



MARYKNOLL OFFICE FOR GLOBAL CONCERNS

Peace, Social Justice and Integrity of Creation

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Maryknoll to join the Vatican, peace practitioners, theologians at conference to promote nonviolence and just peace in Church and world

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Holy See’s Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Pax Christi International, the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns and other major Catholic organizations, will convene an unprecedented conference entitled “**Nonviolence and Just Peace: Contributing to the Catholic Understanding of and Commitment to Nonviolence**” in Rome, Italy, **April 11-13, 2016**.

The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns has been working with Pax Christi International, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, and other Catholic leaders for nearly two years to organize this major international conference on the spirituality and practice of nonviolence in the Church. The aim of this dialogue is to advance a new articulation of Catholic teaching on war and peace beyond the ‘just war’ theory, and to highlight successful experiences of religious and laity around the world who have developed effective nonviolent practices in the face of extreme violence. These living witnesses to the power of nonviolence can help us illuminate the vocation of peacemaking at a moment when our world is rocked by war and terror. The conference will include 80 participants from Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, Australia and the Americas who represent a broad spectrum of experiences in peacebuilding and active nonviolence in the face of violence and war.

“I’m thrilled that Maryknoll is part of this historic meeting in Rome, said [Gerry Lee](#), a member of the planning committee and former Maryknoll Lay Missioner in Venezuela and current director of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns. “Our missioners see every day the impact of extreme violence on vulnerable communities they serve in Asia, Africa and Latin America. I hope that this meeting will be the first of many significant dialogues around the Catholic world that will promote the Church’s spirituality and practice of peacemaking.”

For many decades, Maryknoll Father and Brothers, Maryknoll Sisters, and Maryknoll Lay Missioners have witnessed to God’s love through service to impoverished and marginalized communities. At this conference, they will articulate the truth of nonviolence as a creative power for justice and the well-being of all.

In addition to Gerry Lee, the Maryknoll mission will be represented at the conference by:

[Maryknoll Sister Joanne \(Járuko\) Doi](#), coming from Chicago Theological Union. Sister Járuko was missioned to the Aymara indigenous people of the southern Andes (Altiplano) of Puno and Chinchera, Peru. Inspired by the Aymara people, Sister Járuko left Peru to study and understand her own Japanese American faith history, including her parents’ internment by the United States during World War II.

Maryknoll Sisters • Maryknoll Fathers & Brothers • Maryknoll Lay Missioners

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[Maryknoll Sister Teresa Hougnan](#), coming from Kenya. Sister Teresa is a West Point graduate, who served with the Army in Germany before joining the Maryknoll Sisters. Assigned to East Timor, she arrived just before the United Nations referendum in 1999. Currently she is focusing on peace-building and conflict transformation as part of a Maryknoll Sisters peace team in Africa, based in Nairobi, Kenya.

[Mr. Merwyn DeMello](#), a former Maryknoll Lay Missioner and current co-director of Christian Peacemaker Teams, coming from Afghanistan. As a Maryknoll Lay Missioner, Mr. De Mello supported and advocated for human rights and supported Burmese refugees in Japan and in Japan and Burundian and Rwandan refugees in Tanzania. He also developed peacebuilding curriculum for a Zimbabwean university and coordinated programs for promoting honesty, transparency, and accountability in governance in Mumbai.

[Dr. Pietro Ameglio](#), a former student of Maryknoll Father Donald Hessler and a leading teacher and practitioner of active nonviolence in Latin America, coming from Mexico. Dr. Ameglio founded Mexican Peace and Justice Service (SERPAJ) and co-founded other peace organizations, including Thinking Out Loud (Pensar en Voz Alta), a Gandhian-inspired nonviolent action collective to analyze and publicize statistical information on the nature of social conflict in Mexico and promote nonviolent direct actions, and the Movement for Peace with Justice and Dignity, along with poet Javier Sicilia and the families of dead and missing persons. He has authored the book, “Gandhi and Civil Disobedience: Mexico Today.”

Conference participants will envision concrete ways the Catholic Church can deepen its understanding of and commitment to active nonviolence in its teaching and practice worldwide, including an explicit rejection of “just war” thinking in favor of an alternative ethical framework engaging acute conflict with nonviolent conflict transformation and just peace. Read more about the conference [here](#) on Pax Christi International’s website.

As members of Maryknoll and the Catholic Church, we seek to respond to the [call](#) made by Pope Francis in 2013: “All men and women of good will are bound by the task of pursuing peace. I make a forceful and urgent call to the entire Catholic Church, and also to every Christian of other confessions, as well as to followers of every religion and to those brothers and sisters who do not believe: peace is a good which overcomes every barrier, because it belongs all of humanity!”

For more information about the conference, contact:

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The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns (MOGC) represents Maryknoll missioners, who are Catholic men and women serving in impoverished communities around the world. The MOGC provides analysis and advocacy on issues of justice, peace and the integrity of creation that affect the countries and communities where Maryknoll missioners serve.