



JUSTICE, PEACE AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION



BE THE JOYFUL FACE OF CHRIST TO ALL!

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I get several emails over the course of a week from fellow JIC Animators about which issues we as Seculars need to support and focus our attention on. Unless there is a specific campaign going on or something that the Church is calling us to pray and act on, I usually do not highlight any specific issue. Most people gravitate towards a certain issue because it has touched their lives in one way or another. For example, nonviolent living is very close to my heart, and I strive to promote it as much as I can in my being. I must confess, there are times when I want to slap someone upside the head, human that I am. But this is when I am reminded of Article 7 of our Holy Rule, which speaks of daily conversion. And this is why I gave up violence for Lent – daily conversion. The good thing is that most social justice issues fall under the category of nonviolent living. I am also one who speaks about what I am for, instead of what I am against. I believe we expend way too much energy fighting against, when we can channel that energy and use it for good: the things we want to see happen in our world.

When it comes to choosing an issue to stand for, I invite you to discern what is your BIG WHY. The Big Why is the foundation of why you do what you do. Jesus' Big Why was love and mercy, so everything he did and said came from a place of love and mercy. Saint Francis' Big Why was seeing God in all creation; so everything he did and said came from seeing God in all creation. What is your Big Why? What drives you to do the things you do? As Franciscans, part of our Big Why should be love, mercy and seeing God in all creation. So I have given you a really big head start in finding your Big Why. The things you do, say and stand for must be a reflection of the love and mercy of Jesus, as well as the care and integrity of God's creation. If what you are doing and what you are saying and what you stand for are not in alignment with the mission of Jesus and

Francis, well, perhaps you might want to read Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and pray our Holy Rule.



Two of my favorite Scripture passages are in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5:9 – “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God,” and in Romans 12:18 – “If possible, on your part, live at peace with all.” What these two passages speak of is being peace, no matter what is going on around you; and definitely not being the cause of strife or confusion. Some of the emails I read are heart-breaking, because they are firestarters — the cause of strife and confusion. It is always possible to live at peace when it is your part. You cannot control the actions of another, but you certainly have control of your own actions and tongue.

Our 2015 NAFRA theme is to be the joyful face of Christ to all. Are you being the joyful face of Christ to all? Are you even being joyful? Article 12 of our General Constitutions states that we should bear witness to our faith in Christ in our joys and sufferings as well as in our presence and participation in the life of society and in our fraternal relationships with all creatures. Being joyful is not the same as being happy. Jesus came that our joy may be complete. That deep inward delight you feel no matter the circumstances is the joy of the Lord. Those two Scripture passages can be realities only when you become the joyful face of Christ to all – and that includes to one another.