

Name: _____ School or Parish: _____

PEACEBUILDERS INITIATIVE – PEACE PROJECT FOUNDATION

What is a Peace Project? The Peacebuilders Initiative does not end after the Summer Program. Nor is its impact limited to those students who attend. Through the Peace Projects initiated by the participants, the program's impact reaches beyond the circle of the participants. Over the course of the year, you will enhance your Christian leadership skills by creating and developing a project to advance peacebuilding and reconciliation in your school, parish, or community. You can address any one of the many issues, which divide society and prevent peacebuilding and reconciliation from thriving. You develop the project in consultation with the Peacebuilders Partner from your school or parish and your Mentors. As you prepare and implement the project, your Partner and Mentors will help you reflect on the way such activities deepen and express your faith.

Criteria – Though a Peace Project can take many different forms, depending on the needs or opportunities present in your particular community, there are certain elements that must be a part of every project. Catholic Social Teaching provides specific principles (indicated in **bold**) that should guide the creation and implementation of the Peace Project. Additionally, action on behalf of justice must be rooted in and sustained by prayerful reflection. Therefore, every Peace Project should:

1. Be rooted in your local community. (**Dignity of the Human Person, Participation**)
2. Build and strengthen relationships between individuals and between communities. (**Participation, Solidarity**)
3. Involve and honor the voices of everyone your project will affect. (**Dignity of the Human Person, Participation**)
4. Address a need or opportunity within your community to build peace and justice, especially one concerning the poor, vulnerable, and/or young. (**Option for the Poor, Solidarity**)
5. Incorporate prayer and/or reflection for and with all those affiliated with the project. (**Participation, Solidarity**)

Possible Projects:

- Developing a joint retreat program between racially diverse high schools with a focus on cultural diversity and tolerance.
- Researching well-known and/or local Peacebuilders. Create educational tools such as a movie, one-act play, art show, musical concert to convey their stories, struggles and accomplishments in the areas of peace and reconciliation.
- Becoming a "Peace Educator" by giving talks or creating skits about peace and non-violent strategies for relationship building to elementary schools.
- Organizing and hosting a lecture series on racial tensions.
- Organizing field trips to service sites for fellow students interested in seeing Catholic peacebuilding in action. Invite guest speakers from each site to come to your school, youth group, or parish.
- Hosting a workshop on conflict resolution and reconciliation.
- Beginning a Recycling Program.
- Starting a "Read To Feed" Program in your parish school community with Heifer International, an organization dedicated to world hunger through sustainable agriculture and livestock.
- Hosting Special Olympics events.
- Beginning a chapter of Pax Christi or Amnesty International in your school or parish community.
- Sponsoring a Hunger Awareness Week.

The Three Pillars of a Peace Project

Peacebuilders never really work alone; our work as Christian leaders consists of building bridges between communities in ways that express our faith. This faith informs us of the dignity of each human being, and puts the well-being of people—especially the poor, vulnerable, and young—at the forefront. Please use the questions below to help you think about how you might design a project that engages all three of these “conversation partners”:

Partner Institution: What are its values, resources, gifts, needs for justice and peace, i.e., what is my school’s/parish’s mission statement, who is underserved in our own walls, what are we already doing that could use more support, etc.?

Community Networks: What networks/groups in our community are working to serve the needs for greater peace and justice either here or across the globe, i.e. sister parishes, sister schools, established mission trips, etc.?

Values of the Church: What have I learned about the Church this week and its values, i.e., Catholic Social Teaching (dignity, solidarity, preferential option for the poor, etc.), mission, etc.?

Reflection Questions – Think about a possible project you might be interested in helping create. How does your vision align with the Principles of Catholic Social Teaching that we’ve discussed this week? (For your reference, the Principles of Catholic Social Teaching that underlie these questions are in **bold**)

1. Where and with whom would this project take place?
2. How do you envision your project building or strengthening relationships within your community and between communities? (**Participation, Solidarity**)

3. How does your project involve and honor the voices of all the “stakeholders”, especially those you are seeking to serve? (**Participation, Solidarity**)

4. What need(s) or opportunity(ies) for peace and justice are you working to address with partners, local networks and values of the Church? (**Dignity of the Human Person, Option for the Poor, Solidarity**)

5. Where are you building on the peacebuilding others have done or creating a foundation for future peacebuilding? (**Solidarity**)

6. In what ways are you connecting your action on behalf of peace and justice with prayerful reflection?

7. What are three key places of growth that you personally hope for from this project? What are three key places of growth that you envision for your community?