

My Commitment to Justice and Peace

I appreciated Bro. Phil Aarons' reflection on his lifelong interest and commitment to peace and justice. I share many aspects of Phil's reflection as I also was influenced by Fr. Ferree, although I didn't know him well and as a very young scholastic had a weekend course with him when he visited us in Texas. My personal concern, commitment and involvement with the poor grew out of my own personal experience of poverty in the center of my family.

The poverty I experienced first hand was as a young boy visiting each Sunday my Dad who was mentally ill. Each Sunday I was exposed to folks who were "different". The cruel comments of innocent playmates who talked about "being crazy" created in me a well of sadness and anger that has been a double edged sword throughout my life, but also one that has moved me to do something about those so much less fortunate than me.

My entire Marianist religious life has been lived on the edge, serving in the inner city ministries of St. Michael's in Chicago and Assumption High School in East St Louis. This coming year I will celebrate 25 years of ministry with the poor in So. Mexico. I have tried to convert my personal experience of poverty (in the form of mental illness) into a pastoral ministry and methodologies that try to alleviate in small ways the overwhelming divisions that are realities in the world.

I have come to believe that to be truly effective ministers of peace and justice, we must touch that place in our own hearts where our own poverty lies, fill that space with the Gospel and then be willing to be in a healing dialogue with that energy during the rest of our lives.

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