Unit: Peace studies

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Introduction

*If development is the new name for peace, war and preparations for war are the major enemies of the healthy development of peoples. If we take the common good of all humanity as our norm, instead of individual greed, peace would be possible.*

Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, #10

For Christians, to proclaim peace is to announce Christ; it is to announce the Gospel which is a Gospel of peace; it is a call to all people to the beatitude of being peacemakers. Peace is possible and must be built on the four pillars indicated by Pope John XXIII in the encyclical *Pacem in Terris*: truth, justice, love and freedom. Without justice there can be no peace and therefore peace and non-violence is a key theme of Catholic social teaching.

*If religions want to build peace, they must teach forgiveness. In fact, there is no peace without justice, and there is no justice without forgiveness.* Archbishop Mamberti.

(See Teacher Background for the Social Justice unit).

Religions and peace

Religion plays an important role in establishing and maintaining peace. They can do this by:

- Promoting prayer and worship for both its formative and intercessory value
- Promoting social justice teachings, essential to a culture of peace
- Teaching about the importance of forgiveness and reconciliation to foster inner peace and peaceful relationships on a personal, community, national and global level
- Examining the beliefs, ideas, teachings and practices of their own faith tradition and looking for opportunities to enhance social justice and peace in their own and the broader community
- Being prepared to examine, be accountable for, challenge and rectify unjust practices in their own organisations
- Teaching and practising non-violence; its theory, expression, ethical and religious foundations as a means to change situations of injustice
- Advocating for quality education for all
- Recognising that world religions are global actors with the potential to influence the majority of the world’s people
- Being proactive about speaking out against atrocities and unjust practices.
- Participating in global peace movement networks and interreligious dialogue to promote cultural understanding.

The world needs God. It needs universal, shared ethical and spiritual values, and religion can offer a precious contribution to their pursuit, for the building of a just and peaceful social order at the national and international levels. Pope Benedict XVI.

Sacred Text and Peace

The Jewish biblical writers understood that if you want peace you have to be prepared to work for it. Seek peace and pursue it. Psalms 34: 14. The text of Isaiah reveals the connection between peace and justice. Isaiah 32:17. The Israelites worked to alleviate the lot of the poor Deut. 15:4.
In the Christian scriptures, Jesus says to love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. Matthew 5:43. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus specifically calls blessed, those that show mercy Matthew 5:7 and those who are peace makers Matthew 5:9. Christians are called to imagine that world peace is possible.

Interreligious Dialogue

*Religions for Peace* is the largest international coalition of representatives from the world’s great religions dedicated to promoting peace. Respecting religious differences while celebrating our common humanity, *Religions for Peace* is active on every continent and in some of the most troubled areas of the world, creating multi-religious partnerships to confront our most dire issues: stopping war, ending poverty, and protecting the earth.

Religious communities are the largest and best-organized civil institutions in the world, claiming the allegiance of billions across race, class, and national divides. These communities have particular cultural understandings, infrastructures, and resources to get help where it is needed most and to promote a global approach to achieving peace.

Founded in 1970, Religions for Peace enables communities to unleash their enormous potential for common action. Some of Religions for Peace’s recent successes include building a new climate of reconciliation in Iraq; mediating dialogue among warring factions in Sierra Leone; organizing an international network of religious women’s organizations; and establishing an extraordinary program to assist the millions of children affected by Africa’s AIDS pandemic, the
Hope for African Children Initiative.

**Just War Theory and Non-Violence**

There are two strands in the Catholic social tradition related to war and peace. Both share the presumption against the use of force as a means of settling disputes.

1. Just war theory

   Just war theory first articulated by Cicero in the first century BCE was accepted by Constantine in the fourth century C.E. There are three parts to the Just War theory: *jus ad bellum* which includes the guidelines for determining when to engage in war, *jus in bello* which concerns the justice of how one behaves in war and *jus post bellum* which concerns the justice of peace agreements and behaviour after the war.

   The conditions for entering into a war are:

   a. Just cause: there must be real danger to innocent life and to the conditions of decent human existence. Wars of retribution are not justifiable. All nations must recognise that their claims for a just cause are relative and must be compared honestly and fairly with those of their opponent.

   b. Right intention: the intention for entering war must be to protect human life and human rights. Its ultimate goal must be peace and reconciliation.

   c. Proper authority: War can only be declared by those with the proper authority and responsibility for the common good. In situations of corrupt regimes, the issue of who has authority to launch a war is complex.

   d. Last resort: All peaceful alternatives must have been tried before war is justified.

   e. Probability of success: Disproportionate amounts of suffering and loss of life is not permissible.
f. Proportionality: A response to aggression should not exceed the nature of the aggression. In assessing proportionality, Catholic social tradition considers it of the utmost importance to think about the poor and the helpless and how they will be affected as the ones who have the least to gain and the most to lose from the violence of war (The Challenge of Peace, #106). The arms race, nuclear and biological weaponry are therefore unjustifiable.

2. Non-violence

In 1963, Pope John XIII called for an end to the arms race specifically banning the use of nuclear weapons (Pacem in Terris, #112) and two years later, the Second Vatican Council described a need for a fresh appraisal of war (Gaudium et Spes #80). In 1983, the U.S Catholic Bishops, in their pastoral letter on war and peace, stressed the importance of the pacifist option. The bishops suggested that the development and use of modern weapons have magnified the horrors of war and this has brought the tradition of Christian non-violence back into prominence. There is an inter-dependence between just war teaching and Christian non-violence teaching and each contributes to the full moral vision we need in pursuit of human peace (The Challenge of Peace, #120-121).

The Challenge of Peace urged a framework built on a “conscious choice” and “deliberate policy” in the pursuit of securing peace. They provided the following guidelines regarding a Christian approach:

a. No Christian can rightfully carry out orders or policies deliberately aimed at killing non-combatants (#148). Nuclear weapons clearly cannot discriminate between combatants and non-combatants.

b. No deliberate initiation of nuclear warfare can be justified.
One of the criteria for “just war” is a reasonable hope of success in bringing about justice and peace. The bishops doubt that there is reasonable hope of doing so once nuclear weapons have been exchanged in a conflict. “The burden of proof remains on those who assert that meaningful limitation is possible” (#’s 157).

When the 2010 Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty opened, Pope Benedict XVI, who had previously called for “negotiations for a progressive and mutually agreed dismantling of existing nuclear weapons”, sent a message asking delegates to “overcome the burdens of history”. He said, “I encourage the initiatives to seek progressive disarmament and the creation of zones free of nuclear weapons, with a view to their complete elimination from the planet”.

In 2011, an International Ecumenical Peace Convocation suggested that peace is central to all religious traditions and that war should become illegal. Through increased interreligious dialogue, they agreed to seek common ground with all world religions acknowledging that the starting points might be different. They called for a way of just peace, fundamentally different from a just war concept in that it is more than protecting people from unjust force and economic and environmental damage. The call to just peace defines the concept as a collective and dynamic yet grounded process of freeing human beings from fear and want, of overcoming enmity, discrimination and oppression and of establishing conditions for just relationships that privilege the experience of the most vulnerable and respects the integrity of creation.
Terrorism

Terrorism involves the use or threat of violence to create a climate of fear in a population. The targets can be individuals, governments, corporations, ethnic or religious groups. Terrorists rely on the publicity and fear generated by an attack or threat of an attack to wield power, increase their influence or make political change. Terrorists believe that peaceful means to resolve or advance issues will not work hence justifying the violence.

It is important when teaching about terrorism to challenge students who equate the terms terrorist or terrorism with a particular religious or ethnic group, for example, Islam and Muslims in general. Such generalised statements and unhelpful attitudes have been fuelled by the “War on Terror” waged by the United States and its allies after the attack on the World Trade Centre in New York in 2001. Islam has its own just war theory and suicide bombings violate its basic principles. Religious radicalisation (sometimes called fundamentalism) sometimes masks (or is an outlet for) political or economic conflicts. Peace builders need urgently to interact intellectually with moderates in Islam to challenge false perceptions and to challenge the legitimacy of violent extremism to solve issues in order to engender trust and dispel fear.

The General assembly of the United Nations states that:

_Terrorist acts are in any circumstance unjustifiable, whatever the considerations of a political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious or of any other nature that may be invoked to justify them._ Declaration on measures to eliminate international terrorism. Resolution 49/60 9/12/1994.

Acknowledgement: