



# JUSTICE, PEACE AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION



## BECOMING PRAYER FOR PEACE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE — PART 1

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So often over the past few years, when there is a national tragedy like a mass shooting, the default reaction is for prayer. Then the response comes back that prayer is not enough, we need to do something to halt the violence: we need to work for tighter gun control; we need to take action to stop the violence. And yes, this is very true. We do need to work and take action against the violence that permeates our nation and our world. But do we do away with prayer altogether, as if it is not enough to end the violence? Do we march forth into battle with no preparatory crying out to God for guidance and strength? Are we to fight the good fight on our own accord, in our own power?

Our Holy Rule states fervently, “As Jesus was the true worshipper of the Father, so let prayer and contemplation be the soul of all they are and do” (Art. 8a). Just as the great prophets of old fell on their faces crying out to God for deliverance from their enemies and their oppression, we too must cry out to God with the same passion and conviction. One such example was the prophet Nehemiah.

Nehemiah was a cupbearer to the King of Susa during the exile. He received word that the Israelites who had returned to Jerusalem were in great need. Their city needed a wall of protection. Nehemiah prayed to God, and God sent him to help build this wall. All throughout the book of Nehemiah, we see that he prays to God every step of the way. By the end of the book, the wall is built, and Nehemiah continues to pray for the repentance of the people and their return to God and God’s covenant.

Through the tragedies of life, the storms of life, the violence and hatred, God must be our first line of defense and not our last resort when all else fails. And how do we get God’s attention? Through fervent prayer.

At the beginning of this year, I wanted our Secular brothers and sisters to fall on our faces, repent and cry out to God to restore our troubled land. I hosted two separate prayer services for lamentations and hope on Zoom. Both sessions, attended by about 150 Franciscans from across the United States and Guam, reminded us all that we can do nothing in our own power; but it is the power of God who will forgive our sins and heal our land. The passage from the Book of Chronicles came to me as I moved forward with the prayer service:

*“If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and heal their land.”* (2 Chronicles 7:14)

The call to pursue peace and social justice can seem quite overwhelming. And in that situation, all we know to do is to cry out to God in prayer, as did the prophets of old. This is the best place to begin when you are feeling helpless from being overwhelmed. Then God, who hears our prayer, will animate and guide us in what is ours to do. Perhaps all we are to do is pray. Or we are to write letters to our legislators. Or we are to gather our fraternity members to pray and then feed the hungry. God will not show us what is ours to do if we do not pray and ask. “*Lord, show me what is mine to do today for your Kingdom and your glory!*”

I will leave you with the words I received from the Holy Spirit when I fell on my face and cried out to God asking what was mine to do in this time of strife and violence. These words were downloaded into my heart. I shared this poem on the virtual prayer service and I share it here:

## IMAGINE A WORLD: A POEM OF LAMENT

Imagine a world where there is no violence  
where there is only compassion and care.

Imagine a world where there is no despair  
where we thrive on hope, for ourselves and one another.

Imagine a world where there is no division  
where we know that our neighbor is for us and we are always  
about the business of unity.

Imagine a world where there are no wars, no injustice, no oppression, and no  
divisions.

Imagine a world where children can flourish and grow and are not thrown away  
before they have seen the light of day.

Imagine a world where compassion and empathy and care are the norm, and we rise  
up and reach out to any who are not under the mantle of mercy and peace.

Can you imagine this world? Can you take just one moment, the time it takes to  
breathe a breath, to imagine this world?

Breathe it; feel it; see it; be it – just because you truly need it.

We all need this world. We all need to be reminded that this is not our world, that  
this world belongs to God our Creator, God our Redeemer, God our Comforter.

God gave us this world to keep and care and love and honor. God gave us this world  
to love our neighbors and have no enemies. God gave us this world to cultivate and  
till and sow and reap.

And what have we done in return?  
Oh, look what we have done in return?

Oh God, please forgive us! God, please hear us!  
As we cry out to You with our heads bowed low in mourning and grief.

But You are a God of second chances.  
You are a God of sweet forgiveness.  
You are a God who does not give up on His children –  
especially when we have not heeded Your will.

Oh Lord, help us do better. Help us be better. Help us to see what You see in us and  
for us.

Oh Lord, we are the people who are called by Your name, we do humble ourselves,  
and we do pray and seek Your face, Oh Lord, please hear us, please forgive us and  
please heal our land.



**MAY THE LORD CONTINUE TO GIVE YOU HIS PEACE.**