The Creator promises life. Events, both current and past, reveal that it is people who “... afflict and humiliate” (Lamentations 3). It is people who often oppose others, especially when they bear witness in some non-violent way. Every decade of history, including the present, carries with it the legacy of war, and there is not a nation or people that is not burdened by corruption and insecurity. The effects of war go beyond the time and space where armies meet and death prevails. Generations of military forces are left with the memory and scars of battle. Landmines continue to destroy and maim far into the future. Families that experience the death of loved ones live with a permanent wound in their wholeness. Expenditures for war are not available for peace. The fear of children commonly turns into the hatred of young adults. There is another way.

Into the mystery of this confusion and pain is precisely where the Word of God leads. Wherever God’s suffering people are is where the Word needs
to be heard and where it needs to be proclaimed. Those who dominate as well as those who are martyred are both in need of the proclamation of God's love. Peacemaking in the biblical tradition is based on God's promise of life, and requires doing the truth in love.

Promoting a relational spirituality is consistent with the preaching mission of the Gospel. Today the world is more closely connected than ever before. There is awareness of regional and national differences and growing global alarm in regard to the fragility of Earth and its resources. What holds the promise of sustaining life in the future is the courage and persistence of prophetic voices. Both locally and internationally they challenge individuals, corporations, and nations to see the value in protecting movements that take non-violent actions and offer the world an example of peaceful presence. The path from past to future is not an easy one. Human beings have a hard time imagining a future that is any different from what they have already known or from what they believe they have remembered of the past.

Non-violence and peace must begin within individual hearts and minds and memory. Praying for peace is a constant need. It is also a discipline that requires constant practice. What Thomas Aquinas taught remains true today: To the extent the just love justice, they will be known for doing just deeds. The practice of these just deeds builds right relationship—with God, with others, and with all of creation. These just deeds are necessary if the repetition of fear and violence in history can ever be overcome. Prophetic voices in the Dominican tradition point to both obvious and subtle links between power and violence, between spirituality and peace.

It was prophetic decades ago when church leaders said, "If an authentic economic order is to be established on a worldwide basis, an end will have to be put to profit-seeking, to national ambitions, to the appetite for political supremacy, to militaristic calculations, and to machinations for the sake of spreading and imposing ideologies" (Gaudium et Spes). Many signs today point to the growth of these phenomena rather than to their diminishment. Military expenditures in the richest nations and weapons sales to the poorest continue to keep nations in a competitive race to acquire the power necessary to keep others subservient and fearful. It is prophetic to speak this truth today, and perhaps even more urgent.

What will it require to live peacefully with other inhabitants of the planet, aware of the many differences that can appear to be obstacles? Why is it so difficult to follow a path that promises a hopeful future for all or that is truthful in sharing information and knowledge? Why is it that knowing with clarity at one moment is too often followed almost immediately with preoccupation and worry about self-protection? These are questions that peacemakers ask themselves and others every day.

Dominic's preaching mission promoted peace. He reminded his followers that they were called together to live in harmony, and to have one heart and one soul in seeking God.

The Preaching Mission Continues

"The fundamental crisis of our society is perhaps that of meaning. Violence, corruption, and drug addiction are symptoms of a deeper malady, which is the hunger for some meaning to our human existence. To make us preachers God may lead us into that wilderness. There our old certainties will collapse, and the God whom we have known and loved will disappear. Then we may have to share the dark night of Gethsemane, when all seems absurd and senseless, and God appears to be absent. And yet it is only if we let ourselves be led there, where nothing makes any sense anymore that we may hear the word of grace which God offers for our time." Timothy Radcliffe, OP (The Promise of Life, To Praise, To Bless, To Preach: Words of Grace and Truth, Dominican Publications, 2004, p. 418).

"To live theology here is to commit oneself to the prophetic mission of Jesus himself, to live the compassion and mercy of God towards this suffering people. Theology helps me to argue and to withstand the struggles of life. It helps me to integrate my life of prayer with my work and my relationships with the poor, to struggle in hope of seeing the year of the favour of the Lord happen, the beginnings of the new heaven and the new earth." Rosa Maria Barboza, OP ([Brazil] Building Bridges: Dominicans Doing Theology Together, Dominican Publications, 2005).

... apocalyptic thinking is based on a dualistic mentality that divides people into 'us' and 'them,' as forces of absolute good against absolute evil. ... it is dangerous to
think that through some combination of right belief and behavior one can be aligned absolutely with the good. Such thinking underlies sectarian divisions drawn by racial, ethnic, and religious lines and fuels campaigns of mass destruction of the ‘enemy.’ Apocalypticists applaud violence directed against ‘enemies’ as evidence of God’s punishment, while violence against themselves is interpreted as persecution of the righteous. They see both as signs of the end-times that anticipate their own near deliverance. From such a stance the wellsprings of compassion are shut off toward those with whom one does not identify.”

**Barbara Reid, OP** *(Parables for Preachers, Year C, Liturgical Press, 2000).*

“The mission of Dominic is a mission of compassion. This Jubilee of the Order coincides with another important anniversary: forty years from the publication of the document *Populorum Progressio* (March 26, 1967). In the drafting of this encyclical our brother Louis Joseph Lebret (1897–1966) collaborated in a fundamental manner.” Re-read this text, wherein are the traces of a profound spirituality of compassion. *(International Dominican Commission for Justice and Peace, January 30, 2007.)*

“Extreme disparity between nations in economic, social and educational levels provokes jealousy and discord, often putting peace in jeopardy. We have to devote our attention to the situation of those nations striving to advance. When we fight poverty and oppose the unfair conditions of the present, we are not just promoting human well-being; we are also furthering human spiritual and moral development, and hence benefiting the whole human race.” *(Populorum Progressio, 76.)*

**ON NOVEMBER 24 THE ORDER HONORS THE MEMORY OF 19TH CENTURY DOMINICAN MARTYRS OF VIETNAM, TORTURED AND KILLED DURING A PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS. IT IS ALSO A TIME FOR REMEMBERING THE FAITH OF THE MARTYRED CHURCH OF VIETNAM WHICH CONTINUES TO PERSEVERE IN SPITE OF ITS HISTORY OF WAR AND DEVASTATION.**

**FOR REFLECTION**

How do you imagine the world to be in the future?

What can you do to participate in building a non-violent world?