

ADVENT REFLECTION WEEK TWO: Candle of Peace

By Katharine Mitchell, Interfaith Action of Southwest Florida

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." --Matthew 5:9

As great leaders throughout history have demonstrated, the process of becoming a peacemaker is transformative and, at times, uncomfortable. For, it demands that we first seek justice. The prophet Isaiah warns, "The way of peace they do not know; there is no justice in their paths" (59:8-9). In his Letters from a Birmingham Jail, Dr. Martin Luther King reflected that the greatest obstacle to the civil rights movement is not the extremist. Rather, King wrote, it is the person "more devoted to 'order' than to justice, who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice.

The CIW is a force for justice, so that the next generation may know peace. Throughout the past 10 years, thousands of CIW members and their allies have stood together calling for fair wages and the end to sweatshop conditions in Florida's tomato fields. Their work has resulted in the end to physical violence in Immokalee fields, increased wages for workers picking for Taco Bell, and the freeing of over 1,000 modern-day slaves in the agricultural industry. With the prayerful support and action of faith allies, the CIW is planting seeds of justice that will, with diligence, bear fruits of peace. In our partnership with the CIW and in our own lives, as we seek justice during this Advent season, may our spirit and actions lead us to be peacemakers.