Dear Folks,

If we want a more peaceful world, first and foremost, get to know Jesus better. Building a better world always starts with falling more deeply in love with Jesus. Knowing His teaching is, of course, wonderful, and we can all benefit from studying those more. However, getting to know Him personally, spending time with Him, and, in the words of Pope Benedict, "Let Him be your best friend" will make all the difference. Some will object and point to the evils done by church people. I would suggest that this happens when the church people imitate the world rather than trust the teaching of Jesus. When we trust worldly power over the power of the cross, bad things happen. In the words of William Bennet (in his book "America: the Last Best Hope") "the problem was too little Catholicism,not too much." Also, it is church people who often developed the ideas that would oppose evils that had not been questioned before. It has been said that Christians did not invent slavery but invented the notion that slavery was wrong. I'm not a historian, but I think a case could be made that is true of many of our best moral principles. I think the best bet is to trust Jesus. Jesus has turned many villains into saints.

This will lead to a different kind of combat. We have a natural desire to make a mark on the world and when we feel helpless, it is like pressure building up in us that needs to get out. It is very tempting then to use violence because it seems like a quick way to get results. I had a rage-filled, adversarial relationship with the universe for many years, and I understand this deeply. If it is not channeled properly, it explodes, and we see the results. Christians have different weapons for combating evil (Ephesians 6:10-17). I focus on telling the Gospel story, working together as community, worshipping God, and helping people in need. With these weapons, we can transform the world, not as quickly, but much more profoundly, and with longer lasting effects (eternal!!!). The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the power greater than any imagined superpower (take that, Iron Man). If that is where we should channel our frustration and our energy, we will have a more peaceful world. Of course, we Christians know that we cannot become good people just by studying goodness and trying hard (though that is essential). The power of sin is too strong in our hearts. It is in our relationship with Jesus that by His power we are transformed, gradually made into what we were always meant to be. Many Christians throughout the centuries have demonstrated that they can receive mistreatment, persecution, and suffering of many kinds and respond with love. Only if we can respond to evil with love can the world ever become a better place.

And the better job we do of that, the more other people can see that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is worth exploring. One thing that I think should be obvious: what we have been doing hasn't been getting us there. What if each one of us considered seriously how we could up our game in this area. If we want a better world and more people loving Jesus, are we willing to try something new to make it happen?

Blessings,
Fr. Jim