A Prayer for the Courage to Love Our Enemies
by Dave Robinson

God of all creation,
Open our hearts and eyes so that we might see the face of our adversary, And recognize, as you do, that they are our sister, our brother.

God of Justice,
You call us to live in truth. Give us the strength to admit our past transgressions, And to build new partnerships with old enemies.

God of Peace,
You call us to love our enemies. Give us the wisdom to translate that love into a choice for dialogue over demonization, diplomacy over military confrontation.

God of Nonviolence,
Lead us on your path to peace that we might walk humbly with you.

We ask this in the name of the One whose peace we seek, Jesus the Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, now and forever.

Amen.

ACTION SUGGESTIONS

Pray for a peaceful resolution to our nation’s long-standing conflict with Iran. Incorporate in your prayer, the prayer in this brochure.

Speak out and educate your community on the history of U.S.-Iran relations and the need for dialogue over military confrontation. Make copies of this brochure and put them on your church’s literature table.

Write a letter to the editor supporting the need for comprehensive discussions with Iran leading to normalized relations. Point out the difference between “preconditions” whereby Iran must accept in advance an outcome determined by the U.S., and preparations for dialogue that are essential to a successful engagement.

Contact Congressional and Presidential candidates and urge them to commit to pursuing a diplomatic resolution to all long-standing concerns that both the U.S. and Iran deem important.

Participate in the Pax Christi USA-endorsed Campaign for a New American Policy on Iran; go to www.newiranpolicy.org.

Visit www.paxchristiusa.org regularly for ongoing updates and action suggestions on avoiding a war with Iran.

Join a delegation to Iran. Fellowship of Reconciliation continues to send delegations to affect people-to-people diplomacy. Delegations are scheduled in August and November; www.forusa.org/programs/iran or 845-358-4601.

RESOURCES

The National Iranian-American Council, www.niacouncil.org, provides excellent analysis and resources on understanding the current, as well as long-standing disagreements offers an opportunity to employ nonviolence at the pre-confrontation stage—before great violence is unleashed.

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Nonviolence and Dialogue with Iran

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I Want To Join Pax Christi USA 
and Help Make A Difference!

Pax Christi USA strives to create a world that reflects the Peace of Christ by exploring, articulating, and witnessing to the call of Christian nonviolence. This work begins in personal life and extends to communities of reflection and action to transform structures of society. Pax Christi USA rejects war, preparations for war, and every form of violence and domination. It advocates primacy of conscience, economic and social justice, and respect for creation.

Pax Christi USA commits itself to peace education and, with the help of its bishop members, promotes the gospel imperative of peacemaking as a priority in the Catholic Church in the United States. Through the efforts of all its members and in cooperation with other groups, Pax Christi USA works toward a more peaceful, just and sustainable world.

I support Pax Christi USA’s Statement of Purpose and wish to become a member.

Name _____________________________
Address ____________________________
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Enclosed is my membership donation of $50   __$35   __$75   __$100
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___ Parish Sponsor Program information
___ Youth/Young Adult Forum Information
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___ Information about joining a local group
___ Youth/Young Adult Forum Information
___ Information on becoming a Sustainer
Nonviolence and Dialogue with Iran

dave Robinson, Pax Christi USA Executive Director

How can nonviolence inform our nation’s approach to those with whom we are in conflict? Conflicts rarely become full-blown in an instant; instead, they develop over time. At each point in the process, missteps, a lack of imagination, and a lack of authentic commitment to resolving the conflict in a mutually beneficial way foster a deepening entrenchment that eliminates options rather than illuminating them. Soon, both sides are at an impasse and the “last resort” argument to use force becomes the focus of debate. Sadly, it seems that only at this point is nonviolence even discussed, and then only to dismiss it as an unrealistic alternative.

But what if nonviolence were to inform the first stages of conflict engagement? I have come to believe with all my heart that nonviolence is a much deeper and more comprehensive concept than the avoidance of the use of military force. Gospel nonviolence is about right relationship. It is a way of being with one another. Nonviolence, therefore, is the fruit of truth and love—the foundations of Catholic Social Teaching and the legacy of Jesus’ Good News.

Nonviolence requires a commitment to truth—both our truth and the truth of the “other.” It seeks to establish justice in the relationship motivated by the love to which Jesus explicitly calls his followers. And nonviolence seeks mutuality, a coming together of divergent views in a respectful atmosphere that genuinely seeks a settlement beneficial to all sides.

Today, the stand-off between the United States and Iran over a range of current as well as long-standing disagreements offers an opportunity to employ nonviolence at the pre-confrontation stage—before great violence is unleashed. Unfortunately, the Bush Administration has refused to embrace the practical and potentially fruitful path of nonviolence through dialogue and engagement and instead offers only ultimatums, sanctions, and preparations for military action. None of these approaches offers much hope.

In 2003, under the leadership of reformist President Khatami, Iran made the Bush Administration a remarkable offer: they would recognize Israel, end aid to Hamas and Hezbollah, and negotiate a suspension of their uranium enrichment—all for a chance to normalize relations with the United States. The Bush Administration dismissed this offer out of hand. Subsequently, based on internal Iranian political and economic realities, a new president was elected. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the fiery populist mayor of Tehran, a fundamentalist, and a leader in the 1979 revolution against the Shah and his Western benefactors, soon found the Iranian economic problems much more difficult to solve than he originally believed. So he turned to an old and reliable strategy common to politicians of every culture: he began blaming Iran’s problems on others, demonizing old enemies (the United States and Britain), and championing the development of an old and reliable strategy common to politicians of every culture: he began blaming Iran’s problems on others, demonizing old enemies (the United States and Britain), and championing the development of a truly transformative U.S. policy with Iran. Candidates of all parties must be challenged to employ a new approach to our relations with our global neighbors, particularly with those with whom we have a history of mistrust and disagreement, like Iran. Wisdom and courage must be recognized as the indispensable elements of U.S. leadership that lead us not to false patriotism and brute force, but rather to constructive dialogue grounded in truth and hope.

What is this “love” that Jesus calls us to if not the genuine concern for the “other”? Love is a harsh master inasmuch as it calls us out of our comfortable, self-centered denials, and asks us to be truthful about our own motivations and goals, as well as being just in our evaluations of the motivations and goals of our adversary. This is the power of nonviolence: the ability to transform ourselves as much as those with whom we are engaged. Such mutual transformation must become the preeminent goal of U.S. foreign policy if we are to break the malevolent spiral of violence upon which current and long-standing U.S. policy rests.

In this dynamic, engagement based in truth and love is hardly appeasement. It is, in fact, a supreme act of courage and wisdom. Only a nation with true inner strength and conviction can embrace nonviolent dialogue and engagement as national policy. Similarly, it is a profound weakness when a nation refuses to accept the truth of its own history, refuses to take responsibility for past actions, and fails to engage in authentic nonviolent dialogue with adversaries. The rush to military solutions hides such startling weakness under the cloak of false patriotism and pushes forward the old lie that “might makes right.”

But right now, what we have is a new moment. As the presidential election nears and concrete policy proposals are evaluated by U.S. voters, we who embrace nonviolence must lead the call for a truly transformative U.S. policy with Iran. Candidates of all parties must be challenged to employ a new approach to our relations with our global neighbors, particularly with those with whom we have a history of mistrust and disagreement, like Iran. Wisdom and courage must be recognized as the indispensable elements of U.S. leadership that lead us not to false patriotism and brute force, but rather to constructive dialogue grounded in truth and hope.

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