

Ideas for Learning, Talking and Praying about Peace in your Parish



1. Organize an interfaith peace vigil. Involve neighboring churches, synagogues and mosques.
2. Look for opportunities to celebrate peace in your parish. Some days to consider: the Feast of the Holy Innocents (pray for innocent victims of violence), World Day of Peace on January 1, International Day of Peace on September 21 (<http://internationaldayofpeace.org>), the feast day of St. Francis of Assisi (October 4), the anniversaries of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6 and 9, and the birth of the Prince of Peace on Christmas Day.
3. Draw attention to the "Sign of Peace" in your parish liturgies. Why do we do this every week?
4. Be a witness to solidarity with those impacted by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan by giving something up until the wars end. Encourage others to do the same.
5. Form a legislative advocacy network in your parish. Become a voice for peace at the local, state and national level. See the list of "Peace organizations" in this packet for suggested resources, and contact your local Catholic Charities peace and justice staff person.
6. Help your youth minister facilitate a discussion about conscientious objection. Give parish teens accurate information about this option, and the Catholic Church's teachings with regard to it.
7. Start a Bible study or book discussion group with peace as the theme.
8. Encourage families to incorporate "parenting for peace and justice" in their family life. The Institute for Peace and Justice has wonderful suggestions (<http://www.ipj-ppj.org>)
9. Choose a DVD or video from the Resource List. Show it at your parish and discuss it afterwards. Include a discussion of the questions: how will the parish respond to the ideas presented? How will individuals respond?

10. Sponsor a JustFaith group in your parish. Participants will study the reality of poverty in our country and around the world, which is so often at the root of violence. (www.justfaith.org)

11. Initiate a "twinning" relationship with a church in a war-torn country. This will lead you to develop relationships with people experiencing the first-hand effects of war.

12. Invite a speaker from your local Catholic Charities office to speak about Catholic social tradition in the area of peace. Explore the Just War Theory and its relevance to 21st century military and international policies.

13. Consider forming a parish team to help settle a refugee family. Almost all refugees are fleeing situations of violence, and they have much to teach us about the impact of war. Contact Catholic Family Center in Rochester to explore this possibility.

14. Encourage fellow parishioners to make the Pax Christi Vow of Nonviolence, which begins, "Recognizing the violence in my own heart, yet trusting in the goodness and mercy of God, I vow for one year to practice the nonviolence of Jesus who taught us in the Sermon on the Mount." Form small groups to support each other in fulfilling the vow.

15. Hold a weekly or monthly hour of silent prayer for peace in your parish, perhaps on a Sunday evening.

16. Display brochures and information sheets on Pax Christi, conscientious objection, and other peace-related issues in the back of church. Keep them well stocked.

17. Reach out to veterans and families of veterans in your parish. Assure them that a frank discussion of the validity of military conflict does not reflect a lack of respect for their sacrifices.

Source: Peace Subcommittee, Diocesan Public Policy Committee, Rochester, NY, 2008