

CHRIST IS OUR PEACE (*Ephesians 2:17*)

by fr. Jerry Stookey, OP

1. WE BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST.

After a ten-year moratorium on executions in the United States, the U.S. Supreme Court reinstated the death penalty in 1976, amid a diversity of protest campaigns. I was on the staff of the Justice and Peace Commission of the Archdiocese of Denver, Colorado, and participated in a state-wide coalition effort to prevent possible enactment on this new ruling.

At an initial planning meeting, representatives from political, civic and religious organizations each presented themselves and the reasons they were opposed to the death penalty. The rationale for opposition was justifiably long. For example: overwhelming racism in the arrests and incarceration of criminals; higher sentencing of the poor class who could not pay for proper legal defense; and the danger of executing innocent victims who received unfair trials.

When it came time for the Catholic Archdiocese to present its participation in the coalition, my boss, Auxiliary Bishop George Evans, stated: "We agree with most of the arguments that the rest of you have presented against the death penalty, and certainly we can work in coalition with you. However, our Catholic reasons go even further. We are not in favor of capital punishment under any circumstances, *even if* you can end discrimination in the police department and the court system. We are not in favor of the death penalty *even if* poor and rich get equal treatment under the law. And *even if* we could guarantee that the criminal to be executed is absolutely guilty, we would still be opposed to capital punishment. For we believe that every person is created in the *image of God*, even criminals, and that only God has the right to give and take life. With true compassion for the victims of crime, we believe in the forgiveness and love of Jesus Christ, even for criminals."

His statement created a loud silence over the group. Even so, a year later, we lost our campaign to stop the death penalty when Gary Mark Gilmore became the first to be executed on January 17, 1977. That day Bishop Evans arrived at our office in tears to report the sad news. Since then, at the time of this writing, the United States has executed 1,483 prisoners, with 2,743 prisoners presently on what is called "death row". Nevertheless, I have never forgotten the profound impact that Bishop Evans' words had on everyone in our campaign, primarily because of the clarity of the Christian position, as he stated it to us.

2. THE IMPORTANCE OF ASKING WHY?

Bishop Evans' words inspired all of us on the Archdiocesan Justice & Peace Commission to keep before us always *WHY* we work for justice and peace. It is an important question for all of us at this Congress dedicated to the theme of Justice & Peace & the Care of Creation. Do we know why we are doing this? Do those of us who are committed to justice and peace and the care of creation keep before us the core mission and the purpose behind all our efforts. Perhaps much opposition to justice and peace is due to lack of clarity of purpose on our part.

Many of have read Viktor Frankl's *Man's Search For Meaning* (1946), which I read during my university days, describing how he survived the Nazi concentration camp because "those who have a 'why' to live, can bear with almost any 'how' ." If we know why we are Dominicans and why we are for justice and peace, then we will be able to put up with any opposition.

Translated into many languages, Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1865) is one of the world's favorite fairy-tales. Do you recall where the Cheshire Cat wisely advises Alice that "If you don't know where you are going, then any road will get you there"? If we are going to spend a lot of time, effort and money working for justice and peace, we better know where we want to go.

In his book *Start With Why: how great leaders inspire everyone to take action* (2009), Simon Sinek warns: "When a WHY goes fuzzy, it becomes much more difficult to maintain the growth, loyalty and inspiration that helped drive the original success". Jesus and Dominic knew their Why and their "original success" over 2000 and 800 years ago continue to inspire us and many others, so long as we don't let it "go fuzzy".

Sadly, many individuals in the world have no idea what they are doing or where they are going. They live an "unexamined life", as Socrates would say. Some lack hope and are suicidal because they have no *Why*, no meaning, just going down any road of fuzzy existence. On the other hand, we encounter others who know exactly what they want and where they want to go, but whose *Why* is in direct opposition to ours. They can easily "out-organize" fuzzy thinkers and clueless actors. So, although it may seem elemental and pedantic, it behooves all Dominicans, especially at this International Congress, to reflect again and articulate plainly *our Why*, our initial call. Then we will inspire others to act with us, hopefully because of the greater clarity of our proposition. Don't agonize; organize—and know the *Why* behind what we are and do.

3. OUR WHY:

Of course, Jesus and Dominic, you and I, we all find our first and foremost *Why* to be God. Like the *Creed*, we begin with "I believe in God..." Great minds try to articulate faith in God in a rational way, but it almost always falls short of words, which makes explaining our primary *Why* to opponents very challenging.

St. Thomas Aquinas writes in his *Summa Theologica* (I q.9a,1) that "there is some First reason called God". St. Anselm says that God is "that than which nothing greater can be thought." For many of us, the very existence of anything brings us to faith in God. Playing on Descartes, "If I exist, therefore God exists"--for who of us knows how to create a universe? The greatest good, perfect love, the most merciful and compassionate, wisest and spiritual being, this is what we mean by God and who gives us believers our starting *Why*.

Of course, not everybody believes in God, as we know. In fact, it seems the battle about the existence of God has never raged so strongly as in our modern times. There is no end to Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, Andrew Flew, Carl Sagan, Christopher Hitchens, Stephen Hawking and the long litany of modern atheists, agnostics, and secular and scientific humanists. They are organized and demand that we state *WHY* we believe in God and also *WHY* we are working for justice and peace and the care of creation. If you haven't met them yet, you soon

will!

We believe, as Aquinas says, that there is something supreme, something spiritual, something perfect that is NOT material, greater than mathematics, greater than human reason or consciousness. God is the meaning and center of our life, our first and foremost *Why* to everything.

If we do not personally have God as our primary *WHY* as Dominicans for justice and peace, we will “go off the rails”, take any road to who knows where, and end up misunderstood, and rightfully accused of simply playing politics or fomenting social revolution. We will not inspire others if they do not understand “where we are coming from”--from our belief in God. Then we would fail to teach, as the Jesuits say, “the faith that does justice”, or as Dominicans, we would neglect to clarify that we are “preaching the just Word”.

So let's not be cowardly but rather let our *God-Why* be known and apparent to the world, and in a particular way to fellow, resistant Christians, and yes, even to resistant Dominicans, who accuse our ministry of justice and peace to be nothing more than faithless foolishness.

4. JESUS: “THE FATHER AND I ARE ONE” (John 10:30).

For us Christians, the best example of God's existence is Jesus of Nazareth, God's only Son. God is not abstract. Jesus the Christ is God-with-us. As St. John writes “God so loved the world that he gave us his only begotten Son” (John 3:16).

I am a bit surprised at how little we Dominican preachers talk about Jesus if he is our primary *Why*. How can we preach One whom we do not know? Who do you say that Jesus is *for you personally*? I'm sure we don't all see Jesus the same. So let me offer some of my own reflections about Jesus, in light of His being our *WHY* for preaching justice and peace and caring for creation.

Jesus of Nazareth, being faithful to Torah and his Jewish tradition, referred to God as his “Father”--that's who he said that God is for him . He totally identified his life with God, saying “the Father and I are one” (John 10:30). Jesus believes His God as *Abba* is pure love, who loves and cares for us like a good Father. Jesus says that God showers us with good things and takes care of us, as he does the sparrows, and will never abandon us. Despite the bad times in which Jesus lived, he offers surprising hope and joy in his teaching, simply because of God's love for us. There's a kind of “invincible” belief in goodness in Jesus' teachings, reminding us constantly not to worry, not to be afraid, to be at peace, to forgive one another. For, God loves us, forgives us, treats us with compassion, and considers all of us to be God's children. Jesus' God has a particular concern for the oppressed, poor and down-trodden. His prophetic condemnation is primarily for those who are unjust, oppressors, abusers of their wealth and titles. Most of his Good News seems to be directed especially to “those at the bottom”. For the rich, it's actually bad news.

The modern search for the “historical Jesus” is controversial as you can read in *The Historical Jesus: a comprehensive guide* by Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz (1996), and *What Are They Saying About the Historical Jesus* by David B. Gowler (2007). Some interpretations of Jesus in the past and still today are clearly erroneous and are proven to be nothing more than a “domesticated Jesus” to fit the time, culture, and biases of a particular preacher, Christian

group, or hostile enemy of Christians. At times, what Jesus said and did are intrinsically left open to interpretation, like his parables, as noted in *The Parables After Jesus: their imaginative receptions across two millenia* by David B. Gowler (2017), which presents a fascinating array of how Jesus' parables were variably received throughout history, such as in art and music. That's how parables are! How do justice and peace advocates interpret Jesus' parables?

Apart from theological interpretations, as a sociologist I cannot ignore the “sociological” aspects about Jesus of Nazareth, that are interesting in light of our justice and peace ministry:

- he is Jewish and studied Jewish Scriptures;
- he is poor and he experienced extreme poverty all around him;
- he is from a minority group in Galilee, Palestine;
- he lived in the first century Mediterranean world;
- his country was occupied by the Roman Empire with its strong-armed soldiers and governors;
- he lived amidst a great deal of political and theocratic unrest and rivalries (Herodians, Essenes, Pharisees, etc.);
- he was known as the son of a carpenter;
- his parents were refugees to Egypt in order to save his life;
- his family included his mother who was named, Mary; his father who was named, Joseph; his relatives, Elizabeth and Zachary, and their son, John;
- possibly he was a disciple of John, and was baptized by him;
- he emerged as a prophetic, wandering, charismatic preacher at around 30 years old;
- he was known as a healer, teacher, rabbi, miracle-worker who associated with the poor, sinners, sick, outcast; hungry; excluded;
- he is a layman, not a priest from the Temple;
- he formed a “new school” of wandering disciples, with a core group of Twelve;
- a good number of his Twelve were originally fishermen, also economically poor;
- he and they walked a lot, up and down Palestine;
- he had no permanent home to call his own;
- he had close friends who cared for him like Mary Magdela, Mary & Martha, Lazarus.
- he repeatedly broke with Jewish tradition especially purity and sabbath laws;
- he broke with social custom on relating to women, foreigners, non-believers;
- enemies tried to kill him several times, and eventually succeeded;
- he was betrayed and “played off” between religious and political authorities;
- he was detained, tortured and executed by the Roman Empires' infamous death penalty: crucifixion.
- He died quite young at around 33 years old.

These human “biographical facts” of Jesus, apart from the fact of His Divine Resurrection, help us understand much of what he said and did, in light of justice and peace. Jesus' *personal identities* indicate that God sent him under these human conditions with a very specific message to the world. This Jesus from Nazareth, the Christ, is *THE WHY* we preach and act for justice, peace and creation.

5. JESUS FOR JUSTICE:

Some years ago I taught at Regis University in Denver, Colorado USA, in the Peace and Justice Studies department. At the very beginning of the Introductory Course on Peace and Justice, I asked the students to list some of their favorite figures in history who they admire as heroic supporters of justice and peace. Of course, many agreed that Mahatma Gandhi was a great pacifist. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was also at the top of their list as a non-violent defender of civil rights for African-Americans. Some included Abraham Lincoln, the American civil war president who opposed slavery. Dorothy Day, the foundress of the Catholic Worker Movement in my country was named over and over. Bartolomé de Las Casas, the Dominican defender of the American Indians was acknowledged. Some mentioned Catholic saints: Francis of Assisi, lover of creation and the poor and promoter of peace; Martin de Porres, patron of social justice; Mother Teresa of Calcutta, pro-life advocate of the unwanted and untouchables. Who are your favorite saints, heroes and heroines for justice throughout history? Well, the curious thing is: no students ever listed Jesus of Nazareth! Perhaps we Christians ourselves do not think Jesus is for justice and peace? We not only need to talk about who Jesus is for us, but what we mean by justice.

Very common among us is the perception that working for the poor, doing charity, helping others, is the same thing as working for justice. While they are definitely related, I think we can make some Dominican distinctions between social services or charitable works and our efforts for social justice and non-violent change. St. Vincent de Paul Society, Catholic Charities, Catholic Relief Services, Red Cross, Caritas International are essentially emergency relief and social outreach organizations to help the poor, although many of them include some effort to *advocate for* the poor too. They are very important in helping with victims of injustice, war, emergencies, natural disasters. All Christians should support them and I have rarely heard arguments against Christians doing charity. However, I would like us to consider a difference of Justice and Peace individuals and organizations that are essentially working to change unjust laws and social structures, getting at the causes of so many poor victims, defending human rights, social action, and advocacy to correct injustice. Dom Helder Camara of Brazil once said "When I give food to the poor they call me a saint; when I ask why they are poor they call me a communists". That why some don't like justice and peace--they simply don't like the questions we ask.

There is a famous story that is told to help us understand the distinction between Charity and Justice efforts:

Once two friends were walking along a river praying the rosary, when one of them noticed a baby drowning in the river. They both jump in and save the baby. Then they noticed another baby in the water, and then another. An emergency response team was set up, which eventually included an orphanage and pediatric field hospital. They got volunteers and donations of food and clothes for the poor babies. As this went on for some time, one of the them started to leave the emergency situation at the river. The other cried out "Hey, where are you going? Don't you see we have babies drowning in this river here?" The other friend replied "Yes, and we need to keep saving them. But now it is time for some of us to get together and go upstream and stop whoever is throwing them in and to stop them."

If I exaggerate this story in light of our Congress theme, I would say the first friend who stays at the river helping out charitably is a Franciscan. The one who goes upstream to study whoever is throwing the babies into the river, preaches against it, and act for justice for the babies is a Dominican. Dominicans, if anyone, should be the ones who preach justice. Even

with this simplistic distinction between Charity and Justice, some Christians will never be for justice and peace, or going upstream to try and change things. They may fear it. It's scary.

Most definitions of social justice have to do with how society ought to provide access to materials and services in a fair way. Who gets what stuff, how much do they get, and who decides what they get, what structures and systems are needed to provide it? This is what is called **distributive justice**.

In some cases, it is simply an equal distribution of things like water, electricity or sanitation, or an equality in basic rights such as the right to life, to eat, to breathe, etc. **Equality in distributive justice** is found in Scripture, as we believe everyone is created equal in the eyes of God (imago Dei) and that God's grace falls equally on the just and the unjust, like rain or sunshine falling equally on the good and the bad alike. Jesus feeds 5000 hungry people *equally*, not asking the disciples to separate out the deserving or worthy poor from those who had eaten earlier or those who had money on them. He fed them all. In this miracle, Jesus distributes bread in a way that is **equal justice for all**.

The dilemma arises where our *needs are not equal*, and so we are called to provide **distributive justice based on needs**. "From each according to his ability, to each according to his/her need", as Karl Marx stated it, curiously borrowing from Acts 4:35. For example, those living in Lithuania need more heat and clothing than those in the Dominican Republic. Equal distribution would be unfair when we encounter such a *needs-based* situation. Jesus told the Parable of the Day Laborers who all got the same pay although they worked different hours? So it was not really the same pay but very "unequal" pay. Perhaps Jesus knew that the last to go to work has great need of a full day's salary too. The Prodigal Son had greater need of forgiveness and celebration upon his return, even though the older son had been more responsible throughout his life. So in another context, Jesus' sense of justice allows for those who have greater needs than others, and *in that need, not all are equal*.

The complaints of the hard workers and older sons is precisely what leads some to invent a **distributive justice system based on merit**. They say it is unfair if they have worked harder. This merit-based justice can be un-Christian and drives the heated debate about helping only the poor who are "worthy". The unworthy poor do not try hard enough to "pull themselves up by their own bootstraps". Jesus the carpenter's son, and his fishermen disciples, were all poor, who preached and acted as though all the poor were worthy. I do not see Jesus supporting such a merit-based distribution of justice that has to be earned.

The American philosopher, John Rawls, calls for "justice as fairness" in his writing *A Theory of Justice* (1971). He says we are certainly equal in our basic rights, but must support those who are disadvantaged, often beyond their control, like your place or status at birth. He says that the playing field is uneven from the start; some more privileged, others disadvantaged. I was born in the United States and had no trouble getting into Portugal, while many others in Bolivia or Philippines could not even get a visa to come! And don't forget that I am also an American who is a white, older male, with academic degrees, also a Catholic Dominican priest, all of which probably shows up somewhere in my file! If you recall the biographical data we mentioned regarding Jesus of Nazareth inside Palestine, he would not have gotten a visa to attend here either! I have unfair merits and privileges. So, there needs to be **fairness in distributive justice**.

Rawls developed what he called the “original position” or starting point for doing justice. That is, think about what kind of society we would like *if* you didn't know what your original position in that society would actually be. Try it on yourself: What sort of justice would you like to be “born into” *if* you didn't really know beforehand what your original position in society would be? Would you choose to be born into a poor family in a ghetto, black or white, a male or a woman, a despised foreigner, a leper, or with a deformed hand? A Palestinian Jew from Nazareth? Could you just pull yourself up by your bootstraps and make it? What if we lucky Americans and Europeans at this Congress were *not* born in our countries but rather in violent Honduras, Syria, or Myanmar today? Think about justice as this “original position”, putting yourself in someone else's shoes. Then, if you are really honest, you will choose the fairest distributive justice system possible for all, once you dare to imagine that you would get the unequal starting position in life! What good Christian can be against justice knowing this?

Jesus version of fairness in justice is evident in what we call the Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you (Matthew 7:12). How could he say such rules and treat all the down-trodden accordingly and not be for justice?

Another aspect of justice is regarding punishment. Instead of Distributive Justice as we just saw, they call this **Retributive Justice**. Like criminal justice, it asks: what shall we do about wrongdoers, those who violate the Rule of Law, those who have made others suffer? Who shall punish truly evil persons and how? What if the laws themselves are unjust? Can you resist, disobey or break any law in civil disobedience? Wasn't Jesus known as a law-breaker? Was his punishment justifiable? You can see the dilemma about retributive justice.

Although Christians ignore Jesus on this, he does NOT approve of the Law of Retaliation or Lex Talionis, an ancient principle found as early as the Hammurabic Code, from the Babylonian god of justice. Jesus says clearly that you have heard of “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, but I say turn the other cheek” (Matthew 5:38-42). If someone steals your coat, give him your shirt as well and do not sue him or demand it back. (Luke 6:29). Jesus is not for reciprocal punishment as retributive justice as we see, like: executing drug users less more become drug users, or imprisoning and killing a certain ethnic group in their own homeland, or ignoring drowning “boat people” seeking refuge, or imprisoning attempted-immigrants to make them learn a lesson, or make them an example for deterrence.

Instead, Jesus supports justice that makes amends, and restores peace by forgiveness and by healing instead of punishing. This is what is called **restorative justice**. If you make a mess, yes, you will have to help clean it up, not so much as punishment as restoration. There's a difference. Jesus' teaching and practice indicates He is more attuned to Restorative Justice than Retributive Justice. Jesus' relationship with sinners and wrongdoers, even the wealthy, like Zacchaeus, restores them to society, heals them from their evil ways, and results in them “paying back” voluntarily 4 times more than what they caused in harm. Restorative justice is like conversion, i.e. personal or social change rather than punishment.

None of us can “opt out” of the struggle for justice, and pretend we don't live on planet Earth. All of us share in the injustices and evils that are sadly part of this sinful reality. Jesus seems to uphold an obligation to do something, whenever we do it for the least of our brothers and sisters (Matthew 24: 40).

There are many more concepts of justice that we cannot share today. But the kind of justice

Jesus is for is not based on merits or retribution, but is primarily ***fairness in distribution and restorative***. And as great as justice is, Jesus always pushes us onward toward another virtue that is even greater. As Thomas Aquinas wrote: “ of all the virtues which relate to our neighbor, mercy is the greatest” So then, Jesus is not only for justice but also for mercy.

6. JESUS FOR PEACE:

I will never forget how inspired I was when I first read Pope Paul VI's World Day of Peace Message on January 1, 1972, titled *If You Want Peace, Work for Justice*. In it, Paul VI united Peace with Justice in a way that we all now realize is essential.

Personally, I have devoted a lot of my ministry to justice and peace and still do. I worked full time for justice and peace organizations, including Catholic justice and peace offices. I was once the Justice & Peace Promoter in my province. I learned organizing skills and founded non-profit organizations for human rights struggles. I went straight into war-torn countries like Nicaragua and El Salvador as a missionary. I have marched for peace and justice causes most of my life, even ending up getting arrested at non-violent protests. I tried to preach Christianity on the frontiers in places like communist Cuba. Some of my own family accuse me of being a revolutionary Christian, though I wish it sounded more prophetic. In light of Pope Paul VI's message, I wanted to apply the principle: if we want peace, we have to work for justice. And of course, that principle is still very true today.

But lately, my thoughts turn more to Peace than to Justice, and how much I have neglected Peace work. Peace seems to have been left “in the back seat” while we are so busy working on what we think are the more important social justice issues! As if Pope Paul had meant, “forget about Peace; Justice is what we need first”. Without getting competitive about it, I think Justice and Peace ministry today is sorely lacking in giving proper attention to Peace.

There have been 51 World Day of Peace messages by the popes. But it does not seem to me that Peace and non-violence are seen as core values of Catholics and the other Christians. It is doubtful that non-Christians of the world think of Christianity as a peace religion. Nor do they see Jesus as a pacifist, despite all the evidence. The Christians do not appear to lead the peace movement.

There is a Big Lie today that blurs the truth about Peace. Governments rename their soldiers Peacekeepers. The Nobel Peace Prize is awarded to lovely individuals like Barack Obama and Aung San Suu Kyi, although they haven't done anything significant to work for peace or non-violence. We depict pacifists and war protesters as hippies or communists.

The world has never been so armed to the teeth, so dangerously violent, yet you hear almost not a word regarding peace and non-violence from preachers. With several simultaneous wars going on, there seems to be no peace movement in our countries. The only word we get is from Pax Christi and the Pope on World Day of Peace. So, if you think Justice is unpopular, I daresay Peace is even moreso, even among us Dominicans.

I have another version of Paul VI's slogan, which is equally true: “If you want justice, work for peace”. How are justice advocates going to achieve any social change in the middle of war? One cannot even do Charity work, except in refugee camps, as long as war continues. Why try to build a school or a clinic which will be destroyed tomorrow? How can we achieve any

restorative or distributive justice, defend any human rights, reestablish a free press and just court system--while killing continues and the bombs fly overhead? If you want justice, stop the war so we can get some.

It is worse. Christians have justified war and justify the use of violence. Our dear saints Augustine and Thomas Aquinas have fooled Christians and the official Church with their Just War Theory, ignoring everything that Jesus said and did. Did he say shoot back or turn the other cheek? Did he say kill or love your enemy? Did he fight back or let them crucify him? Did he even curse them or instead heal the enemy's wound and forgive them. That Jesus is not a pacifist is the biggest Christian lie that we continue to tell. Or at least, the most deafening silence. Jesus was never for war or for the use of violence, and we all know it.

Truth-telling is never easy today, but especially for those who work for peace. Governments and their military will denounce pacifists as naive, because you can't show how to make peace. But there is nothing more naive than to keep thinking that war works. It doesn't. It should be outlawed, so that we can work on justice issues. In fact, killing the enemy seems to indicate failure of governments and militaries in coming up with anything other than annihilating the problem at hand. So peace is accused of being impractical, but violence isn't? After they tire of their war games, having destroyed all the people, environment and civilization, but won't admit that the whole thing was a failure, these false peacemakers finally come to their senses, sign a peace accords with no victors, then call for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to be established, obliging the true peacemakers to try and put things back together. Too late they say unite the destroyed people and nation, get on with rebuilding a just society, attempt to heal those raped and traumatized. Thousands of deaths later, thousands of refugees, after they have bombed the hell out of everything, killing more civilians than soldiers (but rarely the rulers who direct the wars from far away). Yet they tell us war is necessary because peace and non-violence doesn't work. Well, it is obvious that war doesn't work either. It is a failure for solving problems and establishing justice and they know it. It is a Big Lie. It's simply more arms production and big sales profits for military-industrial corporations.

We know in our hearts that Jesus is for peace. Love of enemy is the hardest teaching He gives us. Like our work for justice it is scary. But we ought not neglect the challenge of working for peace, studying how to build a more peaceful world, and how to communicate non-violently. Christ is our Peace (Ephesians 2:17) so let us make every effort to do what leads to peace (Romans 14:19).

7. JESUS CARES FOR CREATION:

After hearing the presentations on the Care of Creation by Sister Lissie and Fr. Aristide, and knowing that my presentation was already too long, I cut this section of my paper which was about how Jesus not only is for justice and for peace but also loves and Cares for Creation!

8. CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, let us be clear about *WHY* we are working for justice and peace: Jesus, God-with-us, who is our first *WHY*. Jesus, who is for justice as fairness for the poor and the afflicted, and whose justice restore rather than condemns, by forgiveness and mercy not retribution and vengeance. Jesus, who is our Peace and who rejects violence while loving his enemies, is our *WHY*. Jesus who loves the birds of the air and the lilies of the fields and

recycles left over bread. This Jesus is *WHY* we are working for justice and peace first and foremost. May He guide and protect all Dominicans in this exciting, prophetic mission of working for a more just and peaceful and sustainable world, working joyfully in His reign already begun on planet Earth.