

INSTRUMENTS OF PEACE

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

- Part 2: Specific Themes of Special Interest
 - 5. Human Rights: Individual and Collective



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

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PART TWO

THEMES OF SPECIFIC INTEREST

As we said in the introduction to this section, this second part is composed of seven specific themes of great social and ecclesiastical importance at the present time. They could have been more but, not being able to make the book longer, we have selected these as the most apt and of greatest interest for living out our charism.

Each theme has a brief theoretical development that does not claim to be exhaustive but rather makes a presentation of the theme to stimulate reflection and action. This theoretical development of each theme is completed with the experiences and testimonies of friars from all over the world.

The theoretical part of each theme, having been written by a different author, can throw up some repetitions. However, we wanted to leave it this way because this section is not to be read at one sitting but rather each chapter should be consulted and worked on separately.

At the end of each theme or chapter a long questionnaire can be found. The reason, in effect, is to be found in its instrumental character. If these chapters are to be used for meetings on formation, both initial and on-going, or even in meetings of reflection with the laity, the long list of questions will better facilitate the group that is going to reflect.

Themes:

1. Option for the Poor
2. Peacemaking
3. Integrity of Creation / Environmental Justice
4. Life
5. Human Rights: Individual and Collective
6. Women and the Charisms of Francis and Clare
7. Dialogue: Ecumenical, Interreligious and Intercultural

5. Rights: Individual and Collective



OFM General Constitutions, Article 69,1

In protecting the rights of oppressed people, the brothers should reject violence and have recourse instead to means that are otherwise available even to more powerless people.

Article 96,3

The brothers should work humbly and courageously that human dignity and the rights of all are respected and cultivated in the bosom of the Church and of the Order.

From the life of Francis ...

The examples already given in this section of chapter one (Option for the Poor) also apply here since the most marginalized members of any society are at greatest risk of having their individual and collective human rights pushed aside. Before his conversion, Francis did exactly that to those suffering from leprosy. All that changed one day when Francis met a leper on the road, dismounted, give him some money and then kissed him. Some days later Francis visited the dwelling places of lepers and did the same. “Thus he exchanged the bitter for the sweet” (2Cel 9).

Francis directed that friar ministers must not command anything that is against the friars' conscience or the Rule. Friars should be able to speak with their ministers as employers speak with servants (RegB c.10). Friars may work at any honest labor except jobs which put them in authority in someone's house (RegNB c.7). Without hesitation the friars should make their needs known to one another (RegB c.6). Superiors among the friars must not cling to office (Adm IV). When one friars cried out at night that he was

dying of hunger, Francis arose and summoned the others friars to eat with him and with the friar who cried out. Francis then spoke to them about the virtue of discretion, telling them not to deprive the body of what it needs (2Cel 22).

Rulers should remember that they will be judged by God one day and should, therefore, not swerve from God's commandments, helping their subjects to hold God in reverence (EpRect). Brother Leo was encouraged to take the way which would best please God, following in his footsteps and in poverty (EpLeo). If a novice of a single hour were made Francis' guardian, the Poverello would obey that novice gladly (LM 6:4). Francis' respect for each person extended even to unbelievers and to the apparent enemies of Christ's gospel.

Reflection

1. Past and Current Developments in Human Rights

Human Rights, a popular term in recent times, is an expression of collective consciousness and a symbol of the struggle of many social movements and of entire peoples. Although its juridical, political formulation is of recent origin, its roots are found in the history of human civilization. Even primitive people organize their life together around values of life, the family, honor, work and property, creating their customs, norms and religious rites. Officially recognized in worldwide declarations, conventions, and in national constitutions, Human Rights are actually like a confluence of many waters from which continue to emerge new liberties, rights and responsibilities for individual persons and peoples in the entire world.

While juridically confirmed and in spite of diversity in interpretations, Human Rights protect and promote the well-being of all citizens, their liberty, lives, security, conditions of education, health and work. They organize and regulate mutual relations between individuals and society and relations between nations. As a prototype, the framework of Human Rights actually was used in the Declaration of Independence of North America in 1776 and the Declaration of Men and Citizens of the French Revolution promulgated in 1789. Principles of freedom, equality, fraternity are engraved for time immemorial in these declarations. Only after the horrors, destruction and sacrifice of millions of people in World War II did human rights become globalized and ratified by the United Nations and signed by almost all governments.

In a liberal spirit, the famous “Universal Declaration of Human Rights” assumes the defense and protection of all people, protecting their freedom and rights against any discrimination, with equality under the law applied in all fairness. The Declaration includes the rights to privacy, property and democratic participation (1948). Under the strong influence of socialism and after many discussions regarding primary collective rights, the political, economic, social and cultural order among nations was formulated and confirmed (1966). Along with the recognition of sovereignty and the internal self-determination of each country, the participating countries obliged themselves to guarantee equality between men and women, the right to work, economic development, secure and hygienic conditions for workers, freedom to form associations, the right to social security, especially for working mothers and women, improvement of well-being and education at every level. Other international conventions deepened and spelled out these rights and consistently included urgency with regard to the importance of better stewardship of creation.

2. Human Rights in Southern Countries

Looking at the world from the side of Latin America, the primary reaction to conversation about Human Rights is shock at the abysmal contrast between “theory and practice”-- the luminous ideal and the life of suffering millions. This contrast continues to challenge the responsibility of human participation in bridging the gap. The real world is not like a neatly arranged bird’s nest well taken care of by zealous birds, with housing, food and liberty to fly for all. On the contrary, it is a society of cruel contrasts and injustice, solidarity and blind egoism, riches and luxury alongside of masses of poor and miserable people; the awakening and hunger among millions of people for liberty and life together with slavery and unnatural death. Millions of children are sacrificed in the current dominant system of work and consumption. In order to enrich the few groups, nature is exploited without pity, harming the poor and polluting the world’s land, water and air--all necessary for human survival.

Human Rights are for all human beings or they lose their validity. The ancient Romans recognized the distinction between *ius in re* and *ius in spe*, the actual rights that people truly have and possess and the rights that are just a hope, an ideal not yet realized. In reality, millions in our world today have little hope that they will achieve these rights. The more that globalization takes place in society and is extended throughout the entire world, how much more obvious are the screaming inequalities and the obvious distances between the social classes in power, ownership, freedom, conditions of well-being and survival, education, security, social services of health, etc. Peace without justice functions mainly as a camouflage of an unjust human reality in which millions of persons -- men, women, children and the elderly -- are victims.

3. Francis, Franciscan Tradition and Human Rights

Within the vast sphere of modern human rights, the inspiration that Francis of Assisi communicated to his brothers appears to be something strange, distant, a useless, not to say antiquated instrument. To bridge seven centuries and two worlds, as different as medieval, modern and post-modern, is a complicated process. “Human Rights” are not a theory but a program of personal and collective life that, on the one hand, motivate and bring about action and on the other, suffer more and more violations that are difficult to accept.

The early Christians never heard of such Human Rights. The term is not part of the vocabulary of Francis, this poor man of Jesus. However, he was not a person who lived in a tomb or a reliquary. The practical movement that he began continues strong and alive in today’s world. The vitality of this Christian man, faithful to the Church, continues to inspire many modern people, even those outside of Christianity.

With the stigmata, as though it was a signature of Christ, the Poor Man of Assisi irradiates even now the spirit of the Word that became flesh and dwelt among us, full of love and truth.

Certainly, Francis was conditioned by the historical, political and ecclesiastical context of his time, but he overcame these limitations by his reading of the Gospel and his courage to take it on as a personal way of life and lifestyle in the world. His open communication with lepers and princes, leaders and beggars, elites and the poor plus the profound respect with which he treated all creatures was an uncommon human

experience. This man is capable of motivating new generations to confront the unreal suffering of those without fundamental Human Rights: beautiful rights accepted and formulated on paper, adorned with many important signatures, yet not practiced in reality.

Called the fool, Francis of Assisi did not know any of the social and economic indicators, tables and statistics that circulate in the modern world. But he penetrated deeply the reality of his time and reformed it. The expression “Love is not loved” communicates well and without sentimentalism the clarity of faith with which he analyzed and evaluated his society of great and small, rich and poor, powerful and powerless, free citizens and those excluded, and by which he interpreted the many conflicts, acts of violence and wars of his time.

Even more, the Gospel was not for him a question of knowledge, but rather a life of action that began with service to the lepers and the carrying of stones and cement to restore old chapels. In God’s plan, this resulted in a movement of many men and women, who in contrast to the “world” became small, poor, dispossessed brothers and sisters, free to serve all in humility and by witness of their lives to preach the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

Dominated by the papal and imperial powers, the Middle Ages did not provide a favorable climate for the formulation of the rights of any human person. The language that prevailed in philosophy and theology was generic and universal, with little interest in the concrete, the contingent or variety of forms. There were two Franciscans who helped to break this mold. Reading the signs of the times, Duns Scotus stressed the individuality of people and things, created in the image of Christ. The love of God does not work with concepts and abstract categories but with individuals who have a name and a face. Rising above the abstract discourse about nature or our common human dignity obliges us to close the gap between human persons in terms of necessities, rights and responsibilities. William of Ockham continues the same thrust. According to him, God creates people and things, single and diverse, in full liberty. Empirical recognition of reality in its diversification takes priority and forms the basis for ethical practice with its light and shadows. Opposed to the concentration of power, Ockham became the “father of the conciliar Church,” giving an active voice to the faithful and their representatives in the building up of the Body of Christ on earth.

For the brothers, Francis is the way to the living Gospel that is the Lord Jesus. Open solidarity with all, in order to save all, marked the life of Jesus. He did good to all, and by the grace of God, witnessed even to death on behalf of all human beings (Mk 7,3: Hb 2, 9). Resurrected from the dead, he began the great work of subjugation, through the cooperation of all of creation. When finally everything has been subjected to Christ, the only Son, Christ will in turn be subjected to God, and so God will be all in all. (Rm 8, 18-25: 1 Cor 15, 28). Within this vast panorama of love, dedication and service, the Franciscan movement encounters the reason for its vitality and work. It is evident that the brothers will have to observe the norms of civil laws with justice, while others work for fraternity (GG.CC.80). It is also evident that the Church’s canon law regulates the rights of the faithful lay and clerics and their associations (CIC, 208-329). However, the suffering human world is much more than the Order and the Catholic Church.

4. Franciscan Mission Work on Human Rights

Servants of Christ and ministers of the mysteries of God on their journey through the world, the brothers work to reconcile all things in heaven and on earth with God through Christ. (1 Cor 4,1; Eph 1,10; Col 1, 20). Through Christ, the way, the truth and life (Jn 14, 6), the human condition was changed radically. But the passage from oppression to new freedom, peace, and true justice depends on the help of those who, following their Master, assist pilgrims on the journey. They especially are called to help the poorest, neediest and marginalized to lift up their heads and obtain their dignity by securing their rights. Despite a secularized formula, Human Rights incorporate the justice of God and Christian hope, and the encounter therein of the most profound and transcendent meaning of Human Rights--to save creation, still groaning with the sufferings of this time (Rm 8).

The globalization of economic and political power concentrated in the hands of a few people forms a continuous source of Human Rights' violations against the life and well-being of the multitude, provoking more and more violent reactions. Even rich countries are beginning to discover poor, marginalized, unemployed, drug-addicted, and young people without futures. The percentages vary from country to country, region to region. A large city in Latin America, a former colony in Africa, a Muslim or Buddhist country have their own particular human problems and present special lifestyles and evangelical practices for the brothers according to the Lord's inspiration.

Because Franciscan communities are local, it is not enough to have charters from the United Nations, the World Health Organization, etc. Each community has to think about the local human situation and study the conditions and possibilities of action in the region to avoid falling into paralyzed passivity in the face of global statistics. Because of this, conscientization begins where the friars live and work as promoters of social justice and peace in the midst of the poor, oppressed and weakest. Free of all fear and instruments of reconciliation, the friars are called to work to support human rights that until now have been denied to the oppressed. Closely imitating the profound love of Francis for all of creation, from brother sun to sister ant, the brothers will help to create a respect for mother nature in order that she may guarantee the well-being of all human beings. (GG.CC. 690-71)

In the modern era, time has long since arrived for the Church to initiate once again a dialogue with the world. Encyclicals and social and political messages of Leo XIII, Pius XI and Pius XII are well-known. But it is only with John XXIII that the magisterium takes up Human Rights explicitly, together with other interconnected rights and responsibilities, and puts them in the context of the Gospel and the mission of Christians on earth (*Peace on Earth*, 1963). The Second Vatican Council contributed two important documents: *The Church in the Modern World* and the *Declaration on Religious Freedom*. Paul VI and John Paul II continued this trend in response to new problems in today's world. In spite of much resistance, Human Rights have become an integral part of the social teachings of the Church as well as the practice of many lay Catholics.

Nowadays, abstract names like capitalism, neo-liberalism, development and globalization are used to camouflage the ever-growing distances in knowledge, power, goods and property between the rich and poor nations, between North and South. A collective consciousness and sense of solidarity is weak. The brothers of Francis of Assisi cannot wait until that which is written about Human Rights is dead and its

victims are only more marginalized. St. Francis cautioned that the servants of God should not be perturbed or angered because of injustice of others but should place themselves in solidarity on the side of the weak and poor so that these gain a human position in society. Two millennia of evangelization witness to the slow penetration of this ferment in the human masses. The practice of Human Rights demands patience and perseverance. Auschwitz, Hiroshima and the Gulag remain as signs that the road to the realization of Human Rights is neither broad nor smooth. Those who persevere until the end will be saved (Cf. Mk 13,13).

According to the model of Francis, the brothers do not live for themselves but for others within and outside of the institutional Church. Within this life of service without frontiers, Human Rights help us to discover the human needs in the faces of poor and suffering people. For those who commit themselves to the Gospel, the preferential option for the poor is not a decoration but an obligation. The criteria of the final judgment on humanity is our solidarity with the least of our brothers and sisters. Every time that you did good to the least of my brothers and sisters, the small, poor, abandoned, sick, marginalized and excluded in society, you did it for me (Cf. Mt 25, 31-46). Where there are violations of Human Rights, sin appears in all of its virulence. Yet, the grace of God will be more abundant by the mediating dedication of the brothers (Cf. Rm 7, 15; 5,20).

Learning how to enter into the sphere of Human Rights on behalf of the poor, ill-treated, and marginalized is not easy. Franciscans are not accustomed to be without housing, jobs, food, services, school and money. Even though it may be against our will, we easily arrange privileges, money for our works, gracious assistance and social support in case of a legal process or prison that may result from the struggles in which we participate on the side of the poor. In countries with few priests, many Franciscans are absorbed in ministerial work within the small world of the local parish. In order to create solidarity with the social classes that live on the margins of society, the challenge is to penetrate the comforts of the middle class that live alongside the door of the friary.

The Franciscan mentality that wants nothing for one's own "except for our vices and sins" (RegNB 1:17) opens the door to ordinary work in the world and the Church plus collaboration in local movements, non-governmental organizations and official state service in the area of Human Rights, quality of life, ecology and worldwide politics. Since the problems that afflict humanity are not the property of anyone, their solutions are not the monopoly of any one entity. Not even in Catholic countries does the Church have the power to give adequate responses to the human necessities of poor people, those without power. The three phases of "see, judge, act" require that the brothers analyze this subhuman reality of the poor, create workable options and carry out plans to break the cycle of paternal assistance from top to bottom. The principal subjects of any actions are the victims who are violated in their fundamental human rights. Poor people say, "May God be praised."

Human Rights, products of the long history of humanity, do not remain at a standstill either in theory or practice. In the face of protests, demonstrations, rebellions, political propaganda and armed struggles, new rights are emerging and will become firmly established in the collective consciousness. Along with this continued genesis, new social subjects, groups, associations and non-governmental organizations are being formed in many countries and are seeking to achieve their rightful space through

recognition and growth. Workers, women, youth, the elderly, deprived people, minorities and other marginalized groups are struggling to better their situation and to be respected as human beings with full rights. Claims regarding social justice, peace, work, security, the new economic order, democracy and the preservation of the natural order are emerging across the entire world. Brothers, let us finally begin (2Cel 6).

Bernardino Leers OFM

Examples from the lives of the friars...

If you mention the issue of human rights to almost anyone in **Brazil** today, the name of one man will most likely spring to their lips. Over the past quarter of a century, CARDINAL PAULO EVARISTO ARNS has become known as one of Latin America's greatest defenders of the rights of the poor and the oppressed, standing up courageously against the worst excesses of the 21-year military regime which ended in 1985.

During those two decades of repression and fear, the Brazilian economy expanded with the help of inexpensive foreign loans, spurring millions of hopeful people to migrate to the cities such as São Paulo in search of work. But the economic growth was soon shown to benefit only a tiny elite while living conditions for the vast majority of the people plummeted. In 1976 the São Paulo Justice and Peace Commission, pioneered by Arns, published a book that exposed in detail the links between such economic growth, institutionalized violence and the poverty of the people. Long before that, however, Arns was already making his mark on the archdiocese by encouraging religious and trained lay people to take the gospel out of the wealthier inner-city parishes and into the impoverished slums that were springing up on the periphery. This popular approach in the 1960's laid the foundations of the base communities that were to become the new face of the church in Brazil, as elsewhere in Latin America.

From his earliest days as auxiliary bishop in northern Sao Paolo, Arns showed himself to be committed to the rights of the poor. He quickly became known as “the bishop who rode the bus,” as he traveled throughout the diocese seeing firsthand what needed to be done to improve the plight of the growing number of families living in abject poverty and squalor. When he took over as archbishop of the city in 1970, he shocked many in the church by selling off the episcopal palace and surrounding parkland, earmarking the interest for the construction of community centers in impoverished areas. Arns's vision and enthusiasm for his mission were largely inspired by the work of the Second Vatican Council, as well as his own experience in the *favelas* around Rio de Janeiro during the first years of his priestly ministry. Don Paulo himself traces his first interest in human rights to the years he spent studying in Paris immediately after the Second World War. There he met former prisoners of war who had been tortured in Germany under the Nazi regime - an experience he was to relive in his own country during the worst years of the military dictatorship. As the repression against political opponents grew throughout the 1970's, Arns became known internationally for his outspoken condemnation of such abuses. He regularly visited political prisoners himself, offering personal support to victims of torture and to families of those murdered by government-sponsored death squads. One of his most significant contributions to the human rights struggle in Brazil was the secret archives he compiled detailing nearly 2.000 reports of torture at the hands of the military. A small team of lawyers helped draw up this accurate report on the victims and their torturers, copying transcripts of military court proceedings, which

were then smuggled out of Brazil. The complete document, entitled *Brazil Nunca Mais! (Torture in Brazil)* was published in 1985. Even after Brazil's return to civilian rule, Arns continued his revolutionary human rights work on behalf of the poor and powerless. He has demanded respect for Brazil's indigenous peoples, and supported Afro-Brazilian groups seeking recognition of their culture within the Church. He has pioneered projects to help AIDS patients and their families and has spoken out clearly in support of the environmental and landless movements in Brazil. He has also been active in promoting the bishops' education campaign, which encourages people to organize politically in order to achieve social justice. When LEONARDO BOFF was summoned to the Vatican because of his work on liberation theology, Arns and fellow Franciscan Cardinal ALOIS LORSCHIEDER traveled to Rome to appeal on his behalf. For the past 50 years since his ordination, Arns has stuck tenaciously to his principles of justice and respect for human rights - in and outside the Church. Though he has officially retired, he continues to be one of the clearest voices for the voiceless in Latin America today.

In **South Africa** the concepts of justice, dignity and human rights are now enshrined in the constitution of the new 'rainbow' nation which emerged with the overthrow of the former apartheid regime. The word "equality" is on everyone's lips and within a few years many may start to forget the widespread injustice and discrimination suffered by the majority of the population for more than four decades. Over that time there were many committed Christians, black and white, local and foreign, who worked hard for the human rights of individuals and of entire black and colored communities. One such man is SEAMUS BRENNAN or Father Stan, as he is affectionately known by literally thousands of people who have passed through the parish center he founded back in the 1960's. Originally from County Roscommon in Ireland, Stan first came to South Africa in 1965 as 'pastor of the colored people' in a rundown area known as Reiger Park outside Johannesburg. Talking one day to a neighbor, a man who had been drinking heavily, "the new priest" had his first insight into the lives of the non-white majority: as he poured out his frustrations, the man told how he had failed his school exams and could not afford the necessary books to continue his studies. "It's alright for you whites," he said, "you can go to the library and get all the help you need. But nobody does anything for us." That encounter led to the opening of a small library in 1966, followed by adult education classes for people of all races - a revolutionary step in that rigidly segregated nation. Year by year the numbers of students flocking to St. Anthony's parish center increased from several hundred to several thousand - so more classrooms were quickly added, as well as science and language laboratories and a computer room. As the popularity of Stan's center grew, so did opposition from local government officials, who told the friar he was breaking the law by having black students in a "coloreds only" area. It was only by using all his creativity, his contacts and his knowledge of local government bureaucracy that Stan was able to avoid closure, deportation or possibly worse. During the Soweto riots of June 1976, St. Anthony's was the only black school in the area that did not close down - the adult students there had come to see their studies as an integral and effective part of the struggle for equality. But the center did not just offer such education facilities to people who would otherwise have had a bleak future: it also expanded, with the help of local businesses, to include sports and social activities, a youth club, an old peoples' center, medical services, skills training projects for men and women and a restaurant - all operating on a nonracial basis. More recent additions have included The House of Mercy, a treatment center for alcoholics and drug addicts, who are taken in free of charge if they cannot afford the modest fees, and St.

Francis House for the terminally ill. Stan saw the need for such a hospice after witnessing the lonely and agonizing deaths suffered by many AIDS patients who had been rejected by family, friends and the community. His belief in and defense of the rights and the dignity of each individual have become a model for many other schools and parish centers struggling to overcome the terrible legacy of the apartheid years.

In the early 1960's OSWALD GILL was content teaching Greek and Latin to Irish seminarians but he also secretly harbored a vocation to work in Latin America. When he was offered the possibility of a parish community of 35,000 in Santiago, **Chile** -- where a whole new approach to catechetics at diocesan level was being developed -- he jumped at the chance. It was the beginning of a personal voyage of discovery about the differences between "North" and "South," the living conditions in much of the so-called Third World and the reasons that gave rise to such severe poverty. Oswald saw firsthand how people without access to land, natural resources or an education were unable to develop their personal and economic potential. Two events in particular left a lasting impression in Oswald's mind: his experience during the violent coup d'état which overthrew Chile's democratically elected President, Salvador Allende, and the Latin American Bishops' Council (CELAM) meetings in Medellín and Puebla. These experiences helped him to understand poverty from the perspective of his parishioners, "as insecurity: the inability to own a home, feed your family, educate your children." It was an insecurity that Oswald was to encounter again while working with migrant farm workers in California. The Mexican and Filipino-Americans of his parish labored in the midst of some of the world's most fertile agricultural farmland, and yet they lived as impoverished, second-class citizens. Wealthy fruit and vegetable farmers took advantage of their backbreaking work throughout the growing season, suppressed their attempts to organize even the most basic of social services and sought to deny them USA citizenship. Oswald's mission among these workers became increasingly focused on restoring their human dignity through advocacy for their civil and legal rights. Reflecting on his work, Oswald chooses to paraphrase the words of Pope Paul VI: "Please, please stop talking about peace if you are not prepared to work for justice."

When the Province of Santa Barbara, California, **U.S.A.**, declared Sanctuary for Central American refugees in 1985 after a one-year province-wide discernment process, every friar was asked to do something in response. Some simply collected blankets or wrote letters to their congressional representatives; others took the more risky step of offering jobs to illegal immigrants or offering them a place to sleep. The working class parish of St. Ann in Spokane, Washington was so moved by the story of a Salvadoran woman refugee and her nine children who had witnessed unspeakable horrors perpetuated against her own family that the parish invited them to move into the church basement. After several months, the Immigration and Naturalization Service announced that it knew where the family was hiding and intended to deport them back to El Salvador. St. Ann's responded with a public press conference at which the parish leadership declared that the U.S. government would have to deport them before it could touch "their Salvadoran family." According to ED DUNN, "The parishioners began to see the universal connection of their faith. A Salvadoran refugee had as much a right to their compassion as the person next to them in the pew on Sunday. This was an extraordinary step," argues Ed. "People took risks in the face of their own government, risks that imposed on their own well-being." Perhaps the most dramatic result of the Sanctuary Movement, which at one time included some fifty churches throughout the American west, was that the choices of ordinary citizens forced change in the social

conscience of Christians throughout the United States. “It was no longer enough to say you believed in the human dignity of others”, adds Ed, “as a Catholic you had to be willing to put your own life on the line on behalf of their basic human rights.”

The inter-Franciscan JPIC Commission in **Spain** has long seen its work on behalf of immigrants and undocumented aliens as an essential component of its concern for human rights. Statistics show that some 600,000 legal immigrants and 80,000 undocumented foreigners now live in Spain, a full 2% of the population. With its growing desire to be part of the “first tier” of European countries in full monetary union, the Spanish government is taking increasingly discriminatory actions against all immigrants. The Spanish Franciscans have responded through a number of practical programs that emphasize the fundamental dignity of each immigrant. Friars have worked together with other like-minded groups to raise greater public awareness of the problems within Franciscan parishes and schools. Special employment schemes have been devised and advocacy work on behalf of immigrants has been tailored to the needs of those struggling to fit into their new cultural surroundings. Other noteworthy responses have been the active promotion of multicultural education and interreligious dialogue and efforts to ensure that immigrants' rights are protected under Spanish law. VICENTE FELIPE recalls that his own fraternity has come to the aid of “four Guatemalan refugee families through friendship, professional counseling and material assistance.”

The first recorded Franciscan presence in the southwestern **U.S.** dates back to 1539, although organized missionary work in the region really began with the establishment of St. Michael's Mission in northeastern Arizona in 1898. One friar in particular, ANSELM WEBER, earned the respect of the Navajo people there through his mastery of the local language and his willingness to travel hundreds of miles on horseback to meet each tribal elder. For this German-American friar the greatest issue of concern for the Navajo was the violation of their sacred land by the U.S. government. His sense that the Navajo echoed the Franciscan commitment as “stewards of the land” led him to work actively on their behalf; he was often called upon to help settle disputes between the U.S. government and the native people. He used the new technologies of modern surveying to help file and process homestead claims for countless families and traveled to Washington D.C. annually on the Navajo's behalf to meet with the leadership of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and help settle these countless claims. By the time of his death in 1921, he had effectively helped to increase the size of the Navajo nation by a million and a half acres. In this same year the friars helped establish the Navajo Tribal Council, which would prove an essential component of tribal leadership throughout the remainder of the twentieth century.

In 1902 another Franciscan friar, anthropologist BERARD HAILE, arrived at St. Michael's Mission to serve as chaplain of the mission school. His passionate interest in the Navajo language was to have an equally strong impact upon the lives of the native people there. Working alongside MARCELLUS TROESTER and other friars on a specially modified typewriter, Berard developed the first alphabet using Greek symbols to represent the sounds used in the Navajo language. At the same time Marcellus diligently modified and expanded the “parish census” to provide a comprehensive overview of Navajo culture, family structure, clan affiliations, births, deaths, social as well as religious customs which might otherwise have been lost forever. Like Anselm Weber, Berard spent many days in the saddle travelling to distant Navajo communities where he was able to make records of ceremonials and origin myths. “It seemed to me

that one had to study their customs, their outlook on life, on the universe, their concepts of the origin of man, vegetation and animals, before one could approach them on religious matters,” argued Berard--often in the face of ridicule from some of his fellow friars.

From individual initiatives in the defense of human rights, the Franciscans have recently begun to develop strategies for more effective advocacy and action at international level. Since the Human Rights Conference in Vienna in June 1993, the Friars Minor have joined with Franciscans International to play an increasingly active role at the UN and its affiliate agencies. IGNACIO HARDING and MICHAEL SURUFKA have been especially involved in the development of OFM participation at U.N. conferences and summits. Reflecting on his two-year assignment as the OFM Animator for Franciscans International, Michael comments: “Though the United Nations certainly has its limitations, it is the one place where the international community meets. This is where the global conversation is happening. It will go on with or without us, but we have been invited to take part in it and, as Franciscans, we have something to say and to hear.”

AGOSTINHO DIEKMANN, a member of Franciscan International's team for the Habitat II Conference on Human Settlements in Istanbul spelled out the focus of this relatively new sphere of action: "The confrontation with other cultures, languages and outlooks, as also the deeper study of social, political and economic topics broadened my horizons significantly. Together with my colleagues of the FI Delegation, I discovered what the words of Saint Francis 'Going together through the world' and 'Our friary is the world' can mean today. We must involve ourselves on behalf of the poor as advocates for justice, peace and harmony among all creatures. Following the example of Francis, we reflected upon our grassroots experience and turned to the rulers of our countries with the needs of the poor in order to give a voice to those who have been silenced by injustice and oppression.”

General Constitutions

Article 69:1-2. In “protecting the rights of oppressed people,” the brothers should have recourse to nonviolent means (1). The brothers “should speak out against...every kind of warlike activity as a most serious curse on the world and the gravest injury to the poor,” sparing themselves “neither toil or hardship” in building the “reign of God's peace” (2).

Other references: articles 32,3; 92,2; 96,1-3; 97,2; 109,1; 129,1 and 185,1.

Discussion Questions

1. Do you belong to any national or international human rights group? Should you? Do you make positive references to such groups in your apostolic work?
2. Do you include violations of human rights in your private prayer? in your local fraternity's prayer? in prayer during provincial meetings or gatherings?
3. Which groups in your society are in greatest danger of having their rights ignored?
4. Have you personally experienced mistreatment regarding some basic human right? If not, do you know anyone who has had such an experience? How did it affect you or that person?
5. How does your country deal with immigration issues? Have you ever publicly supported or protested the country's stance on such issues?
6. How effectively does your provincial fraternity address the most important human rights issues facing your country? through declarations? actions? both?

7. What are the human rights that are infringed in your country and on the international level?
8. What are the causes of the infringement of those human rights: economic, political, psychological...?
9. Why is it that each one of us is more sensitive to the infringement of certain types of human rights and less so to that of others?
10. The conscientization of the Church and the Church's action in favor of human rights- can these be considered a sign of the times?
11. What is the relationship between evangelization and human rights? Which is the more appropriate: that the Christian community should have its own organizations in favor of human rights or that Christians become involved in social organizations together with other men and women of goodwill?
12. What kind of action do you consider most appropriate for Franciscans in defense of human rights?

Checklist for Future, Local Human Rights Campaigns

If you wish to respond to human rights violations and wish to activate a campaign:

- Do you have a clear, concise summary of the events that have taken place?
- Can you explain how the Franciscan community is involved?
- Do you have a written endorsement from the local (Franciscan) JPIC Commission?
- Has the local Franciscan superior and/or bishop expressed their support?
- Do you have written endorsements from the Franciscan superior and Bishop?
- Do you have the names and numbers of those (judges, politicians, etc.) to contact?
- Do you have photographs of those you are seeking to assist?
- Do you have the ability and know-how to access a fax machine and/or e-mail?
- Have you designated a campaign coordinator(s) who will respond to all campaign inquiries?
- Do you have a press list of people and organizations willing to help your appeal?
- Have you prepared a news release with clear information, focused direction, “contact numbers,” and the name of your campaign coordinator?