

Sisters of the Holy Cross

Proposed Corporate Stand

on

NONVIOLENCE

Stop Violence

Work for Peace



— Sister Rose Veronica (Mattingly), age 96

September 8–November 10, 2006

Introduction

In the spring of 2004, with U.S.-led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in full tilt and “war on terrorism” rhetoric running high, the sisters in the North American novitiate proposed that the Sisters of the Holy Cross take a corporate stand against violent responses to conflict. Sisters Lilia Martínez and Verónica Fajardo vastly



SISTERS VERÓNICA A. FAJARDO AND LILIA MARTÍNEZ

expanded this proposal during their two-week internship at the Justice Offices in January 2005. As they reflected on the multiple forms of violence in society, they began to articulate a proposed stand opposing violence in *all* its forms and espousing a stance of nonviolence.

In July 2005, Congregation Justice Committee (CJC) members reviewed the work done by Sisters Lilia and Verónica and affirmed their proposal for an expanded stand, noting that a corporate stand on nonviolence would be consistent with

- the committee’s work on Principle IV of the *Earth Charter: Democracy, Nonviolence and Peace*;

- the Congregation’s current and previous Direction Statements, *Holy Cross Women Creating and Promoting Right Relationships* and *Holy Cross Women Seeking Justice in the New Millennium*; and
- the earliest of Christian teachings about the morality of violence.

In their 2005–06 work plan, CJC members consciously focused the Congregation’s attention on issues of violence and nonviolence through numerous articles in *Announcements* and *LifeSigns* and the *Nonviolence: Another Path* bumper stickers. In May 2006, the Justice Offices published a primary education piece: the brochure, *Nonviolence: Another Path*.

Now, in Autumn 2006, as the world reels under continuing violence in Iraq and new conflicts are erupting in the Middle East, it seems especially appropriate for us as a Congregation to say “No!” to violence in all of its forms and corporately adopt a stance of nonviolence.

The materials presented here in support of the proposed corporate stand are offered in the familiar format of the “pastoral circle”:

- reflection on experience,
- social analysis,
- theological reflection, and
- informed action.

The booklet contains stories submitted by our Sisters of the Holy Cross around the world about various kinds of violence experienced where we minister, an analysis of violence and nonviolence, supporting quotations from scripture, Catholic social teaching, and our congregational documents, stories of hope in the face of violence, and the proposed corporate stand.

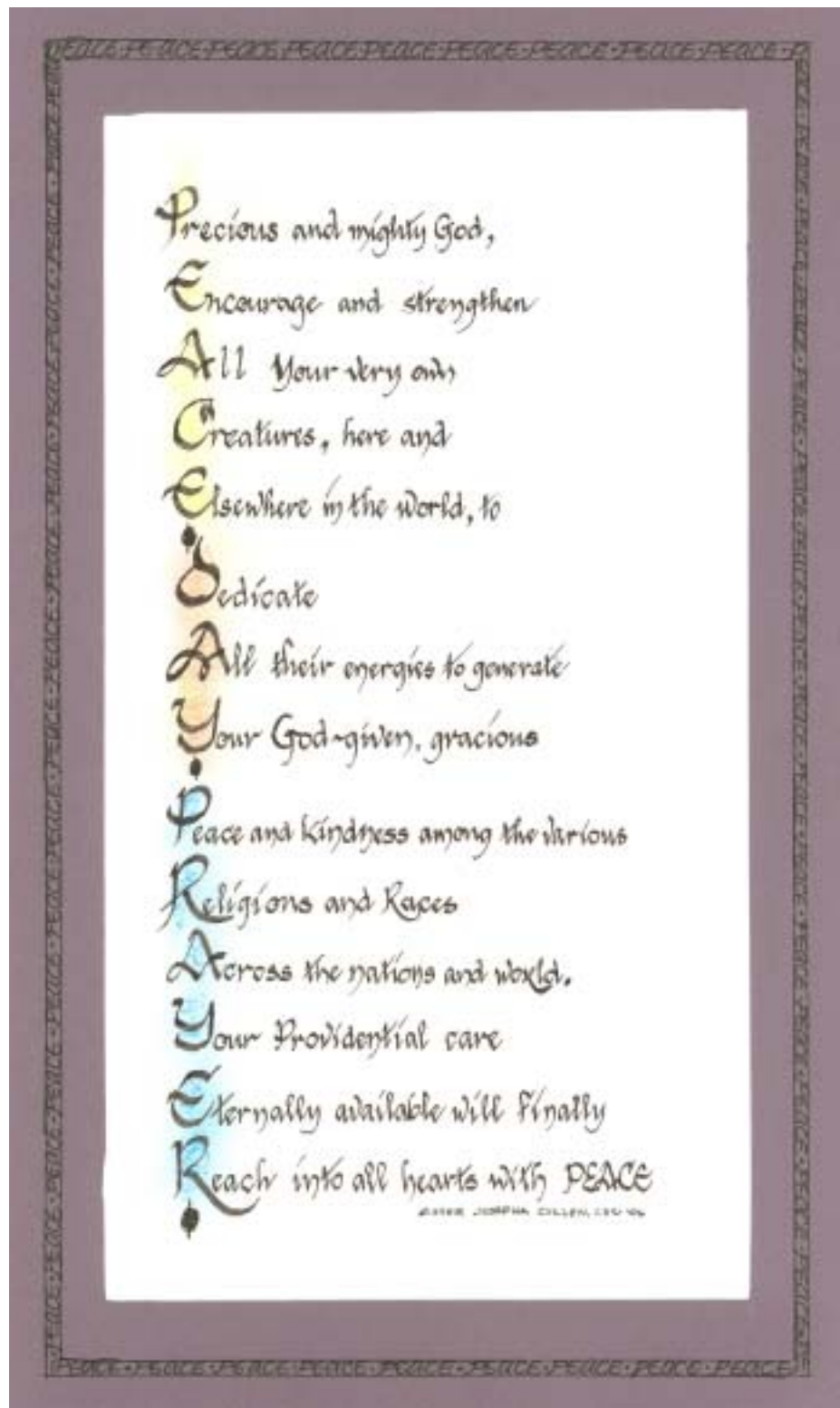
The CJC submits these materials for your study, reflection and discussion from now until November 1, 2006. Between November 1 and

Introduction, continued

November 10, you will be asked to vote on the proposed stand online. Details on the voting process will be sent out and posted on the congregation's web site in the near future. Voting results will be published in the November 17 issue of *Announcements* and on the congregational web site.

Nonviolence is rooted in the reality that all beings, however different, are ultimately one. Harming any "other" harms both self and the whole. It is especially fitting, therefore, that we reflect and decide together on this proposed stand as we approach the beatification of our founder, Basil Moreau, for whom "unity" was so central. That notion of unity today challenges us to affirm our oneness with the entire cosmological family, to defend the sacredness of all beings and persistently resist whatever violates another.

This corporate stand is an instrument that will enable the Congregation to speak more strongly in defense of human dignity and the rights of all creation. Members of the Congregation Justice Committee thank you for your prayerful, thoughtful participation in this process.



— Sister Josepha (Cullen), age 91

Our Experiences of Violence

Bangladesh

Violations of women's human rights

Bangladesh is a predominantly Muslim country so most Bangladeshi women are subject to Islamic law, which is frequently interpreted in ways that ignore women's human rights. In the family, women are considered inferior to men and are denied the right to inherit property from their fathers. Both married and single women



are often victims of violent abuse — acid throwing, rape, and inappropriate touching. They have little, if any, legal recourse. If a woman dishonors the family through acts of sexual indiscretion, she may be subjected to beatings or even “honor killings.”

Discrimination against women in the workplace is a long-standing practice. Bangladesh's economy is based on agriculture, and tea is a major export product. Many women are employed in the tea gardens.

Women who work in the tea gardens are paid much less than men. Men are paid 70 taka per day, but women receive only 30 taka (\$1 U.S. =

70 taka). Women are responsible for the planting and harvesting of the tea leaves. In the harvest season, the weight of the tea leaves the women pick determines how much they are paid. If it rains, they receive significantly less pay, as supervisors subtract a percentage of their pay for “water weight.”

Housing for the tea garden workers is substandard and women are denied educational opportunities because, if they become educated, they might seek better jobs. They work six days a week, and have few, if any, health benefits. In some tea gardens, women are forced to take contraceptives or undergo a tubal ligation as a requirement for employment. If they do become pregnant, there is no maternity leave policy. In all of the country's 28 tea gardens, there is only one union. This union recently negotiated a pay raise for women from 28 to 30 taka per day, but that increase was turned over

to the union in dues.

— *Sisters Bernadette Shilpi Rebeiro, Jamuna Magdeline Gomes, Maria Lotica Palma, Mina Theresa Nongmin, Shephali Veronica Gomes and Sheshanti Margaret Nokrek*

**Look to justice and peace
To be the solution we seek
To bring heaven to earth**

— *Sister Miriam (Eckenrode), age 93*

Brazil

Poverty and the cycle of violence

Jorge, Lia and their eight children lived in Brazil's Jequitinhonha Valley. Work and educational opportunities there were scarce so Jorge, a semi-illiterate man in his late 20s, used to spend six months of the year as a migrant worker in another state.

Jorge did not trust Lia to be faithful to him during his long absences so while he was away, he forbade use of birth control pills. Lia struggled to feed their eight children, many more than they could afford to have. Raising the children alone was difficult and she tried in vain to be patient with them. Her inability to relieve their chronic hunger added to her frustration. She was a hard worker, but with so many children she had to take on heavy-duty jobs like chopping and bringing in wood from the forest to sell and clearing fields for very little pay. Her three boys, deprived of Jorge's presence and influence, became increasingly aggressive.

In São Paulo, Jorge discovered that he could make more money selling drugs and being a hired killer than he could cutting sugar cane. Knowing that he had nine mouths to feed, he became a drug trader. When he returned home, he came with a gun and a criminal record, so the local police were immediately at his door. They arrested and tortured him, which only added to his bitterness.

Because he had never learned how to resolve conflicts nonviolently, Jorge resorted to excessive drinking. This led him to beat his wife and



children. Once he had a police record, no one wanted to hire him so he began stealing and working as a hired killer to provide income for his family. He loved his children, but they were afraid and ran from him. When he caught them, he beat them for running away.

The children, once generous and spontaneous, began to appear old and lost. They spoke in whispers and lied to escape beatings; they cowered in the house for fear of retaliation by someone their father had wronged. They fought one another all the time.

In the end, Jorge was murdered by the local police. However, the wounds of poverty and violence had already been inflicted on the next generation.

— *Sisters Conceição Nogueira dos Santos and Mary Tiernan*

**This is my goal
To see each decision
As a way to peace**

— *Sister Miriam (Eckenrode)*

Ghana

Violence against Earth

Big mining companies, together with local illegal surface miners, are causing serious environmental damage in Ghana. In addition, there is tension between the companies and the locals. This has resulted in many protests and demonstrations by local illegal miners that have ended in violent conflict, injuring both people and Earth.

**Talking it over
Could save many a crisis
From escalating**

— Sister Miriam (Eckenrode)

The government of Ghana, the Chamber of Mines and other stakeholders recently resolved that illegal mining would not be tolerated and notified the illegal miners to cease operations.

However, this measure has been ineffective — illegal miners as well as the big companies continue to damage the environment and fight one another. (For more information on mining in Ghana, see “Mining for Justice” by Sister Madeline Therese Wilhoit, published in *Crossing Boundaries*, fall/winter 2001.)

Another environmental issue facing Ghana is improper disposal of plastic bags. Plastic has created lots of litter and added to landfill waste. In Ghana, plastic bags have replaced paper and other cheaper, more efficient materials for packaging. Plastics (which are not biodegradable) are randomly discarded everywhere, collecting and choking drains, threatening small animals and children, and polluting soil and water. Estimates are that plastic bags alone account for 85 percent of refuse in Ghana. (For more information, see “Tackling Ghana’s Trash” by Brother Michael Amakyi, CSC, published in *Perspectives*, winter 2003.)

— Sister Esther Adjoa Entsiwah



India

Violence goes “Underground”

Violence in different cultures takes on different forms. In northeast India, the “Underground” (organized crime) is involved in virtually all aspects of Indian life. The Underground uses intimidation, torture, kidnapping, even murder to accomplish its goals. Police officials admit that the Underground is a major criminal force in the bigger cities and many smaller villages as well.

A young woman was taking a two-day trip to see her family. After a long bus ride, she arrived in the marketplace. She decided to stay overnight there with her uncle and his family before going on. There she learned that her brother was in the hospital and needed to go to the city hospital for more extensive care.

What happened? Her brother was a quiet, serious man with a wife and six children. He accepted the position of headman in his village a year ago against his families’ wishes. They knew, that as headman, he would have to deal with the Underground. Recently, he made a decision that the Underground opposed and they tried to get rid of him by giving him

some concoction, at this writing still unknown. The police were notified and warned the family not to have any further contact with the Underground.

At first, he seemed to recover from the sickness caused by the concoction, but eventually he became sicker, more aggressive and out of control. He went to the local hospital, but was told to go to the larger market hospital. When he arrived there, he was much worse. His family was told to take him to the city hospital for more extensive care. He was gradually losing his mind and becoming very aggressive.

**The lion and the lamb
Can bring death to each other
Or end up as friends**

— *Sister Miriam (Eckenrode)*

The family got an ambulance to transport him to the city. He broke the ambulance windows and it took everyone with him to manage to hold him down. When they got to the city hospital, they were advised to take him to a mental hospital. There he was tied down and finally brought under control.

Will he ever recover? Will those in the Underground ever be held responsible?

— *Sister Bruno (Beiro)*



Mexico

Physical, psychological and economic violence

Lourdes is an attractive young woman and mother of six children between the ages of 2 and 13. Now she is pregnant with her seventh child. The economic situation is very difficult, because her husband doesn't work. He says that no one will employ him because of the tattoo on his arm. When a potential employer sees it, they associate it with drugs or gangs.

The family lives in a small room built above Lourdes' parents' house. When Lourdes' father drinks, generally her husband joins him. The drinking spree often ends with arguments about what they spent on the beer and sometimes the arguments get physically violent.

A few months ago, Lourdes' father forcefully ran his wife out of the house in front of the six children. After this argument, Lourdes' oldest daughter, 13 years old, tried to commit suicide on a swing, which hung from a tree near the house. Fortunately, one of her younger siblings saw her and ran to tell his father. Her father reached her while she was still alive, took her down from the rope and called an ambulance. Thanks be to God, the emergency team arrived on time and was able to save her. The doctors



said that in spite of the fact that she was without oxygen for a few minutes, there was no physical damage. They recommended some medications, a neck support, visits with a psychologist, and a lot of love.

**Peace comes only after justice.
Each of us is a peacemaker and
Actions flow from this peace
In caring for the pain
and loneliness in others.
Earth and its beauty
is God's gift to us;
Let us be gift to one another.**

— Sister Mary Ada (Dennis), age 76

Clearly, this is an example of a family that lives in an atmosphere of violence, not only physical, but psychological and economic.

—Rosalinda Sanchez, social worker from La Luz Parish, Ciudad Guadalupe, Nuevo Leon, Mexico (translated by Sister Joan Mader)

Peru

Scars remain from many years of political violence

Between 1980 and 2000, political violence in Peru resulted in the deaths of almost 70,000 people. Most of those killed were Peru's marginalized people: the poor, the indigenous, and people from rural areas. In 2001 the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was formed to determine the causes of the violence, identify those responsible, and recommend reforms that would prevent such violence and loss of life in the future.

This conflict developed during a national economic crisis, when a huge recession devastated the poor people in rural areas. It completely paralyzed the development process in these areas, and contributed to the breakdown of social organizations, educational institutions, and the processes of production. The self-confidence and the peoples' sense of well-being was also destroyed.

The principal players were Shining Path (*Sendero Luminoso*), rural self-defense vigilante groups, and the government's armed forces. The terrorist groups deliberately destroyed all of the cultural structures of the Andean and Amazon peoples. They assassinated their leaders, kidnapped people and enslaved them simply because they continued their cultural and religious practices. To "uproot the insurgency," the government armed forces also committed crimes and human rights abuses: assassinations, massacres of whole groups of people, forced "disappearances," kidnappings, torture, sexual violence against women and young girls, hostage-taking, and imprisonment of thousands of innocent people.

Unfortunately, many people, even our sisters, don't know about, or choose to forget what happened in Peru, but confronting this reality is essential before we can build a better future. We need to heal the wounds of this civil war in

our country, and address the psychological, sociopolitical and socioeconomic impact this horrific violence has on those who were most affected. As a Congregation we are part of the citizen's movement "Let this never happen again!" which is working to change civil and religious institutions, raise consciousness and create a new political state that will implement the recommendations made in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report.

We need truth and reconciliation to live peacefully and without violence!

— *Sisters Giovanna Carmona Chavez, Lilma Calsin Collazos and Noylí Ríos Manzo*



Uganda

Two decades of political violence

For the past 20 years, political war has been raging in northern Uganda. The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), formed in 1987, is a rebel paramilitary group operating mainly in northern Uganda. The group is engaged in an armed rebellion against the Ugandan government in what is now one of Africa's longest-running conflicts. Over 12,000 innocent people have been killed. More than 30,000 children and women have been abducted by the rebels, and 1.6 million people (25 percent of the Ugandan population) have been displaced from their homes.

It is amazing to realize that some children have never experienced a normal family life. Many have been born and grown up in refugee camps. Children who are abducted are trained by the rebels to be brutal killers. These child soldiers are forced to come back and attack their own family members to prove their loyalty to the rebel cause. (*See accompanying statistics.*) To escape capture by the rebels, thousands of children hide in underground tunnels or other "safe places" every night. These children have become known as the night commuters.

Refugee camps are not safe places. The rebels have attacked the camps and killed people there.



In 2003 one of the biggest refugee camps was attacked and more than 200 people were burned alive.

To get a better understanding of what is happening in northern Uganda, please watch the DVD "Invisible Children" that is available from the Justice Office.



War Violence Experience by Child Soldiers (Abductees)

Witnessed a killing	78%
Tied or locked up	68%
Received a severe beating	63%
Forced to steal or destroy property	58%
Forced to abuse dead bodies	23%
Forced to attack a stranger	22%
Forced to attack a family member or friend	14%
Forced to kill a family member or friend	8%

— *Sisters Daisy Kabuleeta and Edith Tumuhimbise*

United States

Violence remembered; violence repeated

On Good Friday, April 14, 2006, my friend Karen Klimczak, SSJ, didn't come home from work. She had two ministries — she did part-time work at an inner city parish, but her deepest commitment was to her work with men who had been released from prison and needed help making the transition back to life “on the outside.” Karen ran a home in Buffalo, New York, where these men could come to live together, get counseling and assistance finding jobs, and spiritual support. Karen lived with them and had been doing this ministry since 1985. She knew the potential dangers and she was careful. She had never had any problems . . . until April 14.

A man who had been released from prison nine days earlier was living in the house. He got hold of some crack cocaine, was high, and wanted money to buy more crack. He went into Karen's bedroom to steal her cell phone to sell on the street. While he was in her room, Karen returned — no one else in the house was aware of what was happening because she had a private entrance and staircase to her room that the men weren't allowed to use.

The man heard her coming, and hid behind the bedroom door. When she came in he grabbed her, beat and strangled her to death. Later that night he buried her beneath a shed about four miles away. And he sold her cell phone for another bag of cocaine.

On Saturday morning, Karen did not appear for breakfast or prayer, and missed a lunch date with friends. She was reported missing to the police, and immediately a search party was organized.

When a friend called her cell phone number, a man answered. This man identified her killer, who was arrested after four tortuous days of search. He confessed to the crime, and told police where to find Karen's remains.

The irony of being murdered on Good Friday by someone Karen cared for haunts and challenges me. And I am struck silent when I recall Karen's personal mantra: “Nonviolence begins with me.” I know in my heart that as she took her last breaths on Good Friday night, she was forgiving the man who was strangling her, and asking God to forgive him, too.

— *Sister Ann Oestreich, IHM, congregation justice coordinator*



SISTER KAREN KLIMCZAK, SSJ



Reflection Questions

What impressed you most as you read these stories?

What similarities and/or differences did you find in the stories?

Have you ever been a victim of violence? What was your response to being in that situation?

Social Analysis: Violence and Nonviolence

FACES OF VIOLENCE

Human violence is the use of power to dominate, control, abuse or manipulate an “other” out of self-interest, greed or hate. At the core of violence is a process that objectifies, distances, and trivializes people, groups, nations, even Earth itself and gives psychic permission to harm. Violence reflects a denial of our fundamental interconnectedness; it divides into classes of perpetrators and victims, the powerful and the powerless, those at the center and those in the margins.

Violence is endemic to our global society and exists in a multiplicity of forms. In this proposed corporate stand, we oppose all kinds of human violence — particularly structural/systemic violence — as a fracturing of right relationship. We single out political, social, economic and ecological violence for reflection.

Political Violence

The most flagrant forms of political violence are war and terrorism.

- In addition to the Iraq war, there are currently at least 40 armed conflicts being fought throughout the world.
- In these conflicts, nine civilians die for every military death. Women and children, the elderly and infirm are especially vulnerable to war and its consequences.
- Terrorist attacks in the Middle East and throughout the world occur almost daily, killing for the most part innocent, nonmilitary people.

- Poor and marginalized persons and groups are also impacted by massive diversion of resources from social to military use. Last year, \$1,035 billion was spent on militaries worldwide.



SISTERS IN COMMON INITIAL FORMATION WORKING ON THE CORPORATE STAND ON NONVIOLENCE

Though it would seem that no one benefits from war and armed conflict, that is not the case. War is big business. In 2004, combined arms sales of the top 100 arms-producing companies in the world (excluding China) reached \$236 billion — roughly equal to the combined national output of the 61 lowest income countries during that year.

Though often not as dramatic as war, political violence also occurs whenever persons are denied the rights to freedom of expression, assembly and dissent or the opportunity to participate meaningfully in decision-making which affects them.

Social Violence

Violation of fundamental human and civil rights occur throughout the world in both developing and developed countries.

- The Darfur genocide has claimed at least 400,000 victims. There, and in other areas of conflict, rape of women and girls is routinely used as a weapon.
- Around the world, 114 million children do not receive even a basic education; 584 million women are illiterate.
- More than one billion people still lack access to safe drinking water.
- 1,400 women die each day from pregnancy-related causes.
- Every year, six million children die from malnutrition before their fifth birthday.
- Most of the 25 million people suffering from HIV/AIDS in Africa have no access to health care.
- Around the world, indigenous peoples are being robbed of their cultures, losing their livelihoods and being driven from ancestral lands by globalization forces.
- In the “war on terror,” alleged terrorists are imprisoned and tortured without recourse. The United States continues to hold hundreds of foreign detainees without charge or trial at the Guantánamo Bay naval base, refusing access to legal counsel or the courts.

Small wonder the secretary general of Amnesty International claims that a lethal combination of indifference, erosion and impunity marks the human rights landscape today. “Human rights are not only a promise unfulfilled,” she says, “they are a promise *betrayed*.”

Economic Violence

Economically dominant nations, corporate powers, the World Bank, IMF and WTO continue to do violence to the world’s poorest peoples and nations. Neoliberal economics and corporate



globalization have created a scenario of deepening inequality in which the assets of the world’s 200 richest people exceed the combined income of 41 percent of the world’s population. The richest 20 percent receives roughly 84 percent of total world income; the poorest 20 percent a mere 1 percent.

The primary instruments of economic violence are policies related to international debt and free trade.

- Many countries in the global South are heavily indebted to the World Bank and IMF. To receive new loans or any form of debt relief, they must implement certain economic belt-tightening policies that negatively impact the poor (e.g., cuts in spending for education, health care and other social services). It is estimated that the still uncanceled debt of impoverished countries results in the death of 19,000 children per day.
- The U.N.’s 1999 Human Development Report ascribes the growing gap between rich and poor to “inherent inequities in the global trading system.” Even the World Bank admits that the free trade model negatively impacts the poorest 40 percent of the world’s people, while benefiting higher income groups.

The clear winners in today’s global economy are transnational corporations and higher income people and countries. The losers are the poorest nations and peoples, national governments and Earth itself.

Environmental Violence

Evidence mounts daily that human violence to Earth is straining the planet's very capacity to sustain life. Our misuse and overconsumption of resources, eco-blind economy and destructive "development" are radically altering the Earth by unbalancing intricate ecosystems.

- Global climate change is already causing record heat waves, increasingly destructive storms, massive ice melts and rising seas. If current patterns continue, many islands and low-lying coastal areas will be devastated. Bangladesh, for example, will lose half of its rice production capacity.
- Seventy percent of oceanic fish stocks are already depleted from overfishing or currently being fished at their biological limits. This has serious consequences for those among the world's poor who depend on subsistence fishing.
- The number of species who share the planet with humans is rapidly plummeting. If



Earth's rich biodiversity continues to be depleted, all life will be diminished and human life may become unlivable.

Martin Luther King Jr. maintained that violence of any kind is never a solution. On the contrary, violence only begets more violence. It creates a downward spiral, generating bitterness in the survivors and brutality in the destroyers. There is, as Gandhi taught, "no hope for the aching world except through the narrow and straight path of nonviolence."



NONVIOLENCE: ANOTHER PATH

Please refer to the brochure published by the Justice Offices to guide your reflections on nonviolence. (*The brochure is available on the Congregation and Holy Cross International*

Justice Office web sites, www.cscsisters.org and www.holycrossjustice.org, in case you have misplaced your copy.)

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. Martin Luther King Jr. and other proponents of nonviolence believed that any violent response simply provokes more violence. Do you agree . . . or is violence sometimes a moral option? What is your assessment — at this point in history — of the Church's traditional "just war theory"?
2. The brochure, *Nonviolence: Another Path*, discusses several necessary steps to "crafting a culture of peace." What other strategies occur to you? Which are most essential?
3. What practices do you utilize to support a lifestyle of nonviolence?

Theological Reflection on Nonviolence

Scripture

“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. . . .”

— *Matthew 5:44*

“Those who live by the sword will perish by the sword.”

— *Matthew 26:52*

“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil by doing good.”

— *Romans 12:21*



“WORK DIGNIFIES A PERSON. WE WANT DIGNITY.”

Catholic Social Teaching

“Do not believe in violence; do not support violence. It is not the Christian way. It is not the way of the Catholic Church.”

— *John Paul II, Killineer, Ireland, 1979*

“May people learn to fight for justice without violence, renouncing class struggle in their internal disputes and war in international ones.”

— *John Paul II, 1989*

“Every child murdered, every town ‘cleansed,’ every hatred uttered in the name of religion is a crime against God and a scandal for religious believers. Religious violence and nationalism deny what we profess in faith.”

“We need to address nonviolent strategies with much greater seriousness in international affairs.”

— *The Harvest of Justice is Sown in Peace, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1993*

“We must come to understand that violence is unacceptable.”

— *Confronting a Culture of Violence, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1994*

“Among the signs of hope we should also count the spread . . . of a new sensitivity ever more opposed to war as an instrument for the resolution of conflicts between peoples, and increasingly oriented to finding effective but non-violent means to counter the armed aggressor.”

— *Evangelium Vitae, John Paul II, 1995*

Congregation Documents

“Moving together into the future we will promote nonviolent systemic change through prayer, word and action; . . .”

— *Holy Cross Women Creating and Promoting Right Relationships, Chapter Document 2004*

“We, freely vowed women of Holy Cross, desire and struggle to live more deeply the Gospel call for justice and nonviolence in the context of our global reality. . . . We seek a shared understanding of the causes of violence and a stance of nonviolence.”

— *Holy Cross Women Seeking Justice in the New Millennium, Chapter Direction 1999*

“Recognizing our own powerlessness and need for God’s love, we rely on the Spirit in opening ourselves to experience Christ’s liberating salvation in and with the people we serve. Everything we are and do must communicate our commitment to his desire for the transformation of human hearts and human relationships.”

— *Constitution 3*



— *Sister Louis Gonzague (Kullmann), age 96*



Reflection Questions

1. In our Congregational documents, we have challenged ourselves to address violence and promote nonviolent systemic change. How am I living out these challenges?
2. In the past 30 years, Catholic Social Teaching has seriously addressed the failure of violence and the need for nonviolent conflict resolution. Currently, wars are raging and terrorism is growing throughout the world. Why aren’t these teachings promulgated more widely?
3. Do you believe that Jesus lived and modeled nonviolence in his own life? On what do you base your belief?

Stories of Hope

Mediating tribal clashes in Uganda; restoring forests in Ghana

Over the past five years, some districts of Uganda have experienced tribal clashes as people migrate from heavily populated areas. In response, peace organizations have been formed to promote nonviolent means of conflict resolution and mediate disputes. Sister Daisy Kabuleeta works with one such organization in the Western part of Uganda — the *Ruwenzori Forum for Peace and Justice (RFPJ)*.

RFPJ representatives like Daisy go to the conflict areas, elicit stories from those on both sides of the dispute and encourage everyone to listen to the experiences of the other, forgive and move on. During one of these events, the organization succeeded in bringing two tribes together using traditional reconciliation practices, which include sharing a special meal together. At the end, they agreed, “It is over!” In this way, RFPJ and similar organizations confront violence as it erupts, preventing the escalation of tribal conflict in many parts of Uganda.

In Ghana, indiscriminate logging has stripped entire forests. As a result, the country is experiencing dramatic climate changes — high temperatures and unusual long periods of drought.



This situation prompted religious bodies to act. Church leaders and youth groups have embarked on extensive tree planting to save the rain forests and reverse the prevailing climatic conditions. This is an ongoing activity and hopefully in the next five to 10 years, the country’s climate will noticeably improve.

— *Sisters Daisy Kabuleeta and Esther Adjoa Entsiwah*

**Just as Jesus loves us,
We need to love one another
In word and service.
It takes so little time
To be friendly, and
To invite others to come
And join with us in our everyday life.**

— *Sister Mary Ada (Dennis)*

Enhancing women's status in Bangladesh



In the past year, Sisters of the Holy Cross have helped women in northeastern Bangladesh enhance their status in both family and village.

In Kulara, many women previously did back-breaking work for minimal pay in the tea gardens and the punji. Now, our sisters have begun

a sewing project and welcomed about 50 Christian, Muslim, Hindu and Tribal women. The sisters provide materials, machines and training, and the women learn to cut and embroider material, which is then made into tablecloths, napkins and clothing. When the women have sufficient goods, the sisters help them connect with stores and suppliers who will export the women's handiwork.

With the money they receive, these women are able to support their families and send their children to school. In the rural areas, the women gain the respect of their husbands and their villages. They become good financial managers and are examples of hope to others.

The sisters also train the women in moral and ethical principles they can impart to their families. Equally important, the women learn to work and live in peace with others from different religious and cultural traditions.

— *Sisters Bashona Rebeiro and Mary Ellen Johnson*



Nonviolent witness in Peru

Sister Lilma Calsin Collazos works as a health official in the San Pedro de Lurigancho prison in Lima, Peru — the largest prison in Latin America. Although its capacity is 1,500 prisoners, 11,000 are currently held there.

Inside the prison, violence is widespread. Bands of kidnappers threaten to cut off the fingers or ears of other prisoners if their demands for ransom money are not met. In an attempt to end these atrocities, the Peruvian government passed two new laws. The first makes life in prison mandatory for such crimes, including for those prisoners who are approaching the end of their sentence (roughly 60 percent). The second abolishes a previous law that reduced prisoners' sentences by half if they



PRISONERS IN PERU

**We do have a choice
To calm or disrupt
Blessed the Peacemakers**

— *Sister Miriam (Eckenrode)*

worked while in prison. When the prisoners learned of the new laws, riots erupted that left 50 dead and 180 seriously wounded.

During the riots, the police kept Lilma from entering the prison to tend the wounded so she asked the bishop for help. The bishop publicly called for a cessation of hostilities so medical help could be brought in. Lilma was permitted to enter the prison where she convinced the gang leaders to stop the rioting so the sick and wounded could be treated.

The riots ended and, through the efforts of the Church and health workers, “dialogue tables” between police and prisoners were established. Police were ordered not to speak with prisoners except at the dialogue tables to avoid future violence.

The lesson of hope from this incident is clear: violence begets violence, but if nonviolence is given a chance, peace is possible.

— *Sisters Lilma Calsin Collazos and Mary Elizabeth Loughran*

Empowering abused women the United States

For many years, Juana Garcia suffered physical and emotional abuse by her husband in Mexico. When she left him and fled to the United States, she met a man who seemed like a good companion for her and a good father to her two sons.

She was wrong. The abuse began almost immediately. When their third child was born without a functioning brain, things became even worse. But because the man was undocumented and Juana needed his financial support for the children, she was afraid to report the abuse or leave him.

One day, he hit Juana so hard he broke her jaw. After a few days he felt remorse and told Juana to go to the dentist. The dentist recognized the signs of abuse and asked Juana how she had been injured. Eventually the truth came out and the dentist encouraged Juana to call the police. Juana finally agreed and found the courage to leave the abusive situation. She learned about resources available to victims of domestic violence, and with the help of Holy Cross Ministries, she began a new life by applying for legal status for herself and her children.

— *Sisters Mary Ann Pajakowski, Mary Tiernan, Kathleen Moroney and Roberta Bennett*



Reflection Questions

1. Did these stories make you feel more hopeful? Empowered to work for change?
2. Do you think nonviolence can really offer effective alternatives and solutions to worldwide structural problems such as war, oppression and poverty? Why or why not?



Proposed Corporate Stand Statement on Nonviolence

We, the Sisters of the Holy Cross, affirm that

- Nonviolence is constitutive of the message of Jesus,
- Nonviolence is intrinsic to right relationship with all creation, and
- Nonviolent systemic change requires innovative, creative responses to social problems and conflicts.

Therefore, we reject violence in its multiple forms.

We support actions and policies that

- Promote nonviolent means of conflict resolution,
- Disallow discrimination of any kind,
- Generate an equitable economic system for all,
- Foster a culture of solidarity and peace, and
- Protect Earth and Life in all its diversity.

We oppose actions and policies that legitimate

- Violent responses to conflicts, particularly war and terrorism,
- Denial of human and civil rights,
- Economic and military policies that exacerbate poverty and inequality, and
- Degradation and destruction of natural resources and ecosystems.

We acknowledge that the nonviolent way of Jesus challenges us to

- Examine the quality of our interpersonal relationships,
- Own the complexity inherent in our struggle to live without violence,
- Embrace diversity, and
- Espouse the common good.



Reflection Question

If you vote to approve this proposed Corporate Stand on Nonviolence, how will you personally implement it?



— Sister Francis Rose (Ruppert), age 96

Voting Information

The Congregation Justice Committee asks Sisters of the Holy Cross to study, reflect and discuss this Proposed Corporate Stand on Nonviolence from now until November 1, 2006.

Between November 1 and November 10, sisters will be asked to vote on the proposed stand online. Details on the voting process will be sent out and posted on the congregation's web site. Voting results will be published in the November 17 issue of *Announcements* and on the congregational web site.

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— Congregation Justice Committee

**Come over to play
Could we share our toys
And surprise each other**

— Sister Miriam (Eckenrode)

Congregation Justice Committee



Sisters of the Holy Cross

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Irmãs da Santa Cruz

Hermanas de la Santa Cruz