

An invitation to participate in the
ANNUAL FORTY-DAY FAST
For the Truth
of
Gospel Nonviolence

“This is the kind (of unclean spirit) that can be driven out only by prayer and fasting.”

MARK 9:29



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The test of the sincerity of one’s prayer is the willingness to work for that for which one prays.

The test of the sincerity of one’s work is the willingness to pray for that for which one works.

—ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

Jesus Christ is the incarnation of the true God, who is *Agapé*, Unconditional Love, Unending Forgiveness and Everlasting Mercy toward all without exceptions. The person who sees Jesus sees God, for Jesus and God are One. Jesus is the Incarnation of God. It is the Spirit of this God, the Spirit of Jesus which is life giving. It is this God in whose image and likeness we are formed. There is no other God. All that is not of the only true God is illusion, idolatry and death.

The God of the New Testament, the God who dwells fully in Jesus Christ, the God in whose image and likeness human beings are made, the only true God *is not a warrior God who will lead people in historical victories over enemies*. The Way of Jesus is not the way of violence, retaliation and enmity. The Way of the Jesus of the Gospels is the Way of Nonviolent Love of all. What Jesus taught by word and deed for times of common affairs, as well as for times of crises, is nonviolence, non-retaliation, love of enemy, forgiveness seventy times seven, return of good for evil—mercy. Since God is love and Christ is God, to live in the life of God is to obey Jesus’ new commandment to *“love one another as I have loved you.”* This means that the Christian—the human being who says he or she desires to follow Jesus—commits herself or himself wholeheartedly to following Jesus, who did not use violence and who did not threaten the use of violence, but chose instead—even under the threat of lethal violence—to overcome evil with love. Jesus Christ is the truth of God and Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies is the truth of Jesus Christ.

Therefore, it must be said clearly, and again and again, that violence is not the Christian Way, that violence is not the Gospels' Way, that violence is not the Apostolic Way, that violence is not the Way of Jesus, that violence is not the Way of God. It must be said clearly, and again and again, that this does not mean that only nuclear violence and retaliation are contrary to the Way of Jesus—but all violence and retaliation, even culturally condoned, romanticized and legalized violence and retaliation, are contrary to the Way of Jesus, which is the Way of Eternal Salvation for one and all. Hence, any activity that cannot be conducted without violence or any end that cannot be achieved without violence is an activity or an end that cannot be conducted or achieved by the followers of Jesus Christ. It is also an activity or end that is not needed in God's Plan of Redemption through, with and in Jesus, the Christ.

Violence is mutiny against mercy. In a world that is daily engulfed by the organized mercilessness of governments, militaries, corporations and media, Jesus' teaching is clear. Christ authorized no one to substitute violence for merciful love. As the renowned biblical scholar, Rev. John L. McKenzie concludes, *"If we cannot know from the New Testament that Christ totally rejects violence, then we can know nothing of His person or message. It is the clearest of teachings."* All the ways of God are mercy. In the Incarnation of Mercy in the Nonviolent Jesus, God's being, outside of time and beyond the world, unfolds itself in time and before the world. Mercy is what God is. Mercy is why we are. Mercy is what we need. Mercy is what God wants. Mercy is the supreme attribute of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Way of Nonviolent Christlike Merciful Love is the path for our pilgrimage to the Absolute.

The works of war are not the works of Christlike mercy. Yet, since the fourth century most Christians have not proclaimed that violence is not the Christian Way, that violence is not the Gospels' Way, that violence is not the Apostolic Way, that violence is not the Way of Jesus. In fact, during the last 1700 years, at one time or another, Christians have justified, as consistent with the Way of Jesus, participation in such activities as war, capital punishment, torture, assassination, the burning to death of heretics, witches and homosexuals, colonialism, violent enmity-creating nationalism, violent tribalism, violent revolution, abortion, genocide, wife-beating, child-beating, etc. And they have participated in these horrors, believing they are not engaged in evil, but in faithfully following Jesus.

The spiritually symbolic low point of this false proclamation of and witness to the Gospel—this incarnational heresy—occurs on August 9 in the years of Our Lord during World War II. On August 9 in 1942 Christians in Auschwitz, Poland—because of the nurturing they received in their Churches—believed they were following Jesus when they destroyed Edith Stein, Saint Teresia Benedicta of the Cross—in a gas chamber. On August 9 in 1943 Christians in Berlin, Germany—because of the nurturing they received in their Churches—believed they were following Jesus when they beheaded Blessed Franz Jagerstatter, a Christian who refused to join Hitler's military. On August 9 in 1945 Christians from the United States—because of the nurturing they received in their Churches—believed they were following Jesus when in nine seconds they incinerated tens of thousands of human beings in Nagasaki, the oldest and the largest Christian community in Japan.

Today, as for most of the last 1700 years, most Christians continue to be nurtured by their Churches into the belief that those energies, understandings, emotions and spirits—which have lead inevitably to hundreds of million of August 9s, large and small, over the centuries—are consistent with faithfully following Jesus Christ. Today most Christian Churches and their leaderships still do not unequivocally teach what Jesus unequivocally taught on the subject of violence and enmity. Today most Christian leaders and most Christians still adamantly and obstinately refuse to proclaim that violence is not the Christian Way, that violence is not the Gospels' Way, that violence is not the Apostolic Way, that violence is not the Way of Jesus, and therefore violence cannot be the Way of the faithful follower of Jesus.

It is because of this tragic and sorrowful fact that this Forty Day Fast for the Truth of Gospel Nonviolence is undertaken again this year for the thirty-first time. It is an entreaty to the Christian Churches, to the Christian Churches' leaders and to the individual Christian to repent and turn to the Christ and learn what God's will is. It is an appeal to the Christian Churches, to the Christian Churches' leaders and to the individual Christian to learn *from Him*, who unambiguously teaches by word and deed the Way of Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies as the Way of God, what the Way of authentic Christian discipleship is. For this is certain, unless this viperous poison of justified, so-called Jesus endorsed violence and enmity is entirely flushed out of the institutional Churches of Christianity and out of the hearts and minds of their people, no structural, administrative, personnel, policy, practice or procedural changes will be worth a spiritual farthing (1 COR 13). It will just be sending the same old utterly destructive poison through an updated Church intravenous line.

This Fast for Gospel Nonviolence, for Jesus' Nonviolence, is a prayer and a plea that the Universal Church gather in Ecumenical Council in the not too distant future and declare once and for all that violence is not the Christian Way, that violence is not the Gospels' Way, that violence is not the Apostolic Way, that violence is not the Holy Way, that violence is not the Way of Jesus, that violence is not the Way of God, and thereby disassociate Herself and Her membership forever from the xenophobic, nationalistic, jingoistic, tribalistic, parochial, ethnocentric, racist, bigoted, monster gods of violence and enmity, and from their brutal theologies and politics. Thereby, the Church will at last be what it was in the beginning for all humanity, and what Jesus intended is it to be, namely, the extension in time and space of the Nonviolent Jesus Christ of the Gospels, who teaches as the Way of God and as the Way to peace a Way of Nonviolent Love of all—friends and enemies—no exceptions.

Please do pray and fast, in some way if possible, for this intention, as you are able. The smallest effort done in the Spirit of Christic love in order to bring Jesus' saving truth, life, love and peace to humanity will be honored by God and will be fruitful beyond all human calculation.

Submitted for your personal and merciful meditation within the mystery of Christ-God, amidst the anguish and absurdity a world being crucified daily by justified violence.

—EMMANUEL CHARLES MCCARTHY