



Where Justice and Truth Meet

January 2021

“Through our contemplation, transform us to listen deeply to one another and to the brokenness of the world.”
– A Prayer for the Life of the World

Transitioning from *Just War* to *Just Peace*

Our *WJTM* Newsletter of November 2020 made us aware of the urgency for transforming our vision to counter violence in our world. The present issue goes deeper into the comprehension of *Just Peace* as a framework that can expand our living, being, and peacemaking. This implies letting go of the *Just War* notion.

SEE: Allow yourself to take some time to pray with current victims of war, racism, death penalty, deforestation, climate change, political conflicts and other forms of violence.

Many *rostros concretos* of our world today remind us that the *Just War* theory has gone beyond its original intent of limiting war to being used to justify and rationalize brutal conflicts. The damage inflicted on peoples, other than humans, and Earth is disproportionate to any good achieved. With modern weaponry and war practices, protecting civilians has become impossible. Pope Francis' most recent encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti* (October 2020) reminds us:

In the words of Saint John XXIII, “It no longer makes sense to maintain that war is a fit instrument with which to repair the violation of justice.”
(*Pacem in Terris*, cited in FT, #260)

JUDGE: Just War Theory, an Obsolete Tradition

In the past, Catholic tradition focused more on a “*Just War Theory*” than a concept of “*Just Peace*.” The *Just War* theory, outlined by fourth-century bishop St. Augustine as a means of Christian defense, was intended to limit violence. St. Thomas Aquinas codified Augustine's reflections into the distinct criteria that remain the basis of *Just War Theory* as it is used by nation states today.

Using a series of criteria to evaluate whether use of violence could be morally justifiable, the *Just War* framework did not intend to justify wars but to prevent them. The notion was to consider war as a last resort. Nevertheless, war is always evil, even when it is considered a *Just War*.

The framework looks at when to go to war (*Jus ad bellum*) and conduct while in war (*Jus in bello*). While often looked at separately, they are closely related.

Criteria for going to war

Criteria for conduct when in war include that the violence used:

- cannot cause harm disproportionate to the amount of good it is expected to achieve
- must discriminate between combatants and noncombatants; the latter should never be made the target of attacks.

Pope Francis places a transformative vision of *Just Peace* at the heart of our relationships on the personal, interpersonal, national and international levels.



“We can no longer think of war as a solution, because its risks will probably always be greater than its supposed benefits. In view of this, it is very difficult nowadays to invoke the rational criteria elaborated in earlier centuries to speak of the possibility of a “just war”. Never again war!” (FT, #258)

Transforming our Vision: What does *Just Peace* look like?

Just Peace is a framework that calls us to transformation. It encompasses a way of living/being with a set of practices for *building peace* at all stages of acute conflict—before, during, and after.

Watch a 2-minute video: *Glen Harold Stassen On Just Peacemaking*
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TqU70eiYyUo&feature=emb_logo

Just Peace is not merely the absence of violence but the presence of social, economic, and political conditions that sustain peace and human flourishing and prevent conflicts from turning violent or returning to violence. It includes well-being and plenitude for all.

Just peace theory is developed under the umbrella of the Christian traditions. However, it is born out of the Golden Rule shared by all faith traditions. In his recent encyclical Pope Francis reminds us again:



“In many parts of the world, there is a need for paths of peace to heal open wounds. There is also a need for peacemakers, men and women prepared to work boldly and creatively to initiate processes of healing and renewed encounter.” (FT, #225)

See what recent Popes said about Peacemaking: [Glimpses of Just Peace](#)

Peacemakers in Spanish are called “artisans of peace”. An artisan uses his or her own body to work. An artisan works in harmony with creation and originally, he or she works in guilds, with others. An artisan uses both sides of his/her brain. Skills and imagination are important in the transformation of a vision.

ACT: How do we transform our understanding—and our living? Just peace offers a framework not only for international global relationships but also for interpersonal relationships and our relationships with Earth and all creation. The following story can lead us to our starting point:

Brazil’s Archbishop Dom Helder Camera, was speaking at a crowded church in Berkeley, California. He was asked: “After facing death squads, would-be assassins,

corporations oppressing the poor, violent government opposition, and even hostile forces within your own church, who is your most difficult opponent?”

Without saying a word, Dom Helder pointed his hand into the air, then slowly arched it around, until it turned on himself, his index finger pointing to his heart. “I am my own worst enemy,” he said, “my most difficult adversary. Here I have the greatest struggle for peace.”
John Dear, *Living Peace: A spirituality of Contemplation and Action*

The following words of wisdom will assist you in your own process:

Instead of loving what you think is peace, love other [people] and love God above all. And instead of hating the people you think are war makers, hate the appetites and the disorder in your own soul, which are the causes of war. If you love peace, then hate injustice, hate tyranny, hate greed – but hate these things in yourself, not in another.

Thomas Merton, *Seeds of Contemplation*

Thus, aware that transformation starts within, we invite you:

1. Pause and pray: *Prayer for Peace*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xUhzeH0Va8>
2. Further a collective comprehension and commitment to *Just Peace* by sharing in your local community and/or family:
 - What did you learn from the articles in our last edition of Just Words, WJTM November and the present newsletter?
 - What local steps towards transformation do you find most urgent at this point? How can we participate collectively in those efforts?

Coming Next

Watch for our next issues where we will develop Just Peace principles and moral criteria which guide actions that can assist us in systemic change.