

Walking In, and With, a Wounded World

One Concern Articulated Below:

Rethinking the Jesuit Approach to 'Peace and Reconciliation'



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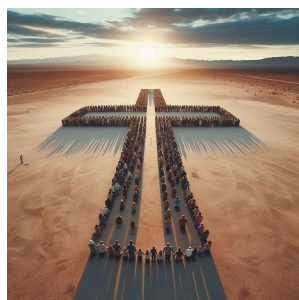
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The Society of Jesus has a distinguished and sacrificial history in peace and justice work — from Rutilio Grande in El Salvador to the martyrs of the UCA, from social centres in South Asia to the Justice and Ecology Secretariat. GC 32's landmark declaration that *"the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement"* of the Jesuit mission remains foundational. And yet, there is a quiet crisis embedded within much of this work: the *structures* through which peace is pursued have often remained hegemonic even when the intentions have been prophetic. Peace work can be institutionalised, professionalised, program-managed, and thereby domesticated — absorbed into the very system it seeks to transform.

To bring about change in the Jesuits' peace work, here are 3 intertwined pathways.

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Going Synodal with Peace



The first rethinking demands that the Jesuit approach to peace become genuinely synodal — not merely self-referential consultation or collaboration within the Society, but radically open to walking with others beyond Jesuit walls. The 2022 JusPax Europe declaration at Assisi explicitly named synodality and integral ecology as two aspects of the same Franciscan-Ignatian vision articulated in *Evangelii Gaudium*, calling them to "fertilise each other". Pope Leo XIV, speaking to Jesuit Major Superiors in October 2025, affirmed that *"the synodal journey calls all of us to listen more deeply to the*

Holy Spirit and to one another, so that our structures and ministries may be more agile, more transparent, and more responsive to the Gospel". Synodality, at its core, is the ancient ecclesial practice of *walking together* — and the Jesuit African Conference envisions a synodal church as one that "better embodies compassion, humility, and inclusiveness".

For peace work, going synodal entails a profound epistemological shift: the Jesuit community must *cease to be the primary subject of peace work* and become a *companion in a larger, pluriversal movement*. It means sitting with Dalit communities, indigenous knowledge keepers, Muslim peace scholars, Buddhist engaged activists, eco-feminists, and youth organisers — not to invite them into a Jesuit framework, but to allow their wisdom to reshape the Jesuit understanding of peace itself. Ignatian discernment, practised communally and extended beyond the Church, is uniquely suited for this: it is already a methodology of deep listening, of *finding God in all things*, including in the voice of the Other. Going synodal with peace, then, is not a dilution of Jesuit identity — it is its fullest expression.

The counter-hegemonic dimension here is critical. When the Jesuit community claims to *lead* peace initiatives — convening conferences, producing documents, running programs — it risks replicating the *traditional intellectual* posture: articulating ideas from above rather than growing them from within the struggling community. A synodal peace movement repositions the Jesuit as a *bridge-builder and fellow pilgrim*, not an architect. It transforms the Jesuit network — spread across 112 countries — from a *delivery system for peace programs* into a *living web of solidarity*, listening, and co-creation. This is the move from leadership to followership, from institution to movement, from project to praxis.

Education for Peace, Not ‘Peace Education’

The second rethinking concerns the Society's entire educational apostolate— its schools, colleges, universities, and formation programs. The distinction is not cosmetic. Peace education adds peace content to an existing curriculum; education for peace transforms the curriculum, the pedagogy, the relationships, and the culture of the institution itself. A Jesuit school that teaches a module on conflict resolution while maintaining hierarchical classrooms, competitive grading, and a colonial canon is practising peace education. A Jesuit school that restructures itself around dialogue, ecological embeddedness, decolonised knowledge, contemplative practice, and community accountability is practising ‘education for peace’.



UNESCO's 2026 Recommendation on Education for Peace places this distinction at the heart of global educational policy, calling for education that "brings about lasting peace and fosters human development" — not merely teaches *about* peace. Jesuit education, rooted in the *Ratio Studiorum* and *cura personalis*, has always claimed to form *the whole person*. But formation of the whole person in a fractured, ecologically devastated, and socially unjust world demands that education become a *practice of peace in itself* — not preparation for peace as a future condition. It demands what the *eco-social-spiritual immersion*: learning that is embodied in the land, embedded in community, and animated by the Spirit.

There is a need to examine the invisible frames — the epistemological, cultural, and cosmological assumptions — that shape what counts as knowledge, what counts as success,

and who counts as a knower. Jesuit education has historically privileged cognitive intelligence, Western scientific frameworks, and institutional credentialing — all of which, however well-intentioned, can function as hegemonic filters that marginalise ecological intelligence, spiritual intelligence, oral and embodied knowing, and the wisdom of the periphery. Education for peace in the Jesuit tradition must undergo *conscientisation at the institutional level*: a collective examination of how the school itself — its walls, its rankings, its language of instruction, its hidden curriculum — either perpetuates or dismantles the structures that produce violence, inequality, and alienation.

The Community Organiser/Organic Intellectual as Eco-Activist, Social Activist and Peace Activist



The third and most generative rethinking concerns the *formation* of the Jesuit missionary and the lay collaborator. Here, the concept of the organic intellectual becomes indispensable — and profoundly consonant with the Ignatian tradition of the *contemplative in action*. Organic intellectuals emerge *from within* the community, carry the community's experience in their

bones, use critical thought not to rise above the community but to give it greater clarity and power, and combine theory with praxis. They are not legitimated by academic credentials or institutional position — they are legitimated by *fidelity to the people and the Earth*. They are grounded in compassion and truth.

A Jesuit peace worker, formed as an organic intellectual, is not primarily a *peace professional* — someone trained in conflict-resolution methodologies and deployed to conflict zones. Rather, they are a *community organiser* who, through deep and sustained solidarity with the marginalised, *becomes* a peace activist, eco-activist, and social activist simultaneously — because they have learned, from the community itself, that these struggles are one. Caste oppression, ecological destruction, economic exploitation, and cultural violence are not separate issues requiring separate specialists. They are woven from the same thread of domination, and the organic intellectual sees the whole cloth. This is precisely what is called the *coloniality of power* — and is called *pluriversal thinking*: understanding that there are many worlds held within one world, each with its own cosmology, its own sense of peace, its own way of living well.

The Jesuit Social Justice and Ecology Secretariat already names ecology, migration, right to education, mining justice, and peace and human rights as interconnected concerns. But naming interconnection at the policy level is not the same as forming people who *live* that interconnection from the ground up. The organic intellectual peace worker does not move between these issues as a specialist moves between departments — they inhabit the integrated reality of a community whose life is simultaneously shaped by all these forces. Formation of such persons requires *immersion*, not instruction; *accompaniment*, not supervision; *long-term rootedness*, not short-term projects.

A Call to Metanoia: Three Movements

The case being made here is ultimately a call to *metanoia* — a turning around of the heart and the structure — in three movements.

- First, go synodal with peace: shed the institutional posture of the convener and become the companion, the listener, the co-pilgrim who walks with the full diversity of humanity's peace wisdom, beyond Church, beyond West, beyond institution.
- Second, make education itself the practice of peace: let every Jesuit classroom, campus, and formation house become a laboratory of nonviolence, decolonised knowledge, contemplative presence, and ecological belonging — not teaching about peace but *being* a peace culture.
- Third, form and celebrate the community organiser or organic intellectual: the Jesuit collaborator who is rooted in community, who carries multiple activist identities without compartmentalising them, who practices the *contemplative activism* that runs from Ignatius -- who understands that *reconciliation with God, with one another, and with creation* is not three separate missions but one indivisible movement of the Spirit.

The Society of Jesus, with its global reach, its intellectual tradition, and its commitment to the *magis* — the more, the greater glory — has everything it needs to make this turn. What it requires is the courage that its own martyrs modelled: not the courage to manage peace from a safe distance, but the courage to *become* peace from within the wounds of the world.

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