to enjoy their own evil by watching the bad guy initially prevail. This segment of the show – the “Tammuz” element, where the hero suffers – actually consumes all but the closing minutes, allowing ample time for indulging the violent side of the self.

When the good guy finally wins, viewers are then able to reassert control over their own inner tendencies, repress them, and re-establish a sense of goodness without coming to any insight about their own inner evil. The villain's punishment provides catharsis; one forswears the villain's ways and heaps condemnation on him in a guilt-free orgy of aggression. Salvation is found through identification with the hero.

Only the names have changed. Marduk subdues Tiamat through violence, and though he kills Tiamat, chaos incessantly reasserts itself, and is kept at bay only by repeated battles and by the repetition of the Babylonian New Year's festival where the heavenly combat myth is ritually re-enacted. Theologian Willis Elliott's observation underscores the seriousness of this entertainment: “the birth of the world (cosmogony) is the birth of the individual (egogony): you are being birthed through how you see 'all things' as being birthed”. Therefore “Whoever controls the cosmogony controls the children”.

The Myth of Redemptive Violence is the simplest, laziest, most exciting, uncomplicated, irrational, and primitive depiction of evil the world has even known. Furthermore, its orientation toward evil is one into which virtually all modern children (boys especially) are socialised in the process of maturation. Children select this mythic structure because they have already been led, by culturally reinforced cues and role models, to resonate with its simplistic view of reality. Its presence everywhere is not the result of a conspiracy of Babylonian priests secretly buying up the mass media with Iraqi oil money, but a function of values endlessly reinforced by the Domination System. By making violence pleasurable, fascinating, and entertaining, the Powers are able to delude people into compliance with a system that is cheating them of their very lives.

Once children have been indoctrinated into the expectations of a dominator society, they may never outgrow the need to locate all evil outside themselves. Even as adults they tend to scapegoat others for all that is wrong in the world. They continue to depend on group identification and the upholding of social norms for a sense of well-being.

In a period when attendance at Christian Sunday schools is dwindling, the myth of redemptive violence has won children's voluntary acquiescence to a regimen of indoctrination more extensive and effective

than any in the history of religions. Estimates vary widely, but the average child reported to log roughly 36,000 hours of television by age 18, viewing some 15,000 murders. What church or synagogue can even remotely keep pace with the myth of redemptive violence in hours spent teaching children or the quality of presentation? (Think of the typical “children’s sermon” – how bland by comparison!)

No other religious system has even remotely rivalled the myth of redemptive violence in its ability to catechise its young so totally. From the earliest age, children are awash in depictions of violence as the ultimate solution to human conflicts. Nor does saturation in the myth end with the close of adolescence. There is no rite of passage from adolescent to adult status in the national cult of violence, but rather a years-long assimilation to adult television and movie fare.

Not all shows for children or adults are based on violence, of course. Reality is far more complex than the simplicities of this myth, and maturer minds will demand more subtle, nuanced, complex presentations. But the basic structure of the combat myth underlies the pap to which a great many adults turn in order to escape the harsher realities of their everyday lives: spy thrillers, westerns, cop shows, and combat programmes. It is as if we must watch so much “redemptive” violence to reassure ourselves, against the deluge of facts to the contrary in our actual day-to-day lives, that reality really is that simple.

Redemptive violence gives way to violence as an end in itself. It is no longer a religion that uses violence in the pursuit of order and salvation, but one in which violence has become an aphrodisiac, sheer titillation, an addictive high, a substitute for relationships. Violence is no longer the means to a higher good, namely order; violence becomes the end.

The Faithful Nonviolence of Jesus

By Nancy Shreck, OSF

Reprinted from:

Ken Butigan and Pat Bruno, *From Violence to Wholeness*
(Berkeley, CA: Pace e Bene Press, 1996)

*A society that lacks people of vision
is a society certain of its end.*

*Perhaps the crisis in our country, our church, our world
today is a result of a lack of dreamers... to open our minds
... to strengthen our hearts... and to employ new energies to change our society.*

-- Leonardo Boff

Jesus' resistance to violence begins on the first page of the gospel and continues through to the end. It is reflected in daily activities of touching, speaking, healing, and eating, but is first born in Jesus' vision of the reign of God.

When we think of the nonviolence of Jesus we often focus on Jesus' response to situations of confrontation and violence. In this essay we will explore such situations, but I suggest that they are not the starting point. This attitude of Jesus is formed long before those confrontational situations take place. In fact, those situations occur most often as a result of his nonviolent vision and approach to life.

The starting place is Jesus' vision of and commitment to **the inclusive love of God** that welcomes all to the one table and creates a world-view that critiques any kind of exclusion as a form of violence. One of the radical nonviolent actions of Jesus therefore is to eat with "sinners" and "tax collectors" and all those others which the society of that time excluded. Sharing a common table is nonviolent resistance to the violence of division. In Jesus' vision, we are all part of one body held in God's all embracing love. This embrace makes each one a sister and brother and thus makes nonviolence possible. One might say therefore that nonviolence is only possible in community.

True community creates an aversion to the roots of violence which define another person as "other," that is, as outside the circle of care. True community roots out violence by dismantling the motive behind so much violence, that the other is not valued. This is what Sr. Helen Prejean was able to demonstrate in her book, *Dead Man Walking*. The person convicted of a crime as well as the victim of that crime are both members of the one body embraced by God's inclusive love. This kind of love rescues and heals the enemy from violence and hatred. In the most basic and literal way it incorporates as a member of the community the one from whom we might be experiencing violence.

If the starting place for exploring the nonviolence of Jesus is in his vision of the all embracing love of God, our reflection is furthered by his **vision of universal healing**. This approach to life includes hope for the basic well-being of the other. This was Jesus' deepest wish for each person he encountered. In the gospel we see him moving among so many kept outside the circle of well-being by institutional violence which claimed that healing and well-being belonged to some and not to others. Jesus always found those who had been pushed outside the circle of care and invited them back into the community through the door of healing. He taught the community that its well-being was somehow tied to the well-being of each member.

Jesus also taught that illness is not the result or fault of personal sin. Rather, the focus should be on the sinful reality that healing is available to some and not to others -- with these "others" most often being

poor people and those excluded from the one table. Jesus extends healing, holy power, to the rejected and untouchable of the world. In so doing he demonstrates that no one is outside the circle of well-being. In the life of Jesus bodily healing functions as a social metaphor for another kind of healing.

The third foundation of Jesus' nonviolence is located in his understanding of God and in his approach to worship. The kind of radical love Jesus knows in God creates an awareness that human life is not about appeasing a vengeful God, but about responding in love. **This is a spirituality purified of violence at its very roots.** God, for Jesus and for those who follow the Christian way, is assertively and polemically against death in all its forms and is for life in its fullness. The enemies of Jesus, such as the Herodians and Pharisees, may have had room in their theology for a God who would require someone to suffer and die -- but this is not the God of Jesus. It follows then that Jesus' attitude toward worship is also purified of violence.

The day of worship, the Sabbath, must be in service to the human community and reflect this relationship with a loving God. It does not exclude healing when that is the need. Jesus' attitude toward the Sabbath raises a question: What kind of activity would God desire to occur in that privileged time, in a dedicated place such as the temple? What kind of activity in fact best characterizes the God we worship? Jesus is obviously against the violence of worship uncluttered by concern for human suffering. He is also concerned about the quality of the community life of those who gather for worship: are they truly sharing the one table and seeking the well-being of all? There is in Jesus a sense of urgency about reconciliation within the community before one can properly worship. "If you bring your gift to the altar and there remember that someone has something against you..." (Mt. 5: 23-24).

Therefore, before we can explore Jesus' nonviolent response to particular situations we must first see that we are talking about a person whose life is committed to the inclusion of all at one table, the well-being to all, and the worship of a God of life, not death. This means a lifestyle built on a commitment to compassion, humility, non-retaliation, forgiveness, truth-seeking, reconciliation and love of others, including one's enemies. This grows out of giving, fasting, praying, trusting, and setting our hearts on the reign of God.

This vision of life accumulated an impressive array of enemies for Jesus. The violence he encountered was intrinsic to the society of his time and eventually became focused on him personally because of the threat he posed to the way things were arranged. What was the threat? The authorities, both religious and political, realized that they would lose their power if enough people believed and acted on what Jesus taught and lived. So resistance to Jesus grew. Throughout his life he knew that people plotted against him (Mk.3:6), that the chief priests and teachers of the law were looking for a way to kill him (Mk. 11:18), and that Herod also wanted to kill him (Lk. 13:31). He was aware of other enemies: Judas, Pilate, and the professional executioners who would mock and beat and nail him to a cross.

This is too often the place we begin to explore Jesus' nonviolent way, but it is born in a far earlier place. Nonviolence was the most natural response in the world for someone deeply committed to inclusive community. Community was the goal, nonviolence a manifestation of and a means to that goal. This commitment to inclusive community in the heart works to create nonviolence in the whole person. True community takes away the motive for violence because it is the great equalizer. The violence of racism, sexism, unequal power, and value based on ability or status finds no place in the Christian perspective.

A vision of the loving community does not always create the reality. The victory of Jesus' love for others is won in the midst of a hostile and extremely violent world. Christ does not invite us to dream about an easy-going love in a perfect utopian society, but to build one in the midst of reality. A key factor in building this nonviolent world is an end to retaliatory activity in the face of physical violence, legal cases and forced conscription. (Mt. 5: 39-42) Jesus obliges active non-resistance to such infringement of self-

interest that is destructive of the community. This kind of response is a positive contribution to the demise of the cycle of violent actions and counter-actions. The radical call is for the person to initiate reconciliation no matter who is at fault in the breach of relationship.

While Jesus in these situations was nonviolent he was at the same time determinedly confrontational, and his confrontational performances had their consequences. He is anything but the complacent victim whose simple goodness aroused opposition from a malevolent set of demonic men, as some would like to portray him. The gospel would have us see clearly that Jesus' goodness is not something passive and private. Rather, it is a goodness that brings him to initiate challenges against certain practices of his day. He provokes and disturbs. He preaches boldly in public despite the danger.

An example of Jesus' initiative is helpful. Let us look at Jesus throwing the money-changers out of the temple. Now, this is not a story of Jesus coming into the temple and being surprised by the activity happening there and responding with a sudden burst of enthusiasm to cleanse the place of worship. Rather, this "buying and selling" activity would have been well known to Jesus. What he initiates and carries out is a carefully conceived act of disruption. By doing so Jesus teaches that compassion and wrath are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

Jesus' response to his enemies was a mixture of courage and prudence. We see that at times he dodged danger. (Lk. 4:30, Jn 7:1) But when face-to-face with it he did not flinch, he maintained his dignity, protected his principles, never compromised the truth, and walked the high moral ground.

At some point Jesus began to see the imminent clash between his absolute nonviolence and the atrocious violence of the sinful world in which he lived. He spoke with the disciples of the suffering he was about to endure. His decision to go to Jerusalem marked the depth of his commitment to nonviolence because he knew his opposition awaited him there and were openly saying that they would endanger his life. It was an act of great trust in God to go into the mouth of the dragon. Jesus' life journey would end in Jerusalem, and the question arises: If Jesus knew of the escalation of violence against him, why did he go there? It was not to fulfill some mandate of death, but to be faithful to the divine mandate he struggled to fulfill all his life, that of overcoming those who promoted death, who cultivated its structures, whose allegiance to it is seen in their willingness to kill when it is to their advantage to do so.

The important thing to remember about Jesus is that he leaves the fate of his opponents to God. Like the tradition of the lament psalms from which Jesus comes, he knows how to acknowledge the reality of evil, resist it, and then place it in God's hands for final resolution. In the nonviolent acceptance of death Jesus acts in a way which is healing and liberating, precisely the reverse of the murderous reign of hatred and violence he experienced. Jesus is condemned, punched, spat upon, blindfolded, hit in the face, mocked without striking back. Even in agony he did not resort to the same violence used against him. He is betrayed, denied by friends, scourged, stripped, nailed naked to the cross, yet he responds in pure nonviolence.

As Gene Sharp in the book *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* writes, "Throughout history, under a variety of political systems people in every part of the world have waged conflict and wielded undeniable power by using a very different technique of struggle -- one which does not kill and destroy. That technique is nonviolent action. Although it has been known by a variety of names its basis has always been the same: the belief that the exercise of power depends on the consent of the ruled who by withdrawing that consent can control and even destroy the power of their opponent." This is what Jesus did in experiencing the crucifixion.. He withdrew his consent from a society of violent arrangements.

The divine response to this violence and injustice -- experienced concretely in the trial and crucifixion of Jesus -- is resurrection. The reaction of God to the unjust violence unleashed on Jesus is neither anger nor

revenge but *new life which proclaims the limited jurisdiction of violence and injustice*. The Spirit of Christ is then handed over to the disciples that they might continue reconciliation and peacemaking. The divine response to violence is the gift of a spirit of patient endurance and love, and a call to the human community to make peace.

When Jesus appears to Mary at the tomb his words to her are not to be afraid -- not to be afraid of what violence can do because there is a greater peace-making power at work. This is fundamental to nonviolent resistance. Lack of fear is critical, because violence can impose its will only to the extent that it's companion, death, is feared. What Jesus teaches in his experience of crucifixion is that the key to nonviolence is the process of overcoming death by fearless love. This fearless love is grounded in a commitment to remember who we are, that is, members of one family embraced by a most loving God.

Pinchas Lapide tells the story of a rabbi who was asked, "Who is the mightiest in the country?" The rabbi responded, "He who wins the love of his enemy." She who wins the love of her enemy. It is a great honor and challenge to be invited by the savior to join in this mighty kind of love. To love in this way means we will have to avoid cowardice as much as violence. We will have to commit to radical love for one another, act with courage to assure inclusive community and the well-being of each person, and ultimately to let resurrection be in God's hands.

Jesus & Alinsky

by Walter Wink, published on Thursday, December 16, 2004 by
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You have heard that it was said, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." But I say to you, Do not resist one who is evil. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also; and if anyone would sue you and take your coat, let him have your cloak as well; and if any one forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. (attributed to Jesus in Matthew 5:38-41, Revised Standard Version)

Many who have committed their lives to working for change and justice in the world simply dismiss Jesus' teachings about nonviolence as impractical idealism. And with good reason. "Turn the other cheek" suggests the passive, Christian doormat quality that has made so many Christians cowardly and complicit in the face of injustice. "Resist not evil" seems to break the back of all opposition to evil and counsel submission. "Going the second mile" has become a platitude meaning nothing more than "extend yourself." Rather than fostering structural change, such attitudes encourage collaboration with the oppressor.

Jesus never behaved in such ways. Whatever the source of the misunderstanding, it is neither Jesus nor his teaching, which, when given a fair hearing in its original social context, is arguably one of the most revolutionary political statements ever uttered.

When the court translators working in the hire of King James chose to translate *antistenai* as "Resist not evil," they were doing something more than rendering Greek into English. They were translating nonviolent resistance into docility. The Greek word means more than simply to "stand against" or "resist." It means to resist violently, to revolt or rebel, to engage in an insurrection. Jesus did not tell his oppressed hearers not to resist evil. His entire ministry is at odds with such a preposterous idea. He is, rather, warning against responding to evil in kind by letting the oppressor set the terms of our opposition.

A proper translation of Jesus' teaching would then be, "Do not retaliate against violence with violence." Jesus was no less committed to opposing evil than the anti-Roman resistance fighters like Barabbas. The only difference was over the means to be used.

There are three general responses to evil: (1) violent opposition, (2) passivity, and (3) the third way of militant nonviolence articulated by Jesus. Human evolution has conditioned us for only the first two of these responses: fight or flight.

Fight had been the cry of Galileans who had abortively rebelled against Rome only two decades before Jesus spoke. Jesus and many of his hearers would have seen some of the two thousand of their countrymen crucified by the Romans along the roadsides. They would have known some of the inhabitants of Sepphoris (a mere three miles north of Nazareth) who had been sold into slavery for aiding the insurrectionists' assault on the arsenal there. Some also would live to experience the horrors of the war against Rome in 66-70 C.E., one of the ghastliest in history. If the option of fighting had no appeal to them, their only alternative was flight: passivity, submission, or, at best, a passive-aggressive recalcitrance in obeying commands. For them no third way existed.

Now we are in a better position to see why King James' servants translated *antistenai* as "resist not." The king would not want people concluding they had any recourse against his or any other sovereign's unjust policies. Jesus commands us, according to these king's men, to resist not. Jesus appears to say that submission to monarchical absolutism is the will of God. Most modern translations have meekly followed the King James path.

Neither of the invidious alternatives of flight or fight is what Jesus is proposing. Jesus abhors both passivity and violence as responses to evil. His is a third alternative not even touched by these options. The Scholars Version translates *Antistenai* brilliantly: "Don't react violently against someone who is evil."

Jesus clarifies his meaning by three brief examples. "If anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also." Why the right cheek? How does one strike another on the right cheek anyway? Try it. A blow by the right fist in that right-handed world would land on the left cheek of the opponent. To strike the right cheek with the fist would require using the left hand, but in that society the left hand was used only for unclean tasks. As the Dead Sea Scrolls specify, even to gesture with the left hand at Qumran carried the penalty of ten days penance. The only way one could strike the right cheek with the right hand would be with the back of the hand.

What we are dealing with here is unmistakably an insult, not a fistfight. The intention is not to injure but to humiliate, to put someone in his or her place. One normally did not strike a peer in this way, and if one did the fine was exorbitant (four zuz was the fine for a blow to a peer with a fist, 400 zuz for backhanding him; but to an underling, no penalty whatever). A backhand slap was the normal way of admonishing inferiors. Masters backhanded slaves; husbands, wives; parents, children; men, women; Romans, Jews.

We have here a set of unequal relations, in each of which retaliation would be suicidal. The only normal response would be cowering submission. It is important to ask who Jesus' audience is. In every case, Jesus' listeners are not those who strike, initiate lawsuits, or impose forced labor. Rather, Jesus is speaking to their victims, people who have been subjected to these very indignities. They have

been forced to stifle their inner outrage at the dehumanizing treatment meted out to them by the hierarchical system of caste and class, race and gender, age and status, and by the guardians of imperial occupation.

Why then does Jesus counsel these already humiliated people to turn the other cheek? Because this action robs the oppressor of power to humiliate them. The person who turns the other cheek is saying, in effect, "Try again. Your first blow failed to achieve its intended effect. I deny you the power to humiliate me. I am a human being just like you. Your status (gender, race, age, wealth) does not alter that. You cannot demean me." Such a response would create enormous difficulties for the striker. Purely logistically, how can he now hit the other cheek? He cannot backhand it with his right hand. If he hits with a fist, he makes himself an equal, acknowledging the other as a peer. But the whole point of the back of the hand is to reinforce the caste system and its institutionalized inequality.

The second example Jesus gives is set in a court of law. Someone is being sued for his outer garment. Who would do that and under what circumstances? Only the poorest of the poor would have nothing but an outer garment to give as collateral for a loan. Jewish law strictly required its return every evening at sunset, for that was all the poor had in which to sleep. The situation to which Jesus alludes is one with which his hearers would have been too familiar: the poor debtor has sunk ever deeper into poverty, the debt cannot be repaid, and his creditor has hauled him into court to wring out repayment.

Indebtedness was the most serious social problem in first-century Palestine. Jesus' parables are full of debtors struggling to salvage their lives. It is in this context that Jesus speaks. His hearers are the poor ("if anyone would sue you"). They share a rankling hatred for a system that subjects them to humiliation by stripping them of their lands, their goods, finally even their outer garments.

Why then does Jesus counsel them to give over their inner garment as well? This would mean stripping off all their clothing and marching out of court stark naked! Put yourself in the debtor's place; imagine the chuckles this saying must have evoked. There stands the creditor, beet-red with embarrassment, your outer garment in one hand, your underwear in the other. You have suddenly turned the tables on him. You had no hope of winning the trial; the law was entirely in his favor. But you have refused to be humiliated. At the same time you have registered a stunning protest against a system that spawns such debt. You have said, in effect, "You want my robe? Here, take everything! Now you've got all I have except my body. Is that what you'll take next?"

Nakedness was taboo in Judaism. Shame fell not on the naked party but the person viewing or causing one's nakedness (Genesis 9:20-27). By stripping you have brought the creditor under the same prohibition that led to the curse of Canaan. As you parade into the street, your friends and neighbors, startled, aghast, inquire what happened. You explain. They join your growing procession,

which now resembles a victory parade. The entire system by which debtors are oppressed has been publicly unmasked. The creditor is revealed to be not a "respectable" moneylender but a party in the reduction of an entire social class to landlessness and destitution. This unmasking is not simply punitive, however; it offers the creditor a chance to see, perhaps for the first time in his life, what his practices cause-and to repent.

Jesus in effect is sponsoring clowning. In so doing he shows himself to be thoroughly Jewish. A later saying of the Talmud runs, "If your neighbor calls you an ass, put a saddle on your back."

The Powers That Be literally stand on their dignity. Nothing takes away their potency faster than deft lampooning. By refusing to be awed by their power, the powerless are emboldened to seize the initiative, even where structural change is not possible. This message, far from being a counsel of perfection unattainable in this life, is a practical, strategic measure for empowering the oppressed. It provides a hint of how to take on the entire system in a way that unmasks its essential cruelty and to burlesque its pretensions to justice, law, and order.

Jesus' third example, the one about going the second mile, is drawn from the enlightened practice of limiting the amount of forced labor that Roman soldiers could levy on subject peoples. A soldier could impress a civilian to carry his pack one mile only; to force the civilian to go further carried with it severe penalties under military law. In this way Rome tried to limit the anger of the occupied people and still keep its armies on the move. Nevertheless, this levy was a bitter reminder to the Jews that they were a subject people even in the Promised Land.

To this proud but subjugated people Jesus does not counsel revolt. One does not "befriend" the soldier, draw him aside, and drive a knife into his ribs. Jesus was keenly aware of the futility of armed revolt against Roman imperial might. He minced no words about it, though it must have cost him support from the revolutionary factions.

But why walk the second mile? Is this not to rebound to the opposite extreme: aiding and abetting the enemy? Not at all. The question here, as in the two previous instances, is how the oppressed can recover the initiative, how they can assert their human dignity in a situation that cannot for the time being be changed. The rules are Caesar's but not how one responds to the rules. The response is God's, and Caesar has no power over that.

Imagine then the soldier's surprise when, at the next mile marker, he reluctantly reaches to assume his pack (sixty-five to eighty-five pounds in full gear). You say, "Oh no, let me carry it another mile." Normally he has to coerce your kinsmen to carry his pack; now you do it cheerfully and will not stop! Is this a provocation? Are you insulting his strength? Being kind? Trying to get him

disciplined for seeming to make you go farther than you should? Are you planning to file a complaint? To create trouble?

From a situation of servile impressment, you have once more seized the initiative. You have taken back the power of choice. The soldier is thrown off-balance by being deprived of the predictability of your response. Imagine the hilarious situation of a Roman infantryman pleading with a Jew, "Aw, come on, please give me back my pack!" The humor of this scene may escape those who picture it through sanctimonious eyes. It could scarcely, however, have been lost on Jesus' hearers, who must have delighted in the prospect of thus discomfiting their oppressors.

Some readers may object to the idea of discomfiting the soldier or embarrassing the creditor. But can people engaged in oppressive acts repent unless made uncomfortable with their actions? There is, admittedly, the danger of using nonviolence as a tactic of revenge and humiliation. There is also, at the opposite extreme, an equal danger of sentimentality and softness that confuses the uncompromising love of Jesus with being nice. Loving confrontation can free both the oppressed from docility and the oppressor from sin.

Even if nonviolent action does not immediately change the heart of the oppressor, it does affect those committed to it. As Martin Luther King, Jr. attested, it gives them new self-respect and calls on strength and courage they did not know they had. To those with power, Jesus' advice to the powerless may seem paltry. But to those whose lifelong pattern has been to cringe, bow, and scrape before their masters, to those who have internalized their role as inferiors, this small step is momentous.

Jesus' Third Way

- * Seize the moral initiative.
- * Find a creative alternative to violence.
- * Assert your own humanity and dignity as a person.
- * Meet force with ridicule or humor.
- * Break the cycle of humiliation.
- * Refuse to submit or to accept the inferior position.
- * Expose the injustice of the system.
- * Take control of the power dynamic.

- * Shame the oppressor into repentance.
- * Stand your ground.
- * Force the Powers into decisions for which they are not prepared.
- * Recognize your own power.
- * Be willing to suffer rather than retaliate.
- * Force the oppressor to see you in a new light.
- * Deprive the oppressor of a situation where force is effective.
- * Be willing to undergo the penalty of breaking unjust laws.

It is too bad Jesus did not provide fifteen or twenty more examples since we do not tend toward this new response naturally. Some examples from political history might help engrave it more deeply in our minds:

In Alagamar, Brazil, a group of peasants organized a long-term struggle to preserve their lands against attempts at illegal expropriation by national and international firms (with the connivance of local politicians and the military). Some of the peasants were arrested and jailed in town. Their companions decided they were all equally responsible. Hundreds marched to town. They filled the house of the judge, demanding to be jailed with those who had been arrested. The judge was finally obliged to send them all home, including the prisoners.

During the Vietnam War, one woman claimed seventy-nine dependents on her United States income tax, all Vietnamese orphans, so she owed no tax. They were not legal dependents, of course, so were disallowed. No, she insisted, these children have been orphaned by indiscriminate United States bombing; we are responsible for their lives. She forced the Internal Revenue Service to take her to court. That gave her a larger forum for making her case. She used the system against itself to unmask the moral indefensibility of what the system was doing. Of course she "lost" the case, but she made her point.

During World War II, when Nazi authorities in occupied Denmark promulgated an order that all Jews had to wear yellow armbands with the Star of David, the king made it a point to attend a celebration in the Copenhagen synagogue. He and most of the population of Copenhagen donned yellow armbands as well. His stand was affirmed by the Bishop of Sjaelland and other Lutheran clergy. The Nazis eventually had to rescind the order.

It is important to repeat such stories to extend our imaginations for creative nonviolence. Since it is not a natural response, we need to be schooled in it. We

need models, and we need to rehearse nonviolence in our daily lives if we ever hope to resort to it in crises.

Maybe it would help to juxtapose Jesus' teachings with legendary community organizer Saul Alinsky's principles for nonviolent community action (in his Rules for Radicals) to gain a clearer sense of their practicality and pertinence to the struggles of our time. Among rules Alinsky developed in his attempts to organize American workers and minority communities are these:

(1) Power is not only what you have but what your enemy thinks you have.

(2) Never go outside the experience of your people.

(3) Wherever possible go outside the experience of the enemy.

Jesus, like Alinsky, recommended using your experience of being belittled, insulted, or dispossessed in such a way as to seize the initiative from the oppressor, who finds reactions like going the second mile, stripping naked, or turning the other cheek totally outside his experience. This forces him/her to take your power seriously and perhaps even to recognize your humanity.

Alinsky offers other suggestions. Again we see the parallels:

(4) Make your enemies live up to their own book of rules.

(5) Ridicule is your most potent weapon.

(6) A good tactic is one that your people enjoy.

(7) A tactic that drags on too long becomes a drag.

The debtor in Jesus' example turned the law against his creditor by obeying it, following the letter of the law, but throwing in his underwear as well. The creditor's greed is exposed by his own ruthlessness, and this happens quickly and in a way that could only regale the debtor's sympathizers, just as Alinsky suggests. This puts all other such creditors on notice and arms all other debtors with a new sense of possibilities. Alinsky's list continues:

(8) Keep the pressure on.

(9) The threat is usually more terrifying than the thing itself.

(10) The major premise for tactics is the development of operations that will maintain a constant pressure on the opposition.

Jesus, in his three brief examples, does not lay out the basis of a sustained movement, but his ministry as a whole is a model of long-term social struggle that maintains a constant pressure. Mark depicts Jesus' movements as a blitzkrieg. His teaching poses immediate and continuing threats to the authorities. The good he brings is misperceived as evil, his following is overestimated, his militancy is misread as sedition, and his proclamation of the coming Reign of God is mistaken as a manifesto for military revolution.

Disavowing violence, Jesus wades into the hostility of Jerusalem openhanded, setting simple truth against force. Terrified by the threat of this man and his following, the authorities resort to their ultimate deterrent, death, only to discover it impotent and themselves unmasked. The cross, hideous and macabre, becomes the symbol of liberation. The movement that should have died becomes a world religion.

Alinsky offers three last suggestions:

(11) If you push a negative hard and deep enough it will break through to its counterside.

(12) The price of a successful attack is a constructive alternative.

(13) Pick the target, freeze it, personalize it, polarize it. Alinsky delighted in using the most vicious behavior of his opponents-burglaries of movement headquarters, attempted blackmail, and failed assassinations-to destroy their public credibility. Here were elected officials, respected corporations, and trusted police, engaging in patent illegalities to maintain privilege.

In the same way, Jesus suggests amplifying an injustice (turning the other cheek, removing your undergarment, going the second mile) to expose the fundamental wrongness of legalized oppression. The law is "compassionate" in requiring that the debtor's cloak be returned at sunset, yes; but Judaism in its most lucid moments knew that the whole system of usury and indebtedness was itself the root of injustice and should never have been condoned (Exodus 22:25). The restriction of enforced labor to carrying the soldier's pack a single mile was a great advance over unlimited impressment, but occupation troops had no right to be on Jewish soil in the first place.

Jesus was not content merely to empower the powerless, however. Here his teachings fundamentally transcend Alinsky's. Jesus did not advocate non-violence merely as a technique for outwitting the enemy but as a just means of opposing the enemy in such a way as to hold open the possibility of the enemy's becoming just as well.

To Alinsky's list I would like to add another "rule" of my own: never adopt a strategy you would not want your opponents to use against you. I would not

object to my opponents using nonviolent direct actions against me, since such a move would require them to be committed to suffer and even die rather than resort to violence against me. It would mean they would have to honor my humanity, believe God can transform me, and treat me with dignity and respect.

Today we can draw on the cumulative historical experience of nonviolent social struggle. But the spirit, the thrust, the surge for creative transformation that is the ultimate principle of the universe-this is the same one we see incarnated in Jesus. Freed from literalistic legalism, his teaching reads like a practical manual for empowering the powerless to seize the initiative even in situations impervious to change.

To risk confronting the Powers with such clown-like vulnerability, to affirm at the same time our own humanity and that of those we oppose, to dare to draw the sting of evil by absorbing it-such behavior is unlikely to attract the faint of heart. But to people dispirited by the enormity of the injustices that crush us and the intractability of those in positions of power, Jesus' words beam hope across the centuries. We need not be afraid. We can assert our human dignity. We can lay claim to the creative possibilities that are still ours, burlesque the injustice of unfair laws, and force evil out of hiding from behind the facade of legitimacy.