

INSTRUMENTS OF PEACE

A Franciscan Resource Book for Justice,
Peace and Integrity of Creation

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Order of Friars Minor
Office of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation

English
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Foreword

*“... The brothers who go
can conduct themselves among them spiritually in two ways.
One way is to avoid quarrels or disputes
and be subject to every human creature for God's sake (1 Pet. 2: 13),
so bearing witness to the fact that they are Christians.
Another way is to proclaim the word of God openly,
when they see that it is God's will ...” (Rnb 16, 5-7)*

“To lead a radically evangelical life in a spirit of prayer and devotion, and in fraternal fellowship”, “to offer a witness of penance and minority”, “to announce the Gospel throughout the whole world” embracing all in charity and “to preach reconciliation, peace and justice by their deeds” is essential to our life of Friars Minor (GG.CC. 1, 2).

The basis of our life in fraternal communion is rooted in the announcement of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have the mission of making Christ known, through our life, to a world that continues to be characterized by violence, war, marginalization and the destruction of the environment. St. Francis, our Founder, the “Saint of the Incarnation”, gave his brothers and his contemporaries an example without equal of how to be a herald of the Gospel, in word and deed, through commitment to justice, peace and harmony with creation. We cannot be heralds of the Gospel if we do not live open to conversion, reconciled with ourselves, with our brothers and with the whole of creation entrusted to our care (cf. Gen 2, 15), and if we do not do this reconciled with God in Christ, our Brother and Lord.

“To conduct themselves spiritually”, “to avoid quarrels or disputes”, “to be subject to every human creature” and to confess that Jesus is the Christ means, in other words, to be heralds and promoters of life, which we all have received as gift, but over which hangs various threats. The present-day mass media, such as the press, radio and television, allow us to verify easily how people and the entire creation live in “the shadow of death” (Lk 1, 79) and, therefore, we need the “rising Sun to visit us” (Lk 1, 78). There is a close connection between destruction of the environment and increasing impoverishment of many people in our world, and vice-versa. The stream of refugees, driven by the fear of losing their lives and in search of a bountiful existence, not only does not stop but, on the contrary, is increasing all the time. The search for immediate satisfaction of subjective needs does not respect the yearning felt by many to leave future generations a better world. It is difficult to control the reins and global connections of a life threatened by an activity whose guiding principle is constant and progressive development at any cost.

With greater reason, then, we Friars Minor are called to witness by means of our Gospel roots our fraternal communion and our simple life in reconciled diversity, of a liberated existence in Christ and for Christ.

That is the objective that the present book wishes to support. This book, in effect, is not a “manual”, as it does not respond to the criteria of a manual in the strict sense. It tries to be, a resource, a help for the brothers, with its articles on our Franciscan spirituality, on our option for the poor, on encouragement for our prayer and meditation, on dialogue in common about the values and bases of our Franciscan

vocation, on incarnated action in concrete situations in the light of “justice, peace and the safeguarding of creation”. It is a response to the request made by the International Council for Justice, Peace and the Safeguarding of Creation in 1995 in its congress of Seoul, to help the brothers become conscious of the fact that our Franciscan commitment in this area is an integral part of our spirituality.

Having studied this JPIC Resource Book, the Definitory General has agreed to making it available to all the brothers, especially to the Provincial and Conference coordinators of justice, peace and integrity of creation. There may be some who, expecting a greater depth of thought and a more restrained language, are not satisfied with what the book offers with its articles and examples. This also is positive as it could spur a deepening of the themes on their own part. We have tried to correct any errors in a series of revisions. Despite that, it may be that the readers will find inaccuracies and errors. Please forgive any oversights. We do not claim to be perfect. The book is meant to assist towards concrete actions in favor of JPIC.

The basis for our being in the world is contemplation, the interior listening, the calm attention to the signs of the times, the experience of the presence and activity of God. To-be-in-the-world means to be on a journey, to welcome with profound worship and respect life, creation and people, because the presence of God surrounds and penetrates all. Let's hope that this book may be an encouragement to all the brothers to live it.

I end by thanking all those who have collaborated in the creation and elaboration of this Resource Book. All have worked in an exemplary manner. In particular I name, as representing all, Francisco O'Conaire OFM, my collaborator in the office of “Justice, Peace and the Safeguarding of Creation”. May God amply reward and bless them and all those who have collaborated!

Rome, 25-III-1999.

Peter Schorr, OFM
Definitory General and Director of JPSC

Introduction

The Origin of the Resource Book

The Office of JPIC at the General Curia, the International Council for JPIC, composed of the 15 coordinators of the Conferences of the Order and the Provincial Delegates for JPIC have the important task of animating and urging the friars to make these gospel and Franciscan values their own so as to make them part of a lifestyle that is fraternal, peaceful and supportive of concrete liberating commitments. Preoccupied as to how best to provide a genuine service of animation, the International Council for JPIC in the Order decided at its meeting in Seoul in August 1995 to propose to the General Definitory the composition of a resource book on JPIC which might serve as a useful instrument for the promotion of these values within the Order. In its meeting of December 1995 the Definitory approved the proposal and entrusted the coordination of this project to the Office for JPIC in the General Curia.

Objective

This Resource Book is not a commentary on chapters IV and V of the GG.CC. although it draws its inspiration from them and can even be a help towards deepening a knowledge and observance of them. Rather it endeavors to offer materials and resources which can help Provincial Delegates and Commissions to make progress in the work of animation. It also hopes to be of use to those charged with initial formation, to local fraternities in their meetings for ongoing formation and to friars in their pastoral ministry.

Since we are dealing with a help or working document, we have not thought at any time of a complete treatise. We are conscious of this Resource Book's limitations. To begin with, in the themes found in Part 2 it is almost impossible to establish a viewpoint that is valid for all parts of the world. The questions at the end of each theme, however, can always be a help in opening discussions with the local reality. On the other hand, since a large number of friars from different parts of the world have collaborated in the Resource Book, it may suffer from a lack of unity and from some repetitions. If the themes in the second part had been more fully developed, the book would be much more bulky. But all in all, we believe that the material is worthwhile and can be a help towards the desired objective.

Format and Content

The Resource Book has four parts. In the First Part we set out the Franciscan vision of work for justice, peace and the integrity of creation as a theoretical framework for the whole book, drawing on our spirituality as found in the Franciscan sources, in the current GG.CC. and in the documents of the Church. For Franciscans the commitment to justice, peace and the integrity of creation is an inheritance coming down from St. Francis; it forms part of their identity as Friars Minor and of their evangelizing mission

and should therefore belong to the content of initial and ongoing formation.

The Second Part is made up of seven specific themes, which seem to us to be most appropriate and of greater interest to our charism. They have just a brief theoretical development because we have not wished to give a full treatment that would exhaust each theme; rather, we have desired that these themes should state the question and stimulate reflection and action. This brief theoretical development is completed by an account of the experiences and witness of friars from all over the world. These help us to see how the ideals which our GG.CC. propose to us are not utopias incapable of realization; such witness suggests to us multiple possibilities for action according to each location. Each theme ends with a questionnaire to facilitate reflection, whether personally or in groups.

We should like to recall that when this Resource Book was envisaged there was also the idea that each Conference could supply a bibliography for each of the themes that would facilitate a deeper study of them and be more attuned to the cultural sensibilities and the needs of each Conference.

The Third Part, entitled **How to Act?**, has several chapters which treat of the history of the movement in favor of JPIC within the Order over the last 25 years: of the International Council of JPIC; how the Provinces and Conferences are organized in the area of justice and peace; of inter-Franciscan cooperation in JPIC; of work for JPIC in daily life and in various ministries: parishes, communications media, education, missionary evangelization, initial and ongoing formation.

The Fourth Part gives some additions or appendices containing the texts which speak of these themes in OFM General Chapters or Plenary Councils, in the GG.CC., in Sacred Scripture, in Franciscan sources, in the social doctrine of the Church and in *Ratio Formationis*. Other additions give prayers, addresses of international organizations with which we can relate.

JPIC Office, Rome

Abbreviations

1. The Books Of The Bible

Acts	Ac
Amos	Am
Baruch	Ba
Colossians	Col
1 Corinthians	1 Co
2 Corinthians	2 Co
1 Chronicles	1 Ch
2 Chronicles	2 Ch
Daniel	Dn
Deuteronomy	Dt
Ecclesiastes	Qo
Ecclesiasticus	Si
Ephesians	Ep
Esther	Est
Exodus	Ex
Ezekiel	Ezk
Ezra	Ezr
Galatians	Ga
Genesis	Gn
Habakkuk	Hab
Hebrews	Heb
Haggai	Hg
Hosea	Ho
Isaiah	Is
James	Jm
Jeremiah	Jr
Job	Jb
Joel	Jl
John	Jn
1 John	1 Jn
2 John	2 Jn
3 John	3 Jn
Jonah	Jon
Joshua	Jos
Jude	Jude
Judges	Jg
1 Kings	1 K
2 Kings	2 K
Lamentations	Lm
Leviticus	Lv
Luke	Lk
1 Maccabees	1 M
2 Maccabees	2 M
Malachi	Ml
Mark	Mk
Matthew	Mt

Micah	Mi
Nahum	Na
Nehemiah	Ne
Numbers	Nb
Obadiah	Ob
1 Peter	1 P
2 Peter	2 P
Philemon	Phm
Philippians	Ph
Psalms	Ps
Proverbs	Pr
Revelation	Rv
Romans	Rm
Ruth	Rt
1 Samuel	1 S
2 Samuel	2 S
Song of Songs	Sg
1 Timothy	1 Tm
1 Thessalonians	1 Th
2 Thessalonians	2 Th
2 Timothy	2 Tm
Titus	Tt
Tobit	Tb
Wisdom	Ws
Zechariah	Zc
Zephaniah	Zp

2. Ecclesiastical Documents

CA	Encyclical <i>Centesimus annus</i>
CP	Apostolic Exhortation <i>Communio et progressio</i>
DH	Declaration <i>Dignitatis humanae</i>
DM	Encyclical <i>Dives in misericordia</i>
EN	Apostolic Exhortation <i>Evangelii nuntiandi</i>
ES	Encyclical <i>Ecclesiam suam</i>
GS	Pastoral Constitution <i>Gaudium et Spes</i>
LC	Instruction <i>Libertatis conscientia</i> (Christian Freedom and Liberation)
LE	Encyclical <i>Laborem exercens</i>
MM	Encyclical <i>Mater et Magistra</i>
OA	Apostolic Letter <i>Octogesima adveniens</i>
TMA	Apostolic Letter <i>Tertio Millenio Adveniente</i>
PP	Encyclical <i>Populorum progressio</i>
PT	Encyclical <i>Pacem in terris</i>
QA	Encyclical <i>Quadragesimo Anno</i>
RH	Encyclical <i>Redemptor hominis</i>
RM	Encyclical <i>Redemptoris missio</i>
RN	Encyclical <i>Rerum Novarum</i>
SRS	Encyclical <i>Sollicitudo rei socialis</i>
VS	Encyclical <i>Veritatis splendor</i>

3. Writings Of Saint Francis

Adm	Admonitions
BenLeo	Blessing for Brother Leo
<i>BenBern</i>	Blessing for Brother Bernard
CantSol	Canticle of Brother Sun
EpAnt	Letter to St. Anthony
EpCler	Letter to the Clergy
1EpCust	First Letter to the Custodians
2EpCust	Second Letter to the Custodians
1EpFid	First Letter to the Faithful
2EpFid	Second Letter to the Faithful
EpLeo	Letter to Brother Leo
EpMin	Letter to a Minister
EpOrd	Letter to the Entire Order
EpRect	Letter to the Rulers of the Peoples
ExhLD	Exhortation to the Praise of God
ExhPD	Exhortation to Poor Ladies
ExpPat	Prayer Inspired by the Our Father
FormViv	Form of Life for St. Clare
LaudHor	Praises to be said at all the Hours.
OffPass	Office of the Passion
OrCruc	Prayer before the Crucifix
RegB	Later Rule
RegNB	Earlier Rule
RegEr	Rule for Hermitages
SalBMV	Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
SalVirt	Salutation of the Virtues
Test	Testament
TestS	Testament written in Siena
UltVol	Last Will written for St. Clare
VPLaet	Dictate on True and Perfect Joy

4. Early Franciscan Sources

1Cel	First Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
2Cel	Second Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
3Cel	Treatise on the Miracles by Thomas of Celano
AP	Anonymous of Perugia
CSD	Considerations on the Stigmata
Fior	Fioretti
LM	Major Life of St. Francis by Bonaventure
Lmin	Minor Life of St. Francis by Bonaventure
LP	Legend of Perugia
L3S	Legend of the Three Companions
SC	Sacrum Commercium
SP	Mirror of Perfection

5. Other Frequently Used Abbreviations

GG.CC.	General Constitutions
CFF	Conference of the Franciscan Family

FI	Franciscan International
ICJPIC	International Council of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation
JPIC	Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation
OFM	Order of Friars Minor
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
RFF	Ratio Formationis Franciscanae
Med F	Medellín Formation
CFI-TOR	International Franciscan Conference of the Third Order Regular

PART ONE

THE FRANCISCAN VISION OF THE WORK FOR JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

This first part establishes the Franciscan vision of the work for justice, peace and the integrity of creation, a theoretical framework for the whole of the book from the basis of our spirituality, from both the Franciscan sources and the present day reality of the GG.CC, the RFF and the magisterium of the Church:

1. Franciscan Presence to the World
2. Minority, Option for the Poor and Our Work for Peace
3. JPIC in Evangelization and Formation
4. Contemplation, Our Work for JPIC and Union with God
5. Justice and Peace in the *Ratio Formationis Franciscanae*

Franciscan Presence to the World

A New Man

Among the numerous saints that have adorned the history of Christianity, Francis of Assisi is one of those who still today exercise most attraction and meet with most approval. His influence spreads beyond Christianity. He belongs to all. He appears “like a flower bud that has blossomed early,” giving a glimpse of a humanity that yearns to bloom in each of us. “It seemed he was a new man, a man of the age to come,” wrote his first biographer, Thomas of Celano (1Cel 82).

Thus it is not surprising that, in our current disarray, many turn to him to ask him the secret of that wisdom that he knew how to bring to bloom and that is characterized by a new quality of presence to the world. For the most precious gift that Francis gave to the world is this new type of presence. A presence that is profoundly human as well as evangelical and cosmic. A total presence that has the gift “of converting all hostility into fraternal tension, within the unity of creation” (Paul Ricoeur). “There is no doubt that there never was a man,” wrote Louis Lavelle, “who offered more perfectly to everyone that total presence and that complete gift of self that are nothing more than the expression of the presence and the Gift that God makes of himself in every instant to all beings.” (L. Lavelle, *Quatre Saints*, ed. Albin Michel, Paris, 1951, p.88).

What then was the secret of Francis of Assisi? How did he open himself to that presence to the world, in which all human conflicts seem to find their way to peace?

An Essential Message

The question is vital for us. Our industrial civilization is in a cul-de-sac. We are rightly proud of our scientific and technological progress. It has made us “masters and possessors of nature,” following Descartes’ wish. But we note today that the price to be paid is heavy, very heavy. On the one hand our environment and in consequence our quality of life are threatened by the growing control of humanity and human technology over nature. On the other hand, an ever more pronounced technological exploitation of natural resources, with the only law being profit, raises great human problems in the areas of unemployment and social justice. Situations of exclusion are multiplying within the human community and risk profoundly compromising peace. So far, the men and women produced by our industrial civilization have thought only about possessing. Now they must learn, with a concern for justice and peace, to fraternize with nature as their equal. Now, on this matter, Francis, the universal brother, has something essential to tell us.

To hear his message properly, we must leave behind a certain image of the Poor Man of Assisi. We have made of him a sort of Prince Charming of creation. Charming perhaps, but desperately superficial. The true Francis is of a completely different stature and inspiration. He was one of the boldest innovators in all of Christian history. In faithfulness to the Gospel, he broke with the political-religious system of his time--a system in which the Church was often a feudal overlord--a system of holy wars and crusades. He also refused to make a pact with the new idol of the society of the communes: money. As for his fraternal attitude towards lower creatures, far from being sentimentality, it was inspired by a clear and profound understanding of creation.

The Starting Point: His Encounter with Christ

At the origin of the new presence to the world, inaugurated by the Poor Man of Assisi, there lies a spiritual experience that begins with the conversion of the young Bernardone. If we wish to discover his inspiration, we must join him at the heart of this experience.

Francis was not born the “Universal Brother.” He became it. At the price of a profound conversion. As an adolescent and a young man, he was not the man of peace that we admire. Certainly his first biographers present him as an affable, courteous man who was open to others. However, under this seductive exterior lay hidden depths of violence and ambition plus a desire for conquest and domination.

As the son of a rich merchant, Francis belonged to the rising class, eager for gain and avid for power. In the medieval communes that had freed themselves from the feudal yoke, the rich middle classes, headed by the merchants, intended to run their own affairs and exercise power. Carried along by this rising social force, the young Francis also nourished great ambitions. He liked to show off, shine like the sun, rise above others, have himself acclaimed king of the young social elite of Assisi.

As he grew, so did his ambitions. He did not want to stay in his father’s business and be only a draper. He had lofty dreams. He aimed high. He aspired to become a knight and even a prince! When he lay asleep and dreamt of his father’s shop, he saw it transformed into a palace whose rooms gleamed with the brilliance of a variety of arms. And all these arms shone for him. For him and his knights. In his youthful visions he imagined himself conquering the world.

The young Francis was fascinated by glory. And glory, at that time, was acquired in war. At precisely this time war presented itself to him; it had just broken out between Assisi and Perugia, neighboring and rival cities. Francis joined Assisi’s communal militia.

He took part in the battle of Ponte San Giovanni. But the fighting turned to Perugia’s advantage. Francis was taken prisoner. He spent a year in enemy jails. And when he returned to Assisi his health was broken. He fell sick.

This illness, which lasted a long time and condemned him to inaction and solitude, marked a turning point in his life. Francis looked carefully at himself. He experienced the emptiness of his youthful years. He realized their frivolity.

When health returned, however, he was again caught in the grip of his warlike ambitions and, together with a young noble of Assisi, decided to join the papal armies fighting against the imperial armies in the south of Italy. But the plan did not last long. No sooner did he reach Spoleto than Francis heard an interior voice enjoining him to return to Assisi. Francis obeyed. From now on his only concern would be to discover what God wanted from him.

He retreated willingly to the solitude of the small abandoned churches in the Assisi countryside. Especially to San Damiano. There, for long hours, he prayed contemplating the Byzantine Christ. This crucified Christ who radiated peace brought him the living and overwhelming revelation of the love of God for men and women. And

Francis let himself be completely captivated by the depth and splendor of this love. Through the humanity of Christ and his life given fully, Francis discovered the merciful manner in which God views men and women. And he too looked at them differently. His universe was opened to human misery.

In his *Testament*, Francis himself recounted the radical change that came over him: “The Lord granted me, Brother Francis, to begin to do penance in this way: While I was in sin, it seemed very bitter to me to see lepers. And the Lord himself led me among them and I had mercy upon them. And when I left them, that which seemed bitter to me was changed into sweetness of soul and body.”

A New Quality of Relationship

Let us tarry for a while on this change. Everything grew from this. Francis did not hesitate to present his conversion as a new openness towards people and towards the world. His universe had exploded. He now dared to seek out men and women from whom he would previously have kept away, people he did not want to see and whom he excluded from his world.

It was not just a case of a wider circle of relationships. The quality of his relating also changed. From now on it would no longer be inspired by ambition, by the desire for prestige and conquest. It flowed from another source. Francis had discovered the merciful way in which God looked on men and women. And this merciful gaze turned his world upside down; he moved from a desire for conquest and domination to an attitude of compassion and communion. His world opened up to the most deprived. In the past he had on occasion given alms to the destitute. But that was from the heights of his position of a young, rich member of the middle class. The destitute had not been part of his gilded world.

Now a wall had fallen. Francis saw the world differently. He discovered it in the light of the extraordinary love that had shown itself to him: the most high Son of God had shed his glory to become one of us, the brother of all, even of the excluded. Heaven had lost its pride. An overwhelming vision that inspired in Francis a new presence to the world. He no longer wanted to rise above others, to dominate them, but he wanted to be with, to fraternize with. No longer did he want to conquer the world, but to welcome and commune with all beings, and so to become, following Christ, the brother of all, especially of the humblest and poorest.

This new presence to the world would inspire and orient all of Francis' life. For the moment it rendered him attentive to and ready to welcome what God desired of him.

One day, attending Mass in the chapel of Our Lady of the Angels, at the Portiuncula, he heard read the passage of the Gospel in which the Master sent his disciples out on mission: “Take neither gold, nor silver ... In whatever house you enter say ‘Peace to this house’...” This was the moment of illumination in Francis' heart. He had discovered his vocation, mission (1Cel 22). Like the disciples he saw himself as sent to announce the messianic peace. He would go towards men and women, “without gold or silver or money,” without any sign of power or wealth, with his only mission being to announce peace. “The Lord revealed to me a greeting” he wrote in his *Testament*, “that we should use: ‘May the Lord give you peace.’” He presented himself not as a conqueror but as a friend, a man of peace. And wherever he went it worked to “convert all hostility into a

fraternal tension within the unity of creation”. He would be a builder of peace, a creator of communion between beings, by communing with all, “in great humility.”

Messenger of Peace

Turning his back on holy wars and the feudal dominion exercised by the Church, Francis began to travel the land, giving everyone his greeting “Peace and all good.” He invited men and women to reconcile themselves and live as brothers and sisters. In front of the whole city gathered in Bologna's central square, Francis' talk centered on the duty of extinguishing hatred and concluding a new peace treaty. At Arezzo, he chased away the demons of discord. And, when conflict broke out in his own town of Assisi between the bishop and the podestà, he did not rest until he had reconciled the two men.

“To those who want to characterize, even superficially, the life of Francis of Assisi,” wrote P. Lippert, “it seems right from the start to be a life of love, with this word being understood in its most sacred and strongest sense.” To tell the truth, it was not just the love of a man for his kind, but the love of God for men and women, which had possessed Francis and which, through him, spread throughout the world, like the sun in springtime, as a force of communion and peace.

And this force was contagious. Soon Francis was no longer alone. Tens, then hundreds, of the young and not so young joined him, wanting to follow his example. They ran to him and to his ideal of poverty, as to a feast. For at the end of the road there was the elation of fraternity.

Creator of Fraternity

Fraternity! That was what they were looking for. It was the face of the peace that Francis announced. A great fraternal movement grew up in his wake. This movement responded to a desire and a deep aspiration of the time. The idea of association and fraternity was in the air.

Had it not been this idea that, together with that of freedom, had inspired the revolt of the communes? In rejecting the power of the feudal lords and erecting their cities as free communes, the people of the towns aspired to new social relationships. The feudal regime only knew about relationships of vassalage: men and women were always vassals of other men and women. The commune, as its name indicates, promised social relationships that would be more democratic, freer, more fraternal. At least that was what ordinary people hoped for. But this hope was quickly disappointed.

In the free communes, the rule of money, that of the rich merchants, replaced that of the lords. Thus the primitive Franciscan movement re-lit, in the hearts of the poor, the hope of a true fraternity. What the communes had not been able to realize, Francis and his brothers lived in the light of the Gospel.

Small fraternities, those of sisters as well as those of brothers, multiplied rapidly in Italy and then all across Western Europe. They seemed like so many centers of peace and reconciliation. In truth, the friars lived a double fraternity: between themselves, of course, but also with all the other men and women whom they met, and most particularly with the poorest, the smallest. None of them was allowed to exercise the power of domination (RegNB 5: 9). “We should never desire to be above others,” said Francis “but we ought rather to be their servants...” (1EpFid 47). Coming from different

social horizons, the brothers learned to live together with respect for their differences. Such a fraternity had nothing to do with dragooning. For Francis, each brother was an individual being, a unique person. Fraternity could only be built upon respect for persons. It was always the welcome of a “thou” into the atmosphere of a “we.”

Today we cannot imagine how revolutionary such a project was at that time. We need to remember that the Church, as a whole, was a seigniorial Church: the bishop at the head of a diocese and an abbot at the head of a monastery were true feudal lords with a temporal power that extended sometimes over entire regions. In this context, the countless Franciscan fraternities that grew up throughout Europe were a real breath of fresh air. They were a new presence of the Church to the world: a presence that created a fraternal communion where the humblest ones in society rediscovered their place and their dignity.

The Dimension of Humanity

But Francis’ gaze did not rest only upon Christendom. It looked much further. He wanted to reunite the whole of humanity in a universal fraternity. Now, at the time, the world was divided into two blocs: western Christianity on the one hand and Islam on the other. Between these two blocs there was war, holy war, crusade. Francis could not admit of this break. He planned to build a bridge between these two blocs. The time was not favorable to such an enterprise. The Fifth Crusade was reaching its climax. Was that all? Francis decided to go to the Sultan of Egypt. A foolish dream. And, incredibly, he was received with great courtesy, in the middle of a crusade, by Al-Malik al-Kamil, the head of the Muslims. The two men showed respect and esteem for each other. Could one have hoped for more? It was already a great deal. A great deal, but at the same time not a lot. The peace mission of the Poor Man of Assisi came up against its limit.

The Experience of Limits and of Depths

It would come to know one other limit. And this time within his own Order. This limit would wound Francis painfully and deeply. We must follow him through this trial where his presence to God and to men and women would be deepened by being purified. From there would be born a new man, one of the strongest and most original known to human history.

It was not, in fact, enough to desire fraternity between all beings in order to find “the unity of creation.” He needed to learn to desire this fraternity with a heart at peace, with a heart that let itself be troubled by nothing. In short, with the heart of a poor man. It was not enough to love; he needed to learn to be poor, even in love.

That was the most difficult but also the most important lesson. The desire to succeed whatever the cost is rarely more than egoism and self-love, even when it is used to bring men and women together. This desire often engenders new exclusions. That is why it weakens life instead of serving it. On the contrary, where life is free from all self-love, it can gush, spread out and create in all liberty.

One can see, in Francis’ *Writings*, the insistence with which he denounces agitation, irritation and anger, as major obstacles to charity within oneself and in others. He sees them as the infallible sign of a possessive attitude, of a secret and often unconscious appropriation (Adm. 4: 2; 11: 2,3; 13: 2; 14: 3; 27: 2). One may think one is pure, generous, disinterested. Until the day when some contradiction or dispute arises. Then

one gets agitated, irritated and becomes aggressive. The mask falls. With all *one's* weapons one defends *one's* good, *one's* territory. Truly then one has appropriated for oneself the good that the Lord was able to do through one; one has made it something personal.

If Francis expressed himself so clearly about agitation and anger, if he recommended his brothers to keep peace in their hearts, (Adm. 15:13; 27:4; RegNB 11:4; 17:15; RegB 3:11; CantSol 10) it is a sure indication that he himself was tempted by agitation and anger. And in the most insidious way: through his own work of peace and fraternity. Through his own effort to create among men and women a truly fraternal communion “within the unity of creation.”

Success seemed to be smiling upon him. The number of brothers was continually increasing. Popes, one after another, showed a particular benevolence towards the nascent Order. Francis had every reason to thank the Lord for all the good that he was accomplishing throughout the holy brothers of his Order.

But then suddenly the sky darkened. Serious disagreements arose within the fraternity. Given the growing number of brothers, a more rigorous organization was necessary. A certain vagabondage needed to end. Houses and times of formation were becoming necessary. Not all were in agreement about the new orientation. Francis realized well enough that five thousand brothers could not live the evangelical life in the same way as twelve. But he also saw dawning among some of the influential brothers the desire to bring the fraternity into line with the more established monastic orders. Now, in his eyes, it was necessary above all to safeguard the ideal of simplicity and of evangelical liberty, as well as the new presence to the world, under the banner of fraternal communion with the lowliest.

A profound anguish then seized Francis. Were they not going to turn the fraternity away from its original vocation by wanting to adapt it? He saw his work compromised and taken over by others who did not really share his spirit.

A Peaceful Man

This moral crisis, aggravated by illness, was for Francis the necessary path to a radical stripping of himself. “He was troubled within and without, in his soul and in his body” (LP 21; 1Cel 104). He retired into the solitude of a hermitage to hide his pain and his turmoil. There was a danger that he would close himself away in isolation and bitterness. God was waiting for him there. Francis was invited to a supreme purification. He would need to divest himself of his work in order to become himself the work of God. No longer to consider the Order as his affair, but as that of God. “Be agitated no longer... I am the Lord.” Francis heard the call. He threw his worry onto the Lord. God is--that is enough. Then the heart of Francis was lightened.

From then on he could give himself to his mission of peace with a heart made peaceful. With a radiant soul. What was important was not founding an exemplary fraternity but being himself a fraternal man, radiating the goodness of the Father. Now Francis could write in all truth: “...the truly peaceful are those who despite everything they have to suffer in this world for the love of Our Lord Jesus Christ, keep peace in their souls and bodies” (Adm 15).

To a brother with responsibility for a fraternity, who asked his permission to retire to the solitude of a hermitage on the pretext that his companions caused him all sorts of vexation and prevented him from loving the Lord as he would have wished, Francis could reply with the authority that personal experience alone confers: "...what impedes you from loving the Lord God, all the impediments that come to you from the brothers or from others, even if they should beat you: these you should hold for a grace.... Love those who do this to you; think only of loving them... This will be more meritorious for you than a hermitage...."

The Unity of Creation

From now on, nothing could limit Francis' peaceful gaze. Nothing could oppose the action of the Spirit within him. He was as free as the wind. He then wrote a letter "to all the inhabitants of the world," wishing them the "true peace from heaven." Nothing shows better the measure of his horizon. But he did not only want to unite men and women in peace. He wanted to extend that peace to all creation, reconciling men and women with nature. This desire for a fraternal presence to the world finds its expression in the *Canticle of Brother Sun* or the *Canticle of Creatures*.

This *Canticle*, composed by Francis in the twilight of his life, is a veritable spiritual testament. It expresses a great surge of praise. The small Poor Man praises God for all his creatures. This praise has the brilliance of the sun, the gentle clarity of the stars, the wings of the wind, the humility of water, the ardor of fire and the patience of the earth. It celebrates the beauty of the world. Three times the adjective "beautiful" is repeated in the *Canticle*. This cosmic praise is in the true tradition of the biblical songs and psalms. But there is something new here: a desire for fraternal communion. Francis fraternizes with creatures. Rejecting all spirit of domination, he welcomes them as brothers or sisters. He associates them with his highest destiny. It is with them that he raises himself up to God in praise.

This fraternal communion with creatures is not sentimentality nor is it dreaming. It does not oppose the turning of natural resources to good account and their use by men and women. One could even say that, according to Francis, material elements are all the more fraternal when they are useful for men and women. As well as their beauty, he celebrates their usefulness. He hails sister Water as "very useful." Similarly brother Wind, whose breath is life, or our sister mother Earth who nourishes us by producing all sorts of fruits.

There is, in this fraternal communion with the creatures, a great love of life that is akin to and melds into that of the Creator for his work. From this came Francis' religious respect for everything that exists and lives. To his brothers who went to cut wood in the forest, he recommended that they not leave behind them a desert but allow life to burst out again in new foliage. He condemned all human cupidity that rapes the earth and tortures life. How many times did he give back their freedom to animals caught uselessly?!

Beyond Every Conflict

Those who fraternize with the creatures open themselves at the same time to all that those creatures symbolize. They fraternize with that obscure part of themselves that is rooted in nature: with their body and all its vital forces. Francis rejected nothing. He assumed everything in his surge towards God. His spiritual life did not take place in a

separate universe. He went to God with his cosmic roots, with his “sister mother Earth who carries us and governs us.” All duality was overcome. The dark forces of life were here transfigured. They became forces of light. They lost their fearsome aspect. The wolf was tamed. Not only the wolf that ran in the woods, but also and especially the one that hides in each of us. The aggressiveness of life was transformed into strength of love. It is this strength that sings in “brother Fire who illuminates the night: he is beautiful and joyous, robust and strong.”

At peace with oneself, one can fraternize with all one’s kind. Francis wanted to add to his praise of the creatures, the praise of men and women of pardon and peace. These he hails as the crowning glory of all the work of creation:

“Praised be you, my Lord,
for those who pardon through love of you,
who endure infirmity and tribulation.
Blessed are those who endure in peace,
for by you Most High they shall be crowned”.

The *Canticle of the Creatures* is the language of a man open to his whole being, born of a complete personality, in whom the forces of life and desire are themselves integrated; they have become the forces of love and light. This gave to Francis’ spiritual life, in addition to its plenitude, a solar radiance.

Francis discovered the luminous meaning of creation through an interior experience of a new genesis. “He appeared to be,” said Celano “a new man, a man of the age to come” (1Cel 82). His *Canticle* is not only a vibrant homage to the Creator; it is also the celebration of becoming. He is singing the new creation in the heart of the fraternal man.

The secret of this divine dawn is the poverty that Francis lived, not only in relation to the goods of this world, but more deeply in the heart of his relationship with God. Letting God be God and handing himself over completely to him, he identified with the total and loving presence of the Creator to his work.

Eloi Leclerc OFM

Minority, Option For The Poor And Our Work For Peace

1. Awareness

Poverty has always been a part of the Franciscan charism. Francis himself frequently recalls our vocation with the words: “that we observe the poverty and the humility and the Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ which we have firmly promised” (RegB 12:4). However, the understanding and the practice of Franciscan evangelical life has changed with the times. From the pontifical declaration on the observance of the Rule (*Quo Elongati*, 1230, by Gregory IX) down to our pre-conciliar GG.CC., the greatest emphasis was on the literal fulfillment of the Rule with a juridical-moral interpretation. Poverty basically consisted in not owning property and a limited use of things, under the authority of the Provincial or the Guardian. There was a distinction between vow and virtue, but both aspects were part of the same perspective: the religious life as a way of Christian perfection within an objective, institutional framework.

What happened just after Vatican Council II? In the beginning we thought that it was just a matter of readjusting some points of observance. Now we are aware that the Order is going through a difficult stage, a radical rebirth or re-creation of its own identity.

So we shall speak of **minority**:

It is not sufficient to observe the precepts and counsels of the Rule. Rather there is question of an option for the poor.

Austerity is not sufficient. It is necessary to create lifestyles that make us minors in society.

The use of goods in obedience to superiors is not sufficient. Rather are we called to promote justice and to be heralds of peace.

To look for the perfection of the vow of poverty is not sufficient. We must discover a way of living the beatitudes of the Kingdom today in a world of conflict, injustice and secularization.

No doubt minority is a spiritual attitude; but it is also a form of gospel living. Is this what is actually happening?

2. Analysis

It would seem that two factors are influencing this change of perspective:

A. New ecclesial consciousness

We can speak of a new “displacement” of gospel centers. Each epoch re-reads the Gospel; today significant stress is laid on:

- 1) The history of Salvation as an action of God in favor of the poor. The Kingdom, Good News for the despised. Messianic preferences and options of Jesus.
- 2) If this is God's way of acting and consequently the mission of the Church, in continuity with Jesus, what then is the meaning of religious life today? The following of Jesus, which is the nucleus of our vocation - does it consist in a

personal relationship, in reproducing his attitudes and virtues after the manner of ascetic practices not related to history? - or are we called to follow the footprints of Jesus, the dynamics of the Kingdom, in the actual conditions of our world?

- 3) There are indications that confirm this displacement:
- the theology of the Kingdom as integral, not exclusively spiritual, liberation;
 - the search for a model of Church which is more participative, more egalitarian;
 - the creation and consolidation of base communities;
 - the constant preoccupation on the part of religious institutes for a presence among the poorer classes, in marginalized barrios;
 - the proliferation of the so-called “inserted” communities;
 - the participation in platforms of struggle on behalf of human rights;
 - the adoption of the principle of nonviolence as a method of socio-political change.

B. Socio-cultural context

Since Vatican II, the Church is adopting a positive attitude towards the world and its hopes. For some time now, human history has begun a process of self-liberation that has taken on certain significant characteristics:

- 1) Every person has an inviolable dignity and rights, which should be respected by every authority, civil and religious. The first right is that of liberty, of being a protagonist of one's own history.
- 2) Equality and solidarity are irrenounceable values of human progress. A suspicion that in every inequality there exists an injustice. An attitude of participation in social and political change.
- 3) A sensitivity towards groups of people who cannot attain to liberty: the proletariat, colonized peoples, women, the Third World and other groups.

This widespread movement which belongs to western modernity has been characterized at the beginning by an excessive optimism and very soon has become a source of contradictions which create conflicts. (For example, the confrontation between liberal capitalism and socialism). It has later produced profound disenchantment regarding every attempt at a social utopia (post-modernity).

Within religious life even today, we notice a different appraisal of social commitment. But it is certain that our Order has incorporated many aspects of modern humanism in the current GG.CC. Chapters IV and V give a clear reflection of this. What that means is that we Franciscans, having made a discernment of the socio-cultural context in which we live, have come up with certain options because we are convinced that they are in line with the original gospel project of the Franciscan movement.

In effect we believe that minority, in as far as it shows a new way forward in accordance with the sensitivity of many friars and the GG.CC., corresponds faithfully to Francis and his project, even though it may not reproduce literally the Rule and Life.

3. In the light of the Life and Rule.

The *Regula Bullata* 3:10-14 gives a synthesis of the characteristics of the Franciscan mission: “I counsel, admonish and exhort my brothers in the Lord Jesus Christ that, when they go about the world, they do not quarrel or fight with words or judge others; rather, let them be meek, peaceful and unassuming, gentle and humble, speaking

courteously to everyone, as is becoming. And they should not ride on horseback unless they are forced by manifest necessity or infirmity. Into whatever house they enter let them say: Peace to this house. And according to the Holy Gospel, they are free to eat of whatever food is set before them.”

In synthesis (then) the franciscan mission consists in (our) being minors and the text highlights the great themes which derive from this mission of minority:

3.1. Mission and itinerancy. Franciscan life is not “mixed,” a kind of equilibrium between contemplation and action, after the manner of regular clerics of the time or later semi-monastic forms of life. Our cloister is the whole wide world of the children of God, our brothers (SC 63); our house is the fraternity. Consequently, our mission is not a concrete function to be fulfilled (like preaching, caring, teaching, doing works of charity) within an efficiently organized institution. We are supposed to live in a permanent state of mission. For this, a form of living without fixed property is a help.

3.2. Mission and insertion. We need mobility, like Jesus, who “did not have where to lay his head” (LP 57). Minority places us in solidarity with the lowest in society (cf.RegNB 9). That is how our salvation was achieved, “from within,” taking on the human condition, looking for the lost (2EpFid 45; Adm 6; 9; 11).

3.3 Mission and Beatitudes. The correlation between mission texts of the Gospel and the Sermon on the Mount is not arbitrary. Why has Francis spoken of the franciscan apostolate in terms of a life based on the Beatitudes of Jesus? The answer is clear: the friars are being sent among the people to be minors. That is the reason for having example as a priority rather than the ministerial function - not by way of exclusion but by deliberate preference. What is most urgent for the Kingdom is that it become a reality among peoples, that the friars become disciples of Jesus and announce him by the witness of their lifestyle (EpOrd 9; Test 19; LP 58, 103).

3.4 Mission of peace. The whole Christian ministry can be summarized in the concept of reconciliation (2 Cor 5; Eph 2); but the option of Francis is to bring this about by non-violent action, preferring to suffer injustice rather than create divisions and to rely on that love which waits and endures without limits; in other words, following the footprints of Jesus who bore our sins (Adm 5; 15; VPLaet; RegNB 16; 22:1-4; RegB 10:7-12; Test 23).

In reality, this process in Francis' vocation is inseparable from the world of poverty and suffering. The biography of his companions points out that one of the elements which preceded his conversion was his compassion for the needy. The decisive steps in that conversion were marked by a progressive insertion into the condition of the most wretched: lepers and beggars. In spite of the exceedingly spiritualist interpretation which the biographers have given us of the vision of the Crucifix of San Damiano, there is no doubt that we must relate it to the consciousness which Francis acquired of the identification between the following of the poor and humble Jesus, sharing the lifestyle of minors (L3S 3; 11-14; 2Cel 8-12; Test 1-5).

The franciscan movement was born in the context of social marginalization and service of the lowly. The original project and life, namely, the non-approved Rule, presupposes this as an habitual and determined option (2:7; 7:1; 7:13-14; 8:8-11; 9:2; 11). In spite of

the rereading which Celano has left us of some anecdotes concerning poverty, it is obviously still the primitive inspiration: the friars minor do not offer charity to the poor, they feel themselves identified with them (2Cel 84-85; 87; 92). It is true that with the responsibilities of serving his brothers and the numerical and ecclesial burgeoning of the fraternity, Francis could scarcely have dedicated himself to his preferential mission. But he still insistently maintains the principle of minority: that the friars may not preach without the permission of the bishops or when any priest impedes it; that they should choose menial jobs at the pastoral level or manual work. Their role is not to possess anything but “to do penance” and to be minors (RegB 9; Test 7-8; LP20; 58; 2Cel 146-147; Test 24-26).

4. In the light of the GG.CC.

Although it may seem strange, the importance which the theme of minority has acquired in our actual rule of life, the GG.CC., fits in more directly with the original franciscan movement than with regular observance which tends to portray a franciscan life in which minority is reduced to the asceticism of poverty.

Since the theme is extensive and since it will be treated later under its specific aspects, we shall limit ourselves to explaining in outline the dynamic which the GG.CC. bring to the actual renewal of the franciscan vocation of minority:

- 1) The definition of our charism (art.1,2) treats minority as a forming element of the following of Jesus, which is closely united to evangelization by means of the commitment to peace and justice.
- 2) The vow of poverty is understood not only in the juridical-moral or ascetic sense but as a sharing of the lot of the poor (art.8).
- 3) The spirit of penance/conversion takes root not only in the interior being but also in the service of the lowliest of people (art.32).
- 4) Our following of Jesus is one of minority, as disciples who live the Beatitudes of the Kingdom in the world, as servants of all, submissive, peaceful and humble (art.64). Let us note the saying of RegB 3 (“let them go through the world”), which presupposes a life not centered in the cloister.
- 5) Art. 65 sets out the theological basis of our minority, without which every plan of living and every commitment to the poor remains radically vitiated.
- 6) The vocation to minority is in practice molded by adopting the life and condition of the lowly in society.
- 7) This dynamic of “incarnating” is not to be confused with the uncritical assimilation of worldly values (art.67).
- 8) The option for forms of life known as “presence” (which do not need to be justified by means of specific tasks: cf. art. 83-84) is united to the mission of justice and peace. The first feature of franciscan fidelity is the principle of nonviolence (art.68-69). This presupposes a gospel-centered heart, reconciled with all people and with creation (art.70-71).

So this is a dynamic of witness and of action which is born of the same gospel experience of minority. There are many more examples in Chapters IV and V of the GG.CC. which confirm and complete the dynamic of minority. Those mentioned are sufficient to make one aware of the challenges which the present GG.CC. bring to franciscan life in the 21st century.

Javier Garrido OFM

Justice, Peace And Integrity Of Creation In Evangelization And Formation

1. Evangelization and JPIC

The word “evangelization” was not commonly used in Catholic circles until the publication, in 1975, of *Evangelii Nuntiandi* by Pope Paul VI to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the close of Vatican II. In the decade before Vatican II and in the face of the de-christianization of the West, a number of European theologians such as Karl Barth had been calling for a kerygmatic theology: a confident proclamation of the basic message of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. The sermons of Peter and Paul, as found in ACTS, were used as models for this basic evangelization.

Vatican II, a preeminently “pastoral” council, built on this experience of Europe's pastoral theologians, both Catholic and Protestant and emphasized evangelical terminology. A comparison with Vatican I is instructive; that council used the word “gospel” only once and never the words “evangelize” or “evangelization.” Vatican II, by contrast, used the word “gospel” 157 times, “evangelize” 18 times and “evangelization” 31 times.

The concept of evangelization proposed by Paul VI is broader than that of the kerygmatic theologians, who thought of it as a “first proclamation” followed by catechesis. For Paul VI evangelization is the “grace and ... deepest identity of the church; she EXISTS TO EVANGELIZE, that is to preach and teach, to be the channel of the gift of grace, to reconcile sinners with God and to perpetuate Christ's sacrifice in the Mass” (EN 14).

Evangelization proclaims “salvation” which -- and this is very important for our theme - - is understood to be “this great gift of God which is LIBERATION FROM EVERYTHING THAT OPPRESSES HUMAN BEINGS (in the official Latin text: *liberatio ab iis omnibus quibus homo opprimitur*) and especially liberation from sin and the evil one, in the joy of knowing God and of being known by Him, of seeing Him and of being given over to Him” (EN 9). While all accept the final clauses of that description of salvation, not all are enthusiastic about seeing salvation as “liberation from everything that oppresses human beings.” Nonetheless that understanding is in keeping with the biblical and Christian tradition.

The Exodus, for example, was not a “purely spiritual” event -- it was also, and very prominently so, economic, social, political and cultural liberation. Salvation then includes, but is not identified with, liberation from the dehumanizing poverty that afflicts hundreds of millions of people in our world today. Very early in Israel's history God explains His loving plan: “For Yahweh will bless you in the land Yahweh your God gives you for your inheritance... Always be open-handed with your brother and with anyone in your country who is in need and poor” (Dt 15:4.11) -- something that can happen only if the abundance created by God is equitably shared by all God's sons and daughters.

In a similar vein, St. Paul told the Corinthians: in the matter of riches there should be a certain equality among you (Cf. 2 Cor 8:13ff). The gap between rich and poor

nonetheless continues to widen and we need to see this as contrary to God's plan. Indeed, this widening gap “is a threat to the very future of the human race” (*Octogesima Adveniens*, 7). As the numbers of desperately poor people (think, for example, of the millions of refugees) increase dramatically, we need to recall that evangelization involves “a message especially energetic today about liberation” (EN 29). Working for the Kingdom of God “means working for liberation from evil in all its forms” (*Redemptoris Missio*, 14). Of fundamental importance for the JPIC ministry is the emphatic teaching of the 1971 Synod of Bishops: Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the gospel or, in other words, of the church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.

Justice

Transformation of the world and liberation from oppression -- all this is part of the church's mission. A spirituality that is so “otherworldly” that it is not concerned about justice, liberation and transformation of the world is thoroughly inadequate and unbiblical. In a surprisingly candid statement, the 1987 Synod of Bishops said: “The Holy Spirit leads us to understand more clearly that holiness today cannot be attained without a commitment to justice.” Failing to commit ourselves to the great cause of justice is failing to grow in holiness! For that very reason Christian social teaching is “an essential part of the Christian message...and an essential element of the new evangelization” (*Centesimus Annus*, 5).

At the heart of the church's social teaching is the “preferential option for the poor” an option “to which the whole tradition of the church bears witness” (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 42). St. Francis was conspicuous in his preaching and living that option. In his *Testament* he explains that the Lord led him among the poorest of the poor--the lepers he had so studiously avoided. It was then that Francis was given the grace to redefine what is bitter and what is sweet--a beautiful description of conversion. Very much like contemporary papal teaching, Francis considered the help given to the poor to be a matter of justice: “Alms are a legacy and a just right due to the poor, which our Lord Jesus Christ acquired for us” (RegNB 9:8).

Peace

Similarly, while it is true that the young Francis was keen on becoming a warrior-knight, after his conversion he became the most ardent promoter of peace and this at a time when not only the “world” but also the church had recourse to violence--e.g., the Crusades. The earliest Franciscan movement was known as a “delegation of peace” (1Cel 24). Francis claimed that violence delighted the hearts of demons and had an exorcism prayed over the strife-torn city of Arezzo, for he saw violence to be a sign of diabolical possession (cf. 2Cel 108.). Francis was convinced that the Lord revealed the greeting of peace to him; in his writings the vices he most warns against are those that disrupt peace in oneself and in others: arrogance, greed, haughtiness, vanity, jealousy, detraction, an unforgiving spirit. On his deathbed Francis reconciled two bitter enemies, the bishop and the mayor of Assisi. He was a peacemaker until the end; literally he died making peace. The “spirit of Assisi” is a spirit of peace and so when Pope John Paul II wanted to gather the world's religious leaders together to pray for peace, he invited them to Assisi.

St. Francis speaks to us today just as he urged his early followers: “Since you speak of

peace, all the more must you have peace in your hearts. Let no one be provoked to anger or scandal by you, but may they be drawn to peace and good will, to kindness and concord through your gentleness. We have been called to heal wounds, to bring together what has fallen apart and to bring home those who have lost their way” (L3S 58).

Integrity of Creation

Vatican II reminds us that to fulfill our mission we must read the “signs of the times.” “Signs of the times” may also be called “Signs of the Spirit” since they point to the many ways the Spirit of God is present and active in the world and the church, raising our consciousness to new levels of awareness. The ecological movement is one of the signs of our times. More and more people are coming to see ecological concerns as a matter of basic justice to future generations and find it easy to agree with the judgment of Pope John Paul II: “the ecological crisis is a moral problem” (Message of 8 December 1989).

An eminent scientist-member of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences claims that “we have violated the Genesis trust. We have gotten carried away with the concept of dominion and subjugation and have lost the concept of caring.” He claims that “the way we are treating the world is not sustainable. To continue to shuck our clear obligation in what often seems to be nothing more than a relentless quest for material prosperity must eventually come to seem unacceptable to any moral person.” Over-consumption and waste, especially in affluent countries, are the chief causes of environmental destruction. This is a call to serious conversion.

While as Franciscans we do not have the scientific expertise to solve the ecological crisis, we do have a Franciscan vision of reverence for all creation and this attitude is the key to solving the ecological crisis. For this reason many scientists today propose a partnership between religion and science so that the ecological movement can have a “soul.”

St. Bonaventure beautifully expresses Francis' mystical vision of creation: Aroused by all things to the love of God he rejoiced in all the works of the Lord's hands and from these joy-producing manifestations he rose to their life-giving principle and cause. In beautiful things he saw Beauty itself and through his vestiges imprinted on creation he followed his Beloved everywhere, making all things a ladder by which he could climb up and embrace Him who is utterly desirable. (LM IX,1) In a simple sentence Bonaventure expresses Francis' vision as well as his own: “Every creature is a word of God, because it speaks of God” (*Comment. in Eccles.*). For obvious reasons Pope John Paul II declared St. Francis the Patron Saint of those dedicated to ecological concerns in his letter *Inter Sanctos Praeclarosque Viros* (29 November 1979). The ringing challenge of Pope John Paul II can fittingly close this section: “We cry out once more: Respect the human being, who is the image of God! Evangelize so this may become a reality, so the Lord may transform hearts and humanize political and economic systems.” (Puebla, 1979)

2. Franciscan Formation in Justice, Peace and Ecology

Our General Constitutions (art. 126ff) remind us that ALL friars are in formation. The distinction is not between friars “in formation” and friars “out of formation” but between those in initial formation (from the day a man is received as a candidate until

the day of solemn profession) and those in continuing formation (from the day of solemn profession until death). Continuing formation is seen as “the journey of one's whole life” (*itinerarium totius vitae*) (art. 135). Understood this way, our continuing formation is very closely related to our continuing conversion of our life as “men of penance” (L3S 37). We are encouraged to be like St. Francis, described by both Thomas of Celano and St. Bonaventure as “always new,” “always beginning again,” *semper novus, semper inchoans* (cf. *Analecta Franciscana* X, pp.80, 222, 366, 577, 621). Francis continues to encourage us, as when close to his death he encouraged his first followers, “to begin again to serve the Lord God, for up till now we have made little or no progress” (1Cel 103). Our Franciscan vision can grow ever more dim just as a fire can be gradually extinguished if it is not continually rekindled. So St. Paul reminded Timothy: “REKINDLE the gift of God that is within you” (2 Tim 1:6). If the gift--in our case, St. Francis' vision of radical gospel living--is not treasured and nurtured, it can be lost. We have two options: growth or decline; progress or stagnation. Continuing formation/conversion is the path of progress and growth.

This understanding of continuing formation as a lifelong process is confirmed by Pope John Paul II: “Every life is a constant path towards maturity, a maturity that cannot be obtained except by constant formation. There is no profession, job or work that does not require constant updating, if it is to remain current and effective” (*Pastores Dabo Vobis*,70). For this reason, continuing formation “is particularly urgent today, not only because of rapid changes in the social and cultural condition of individuals and peoples, but also because of that 'new evangelization' which constitutes the essential and pressing task of the Church at the end of the second millenium.”

The new evangelization needs new evangelizers” (ibid.82). As noted earlier, this new evangelization--which we too must see as our “essential and pressing task”--“must include among its essential elements a proclamation of the church's social doctrine” (*Centesimus Annus*, 5). We cannot proclaim that doctrine if we are unfamiliar with it; study and reflection on the church's social teaching is an essential element in our continuing formation. Cf. GG.CC. art. 96. That teaching, a real call to conversion, was enunciated for the universal church by Vatican II, especially in the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* and in numerous papal encyclicals. Episcopal conferences have provided an extremely valuable service by applying the universal social teaching to the conditions of their own continents and countries. Most notable among these efforts have been the meetings of the Conference of Latin American bishops (CELAM) and especially CELAM II (held in Medellín in 1973).

Medellín injected new vitality into much of the Latin American church, giving it a new direction: the “preferential option for the poor.” A five-centuries old way of “being church” in Latin America (allied to the oligarchies and ruling classes, even as it preached “charity” to the poor) died at Medellín, and a new way, more evangelical, was born. Medellín is a brilliant example of continuing formation and conversion, for the church on an entire continent and thus constitutes a grace not only for Latin America but also for the church universal. (Interestingly, in its Message to The Peoples of Latin America, Medellín coined the term “new evangelization,” used countless times since, especially by Pope John Paul II.). One important lesson we can learn from Medellín, especially for continuing formation in matters of justice, peace and ecology, is the importance of experience. At that conference the Latin American bishops used the inductive method -- they began, not with a study of abstract doctrines, but with an analysis of the lived

experience of millions of Latin America's poor. They made their own the words of Vatican II: "The joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted in any way, are the joy and hope, the grief and anguish, of the followers of Christ as well" (GS 1).

St. Francis too was converted, not by reading books about leprosy but by his experience of going among lepers and serving them. Cf. Test 2. It was that lived experience that led him to redefine what for him was bitter and what was sweet. He wanted his brothers to have a similar experience and a similar conversion. Friars are "to rejoice when they live among people who are considered to be of little worth and are looked down upon, among the poor and the powerless, the sick and the lepers, and the beggars by the wayside" (RegNB 9:2). Reading books and articles and attending lectures about poverty, hunger, homelessness, the plague of violence and environmental destruction may be helpful and even necessary. We need to be well informed to address these issues with competence. But the experience of sharing the lives of the poor and working with others committed to a Christian solution to dehumanizing poverty, violence and environmental destruction is of even greater importance for our continuing conversion and formation. "People today put more trust in witnesses than in teachers, in experience than in teaching, and in life and action than in theories" (*Redemptoris Missio*, 42).

All friars should have the experience of direct involvement, at least on occasion, in ministries dedicated to issues of justice, peace and the integrity of creation. One happy result of this experience may well be that we begin to attach more importance to these issues in all our ministries, whatever they may be. We can thus raise the consciousness of the people whom we serve, thereby fostering their continual conversion also, so that together with them, we may more effectively advance the Kingdom of God on earth. This has special relevance in our youth ministries, for with their energy and enthusiasm young people are called to make their own unique and necessary contribution to promoting Kingdom values. Trained in social/cultural analysis, young people will better understand the root causes of the social ills that plague our world and dedicate their energies to eliminating them; and while instruction in the peaceful resolution of conflict is beneficial for all, it is especially so for the young, who are so often victims of violence and easily tempted to have recourse to it. In summary we propose three steps:

3. Summary

Prayer

Although the issues of justice, peace and ecology are often considered to be "secular" concerns (and do interest many sincere secular humanists), we approach them as men of faith. Prayerful reflection on scriptural texts dealing with these issues is of primary importance, for we seek above all else to discover and implement God's plan for creation. Prayer to the Holy Spirit is especially necessary, for the Spirit is always the principal agent in the whole work of evangelization. In the Constitution on the Liturgy (35 #4), Vatican II recommended sacred celebrations of the Word of God, also called Bible Vigils. Our GG.CC. (22 #2) recommend the same, both in our fraternities and with the people. Such celebrations on justice, peace and the integrity of creation could easily be compiled, using the biblical texts in the Lectionary for the Mass for Justice and Peace. In addition to the biblical texts, many Franciscan sources, both early and modern, deal with these themes. While there is no corresponding Votive Mass for Ecology, many biblical texts could easily be found dealing with the integrity of creation, e.g., Gen 1; 2:4-

7, 15; 9:8-17; Lev 25:23-24; Psalms 8,65,104,147,148; John 1:1-5; Rom 8:18-25; Col 1:15-23; Rev 21:1-5. Among the many Franciscan sources, St. Francis' *Canticle of Brother Sun* is especially noteworthy.

Study and Reflection

In his letter *Tertio Millenio Adveniente* (36), the pope asked a challenging question: “how many Christians really know and put into practice the principles of the Church's social doctrine?” These words invite us, and especially friars entrusted with the preaching and teaching ministries, to a serious examination of conscience. How well do we ourselves know the Catholic tradition on the pressing issues of justice, peace and the integrity of creation? Is our thinking truly catholic: do we “think globally and act locally?” How much importance do we attach to these compelling questions in our ministries? If the people to whom we minister are largely ignorant of the Catholic social tradition, to a great extent the fault is ours. We need to recall that the “new evangelization” -- so urgently and repeatedly called for by Pope John Paul II, in the new millennium, “must include among its essential elements a proclamation of the church's social doctrine” (*Centesimus Annus*, 5). This doctrine, with its principles of universal validity, needs to “take flesh” in the concrete situations of each continent, country and locality. These concrete applications also require competence, the fruit of study, reflection and social/cultural analysis. In this context we need to emphasize the importance of the laity's role since the practical solution to problems in the areas of justice, peace and ecology depends almost exclusively on the competence and goodwill of the laity. The question for us is: are we forming a Christian social conscience in the laity we serve? The laity's road to holiness is not by a monastic *fuga mundi* but by living in the world dedicating themselves to the renewal of the temporal order so that it might correspond to God's plan. As Pope John XXIII noted: “We should not artificially see opposition where it does not exist: in this case, opposition between personal perfection and each one's activity in the world, as if a person could become perfect only by leaving aside temporal concerns. On the contrary it corresponds perfectly to the plan of Providence that each one become perfect (sic!) through his daily work, and for practically the whole human race that work will be in the temporal order” (MM 2249f). So the lay state too is a “state of perfection,” lived in the world while striving for the renewal of the temporal order. Do lay people hear that message from us?

Action

Some suggestions have already been made, such as study and giving more attention to the issues of justice, peace and the integrity of creation in our ministries. Other activities will depend largely on local conditions and so are best left to the conferences as well as provincial and friary chapters. Chapters have an important role, for just as our continuing formation is both personal and communal (GG.CC. 135), so too we are called to respond to the pressing needs of our times in the light of the gospel, both as individuals and as a brotherhood. We simply note that without action, study and reflection remain sterile.

Conclusion

As we prepare for what Pope John Paul II calls “The Great Jubilee of the Year 2000” (*Tertio Millenio Adveniente*, 17), we Friars Minor recall gratefully that the example of St. Francis has so much to offer us in meeting the most pressing social challenges of our times; Francis was truly the “Father of the Poor” (1Cel 76), whose early brotherhood was known as a “Delegation of Peace” (1Cel 24) and who considered himself the

Brother of all Creation (Canticle). As loving sons of Francis and of the Church, we need to respond to the pope's urgent plea: if we recall that Jesus came to “preach the good news to the poor” (Cf. Mt 11:5; Lk 7:22), how can we fail to lay greater emphasis on the Church's preferential option for the poor and the outcast? Indeed, it has to be said that a commitment to justice and peace in a world like ours, marked by so many conflicts and intolerable social and economic inequalities, is a necessary condition for the preparation and celebration of the Jubilee of the year 2000. Thus, in the spirit of the Book of Leviticus (25:8-12), Christians will have to raise their voice on behalf of all the poor of the world (TMA, 51).

Charles Finnegan OFM

Contemplation, Our Work for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation and Union with God

When speaking of contemplation and the work for justice, peace and the integrity of creation, we frequently are at a disadvantage, as these important aspects of our gospel life are often stereotyped unfairly. Some people assume that there is a dichotomy between contemplation and the work for justice. Contemplation, some think, is a withdrawal from the activities and business of society to a calm, peaceful, abstract presence that avoids the pain, confusion and questions raised by the suffering involved in our histories and personal lives. The work for justice and peace seems to be a more extroverted activity in which people are caught up in the social order with its problems and challenges. Expanding these stereotypes, we could say that contemplative prayer is a withdrawal to a private, isolated interiority and that the commitment to work for justice, peace and the integrity of creation is for marginal friars often motivated by a dedicated anger to challenge and change the political order. It is an activity caught in urgent social problems that do not appreciate interiority or time for quiet reflection.

Contemplation and meditation are frequently confused. Meditation is an activity that limits, concentrates or restricts our attention and consciousness to a particular point of focus. As a mental activity, it involves intellectual discipline and emotional withdrawal for concentration. Contemplation (con – templo, to be in a sacred place) has some of the same characteristics: for example, it is a focus of our attention. But the goal of contemplation is different. Not content with observation, it actively involves the whole person, intellectually, affectively and physically to seek union with God. It is about conscious union rather than observation. There are different schools and methods for both meditation and contemplation.

Jesus asks his followers to pursue the discipline of being awake, alert to what is happening around them and prepared to act. “The Reign of God is like a merchant who searches for the finest of all pearls” and when he finds it he acts decisively to have it; the Reign of God is compared to the bridesmaids, who while waiting for the groom, stay awake to keep their lamps burning so that they can see the bridegroom when he approaches. “The Reign of God is like a servant waiting for his master’s return . . . (it) comes like a thief in the night, you know neither the day nor the hour, so stay awake and be ready.”

The disciple stays awake and alert not for an intellectual appreciation of the meaning of life, but to re-enter life as an enlightened person of service. Jesus tells his followers that he has come so that we “may have life and have life abundantly.” In the parables of Jesus, we find that people are awakened to participate with others, for example, to be one with the bridegroom or to be of service in the story of the servant waiting for the master. Contemplation follows the path of compassion: awareness, action and union. These stages are connected by reflection that is done in a communal or personal setting.

The person who follows the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, as Francis describes Franciscan life, does not withdraw from society to preserve his life but gives his/ her life so that we can become a new creation. Jesus points us toward commitment, action and change. The Reign of God is compared to yeast that loses its own life in flour, becoming

something new and helpful for others, that is bread to nourish others.

The story of the Good Samaritan is one of the simplest and most concise descriptions of the movements within Christian contemplation. The Samaritan is united to God's will by being alert and acting out of compassion. In this parable the priest, lost in thought or wanting to keep himself ritually pure by not touching a person who appeared to be dead, walked past the beaten man. The Levite, who knew the laws and the prophets also walked past the victim. The priest and the Levite are absorbed in their own internal--probably well-intentioned--world that was protected by external rules, regulations and judgments. Even if they saw the suffering man, they had practical, religious and legal reasons to avoid his pain and misery. The man who was awake and alert, who saw and responded was the Samaritan. He understood his place in creation and acted accordingly.

A bridge of compassion, the physical care of the beaten man by the Samaritan, was an active response in love. His response fused a union of three wills: those of the Samaritan, the beaten man and God. Frequently the action of compassion is caught up with the preoccupations of the mission or emergency and only later upon reflection do we realize that we were participating in God's life and activity.

Like the response of the Samaritan, the life of St. Francis parallels a similar movement of observation, compassion and action. His personal conversion is a key that helps us to understand Franciscan contemplation. It was a moment of affective union with God that involved different movements and levels: an experience; his reflection upon and understanding of the experience and the identification of the experience as being of and with God. The grace was not initiated in the abandoned chapel of San Damiano or in the quiet of Mount Subasio. Francis experienced his liberating union with God one day on a road outside the security of Assisi. Surprised by a leper, Francis spontaneously embraced and kissed the man. Later he knew that in his embrace of the leper he somehow had been embraced by God and that his whole life changed. The "sweetness and light" that Francis describes as flowing from the act of compassion was not God's paternalistic reward to Francis for being kind to a wretched man. It was the manifest result of the union of wills to love. The event on the road and not the process of reflection is what Francis identifies as his moment of conversion, his encounter with God.

Jesus and Francis each had moments of personal, private prayer when they were "away in a quiet place." We know little of these private moments. The scriptures and the biographies of Francis contain many stories of Jesus and Francis being in direct contact with God while they were interacting with people and creation. Jesus had his most significant and direct contact with God not in a dream but in the River Jordan, where he was standing in a crowd of people before John the Baptist. He went into the desert to understand more clearly his experience in the river. He did not go there to find his vision. Jesus regularly experienced direct union with God when he was in the presence of another person who was in need and had faith. He could feel the power of God physically move through him as the sick are healed. He could command the storm to be still and the fig tree to wither. These moments of conscious connection, union, being in a sacred place, with God were "contemplation in the action." There are many stories about Francis that describe the saint's delirious delight in God in the midst of people and creation (Greccio, *Canticle of the Creatures*, preaching to the birds.) Jesus withdrew to the desert and Francis to the mountains where they each reached a profound

understanding of who was interacting with them in their lives.

St. Francis' love for the incarnation of God in the poor Jesus of Nazareth was pivotal in the development of social awareness within western Christianity. Francis' embrace of the leper, the marginalized person of his society and his entering into the community of the lepers outside of Assisi opened a new path of contemplation. His joyful, passionate embrace of the Incarnate Love of God inspired others to believe in and to love God, who is seriously involved within our history. This in part is why the Order tells us: "Following the example of Francis who was led by the Lord to go among the lepers, each and every brother should show a preference for the marginalized, poor and sick. The brothers should look at all things from the perspective of the poor...." (GG.CC. art 96. 1-2). The growing trust and appreciation of the Incarnation and its implications opened new paths for the western Church and civilization. On the other hand, for eastern Christianity, which did not have a Francis of Assisi, most of the sacred mysteries have remained mainly behind the iconostasis, within its icons, music and incense and not within the hospitals, orphanages, schools and social documents of the Church.

For our ancestors in faith, the Jews, justice was restoration not punishment. A judge performed an act of justice by restoring what had been stolen or broken. Occasionally he would imprison a person until everything was paid back. In the Bible the books of Genesis and Revelations see God's original plan for creation and humanity and its restoration symbolized by the Garden of Eden and the New Jerusalem. Justice is working so that the kingdom of God "may come on earth as it is in heaven" so that humanity will live peacefully and consciously in the presence of God.

Faithful to Francis and our tradition, we should resist creating a false dichotomy between contemplation and the work for justice that leads to a dualistic view of life. Each of us, called by God to be a lesser brother, a friar minor, has the responsibility to be alert to what is happening around us, to develop a habitual pattern of observation and preparedness to join God in the loving work of restoration. "The friars minor, joined as they are to the People of God, shall scrutinize the new signs of the times and always relate to a world in continual development" (GG. CC. art 4.1). Prayer reflection secures, identifies and reinforces the experience of God's saving activity. It reminds us that God does not live outside of our history but within it. We need time to move away from our activity to understand what has been happening and to incorporate ourselves more wholeheartedly into God's action around us.

Discernment helps us to understand where the Spirit is leading our community. Our projects, the structures that we have, the associations and the collaboration that we have with other people and organizations of goodwill should lead us to become more awake to what is happening in our society, then to embrace reality--even the parts that we want to avoid--and to join God where God is living and working. In our structures, our chapters, our work, our life together, we must be united with God so that his "kingdom will come on earth as it is in heaven."

John Quigley OFM

Justice and Peace in the *Ratio Formationis Franciscanae*

Introduction

a) *Origin, objective and structure of the Ratio*

The *Ratio Formationis*, approved in 1991, is the orientative Document of both initial and ongoing formation for the whole Order. It is a reply to the conviction that "the formation of its members in fidelity to the roots of its special charism and to the signs of the times constitutes the greatest challenge to the Order and to the Provinces" (Presentation). In order to help the Provinces and all the friars to respond to that challenge this document has endeavored to gather up and to apply to formation the fruits of reflection on renewal in the area of formation from the time of the General Chapter of 1967. That reflection was given form and shape especially in the GG.CC. of 1987, although this occurred also in the chapters of Medellín in 1971, of Madrid in 1973 and in the Plenary Council of 1981, all of which had precisely formation as their central theme.

In the meetings of Novice Masters in 1988 and of Directors of those in temporary profession there was clear evidence of the need for an instrument for formation which would offer some agreed principles and some common guidelines to the whole Order.

Fruit of all this is the *Ratio Formationis* which is an orientative and inspirational document rather than a juridical one.

It is divided into three parts:

I. THE GOSPEL VOCATION OF THE FRIAR MINOR: It begins with art.1 of the GG.CC. and collects the fundamental features of the Franciscan charism as developed in the first five chapters of the GG.CC.

II. FRANCISCAN FORMATION: it develops Chapter VI of the GG.CC. on formation, following the same structure as the themes of Chapter VI.

III. GENERAL, THEOLOGICAL, PROFESSIONAL AND MINISTERIAL FORMATION IN THE FRANCISCAN SPIRIT: it develops Chapter VI, title VI, of the GG.CC. on "Other aspects of formation".

The *Ratio* corresponds closely to the GG.CC. It contains eighty explicit citations from them, without counting those in the appendix. Its influence is visible in what pertains to Justice and Peace. It also makes many allusions to the Medellín Document on formation (nine references without counting those of the appendix).

b) *Justice and Peace in the document*

Is the question of Justice and Peace so evidently present in the *Ratio* as to deserve to be the object of study? No doubt the person who approaches this document from a JPIC perspective will say it does. Not only are the basic key elements of Justice and Peace present, they even constitute the underlying perspectives for all principal aspects of formation.

It is evident that there is not a question of a document on formation expressed in terms of justice and peace. Nevertheless, all the fundamental coordinates of Justice and Peace are found there explicitly, often as an explicit focus, always as a real background.

Some limitations are noticeable:

- There is a notable silence concerning the structural character of injustice and its implications in formation (just one allusion in this sense).
- The cultural dimension of Justice and Peace seems to be more present than its socio-political source.
- There is no allusion to the problem of the marginalization of women.
- Most notable: it does not offer pedagogical guidelines which are concrete and distinguishable for the purpose of developing the theme of Justice and Peace in the various stages of formation.

Having said that, we must acknowledge that it would not be realistic to ask much more from a document such as this which sets out to offer general guidelines for the whole Order in all its plurality and complexity. In other words, it is not the job of a document of this nature to offer concrete pedagogical instructions but rather to offer inspirational principles, attainable horizons and criteria for discernment.

c) *My aim*

I am not going to read the *Ratio* or present it line by line. Neither am I going to enter into its pedagogical aspects. I shall simply try to gather up the affirmations which seem to me of basic importance, pointing out some commentaries and outlining some deeper reflections.

I am arranging these affirmations in three sections: some principles of spirituality, some objectives for formation and some formative places, instances or means.

I am aware of the fact that in so doing I am pitched at a level that is too abstract and vague, almost cliché and for that I hasten to beg pardon.

I. Some Principles of Spirituality in "Justice And Peace"

All formation is sustained by a particular spirituality. Formation for Justice and Peace likewise presupposes a spirituality, that is to say a manner of conceiving the meeting between the human being and God, a way of knowing the journey of the human person towards God in society and in the world in which that person lives. In Part I, I am going to emphasize three elements which are very much present in the *Ratio* and which in one way or another shape the form of "a spirituality of Justice and Peace", a spirituality, that is to say, of following Jesus, the Just and the Peaceful; a spirituality which contemplates God in the victims; a spirituality of incarnation and of praxis.

1. A spirituality of following Jesus.

Following Jesus is one of the dimensions most often alluded to in the *Ratio*, above all in the first part; It uses the expression "following Jesus Christ" more than twenty times (Presentation: nn. 1; 3; 5; 6; 8; 9; 10; 11; 12; 16; 17; 20; 30; 35; 36; 41; 44; 56 3a; 132; 142). The brother in formation is, above all, a "disciple" (1; 5; 26), called to "follow in the footsteps of Christ" (1; 17), more precisely, to "witness before the world to the poor and humble Christ" (24), of "poor and crucified Christ" (1; 15; 29; 36; 57), of "the poor,

humble and crucified Christ” (17). This is the identity of the brother in formation. This is the perspective and horizon for formation.

I believe that here we are given the key to a formation in Justice and Peace. The following of Jesus is what gives foundation and meaning to the cause of Justice and Peace, encompassing the friar minor. The first thing, therefore, which formation must try to do is to make followers, disciples of Jesus. From the Franciscan perspective, formation in Justice and Peace is the same as promoting formation in following and for the following of Jesus.

What then does formation from the perspective of being a follower require? It requires something more than learning principles, ideas and values related to Justice and Peace. It has to do with the active and personal following of the One who both Just and Peaceful. It is only in following that one is formed and molded, not by mere ideological instruction nor praxis through force of will nor even by superficial imitation. Otherwise, Justice and Peace runs the risk of descending into ideology or voluntarism. Justice and Peace is not just an initiative by a brother but rather a continuation of the Jesus mission. It is not merely a program of activities. Instead, it is above all personal identification with the Risen crucified in solidarity with all who have been crucified along with their hopes and their despairs.

2. A Spirituality of the contemplation of God in the victims

Let us pick out some affirmations of the *Ratio*. The person in formation needs to develop the “attitude of contemplation which is capable of listening to God” in his daily life (60), “a sense of the God’s presence in the world” (56 2b) “who discovers in the world the good which God works there” (32; cf. Med F 52). Valid for all formation is what the *Ratio* says concerning ongoing formation: that it “is a journey lasting the whole of life, both personal and communal, consisting in the discovery of the poor and crucified Christ in oneself, in one’s brothers, in one’s service, in one’s particular culture, and in the whole of contemporary reality” (57). In no.33 it says: “To be faithful to their own vocation, the Friars Minor incarnate themselves in the concrete situations of the people among whom they live. They discover in them the different faces of Christ and find in them the appropriate form of Franciscan life”. And where will the Friar Minor discover those various features of Christ poor and crucified? Simply in the poor and crucified members of the people among whom they live, in all the disfigured faces of today, where is hidden and where is revealed the glory, the passion and the tenacity of a God who is near and is partial (towards them).

The friar in formation must familiarize his heart and his gaze with the face and those (other) faces of the Crucified. That is the gospel and Franciscan way of recognizing the presence of God in the world. This gaze is a fundamental principle of spirituality as well as being an objective and means of formation: the purpose of formation is to help develop this gaze and it is this gaze which forms the friar. For the friar minor who is a follower of Jesus and a believer, it is not simply a matter of looking at the world from the perspective of the poor; it is also a matter of discerning the presence of God in the world and in the poor. And that is the way “to be genuine” (J. Sobrino), the way to be faithful to the world’s as well as God’s reality because God is defined as *the one who sees the misery, hears the cries and knows the suffering* (Ex. 3,7) of the victims.

Contemporary man does not ask who is God or whether God exists, but where is God?

Where is God in Auschwitz, in El Salvador, in Rwanda. Well then, God is always "outside the city", with those who are outside, crucified with the crucified. The God who beholds and prefers the victims is looking at us from (the faces of) the victims and wishes to be seen in them. The injustice which creates victims hides God dramatically, but in a world where there are victims God does not want to be sought and found if not in them. It is not simply a question of believing in God but of "believing in God from (the reality of) the victims" (J.Sobrino). It follows then that nearness to the victims and the option in favor of them, in other words, the option for justice and peace, is the "Christian opportunity for the experience of God"

Christian spirituality does not consist in acquiring certainty that God exists or knowledge of God's nature; rather it consists in the heartfelt and existential experience that God has a preference for the poor. Likewise, the question of formation does not consist in preparing oneself to prove to the world of today that God exists; rather it consists in the mental, heartfelt, existential preparation for being able "to say that God loves the poor" (G. Gutierrez).

3. An Incarnated and Practical Spirituality

The *Ratio* affirms that "the Friars Minor incarnate themselves in the concrete situations of the people among whom they live. They should discover in them the different faces of Christ" (33). According to the famous expression of D. Bonhöffer, "Christ adopted man in the center of life"; not at the edges but at the heart of the world and of life, not in the quiet open spaces but in the struggle against injustice and in the conflict for peace. Formation in the spirit of Justice and Peace is animated and sustained by a spirituality that is rooted in life with all the confusion of injustice and conflict, of hopes and of projects.

We have here a criterion that is decisive for human and spiritual formation. If God makes himself incarnate in the very heart of our lives, then only from the heart of life, of the world, of mankind can we continue the transforming experience of meeting God. This is what spirituality is about. An incarnated spirituality, attentive to reality regarding the place of its manifestation and its meeting with God. Not an intimist spirituality but one open to others; not an inward looking spirituality but one aware of others. Not a spirituality of flight but one of commitment. Not a quietist or self-centered spirituality but an involved and active one; not spiritualist but spiritual and fed by the Spirit which vivifies and transforms; a spirituality that is all the more personal in the degree that it is involved in society. It is deeper and more interior to the degree that it is more open to the outside and from the outside.

All of this demands a bond between spirituality and a vital day-to-day praxis. That is not for the purpose of losing the content of spirituality in activity but to make of it an opening and a source of transformation. What the *Ratio* says of formation in general is valid also for spirituality: that it is an "experiential, that is to say it is based on the particular life and gifts of each person, and encourages the concrete experience of the particular Franciscan style and values in daily life" (47); and it is "practical, inasmuch as it aims at transforming into action whatever is learned" (48). It insists on the need for formation that comes from life and from concrete experience both in relation to the postulants (128&3) and in relation to the novices (142), the friars in temporary profession (153) and those who are preparing for any ministry (175;177). Mere doctrines and mere ideal identification do not form. That comes from contact with reality, illumined by and lived in faith. A spirituality arising from the depth of reality which makes us into admiring servants of life in all its forms,

above all the forms which are most threatened.

II. Some Objectives of Formation “for Justice and Peace”

It is important to point out these spiritual principles by which formation is oriented. It is also necessary to be more precise and more concrete. In this second part I am going to look at the objectives which the *Ratio* assigns to formation and which are related to Justice and Peace. In a world where all revolutions seem to have failed and all the utopias have disappeared, where skepticism, the feeling of perplexity, the sensation of powerlessness and the “ideology of the inevitable” grow, Franciscan formation must endeavor to have friars disposed to effectively incarnate the Gospel in today's world. And this objective is not just one other among the other objectives of formation; instead, it is that which authenticates and gives meaning to the other objectives. More concretely, Franciscan formation must engage itself in fomenting among the friars a triple attitude and activity: a view of the world in a Franciscan perspective, a real and effective compassion towards the very poor, and action in favor of justice in peace and of peace in justice.

I. Seeing Reality from the Perspective of the Poor.

This is well expressed in the *Ratio* in a short article referring to the Novitiate, but which is applicable to all stages of formation: “The novice should develop the capacity to perceive, to judge critically and to participate in the realities of life in a Franciscan perspective” (143). What is the Franciscan perspective? Without a doubt those preferred by Jesus and by Francis, those bereft in this world of an advocate or an ally. Like all perspectives it is partial, but it is the partiality of God which Jesus made into Good News and Francis into a form of life. “To know”, “to judge critically”, “to participate in the reality” of that perspective: this is the objective of Franciscan formation.

The way in which we behold, know and judge the reality is important. It is true we live in times of radical uncertainty, of general disorientation and instinctively we doubt global judgments on reality. That, however, could also become a temptation; the temptation of renouncing any kind of criterion. It is true we live in a “galaxy of complexity” (J. Garcia Roca). We need to avoid simplification and not wish to return to dogmatic certitudes, ideological doctrines or omni-comprehensive systems. At the same time it is imperative the friar minor apply himself to having “a critical attitude to society and to the world” (162) as in the *Ratio* developing a “sensitivity for the real state of things so as to see the problems and understand their causes” (180), and still more acquiring “the Franciscan vision of the world and of man, develops a balanced and critical judgement regarding events” (32). Obviously a “balanced judgment” is not an impartial or neutral one which consciously or unconsciously ratifies and supports situations of injustice; rather, it is a judgment animated by gospel clarity and partiality. The *Ratio* also says that formation must endeavor to provide the friars with capacity *to read the signs of the times* (65 & 1c), and the great sign of the times is the increasing gulf between the wealth of a minority and the misery of a majority. Formation tries to create and deepen a lucid and critical view of the world in the friar minor; not a neutral one but a view that is partial from the perspective of the poor; a view that looks at God in the world and looks at the world with the eyes of God.

We must also understand these objectives similarly to what the *Ratio* points out for the theological studies of the friar minor, namely, “to confront his faith with the problems of the today's world”, “to clarify and to promote a personal and social ‘practice’ of the faith”

(165), to make possible an “understanding of the world today and of the human person” (151). We will not understand the modern world and the human being within it except to the extent we understand that misery and hunger are more unjust to the extent that they are more avoidable. In the face of injustice there is no place for an impartial theology.

In this sense it is worth taking note of some features which theology should possess according to nos. 166, 167: “a theology associated with prayer; a theology close to real life, directed towards concrete action” (166); “a theology of Creation, nourishing the praise of the Creator, teaching men respect for created things, bringing the light of faith to bear on the ecological problems of our time; a theology and a Christology making present the salvation and the liberation offered by God in response to the appeals and the needs of the poor of today; a theology leading to respect for the human person and his rights; a theology which aims at the construction of a fraternal world (justice, peace, ecumenism) (cf. Document on formation by the General Chapter of Medellín, 59); a theology firmly tied to an eschatological vision in which it finds the force for a daily self-commitment” (167).

2. An effective compassion for those who are poorest

L. Feuerbach correctly judged that "suffering preceded thought". In effect, only that which is suffered is known, or more exactly, that which is suffered jointly. Our world is more in need than ever of "compassionate reason" (J. Sobrino). In this sense I have declared in a previous point that we only come to know today's world when we take upon ourselves the pain of the poor. But we must also declare the opposite: knowledge must also bring with it compassion, to "take charge of and to bear" (I. Ellacuría) the suffering of that "surplus population", an increasing majority each day on our planet.

In the Franciscan vocabulary this compassion is called *minority*. The *Ratio*, quoting Francis and the GG.CC., reminds us that the friars have been called to “live as Minors among the poor and the weak” (Art. 10, RegNB 9:2), to live “in poverty, humility and meekness among the least of the people, without power or privilege”, “like a pilgrim and stranger... a brother and subject of every creature” (22); that the friars minor imitate Francis “choosing the life and the condition of the poor, identifying with them, serving the oppressed, the afflicted and the sick, and they let themselves be evangelized by them” and make “an explicit option for the poor, becoming a voice for those who have no voice, as an instrument of justice and peace” (25). In particular the *Ratio* recalls that formation must ensure that the friars choose and take up work “in the spirit... of minority, simplicity and sharing, especially with the little ones and the poor of this world” (159). And just as love is real only when it is concrete, and is concrete only when it is exercised with the one nearest at hand, compassion towards those of little importance and the option for the poor must begin and must express itself in the first place in the fraternity, in relation with the friars of the fraternity who are in greatest need. In this respect, the *Ratio* says, speaking of the Novitiate, that respect and care of the old, infirm and weak friars (144) of the fraternity is one of the criteria for discerning the suitability of the novice for first profession.

That minority-compassion, since it is an essential element of the identity of the friar minor, constitutes a fundamental objective of Franciscan formation for Justice and Peace. Formation must stimulate in the friar that identification of judgment and of sentiment, of mind and heart with the least of all: with the Third World, with the Fourth World and with that social fringe - every day greater - which is identified by what J. Garcia Roca calls “vulnerability” that is to say, all those who are neither completely marginalized nor completely integrated into society and have a precarious existence: precarious work,

precarious affective relations, a precarious feeling in their lives.

But to be evangelical and Franciscan, the option for the poor must get its impulse not from motivations of the moral order nor from ideological convictions, but from a compassion which emanates from the heart, reaching and transforming the whole person. Then that option becomes an experience of grace and can be lived authentically as an expression of gratuitous love: “it was changed for me into sweetness of soul and body”. Indeed, “there does exist a form of love of justice which suffers from the threat of not loving people.”

Within minority-compassion, which constitutes a principal objective of formation we can include a medullar aspect of the Franciscan charism, *respect for Creation*. This is an expression which is repeated many times in the *Ratio*: 21;56 &3c; 156;162. What does "respect for Creation" mean? It signifies admiration and consideration for everything that exists, because it is a creature of God and possesses the dignity of a brother, and in it Christ is present and is encountered (cf.12). The *Ratio* points out that this "respect for Creation" is one of the criteria for the suitability of a friar for solemn profession (165). Formation should help discover that in ecology there is no question of an egoistic preoccupation of an opulent society, nor a superficial manifestation of some bourgeois spirituality, but rather something that is at the very heart of Francis' faith: the understanding of creatures as subjects and not mere objects of manipulation and human consumption, and the feeling of respect for the inviolable right of every creature. Formation ought to help discover that the ecological problem is precisely the right to existence of every creature and the right to survival of those who come after us on Mother Earth.

Here then are the existential preferences of mind and heart, which formation should stimulate and reinforce in the friars. For this it is indispensable to establish a pedagogy which is concrete, operative, coherent and part of a process which, evidently, the *Ratio* cannot offer. How can we ensure that the criteria of judgment and the practical options of friars in formation are going to take shape from compassion-minority? How can we set about purifying and authenticating the over-superficial idealizations of many candidates?

How can we substitute the eyes and habits proper to the more privileged in our world by replacing them with the preferences of Jesus and Francis? How can these preferences be motivated and spiritually consolidated above all starting from the Novitiate? How are we going to offer during temporary vows levels of experience and real encounter with the very poor, so that this option may continue to take root in everyday life? These are vital questions for formators and those in formation. Otherwise Justice and Peace run the risk of being reduced, as so often happens, to a vague desire or an empty formula.

3. Action in Favor of Justice in Peace and in favor of Peace in Justice

Action for justice and action for peace. They are inseparable. They are one and the same. They form one sole objective and are impossible to separate in formation. The friar minor, says the *Ratio*, “works for justice and peace, and he respects creation” (21); he must convert himself into “an instrument of justice and peace” (25; 32), into “a herald of justice, peace and reconciliation” (180a). That is what Franciscan formation looks towards by what is measured. “A pursuit of justice and peace” (56 2b) figures among the specific principles of Christian growth for the one in formation; the “sense of justice, peace and respect for creation” (156) is featured among the criteria for suitability for solemn profession. The efficacy of the “engagement to transform society towards justice, peace

and respect for creation” (162) is included among the objectives of formation in general. To sum up, justice and peace together with respect for creation form a principle, a criterion and an objective of formation. In line with the *Ratio* let us be more specific.

On one hand: action in favor of justice. To the degree that the marginalized and the “vulnerable” in our world and our society are victims of injustice, compassion for them must be changed into action against injustice and action in favor of justice. The *Ratio* points out that “The Friar Minor seeks to become aware of and work for the elimination of every form of injustice and the dehumanizing structures which exist in the world” (25); and “The Friar Minor...is prepared to denounce vigorously all that is contrary to human dignity” (34). That element also belongs to the essential objective of formation. Nor does the *Ratio* omit to indicate a line of action for justice which should always be remembered and put into effect, namely: that it is important to “care for the recipients of charity, so that they may become protagonists of their own human promotion and liberation” (180a).

Thus, working for justice is inseparable from working for peace. just as working for peace is inseparable from working for justice. If “justice is the name for peace” (Paul VI), peace is the name for justice fully realized. The *Ratio* insists in the First Part that the friar minor is called to be a “man of peace” (28) and “a messenger of reconciliation and peace” (3) to live as one “reconciled and peaceful” (22); “as the herald of peace, carries it in his heart and offers it to others” (34; cf GG.CC. 68,2). A “commitment to reconciliation and forgiveness” (56, 3c) should distinguish the growth of one in Franciscan formation, and “a spirit of compassion and reconciliation” (156) is a criterion for suitability for solemn profession.

Evidently having “a spirit of compassion and reconciliation” is not the same as being pusillanimous in situations of conflict and injustice. Formation to be “a man of peace”, a “herald of peace”, does not mean teaching one to avoid conflicts but to prepare to confront them. Formation must take care that the one in formation continues to acquire the “ability to communicate and face up to conflicts” (56, 1b), beginning with one's own fraternity. One's own fraternity is the first place in which the friars must promote this ability for communication and “of resolving conflicts” (64).

Finally, it is important to point out that struggling for justice in peace and for peace in justice is a job full of risks and prone to making mistakes. Whoever wants to be an instrument of justice and peace must learn to take on complexity and incertitude, even ambiguity and errors. He must learn how to enter into conflicts without making a covenant with injustice and without yielding to any sentiment of hatred or rancor. This demands great internal freedom and courage of spirit. But that strength is not the property of supermen but of those who recognize that they are poor and pardoned, indigent and graceful.

III. Some spaces and some formative instances "arising from Justice and Peace"

Having pointed out by following the indications of the *Ratio*, that Justice and Peace constitute a spiritual foundation and an objective for formation, I should like to emphasize in the third place that Justice and Peace indicate a place and a means for formation, a formative instance and factor. If all spirituality, like all knowledge and action, is conditioned by place and context, the same must be said of formation. Formation is not a transmission of ideas but of vitality. Nor is formation a program of information but a road to transformation. In the last analysis formation, like spirituality itself, is a way of life.

And life is taught and learned above all by adaptation and contact, by intuition and affection. Ultimately it is built up from a style of life. In this third part I am going to point out three features of Justice and Peace as a place from which a friar is formed: fidelity to the world, insertion-inculturation, dialogue.

1. From fidelity to today's world

In the *Ratio* we frequently meet the expression “today's world”, “people of today” (3;15;66;35;132;137;144...), and also “fidelity to the exigencies of today's world”, “fidelity to the signs of the times” (Presentation), or simply “faithfulness to mankind and to our time” ... (15)

What does this fidelity mean? In the first place it indicates “attention”. In the expression of *Populorum Progressio* taken up by the *Ratio*, it requires the brothers to be attentive “to the human person, the whole human person, and all human persons” (157); that formation be “attentive to the present appeals of the world” (50), that the friar in formation be “attentive to the signs of the times” (26; 32); that the “formation house is aware of the world and its history, of its present social context” (79). Fidelity to the world and to people of today evidently is not a servile and uncritical adhesion but a vigilant and accepting attitude. It does not mean conformity or facile adaptation but an alert listening to voices, calls and demands of today's people.

Fidelity also signifies an answer to the actual needs of the world. Speaking of the program of formation of the friars in temporary profession it is said that we must respond “to the longings and needs of the world today” (150), and this presupposes an understanding of the modern world (151&3), a listening, understanding response. And even more so: communion. Formation must foment an in-depth communion with the world and people of today. Speaking of the Novitiate, the *Ratio* says that the friar novice “prepares himself to enter both intellectually and practically into a deeper communion with the men and women of today in their historical, social, political, cultural and religious reality” (137; cf GG.CC. 127, 3; 130). Formation in the spirit of Justice and Peace requires attentive listening, a positive response, a heartfelt communion with the world in which we live, contrary to such frequent temptations of reproach and censure. We must engage in formation in harmony with people of today rather than in condemnation of them, so as to walk with them rather than impose (ourselves), to be companions rather than impart magisterial warnings.

Fidelity to the real world requires, finally, a constant creative effort on the part of formators and those in formation. The *Ratio* points out that the friars make creative efforts to discover new ways for the promotion and diffusion of gospel values (39). That, says the *Ratio*, is the source of the need for ongoing formation. Formation means opening oneself up “to new forms of life and service” (50) and “to adapt himself continually to the needs of the Church and of the historic moment” (180a).

The Gospel is always novel because it is always unknown news and because there is an announcing and a hearing in a human history that is always changing. It is ever more changeable in our time of accelerated transformations, where yesterday's schemes and solutions have failed today, where each new transformation brings with it new injustices and where all injustice acquires planetary dimensions. In that kind of world, formation must help keep our eyes wide open and our entire existence free, at the service of others, and creative.

2. From insertion in the life and culture of a people

The *Ratio* insists that life itself in fraternity and in the world is the appropriate place and best medium of formation. “Franciscan formation takes place in the fraternity and in the real world” (43). Well then, for a gospel and Franciscan view, the starkest reality in the world in which we live is the contrast between the riches of some and the poverty of others. Franciscan formation, therefore, requires insertion - which may be very varied, but which must be authentic - in the reality of the poorest in the world, of their surroundings and in the fraternity itself. The friar in formation is to “integrate himself positively in social and community life” (45).

That feature is valid for all phases of formation but is especially applicable to the time of temporary profession: “The friar in temporary profession should become a part of and be in solidarity with the real situation of the world and the problems of the country in which he is called to live out his vocation” (155). “Practical formation for any ministerial service takes place above all in the daily experience of life in the fraternity, in the ecclesial community, in society and in particular among the poor” (177). The words “in particular among the poor” always define what is peculiar to Jesus and Francis and, consequently, also to the peculiar aspect of the place of Franciscan formation. Franciscan formation not only has its place in the spirit of minority but also as coming from the experience of minority.

Evidently the forms of insertion may be very diverse, but effective proximity to and experience of the reality of the world in which the friar in formation lives is a condition and medium just as much an objective of formation which is for and emanating from Justice and Peace. This acquires a special validity in ongoing formation: “Ongoing formation takes place in the context of the daily life of the Friar Minor, in his prayer and work, in his relations both within and outside the fraternity, and in his contact with the cultural, social and political world in which he moves” (58). The experience of real life in the real world is what forms, in the last analysis.

How are we to apply this criterion and put it into practice? The *Ratio* does not give details - which is understandable. At any rate, it is interesting to point out that it considers the possibility of “small formation fraternities inserted among the poor” (80).

One of the fundamental exigencies of this insertion is inculturation. The *Ratio* formulates the following principle: “Franciscan formation is inculturated in the conditions of the life, the environment and the time in which it is carried out” (49). It also says that the formation of one in temporary profession must include an “introduction to the understanding of their own culture and of popular piety” (151,3); and the preparation of the friar minor for evangelization requires “an openness to inculturation, and to a positive evaluation of popular piety...closeness to the life and the language of the people; knowledge of, and dialogue with, other religions and cultures” (179). All of this imposes an obvious demand on formators: “The formation directors should do their best to integrate their work into the cultural context of the places in which they are called to serve” (100).

Culture is the whole aggregate of the references of meaning, values of conduct, symbolic horizons which shape and motivate the lives of individuals and of peoples; culture is the subsoil which we share with those nearest to us, but also at the same time that which permits us to approach and understand those furthest removed, that which permits us to

enter into dialogue and a search in common. It is possible and necessary to open oneself from one's own culture to that of others. Finally, it is other people's culture which allows us to understand ourselves at greater depth. Culture, therefore, is not a mere adaptation but a penetration down to the vital root of individuals and peoples which enables us not only to announce the Good News but also to receive it from them. That meeting and encounter is the privileged place for a formation which wishes to be of service to justice and peace.

3. From Dialogue and Respect for Difference

The *Ratio* insists on dialogue both within and outside the fraternity: a friar lives "in listening and dialogue" (23), in "respect for diversity" (75) within the fraternity and "in dialogue with the people of his own time" (33). He "cultivates an attitude of good will and dialogue in his encounters with different cultures and religions" (26). In the formation house "an atmosphere of confidence, dialogue and courtesy" should prevail (76). The formators should "possess the ability to work together, to dialogue and to listen to the other friars" (84). "Training in active listening" (163) is one of the major objectives of the study of human sciences. "To dialogue with other Christians, with other religions and with agnostics" is one of the objectives of theological formation. "Knowledge of, and dialogue with, other religions and cultures" (179) is one of the requisites in the ministerial preparation.

Each one of the places in the world in which we live is more and more a crossroads where we find ourselves in the irreplaceable and irreducible presence of the other - the other with his/her language and logic, religion and moral code, ethics and politics. We inhabit a world which each day is becoming more our village but is nevertheless more pluralist. So-called post-modernity is essentially the result of the radical pluralism of our societies. In particular, today there are cultures and religions being imposed on us which were unknown for centuries and which were relegated by our Christian Occident and by our Euro-centric Church. They are cultures and religions which in no way can be reduced to what we already knew or believed them to be. They are cultures and religions which perturb our securities and contradict our pretensions, and so they convert us and incite us to believe in a more human way in a more human God.

Pluralism is one of the greatest challenges for formation: to help (it) to accept this pluralism in a positive way; even more, to help in such a way that this pluralism will be changed into a stimulus and a means of formation, into an exercise in growth and in common searching, without falling into skepticism or dogmatism, without yielding to relativism or intolerance. The narrow road to follow is dialogue which will allow the crossroads to become a meeting-place, allow difference to become a dialogue and allow divergence to become a common road towards justice and peace.

In conclusion, formation contributes to justice and peace in the world initiating the friars into a spirituality incarnated in the following of Jesus and into faith in a partial God. It leads the brothers to look on the world with God's eyes and to involve themselves with him, with the compassion of the Crucified. It teaches the friars to grow as human beings and as believers from the standpoint of insertion in the world and dialogue with people.

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