



GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

from an International Adult Faith Formation Best Practices Study

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A Best Practice: Committing to Peace

We talk a lot about peace, but how do we DO peace? We talk a lot about peace, but how do we actually do peace? That thought-provoking question invited adults at St. Kateri Tekakwitha Parish in Schenectady, New York, into a deeper exploration of what it means to practice peace every day.

Where did this idea and resource originate?

Sr. Susan Zemgulis, OP Administrator of the Dominican Retreat and Conference Center, Niskayuna, NY, and Dr. Joy Galarneau, Program Director at the Center, created a peace curriculum for children.

Joyce Solomini, retreat staff at the Center and a parishioner at St. Kateri Tekakwitha Parish, adapted it for adults from the curriculum Sue and Joy created and piloted in two Catholic schools. Using the outline, Joyce made suggestions on how it could be used for adults, leaving leaders free to design the sessions however they wanted within the outline.

Kristine Rooney, Pastoral Associate for Adult Faith Formation and Pastoral Care at St. Kateri Tekakwitha, has offered it for the adults of the parish.

What was the process for this program?

Once a month for eight months, a particular peacebuilding skill was explored through a 30-40 minute Zoom gathering.

- The flow of each session was built on the knowledge that we are each beloved, then explored peace within ourselves, culminating with being peace to/for others.
- Each theme included
 - a Scripture passage (rooting the skill in Jesus)
 - a reflection/activity
 - a practice to live each day

Who facilitated the sessions?

Kris invited various parishioners to lead the sessions each month. For example, the topic for the second session is "Peacemakers befriend their feelings." The parish cantor, who has 4 young children with special needs, recently went through brain surgery for cancer. Understandingly, she has been dealing with befriending her feelings in this adventure (she prefers that word over journey). Kris asked her to lead that month's session (which was amazing and inspiring).

What did each session include?

1) *Peacemakers know they are beloved*

- Scripture: Jesus' Baptism by John
- Poem for reflection: *Belovedness* by Jan Richardson
- Reflection/discussion – how do you know you are beloved?
Example: a five-year old says he is beloved by his mom because "I know my name is safe in her mouth."
- Practice: Daily begin your prayer with – "You are my beloved, _____ (say your name)"
- Practice: Breathe in Jesus, breathe out peace.

2) *Peacemakers befriend their feelings*

- Scripture: Prompt the participants to think of places in Scripture where Jesus expresses his feelings – cries, shows fear, anger, laughter, frustration.
- Reflection: Feelings are neutral and need to be felt, but we have choices on how to act on them. We need to be careful not to let our feelings "eat us up" or cause us to make choices we will regret later. Discussion on how we handle our feelings.
- Practice: Back to Jesus....he stays grounded in God and in who he is and his mission. Goes to a quiet place to be still and listen. Use breathing to bring us into the quiet. Practice counting to 10 before we react.

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3) *Peacemakers are Joyful*

- Scripture: I Peter 1:8 or John 16:24
- Reflection: *Little Book of Joy* by Desmond Tutu and Dalai Lama (also show *Book of Joy* by same authors) and discuss difference between joy and happiness.
- Practice: Be on the watch for “joy stealers” and hold on to what gives you joy (even in the hard times)!

4) *Peacemakers are Grateful*

- Scripture: Colossians 3:17, Philippians 4:6
- Reflection: video on gratitude by David Steindl-Rast, or Brene Brown. Gratitude stems from remembering our belovedness, God’s mercy and faithfulness. It’s for every circumstance including times of distress. It can involve prayer (praise), worship, and living our daily tasks with a grateful heart.
- Practice: Keeping a gratitude journal.

5) *Peacemakers are Patient*

- Scripture: Galatians 6:9, various psalms 27:14, 37:7, 40:1
- Reflection: *Waiting is Hard* – the children’s book by Mo Willems (for a little humor and truth!). Reflection on the impulse of instant gratification. Waiting renews strength, teaches us to trust God’s timing even when it feels slow, develops our courage. Examples in life where participants found the best things take time and patience.
- Practice: Pray for patient waiting using the words of Bishop Untener for a Cardinal John Dearden homily, Prophets of a Future Not Our Own (often attributed to Oscar Romero), and the words of Teilhard de Chardin (Trust the slow work of God...).

6) *Peacemakers show compassion*

- Scripture: Jesus healing the paralytic whose friends lowered him through the roof
- Reflection on Scripture: Place yourself in the scene....meditation.
- Discussion: Compassion is about a move from “me” to “we” / a sense that what happens to one of us happens to all.

Solidarity where there is no “us and them,” only “us.” How do we show compassion on a daily basis – through words and actions?

- Practice: Daily Examen

7) *Peacemakers show forgiveness*

- Scripture: Luke 15 – Prodigal Son story, or 70x7
- Reflection on Forgiveness: what it is/what it’s not. Forgiveness is about releasing ourselves from the power the hurt has over our lives. It is about freeing ourselves to live more fully without the burden of the hurt. Forgiving is not forgetting! (The famous “Two Wolves” tells a story about an elder telling his grandson that two fighting wolves live inside every person. One bad (anger, greed) and one good (peace, love and forgiveness). When asked which one wins, the elder replies, “The one you feed.”)
- Practice: Reflect on what hurts are burdening you and find ways to heal, perhaps the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Contact someone you may have been estranged from and try to reconnect anew.

8) *Peacemakers are dreamers*

- Scripture: The Reign(Kingdom) of God
- Reflection: If our earth could be re-named “Planet Peace” what would it look like? How does that resemble the “dream” of God? We see glimpses of it: God’s dream is already here, but not yet in its fullness. With the help of the Holy Spirit, we can work toward its fulfillment, confident that it will be fulfilled by God at the end of time!
- Practice: How can I build the dream of God in my own corner of the world – in myself, my family, my community, my world, Earth?

Some Resources

- [The Little Book of Conflict Transformation](#)
- [Pax Christi USA](#)

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- [Catholic Nonviolence Initiative](#)
- [21 Resources to Plan Your Next Peacebuilding Training](#)
- [Living Peacefully](#); 10 Best Tips for Finding Peace on Earth
- [Peacebuilding Learning Resources](#)
- [Building Peace](#): Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies
- [Peace Academy](#)
- [Reflective Peacebuilding](#)
- [Greater Good Resources for Peace and Conflict](#)
- [Best Websites](#): Peace Studies: K-12 & Adult Peace Education
- [Actions for a peaceful world](#)



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Additional ideas for Adult Faith Formation Planning and Best Practices can be found in:

- *Deepening Faith: Adult Faith Formation in the Parish*
<https://www.litpress.org/Products/4652/Deepening-Faith>
- *Guided by the Directory for Catechesis: Transforming the Vision and Practice of Parish Catechesis*
<https://twentythirdpublications.com/products/guided-by-the-directory-for-catechesis>
- Lifelong Faith Training: <https://www.lifelongfaithtraining.com/>
- Lifelong Faith: <https://www.lifelongfaith.com/>
- Seasons of Adult Faith website: <http://adultfaith.weebly.com/>
- The Seasons of Adult Faith Formation:
https://www.lifelongfaith.com/uploads/5/1/6/4/5164069/seasons_of_aff_journal_special_issue.pdf

Ultimately, we have just one moral duty:
to reclaim large areas of peace in ourselves,
more and more peace,
and to reflect it towards others.

And the more peace there is in us,
the more peace there will also be
in our troubled world.

~ Etty Hillesum