

Major themes from the 2012 Seminar on New Challenges for Catholic Peacebuilding (Rome):

- The Church is not satisfied with a negative peace, defined as a cessation of violence, but goes further and seeks to build a positive peace rooted in the dignity of the human person and a commitment to the common good.
- In addition to civil wars and inter-state conflicts, the Church is addressing new kinds of conflicts involving drug wars and general lawlessness; violent competition for scarce resources; and the instability, injustices, and environmental degradation often associated with extractive industries.
- Church leaders at the local and national level often risk their lives speaking out against repressive policies, defending the rights of minorities, engaging violent actors in efforts to advance peace processes, and mediating between governments and insurgents.
- As the Church engages perpetrators of violence and seeks to hold them accountable for abuses, more attention is being paid to the need to also accompany victims of conflict by insisting on their right to restitution of land and property, and their need for healing and help in rebuilding their lives.
- The victimization of women, in particular, needs special attention, even as women themselves provide powerful, but often unrecognized, leadership in peacebuilding.
- Where Catholicism is a tiny minority, especially in Asia, the Church often is a spark – a catalyst – of inter-religious collaboration and social witness.
- The Church's peacebuilding is most effective when it is coordinated and integrated across and within sectors; while the Church lets a thousand flowers bloom, she must also make them into a bouquet.
- The Church's considerable and diverse experience in peacebuilding provides valuable insights that can inform the further development of a theology and ethics of peacebuilding.
- While peacebuilding principles and practices are often considered a subset of Catholic social teaching and action, understanding peacebuilding as our Christian vocation gives it greater coherence and greater theological and spiritual depth.
- Peacebuilding often involves a profound challenge of relating international human rights norms, which are often understood in highly individualistic ways, to cultural contexts with a more communitarian vision in which communal rights take precedence over individual rights.
- The Church's rich understanding of the requirements for reconciliation on the part of individuals, as well as communities, offers a helpful corrective to the more limited understanding of reconciliation that is promoted by governments and international institutions.