A plan to consider JPIC in a Monthly Fraternity General Meeting

**What should our Fraternity do?**

A. Conradi, ofs – 10 February 2014

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| Overview:  1. We offer a selection of readings for reflection from:  a. the Word of God  b. writings of Francis and Clare  c. SFO Rules 15 (justice); 18 (environment); and 19 (peace)  d. SFO General Constitutions articles 18, 19, 22 and 23  e. an important statement by Fr David Couturier, OFM Cap  2. Using the National JPIC Action Plan 2012 -2015 we propose the fraternity discuss the plan’s JPIC issues and select one(s) for further study and action. |

**OPENING PRAYER**

**The Prayer of St Francis – The Prayer for Peace**

“Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. .......”

**THE WORD OF GOD**

Read aloud and reflect on the following:

Mt 5: 6

Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shall have their fill.

Isaiah 45: 18-19, 23-24

I am the Lord, and there is no other. I, the Lord, promise justice .......To me every knee shall bend; by me every tongue shall swear, saying, “Only in the Lord are just deeds and power.”

Wisdom 9:1-6

God of my fathers, Lord of mercy you who have made all things by your word and in your wisdom have established man

to rule the creatures produced by you, to govern the world in holiness and justice, and to render judgment in integrity of heart:

Give me Wisdom ........ for I am your servant ......

Jas 2:14-18

My brothers, what good is it to profess faith without practicing it? Such faith has no power to save one, has it? If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and no food for the day, and you say to them, “Good-bye and good luck! Keep warm and well fed,” but do not meet their bodily needs, what good is that? So it is with the faith that does nothing in practice. It is thoroughly lifeless. To such a person one might say, “You have faith and I have works – is that it?” Show me your faith without works and I will show you the faith that underlies my works!

Take a few minutes to reflect on these passages. Invite comments from anyone moved to share their thoughts.

You could provoke reflection/discussion by asking questions e.g.:

1. Mathew -- how shall those who hunger for justice have their fill?
2. Isaiah – if just deeds are only in the Lord, what is our role? As instruments of love (c/f the Prayer of St Francis)?
3. Wisdom – to rule and govern. What is our role in combating legal injustice? How can we influence governments and corporations?
4. James – faith and works. How do we know what to do? See, judge, act is the Catholic Action method Franciscans use.

**WRITINGS OF FRANCIS AND CLARE**

Francis: Although he is reputed to have said: “Preach - use words if you must,” actually what he wrote in Chapter 17 of the Rule of 1221 was: “All the Friars . . . should preach by their example.” In some translations “example” is rendered as “deeds” or “works.”

Francis: “We are spouses when the faithful soul is united by the Holy Spirit to our Lord Jesus Christ. We are brothers, moreover, when we do the will of His Father who is in heaven; mothers when we carry Him in our heart and body through love and a pure and sincere conscience; and give Him birth through holy activity, which must shine before others by example.” (Later Admonition and Exhortation 51-53 (Écrits, 236)

Ilia Delio, osf (in Franciscan Prayer, 2004, St Anthony’s Messenger Press, Cincinnati, Ohio) outlines the stages that lead to the imitation or “birth” of Christ in the believer using Clare’s path of prayer i.e. : Gaze, Consider, Contemplate, Imitate. “Francis understood the Incarnation takes place first and foremost in the human person” (150) and: “When we allow ourselves to be grasped by God fully then gospel living becomes radical living. Our hearts centered in God cannot help but see God incarnate in every person, creature, flower, earthworm and tree. ........... Solidarity with all people and solidarity with the earth are signs of those living in the fullness of the body of Christ.” (157)

Compare “See, Judge, Act” with “Gaze, Consider, Contemplate, Imitate.” Gaze (See), Consider, Contemplate (Judge), Imitate (Act)?

Is Clare’s path of prayer a call to action? A call to “holy activity”? How does this relate to James 2:14-18?

**SFO RULE**

15. Let them individually and collectively be in the forefront in promoting justice by the testimony of their human lives and their courageous initiatives. Especially in the field of public life, they should make definite choices in harmony with their faith.

18. Moreover they should respect all creatures, animate and inanimate, which bear the imprint of the Most High, and they should strive to move from the temptation of exploiting creation to the Franciscan concept of universal kinship.

19. Mindful that they are bearers of peace which must be built up unceasingly, they should seek out ways of unity and fraternal harmony through dialogue, trusting in the presence of the divine seed in everyone and in the transforming power of love and pardon.

**GENERAL CONSTITUTIONS**

For a Just and Fraternal Society

Article 18

2. (Rule 13)

........... They should firmly commit themselves to oppose every form of exploitation, discrimination, and exclusion and against every attitude of indifference in relation to others.

3. They should work together with movements which promote the building of fraternity among peoples: they should be committed to "create worthy conditions of life" for all and to work for the freedom of all people.

4. Following the example of St. Francis, Patron of Ecology, they should collaborate with efforts to fight pollution and to conserve all that is valuable in nature.

Article 19

1. (Rule 14)

2. In the spirit of minority, they should opt for relationships which give preference to the poor and to those on the fringe of society, whether these be individuals or categories of persons or an entire people; they should collaborate in overcoming the exclusions of others and those forms of poverty that are the fruit of inefficiency and injustice.

Article 22

1. (Rule 15)

Secular Franciscans should "be in the forefront... in the field of public life." They should collaborate as much as possible for the passage of just laws and ordinances.

2. The fraternities should engage themselves through "courageous initiatives", consistent with their Franciscan vocation and with the directives of the Church, in the field of human development and justice. They should take clear positions whenever human dignity is attacked by any form of oppression or indifference. They should offer their fraternal service to the victims of injustice.

3. The renunciation of the use of violence, characteristic of the followers of Francis, does not mean the renunciation of action. However, the brothers and sisters should take care that their interventions are always inspired by Christian love.

Article 23

1. (Rule 19)

Peace is the work of justice and the fruit of reconciliation and of fraternal love. (See Gaudium et Spes 78) Secular Franciscans are called to be bearers of peace in their families and in society:

-- they should see to the proposal and spreading of peaceful ideas and attitudes;

-- they should develop their own initiatives and should collaborate, individually and as a fraternity, with initiatives of the Pope, the local Churches, and the Franciscan Family;

-- they should collaborate with those movements and institutions which promote peace while respecting its authentic foundations.

2. While acknowledging both the personal and national right to self-defence, they should respect the choice of those who, because of conscientious objection, refuse to bear arms.

**FRIAR DAVID COUTURIER, OFM (Cap)**

Friar David Couturier, OFM Cap, who has been President of Franciscans International and Associate Director of the Capuchin International Office of Justice and Peace said:

“........ justice, peace and the integrity of creation are not what a Franciscan community does when it has time or energy left over from its other more important work. Neither is it the activity left to a small group of highly motivated individuals at the corners of the Province. It is the primary task of each and every community of faith that dares to claim a role in the evangelizing work of the Spirit today.” (A Talk to Franciscan Directors of JPIC, 27 November 2003)

Do you agree with the last sentence? Is JPIC your fraternity’s first priority?

If not, what priority does your fraternity give to JPIC? Should your fraternity give JPIC a higher priority?

**DISCUSSION/DECISION: THE KEY ISSUES**

These are the issues selected by the National JPIC Action Plan 2012-2015. Decide which one(s) your fraternity will choose for further study to raise awareness and take action. These are:

1. Extreme poverty and the excluded; 2. The ethical use of resources: especially water, mining and fair trade

3. Food: security and sovereignty; 4. Human Trafficking and Contemporary Forms of Slavery; 5. Care of Creation: particularly one or more of the following: Pollution; Climate Change; the Alberta Oil Sands and/or Hydraulic fracturing (fracking); 6. Peace, conflict resolution and active non-violence; 7.Treatment of Refugees, Internally Displaced Persons and Migrants; 8. Solidarity with, and support for, Christians in countries threatened by hostile cultures; 9. Current issues regarding Aboriginal Peoples in Canada & 10. Other topics at the discretion of the fraternities.

For further information on the JPIC Action plan and resources please contact:

your fraternity JPIC rep; or

George Guimond, ofs (Eastern Canada) [geosherr@xplornet.com](mailto:geosherr@xplornet.com)

Marzio Apolloni, ofs (Trillium) [marzioapolloni@gmail.com](mailto:marzioapolloni@gmail.com)

Margaret Ross, ofs (OLOTA) [margavross@hotmail.com](mailto:margavross@hotmail.com)

National JPIC Animator Andrew Conradi, ofs (604) 522-8417 [apconradi@telus.net](mailto:apconradi@telus.net)

and the OFS in Canada JPIC website Franciscan Voice Canada: <http://www.franciscanvoicecanada.com/>

**CLOSING PRAYER**

**Francis: Canticle of the Creatures** (There are several versions/translations)