



Pope's Prayer Intention for April 2023: For a Culture of Peace & Non-Violence

*We Pray for the spread of peace & nonviolence,
by decreasing the use of weapons by States & citizens.*

Pope's Prayer USA Video, popesprayerusa.net

Pope Video, thepopevideo.org

Reflection by Jill Rauh

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Years ago, I traveled with Catholic Relief Services on a solidarity visit to [South Sudan](#), where I met young people affected by decades of violent conflict in their country.

Willy, a young father, described the pain of separation from his family, who had fled across the border due to violence. Hannah shared her sorrow at the loss of a family member.

Priscilla reflected on the developmental and educational opportunities she had lost during her childhood in a refugee camp.

Taban spoke words which likely echo those of many others in war-torn locations, such as Yemen, Syria, Somalia—and most recently, Ukraine: “If you ask me what peace is, I cannot answer. I do not know what peace is like. But I long to know it.”

What can we do to address the violence that affects so many of our brothers and sisters around the world?

- We can pray. Many wonderful tools are available, including the [Holy Hour for Peace](#). Pope Benedict XVI reminded us in [Sacramentum Caritatis](#) that through the celebration of the Eucharist, our universal communion is strengthened. As a result, “all who partake of the Eucharist must commit themselves to peacemaking in our world scarred by violence & war.”
- We can support the [work of Catholic Relief Services to build peace](#) in conflict-affected countries.
- We can [welcome refugee families into our homes](#) or invite others to discern this opportunity.
- We can work to address gun violence in our own country. Pope Francis made [this appeal](#) last June: “My heart is broken over the massacre at the primary school in Texas... It is time to say ‘no more’ to the indiscriminate trafficking of weapons.” Catholics can join with the U.S. Catholic bishops [in their call](#) for reasonable gun measures to protect children.
- Finally, we can seek to address violence in our own hearts by prayerfully examining how, through our attitudes, words, and actions, we can sometimes contribute to division and polarization instead of building a culture of encounter. This [examination of conscience](#) can help us as we reflect on [Pope Francis’ invitation to build peace in our hearts](#).

May we together respond this month to Pope Francis’ invitation to build a culture of peace and nonviolence!

[Leader] Daily offering prayer: O Jesus, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary,
I offer You my prayers, works, joys, and sufferings of this day
in union with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass throughout the world.

I offer them for all the intentions of Your Sacred Heart:

the salvation of souls, reparation for sin, and the reunion of all Christians.

I offer them for the intentions of our bishops and of all Apostles of Prayer,
and in particular for those recommended by our Holy Father this month—

April: For a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence. We Pray for the spread of peace and nonviolence, by decreasing the use of weapons by States and citizens.

Grace: We pray for the grace to examine well our own hearts, and from the love in our hearts be advocates of peace and nonviolence in our families, neighborhoods and however else the Lord may call us to.

[Reader 1] Scripture: “These are the things that you shall do: ⁹Speak the truth to one another; ¹⁰render in your gates judgments ¹¹that are true and make for peace; ¹²do not devise evil in your hearts against one another, and ¹³love no false oath, for all these things I hate, declares the Lord.” - Zechariah 8:16-17

[Reader 2] Quote: “Violence is not the cure for our broken world. Countering violence with violence leads at best to forced migrations and enormous suffering, because vast amounts of resources are diverted to military ends and away from the everyday needs of young people, families experiencing hardship, the elderly, the infirm and the great majority of people in our world. At worst, it can lead to the death, physical and spiritual, of many people, if not of all.

“More powerful than violence”

Nonviolence is sometimes taken to mean surrender, lack of involvement and passivity, but this is not the case. When Mother Teresa received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979, she clearly stated her own message of active nonviolence: “We in our family don’t need bombs and guns, to destroy to bring peace – just get together, love one another... And we will be able to overcome all the evil that is in the world”. For the force of arms is deceptive. “While weapons traffickers do their work, there are poor peacemakers who give their lives to help one person, then another and another and another”; for such peacemakers, Mother Teresa is “a symbol, an icon of our times.” (Pope Francis, [*Nonviolence: a Style of Politics for Peace*](#))

[Leader] Reflection questions: How can we follow Mother Teresa’s words and love those being affected by violence? Jill Rauh gave a couple of options on how we can address violence; which of those will you actively start today, and what are ones that you can look more into or pray about doing?