CST session 3: Peace in the CST tradition

Immaculate Conception parish 24 January 2023

Good to be back. Start tonight by looking at peace in the CST tradition, then Duncan will share practical examples of peacebuilding from his own experience.

One thing we have learned about CST since we began thinking about it together a few months ago is that while its roots lie deep in our shared biblical inheritance, its development is shaped by the church's response to our changing world. Perhaps nowhere is this more true than in relation to peace and peacebuilding.

So what I want to do tonight is look briefly at 3 things **Ppt**

- Biblical understanding of peace
- The emergence of the just war theory (which came back on the agenda with Russia's invasion of Ukraine last year)
- Change and development from the 20th century.

I want to give you a sense of the strands which make up the peacebuilding tradition and how they have developed.

1 Biblical understanding: Shalom **Ppt**

Not just the absence of war.

The biblical understanding of peace is well conveyed by the Hebrew word ***shalom***: peace is not just the absence of war; it entails an abundance of life in community which includes religious, family, social, economic and political dimensions. Think of Isaiah's peaceful community where the wolf lies down with the lamb (Is 11:6); or the Book of Revelation's new creation, when there will be no more tears and death (Rv 21:4). That future hope draws us on to work for the coming of God's kingdom in the world of today.

2 Just war theory **Ppt**

The just war theory began to emerge during the fourth and fifth centuries, when Christianity became the main religion of the Holy Roman Empire and the church became more closely tied to the state.

We find it in the writing of St Augustine, who believed that the true goal of social life was to reach a form of peace that is not merely the absence of war, but the tranquility of just social relations lived out in in our families, church and civic life.

But Augustine also understood that conflict is part and parcel of sinful humanity, with its disordered desire for power and domination. So he developed an account of legitimate action by a Christian government in self defence of the body politic. War was both a manifestation of human sinfulness, *and* something that might be necessary in a fallen world to restrain evil and defend the right ordering of a community. In this context, war could become a courageous act in pursuit of justice and neighbour love.

Thomas Aquinas developed the argument further in the 13th century and set out the conditions necessary for a war to be considered just.

- There must be a just case (repelling an attack, righting a wrong, punishing evil);
- There must be a legitimate authority to execute the action of war (an authority capable of defending and securing the common good);
- There must be right intention towards establishing peace.

Later thinkers added that there should be

- a reasonable prospect of success
- non-combatant immunity
- proportionality between the harm caused and the good to be achieved

(Francisco di Vitoria 1492-1546).

This same historical period saw the foundation of religious orders and Christian communities which offered space for the development of radically non violent Christian witness. This was to provide another strand of Christian peacemaking.

3 Change and development 20th century Ppt

Modern warfare, the experience of three popes and the Second Vatican Council

Teaching on peace in the 20th century was framed by two world wars and the coming of the atomic age. The impact of modern warfare, the calling of the Second Vatican Council, and the experience of three popes – Pius XII, John XXIII and Paul VI – helped shape the teaching.

Three popes

Pius XII was a lifelong Vatican diplomat who witnessed the rise of fascism, Nazism and the growing power of communism. He was pope during the entire length of WW2 and the division of Europe into Eastern and Western blocs.

As Angello Roncalli, John XXIII served as a chaplain in WW1 and was sent to France as nuncio towards the end of WW2 as the country faced the task of rebuilding. He was also the Vatican's observer at UNESCO (educational scientific and cultural organisation).

Archbishop Montini, later Pope Paul VI, was Pius XII's closest diplomatic advisor and would have known Roncalli during the time Europe was devastated by war.

Their experience set in motion a trajectory that continues today which challenges the presumption in favour of war as an instrument of peace. Let's listen for a moment to them…

Pius XII argued that recourse to war should be less frequent because of its devastating effects, and narrowed the ground for making a just case for war.

John XXIII asserted that it is 'contrary to reason' in the atomic age to hold that war is a suitable way to restore rights which have been violated'. (*Pacem et Terris*, 1963, n 127).

Paul VI made this urgent plea at the UN in 1965: 'No more war! … It is peace that must guide the destinies of people and of all humankind'.

John Paul II, who was a young man in occupied Poland during WW2, visited Hiroshima in 1981, where he declared that 'Clashes of ideologies, aspirations and needs can and must be… resolved by means other than war and violence. Humanity owes it to itself to settle differences and conflicts by peaceful means'.

Vatican II: justice, peace and development *ppt*

The Second Vatican Council, called by John XXIII to update and renew the church's teaching, and continued by Pope Paul VI on John XXIII's death in 1963, ran from 1962-65. Its final document, The Church in the Modern World, underlined the link between peace and justice:

'Peace cannot be limited to a mere absence of war… it is something that is built up day after day, in the pursuit of an order intended by God, which implies a more perfect form of justice among people' (GS 78).

The arms race is described as 'one of the greatest curses on the human race, and the harm that it inflicts on the poor cannot be tolerated' (n 82).

Vatican II also announced the creation of a new pontifical commission for justice and peace, which in turn led to commissions at national and diocesan level. They were to 'awaken in the People of God a full awareness of their mission in the world in the light of the gospel and the social teaching of the church'.

Paul VI began the tradition of the annual World Day of Peace which we continue to observe each January. In his 1972 message he said succinctly:

'If you want peace, work for justice'.

Link with development

Paul VI also linked peace with the growing awareness of the vast gulf between rich and poor nations. In 1967, in his encyclical, Populorum Progressio (On the development of Peoples), he wrote: 'The hungry nations of the world cry out to the peoples blessed with abundance' and the church must respond…'
'Extreme disparity… in economic, social and educational levels provokes discord, often putting peace in jeopardy'.

Development, he said, is the new name for peace.

And development was not just about economics: true development had to 'promote the good of every person and of the whole person'. We will return to the issue of integral human development in our final session.

A growing presumption against war **Ppt**

In his World Day of Peace message in 1999, John Paull II summarized the evolving papal outlook on war and peace:

‘Since the end of WW2 and the beginning of the atomic age, the attitude of… the Catholic Church has been clear. It has continually sought to contribute to peace and to build a world that would not have recourse to war to solve disputes’. (World Day of Peace Message , 1999)

What we see is the development of a *presumption against war* and a *distancing from the just war theory*, which remains as part of the tradition.

This presumption continues in the papacy of Pope Francis. He wrote in 2020:

‘Every war leaves our world worse than it was before. War is a failure of politics and of humanity... Let us not remain mired in theoretical discussions but touch the wounded flesh of the victims… Let us ask the victims themselves. Let us think of the refugees and displaced, those who suffered the effects of atomic radiation or chemical attacks, the mothers who lost their children and the boys and girls maimed or deprived of their childhood. Let us hear the true stories of these victims of violence, look at reality through their eyes, and listen with an open heart to the stories they tell. In this way, we will be able to grasp the abyss of evil at the heart of war. Nor will it trouble us to be deemed naïve for choosing peace’ (Fratelli Tutti 261).

Here Francis makes a link between peace and the option for the poor.

To sum up… **Ppt**

When we look back at the last 60 years, we see change and development in the way the strands of the church’s teaching on peace are understood, and how they relate to one another and to us. Peace is the fruit of justice, its new name is development, it is a central concern of the church at all levels.

We have seen the just war theory pushed out from the centre of church teaching and the pacifist emphasis, which we saw in the early communities of non violence, re-integrated.

This is in part because of papal reflection on the advent of nuclear war, the church’s new openness to the world at Vatican II, and the work and witness of grassroots movements.

Catholic peace movements were publishing reflections on war, peace and non violence from the 1920s. Many of them drew directly on biblical sources.

There were activists like Dorothy Day, founder of the Catholic Worker, and organisations like the international Catholic peace movement, Pax Christi, founded in the wake of WW2 in 1945, which continue to provide resources for peacebuilding.

They in turn highlight the contribution made to the developing understanding of CST at national and local level. Both Duncan and I served on the first Scottish J&P commission in the early 1980s.

Scottish Bishops

I cannot end without mentioning the contribution of the Scottish Bishops' Conference which, with the Clyde Submarine Base on its doorstep and the help of the J&P commission, produced one of the most significant statements on peace and disarmament in Europe in 1982. If it is immoral to use nuclear weapons, it argued, it is immoral to threaten to use them. The development of church teaching, as we have seen, is incremental.

Among the challenges we face today is to reflect further on the experience of Christian peacebuilders – many of them women – and ask what we might learn from them. Think of Baroness May Blood from Belfast, one of the founders of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition, whom we discussed at our last meeting. We can learn from the work of people like her on issues like conflict resolution, reconciliation, truth telling and forgiveness, which can all be part of the peacebuilding process. The tradition will surely go on to incorporate new insights and refine existing themes.

And to give you an example of what peacebuilding looks like in practice, Duncan will now share concrete examples from his own experience.

Thank you.