

Chaplain's Bulletin August 31, 2025



Dear Folks,

I wanted to share some further thoughts on making the world more peaceful.

Anger management: Our anger matters, but it is not the most important thing. (James 1:19-20; Ephesians 4:26-27). Anger does not show the rightness of our position. In fact, it narrows our perception and hampers our judgment. Learning to heal our anger, not letting it lead us can make a difference. I have a punching bag that has suffered terribly for this cause. I recommend “No Future Without Forgiveness” by Desmond Tutu and “The Book of Forgiving” by Desmond and Mpho Tutu. Also helpful is “Remembering God’s Mercy” by Dawn Adams. This is a part of the notion that our feelings in general matter and have things to teach us, but they should not be in control, nor be trusted as a moral compass. We recognize that they are easily manipulated and subject to change for all sorts of reasons. We can practice feeling anger and practicing calm. This is connected to:

Reconciling ourselves to the truth that if we want to do good, we are going to have to work harder than we thought, for longer than expected, to accomplish less than we hoped. The world is a horrible mess. We can believe we can make some difference without having to believe that we can fix it in our lifetimes. When we are done, it will still be a horrible mess, but better than it would have been without our efforts. I know that feeling of urgency that I have to fix this huge problem now, and the harm I did because I got too aggressive. Recognizing that the evil goes much deeper and we can be more effective by being patient and persevering than by panicking. This has not only saved me a lot of stomach acid, but I believe it has made me more effective.

Training in peaceful and constructive dialog: I recommend Ann Garrido’s book “Redeeming Conflict” to begin, then Monica Guzman’s “I Never Thought of it That Way.” There are some people with whom we cannot make peace, but the more people get better at peacemaking, the fewer such people there will be. I’ve seen so many conversations that take the form of: Person A: “People shouldn’t be starving. We need the government to take all the food and give it out to everyone so no one will starve.” Person B: “I don’t think that will work and will cause more harm than good.” Person A: “You are a wicked, wicked person who doesn’t care about starving people.” This form of dialog takes place with many issues and many proposed solutions. We need to make conversation more productive. This is connected to:

Problem solving and conflict resolution skills. This will give us a channel to direct our energy and concern. If we spend less time attacking our opponents (which is so much easier) and more time building a case for our solution (which is more work and makes us vulnerable to being attacked ourselves) we need not be trapped in the helpless rage that is a temptation to violence. This is connected to:

Leadership skills: Able to exercise constructive leadership in society. One does not always need an official position to be a leader. Sometimes, asking a good question, telling a good story, setting a good example can be acts of leadership. This is an art that needs cultivating. I recommend “The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World” by Ron Heifetz. I can make my mark on the world without resorting to violence, even in this big, frustrating world.

More later.

Blessings,
Fr. Jim