

# What is “Just Peace”?

## A Collation and Synthesis based on Catholic and Ecumenical Christian Sources

prepared by Gerald W. Schlabach, University of St. Thomas (MN, USA), Catholic Nonviolence Initiative

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### Key background assumptions:

- Peace is not the absence of conflict. It is the presence of creative processes by which human communities become ever-more skillful and habituated at working through their conflicts without recourse to violence and without demeaning one another’s dignity.
- All Christian peacemaking begins and finds its continuing source as forgiven sinners gather together around the table of Eucharist; as they do so, they recognize the nonviolent self-giving of Jesus Christ and receive the grace of his real and abiding presence, which they need to “pass the peace” first to one another and then to the world.
- To confess particularly Christian sources of peacemaking is not to depreciate the spiritual resources or active contributions of other religious and secular traditions toward peace, but rather to welcome analogies and to invite collaboration grounded in respect for the particularity of every culture and tradition.
- A central task of any ethical position is to keep means congruent with ends, or else accept the burden of proof needed to explain any disjunction. “Just peace” expects human beings to thrive when ends and means are closely integrated, such that the means chosen in the pursuit of ends are consonant with or reflect those ends (a.k.a. the principle of reflexivity). The very term “just peace” responds to this principle: A social order will be truly peaceful only to the degree that it is just; the pursuit of justice will sow new seeds of injustice unless done through peaceful means.
- Jesus’ ethical teachings thus offer realistic and paradigmatic “transforming initiatives” for breaking out of the vicious cycles that result when just ends are pursued through incongruent means. (Cf. Glen Stassen exegesis of the Sermon on the Mount.) As St. Paul summarized Jesus’ ethic in Rom. 12:21, these initiatives are transformative because they resist being “overcome by evil, but [instead] overcome evil with good.”
- Just peacebuilding will sometimes fail. There are no risk-free options; any promise of perfect security is illusory. But military solutions fail at least half the time, even on their own terms, insofar as at least one side always loses to the other or else – more often – both sides lose. The potential of just peacebuilding must thus be assessed according to a single rather than a double standard.
- If a just peace framework appears to be more complex than a “just war” framework, this is “a feature not a bug,” Justice, as defined by Cardinal Peter Turkson, means “attending to the requirements of relationship.” Insofar as a just peace framework attends to the root causes of war and social injustice, while recognizing the interconnectivity of all creatures (as Pope Francis has emphasized) it is being realistic and rejecting simplistic solutions that are often what make violence deceptively tempting.
- Nevertheless, wide reflection by Christians about the social conditions and priority practices that nurture just peace – informed by findings from the maturing field of justice, peace, and conflict studies – yields an emerging set of patterns that are amenable to summary. What follows is an attempt to be accountable to the insights of other scholars, collectives, and religious bodies that themselves have been attending to grassroots practitioners in diverse global settings, to discern emerging points of consensus and to summarize them with what aspires toward a certain pedagogical elegance.

JUST PEACE NORMS		Principles	Virtues		Practices		Ecumenical	JW criteria
<b>Collation and possible synthesis of proposals</b>	<i>Note that items below that can potentially appear under more than one category are listed in italics.</i>	Maryann Cusimano Love	Eli McCarthy	Jarem Sawatsky	Just Peacemaking Theory	Just Policing	WCC Decade to Overcome Violence final document	As listed in Harvest of Justice
<b>JUS <u>IN</u> CONFLICTIONE</b>	<b>In order to act justly and wisely amid conflicts, at all stages, cultivate the dispositions, skills, and virtues that help resist pressures of the moment, which tempt actors to dis-integrate ends and means.</b>							
	<b>Sustaining spiritual practices:</b> To become consistent, life-long peacemakers and peacemaking communities, invite God's formative work through sacraments and spiritual disciplines.							
	Celebrate the Eucharist as Christ's nonviolent act of self-giving, along with prayer, meditation, and fasting.		X				7	
	Reflect prayerfully on how to “apply the Beatitudes in the exercise of [one’s] respective responsibilities” in every area of life (Pope Francis, 2017 World Day of Peace message), thus growing in conciliatory love, sensibility to the equal dignity of all, mercy, humility, compassion, empathy, hospitality, and solidarity.		X					
	Cultivate hope and trust in the possibility of life-giving social transformation rather than fatalism regarding the status quo, while seeking and respecting the best wisdom of the past as passed down through elders and traditions.				X			
	<b>Core dispositions and habits:</b> Amid any conflict at any level, choose actions that signal and further develop the dispositions and habits that will make one's self, community, and culture one that respects the dignity of all and nurtures creativity in pursuit of peace.							
	Just cause: protect, defend and restore the fundamental dignity of all life and the common good.	X						X

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	Right intention: Aim to create a positive peace, i.e. everything that the "jus ad pacem" category entails. (AKA just intention as listed in JWT in bello criteria; also cf. newer jus post-bellum category)	X						X
	Probability of success, interpreted in a just-peace framework as a commitment to avoid rash and ill-considered action under pressure to "do something," lest well-meaning intervention actually make a situation worse.							X
	Cultivate a "generations lens" by identifying root causes, acknowledging past responsibilities, refusing merely short-term solutions, and anticipating impacts on future generations.			X		X		
	Cultivate humility, recognizing the incompleteness of even expert knowledge, and the possibility of unforeseen consequences from amid the best intended and carefully designed interventions.					X		
	Conduct training and education in nonviolent peacemaking and resistance, while forming nonviolent peacemaking communities.		X					
	Willingness to recognize the truth about ourselves in the face of self-deception and complicity with violence, giving up self-justifications, giving and receiving forgiveness.						13	
	Formational education for peace: spiritual formation of character, spirit of peace, respect for human rights, imagination for alternatives, emphasis on active nonviolence as practiced in different cultures.			X			28	

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	<b>Participatory processes:</b> Decisionmaking about prospective action must be as participatory and inclusive of as many key stakeholders as possible, especially women, young adult leaders, and other marginalized groups							
	Participatory process: extend respect for human dignity by including all societal stakeholders – state and non-state actors as well as previous parties to the conflict.	X		X			5, 25	
	Seek especially to empower those who have previously been marginalized, disenfranchised, and silenced, inviting their authentic participation from early in decisionmaking and conflict transformation processes.			X				
	Recognize and value particularity: respect the particular identities of cultures, communities, and persons, seeking solutions that arise from and accord with local context rather than rigidly importing external models, even if they have been successful elsewhere.			X				
	<b>Skillsets:</b> Long before conflicts become acute, churches, schools, other organizations, and individuals themselves should develop the skillsets that enable creative responses to conflict and injustice, both as participants and advocates practiced in active nonviolence, and as impartial mediators or facilities practiced in conflict transformation.							
	<i>Support nonviolent direct action.</i>			X	#1			
	<i>Use cooperative conflict resolution.</i>				#3		21	

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	<i>Conflict transformation and restorative justice, particularly in the form of Truth and Reconciliation Commissions.</i>		X					
	<b>Priority of building of peacemaking communities:</b> To act with integrity as effective peacemakers, churches and other communities must be seeking to embody “the change they seek in the world” (Gandhi).							
	Encourage grassroots peacemaking groups and voluntary associations					#10		
	Christian communities must embody peace, justice, reconciliation, etc. both locally and through growing church unity if they are to be effective agents of peace globally.						7, 16, 31, 32	
<b>JUS EX BELLO</b>	<b>Seek every opportunity for creative actions that will allow actors on every side to escape vicious cycles of violence and retribution that may seem justified by the past, but that nonetheless invite continuing cycles of violence in the future. Such cycles may include direct, structural, or cultural violence.</b>							
	<b>Creative gospel nonviolence:</b> Use nonviolent direct action to resist injustice without responding in kind.							
	<i>Support nonviolent direct action</i>			X		#1		9
	Unarmed civilian protection, a third-party intervention both through international intervention and local peace teams		X					

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	Proportionality – the JWT <i>in bellum</i> criterion to avoid undue harm applies also to nonviolent campaigns and tactics, e.g. for economic sanctions and boycotts effecting civil society.							X
	<b>Conflict transformation:</b> Look for every opportunity to turn adversaries into partners shaping a new future.							
	<i>Use cooperative conflict resolution.</i>				#3		21	
	<i>Conflict transformation and restorative justice, particularly in the form of Truth and Reconciliation Commissions.</i>		X					
	Focus on root causes of the conflict.	X	X					
	Comparative justice as used within a just-peace framework will require discernment about when to act impartially and when to take sides in order to avoid "false equivalence" and to opt preferentially for the poor and vulnerable.							X
	<b>Independent initiatives:</b> Take risks to cultivate trust as they surprise adversaries by doing what one's own side wishes others would do first.							
	Take independent initiatives to reduce threat.				#2			
	<b>Acknowledging responsibility:</b> Publicly recognize one's own part in creating the conditions for conflict, seeking repentance and asking forgiveness.							
	Acknowledge responsibility for conflict and injustice, and seek repentance and forgiveness.				#4		5, 13	

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<b>Reduction of weapons and weapons trade:</b> Reduce and remove the fuel that makes violent conflicts easier to start and harder to stop.								
	<i>Reduce offensive weapons and weapons trade.</i>				#9		36	
<b>Rebuilding of social norms and infrastructure:</b> Facilitate trauma healing, reparations, and reconciliation.								
	<i>Reconciliation: seek the kind of justice that envisions a holistic healing of the wounds of war.</i>	X						
	Restoration: repair the material, psychological and spiritual human infrastructure, taking responsibility for past wrongs through concrete restitution and reparation.	X		X				
	Practice trauma healing, both as an empowering act of compassion for victims and perpetrators of past injustices, and to prevent generational cycles of violence.						18	
	Patience and accompaniment with those "who have stereotyped and demonized their adversaries."						14	
<b>JUS AD PACEM</b>								
<b>At every stage of conflict – from prevention to post-conflict – attend to the social and ecological conditions that promote and sustain human thriving.</b>								
	<b>Relationality:</b> The peace that is God's <i>shalom</i> is preeminently the peace of right relationship; therefore act always in ways that invite, create, strengthen and heal relationships in ever-wider (horizontal) and deeper (vertical) directions.							
	Just intention – the JWT <i>ad bellum</i> criterion as appropriated within a just-peace framework requires that the objective purpose of any social intervention be							X

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	ordered to the common good rather than limited self-interests.							
	Proportionality – the JWT <i>ad bellum</i> criterion as appropriated within a just-peace framework requires that legitimate collective needs of a group or class be promoted through win-win (rather than zero-sum) solutions that build up civil society as a whole.							X
	Right relationship: create or restore just social relationships both vertically and horizontal, equally and in tandem.	X					3	
	<i>Reconciliation: seek the kind of justice that envisions a holistic healing of the wounds of war.</i>	X						
	<i>Encourage grassroots peacemaking groups and voluntary associations.</i>							
	Attend to religious or spiritual factors in public discourse, particularly through intra- and inter-religious dialogue.		X					
	Crucial role of women in conflict transformation and peacebuilding.							
	"We are committed to building cultures of peace in cooperation with people of other religious traditions, convictions and worldviews."							
	<b>Environmental sustainability:</b> action must contribute to the long-term interconnected well-being of human and non-human communities by addressing root causes of conflicts and nurturing ecological conditions that are life-giving.			X				

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	Sustainability: Develop structures that can help peace endure over time.	X							
	Virtue of solidarity entails environmental responsibility			X					
	Emphasis on vitality of connections with the earth and the integrity of creation.						3, 26, 34		
	<b>Just governance and the rule of law:</b> Respect and anticipate the need for positive social change to be institutionalized through robust civil society if it is to be sustainable.								
	Legitimate authority – the JWT <i>ad bellum</i> criterion as appropriated within a just-peace framework insists that government intervention in civil society requires the consent of the governed, and that such legitimacy is itself a social condition for peace.							X	
	Work with emerging cooperative forces in the international system.					#7			
	Strengthen the United Nations and international efforts for cooperation and human rights.					#8	23, 41		
	Unarmed civilian protection units and civilian-based defense – nonviolent forms of defense that engage the broader society against external threats or government overthrow.			X					
	Last resort: Recognizing that security grounded on respect for human life is among the conditions of peaceful human thriving, be prepared to risk one’s own life to protect the vulnerable; test claims that the exceptional use of armed force is necessary to do so by a demonstrated commitment of those charged with						X	24	X

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	enforcing the rule of law to do the same as they prioritize creative solutions to life-threatening conflicts and humanize perpetrators as well as victims through just policing. (See addendum below for further criteria to distinguish just policing from war.)							
	<b>Respect for human dignity and human rights:</b> cultivate actions that cultivate appreciation and are consistent with the equal dignity of all people, including adversaries, by ensuring human rights and cultivating empathy.							
	Noncombatant immunity – within a just-peace framework, the JWT <i>in bello</i> criterion reiterates the moral priority of the vulnerable in all struggles for justice, while warning against dehumanizing opponents even in the service of a just cause.							X
	Advance democracy, human rights, and religious liberty.					#5		
	Freedom from fear and want [aka “human security”].						11	
	Virtue of nonviolent peacemaking illuminates the equal dignity of all and our ultimate unity.		X					
	"The 'rule of law' is a critical framework for all such efforts" to do conflict transformation while exposing structural injustice, accompanying victims of violence, and strengthening civil society.						21	
	Respect for human dignity and human rights through care for the human needs of all.			X			25	
	<b>Human economics:</b> Direct marketplaces toward human ends and promote economic development with a focus on the poor and marginalized.							

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	Foster just and sustainable economic development [sustainability includes environmental]					#6		
	<i>Reduce offensive weapons and weapons trade.</i>					#9	36	
	Constructive programs with particular focus on the poor and marginalized.		X					
	Promote "economies of life" – i.e. directing the marketplace toward human ends.						37-38	

**Addendum: Criteria to distinguish just policing from war**

**To qualify as policing, not warmaking, any exercise of armed force that risks the life of either enforcement officers or alleged criminals must be consistent with larger just-peacemaking efforts and just-peace norms that build and strengthen humane and participatory social structures.**

Sustain and deepen accountability to the rule of law that embodies societal commitment to justice.

Strengthen the identification of enforcement officers with all people in their jurisdiction (i.e. build and maintain a we-are-they rather than an us-versus-them mentality).

Facilitate rather than undermine initiatives by civil society to govern itself through nonviolent policing and civil resistance, thus enabling progressive disarmament

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Adopt and strengthen community-policing models, which propitiate the above.

**Recognizing that it is also necessary to sanction inhumane and antisocial behaviors, keep potential risking of life exceptional, by developing unarmed civilian protection units and reserving any use of armed force to de-militarized policing wherein any risk of life or use of potentially lethal violence can truly be last resort.**

Any risk of life, including any use of armed force, must aim to apprehend suspected criminals (not destroy "enemies")

Such intervention comes only when the threat of death-dealing violence, injustice, or ecological destruction is immediate and grave, and the level of de-humanization is very high,

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Trial and punishment is then conducted by others (not the police themselves), through processes seeking restorative justice whenever possible.

Through a process of "transarmament," national self-defense itself is increasingly brought under the just policing model, through institutions of nonviolent civilian-based defense.

Any killing of others, even if legal, must not be glorified, but rather mourned, and all participants invited to go through a restorative justice process that recognizes killing as harmful to all involved.

Dismantle militarized models of policing, which undermine all of the above.

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<i>Note that criteria previously elaborated by just war theory may also be applicable, and even prove all the more operative once that theory is reframed within a just policing rubric, within a larger just peace framework.</i>								

Collated and synthesized by Gerald W. Schlabach (gwschlabach@stthomas.edu) from the following sources:

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