

# ***The Presentation of The O.F.M. Guide to Justice, Peace And Integrity of Creation and Suggestions For Its Use***

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During the past 30 years, the Order, through its General Chapters and Plenary Councils, has been becoming aware of, and insisting on, the option for the poor and the commitment to justice, peace and integrity of creation as forming part of our identity, vocation and mission in the world. It appears clearly in Art. 1,2 of the GG.CC., where the constitutive elements of our form of life are found concentrated: "The friars, as followers of St. Francis and in charity towards all mankind, are bound to announce the Gospel throughout the whole world and preach reconciliation, peace and justice by their deeds". The previous Minister General, Fr. H. Schalück, in his letter to the Order on evangelization, "Fill the Earth with the Gospel of Christ", also points out the option for the poor and the championing of justice, peace and integration of creation as some of the principal fields of our work of evangelization at present and in the future.

We have (as can be seen in the anthology of texts from the General Chapters and Plenary Councils reproduced in the first

chapter of the IV Part) an ample, profound and committed doctrine that during the years has been helping the Order (Conferences, Provinces) to advance in the life of the social dimension of the values of justice, peace and integrity of creation. However, there is still a long way to go before the letter and the spirit of our Constitutions are assimilated and lived in such a way that it appears normal that the Friars Minor, wherever they find themselves, are at the service of the poor and share the life and conditions of the little ones in society (Cf. GG.CC. 66, 1-2), that they protect "the rights of the oppressed" (GG.CC. 69,1), that they struggle in order that "the rights and human dignity of all may be promoted and respected" (Cf. GG.CC. 66, 1-2), that they denounce the arms race (Cf. GG.CC. 69,2) and "take part in undertakings of charity, justice and international solidarity" (GG.CC.96, 2), to cite just some of the articles of the GG.CC. referring to these values.

In the same way, our present Minister General and his Definitory told us in the letter of 4th October 1999 that: "There is still a long way to go before our fraternities become living cells of the Gospel, privileged places of encounter with God and mankind, so that our poverty becomes fraternity, sharing, concrete solidarity with the little ones, the humble and those without power; so that our option for justice and peace transforms us into announcers of peace, defenders of the rights of the oppressed and champions of respect for the human dignity of all mankind".

## **1. The Origins of the Guide**

For this reason, the Office of JPIC of the General Curia, The International Council of JPIC, made up of the coordinators of the 15 Conferences of the Order, and the Provincial Delegates of the JPIC have an important mission of animation so that these evangelical and Franciscan values become personalized by the friars and turned into a style of fraternal, pacific and mutually binding life in concrete commitments to liberation. Preoccupied by the question of how to carry out this service of animation better, the International Council of the Order's JPIC decided at the meeting in Seoul, August 1995, to propose to the General Definitory the production of a guide or manual on the JPIC that could be a useful instrument for the promotion of these values in the Order. The Definitory, in its meeting of December 1995, approved the proposal and charged the Office of JPIC in the General Curia with the coordination of the project.

I, as one of the coordinators of the project, have been given the task of presenting it at this meeting and of making a series of proposals on how to use the guide, how to benefit from it. The suggestions that I will make are meant to be a starting point that would require the reflection of all here present to round them off.

I will begin by commenting on the proposed objective of the guide; I will explain its contents and will make a series of suggestions to the Delegates and

Provincial Commissions of JPIC, to the friars and Fraternities and to Formators.

## **2. The Objective**

This guide, although it is not a commentary on the IV and V Chapters of the GG.CC., is inspired by them and can even help to deepen the knowledge and living of them. This guide tries to offer some materials or resources that could help the Delegates and the Provincial Commissions of JPIC to fulfill their task of animation. It is also offered for use by those responsible for initial formation, by local Fraternities in their sessions of ongoing formation, and indeed for the friars in their personal reflections and pastoral activities.

Since we are dealing with a Guide we have never thought of it as something definitive. We are conscious of its limitations. We have been conscious, especially, of the diversity of contexts (political, economic, cultural, social and religious) of those who will use it. From the start it is almost impossible, especially on the themes of the second part, to establish a vision that is valid for all areas of the world. We have tried to ease this by gathering the experiences of the friars from all over the world; providing ample questionnaires that allow the selection of questions according to their own interests or needs, and asking for the collaboration of friars from different parts of the world. It is clear that, having had so many different friars collaborate on the guide; there may be a feeling of insuffi-

cient unity and of repetition. We have left the repetitions in because it is not a book to be read in one sitting but is an instrument of work from which one chapter or another is to be used in one or other circumstance for one or other purpose.

Because of this difficulty of diversity of contexts, it was thought from the beginning that this would be a basic common book for the whole Order. However, it should be complemented and adapted for each Conference by means of other articles, themes, bibliographies, directions and other elements of one's own context.

This work of adaptation and complementation, I believe, could be very convenient for the following reasons:

There are many more themes, which we have not included so that this guide didn't become an encyclopedia, about which it would be convenient to reflect and help our brothers to reflect: For example:

*Biblical and theological basis of JPIC*

*Theological themes such as the Incarnation, the Resurrection, the Spirit, conversion, liberation-salvation, theology of life*

*Economics and Christian faith*

*Relations between justice and cult*

*A new vision of the Religious Life from JPIC*

*The vows from a JPIC perspective*

*Where do we invest our money? Criteria for investment with social justice*

*Etc. etc.*

I believe that the Fraternities and the friars very often need instruments, tools on our way through life: themes of profound study, catechetical material, of prayer and celebration, course of action, etc. In part IV of the Guide there are some materials along these lines but there are many more that the Conferences could elaborate or take from what is already published.

The preparation of themes for reflection and practical materials could be, for the Provincial Delegates of a Conference, a work of profound study for themselves.

### **3. Structures and Content:**

*The guide has four parts*

**3.1.** In the first part the Franciscan vision of the work for justice, peace and the integrity of creation is established, it is the theoretical framework for the whole book taken from our spirituality, from the Franciscan sources and from the current GG.CC. and the magisterium of the Church: The commitment by and for JPIC is, for Franciscans, an inheritance from St. Francis, it forms part of their being friars minor and of their evangelizing mission, that is, it is an integral part of their spirituality and therefore should be included in their initial and on-going formation.

Five chapters make up this first part. In the first Eloi Leclerc presents, from the vocational experience of Francis, a global view of what should be the frame of mind and characteristics of our presence in the world. In contemplating the cruci-

fied Christ, Francis discovers the live and deeply moving revelation of the love of God for humanity, which makes him change his own view and he is opened up to the misery of humanity. Francis presents his conversion as an opening up to a new presence between men and in the world. Francis is changed into a man of peace, a messenger of peace, creator of fraternity, of a universal fraternity that goes beyond the limits of Christianity and is extended to cover all creatures.

The second chapter, titled "Minority, option for the poor and work for peace", reflects on the relationship that exists between the vision of minority that our present GG.CC. present, having integrated not only the theological input from the II Vatican Council but also the present social-cultural context, and the option for the poor and work for peace. The importance that minority has in our GG.CC. is highlighted. Minority is the forming element of the following of Jesus closely tied to evangelization through the commitment to peace and justice. Our following of Jesus in minority brings us to live the Beatitudes of the Kingdom in the world as servants of all, subjects, peaceful and humble, sharing the fate of the poor, adopting their life and condition (insertion) and defending their rights while adhering to the principle of non-violence.

The third chapter presents the place of justice, peace and integrity of creation within the sphere of evangelization and formation. In respect to evangelization it begins from the concept that Evangelium

Nuntiandi has of it in that evangelization, the mission of the Church, proclaims "salvation" understood as integral LIBERATION FROM ALL THAT OPPRESSES HUMAN BEINGS, especially from sin. Therefore, activity in favor of justice and participation in the transformation of the world appear to be a constitutive dimension of preaching the Gospel, in other words, of the mission of the Church in favor of the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every situation of oppression. This chapter presents the characteristics of Franciscan formation in matters of justice, peace and ecology. This is an aspect that is more developed, I would say splendidly developed, in the fifth chapter titled "Justice and Peace in the Ratio Formationis Franciscanae," of this first part. It is a chapter that can be of great usefulness to formators that want to make a deep and committed reflection on the theme. In this chapter, following an introduction about the origin, objective and structure of the Ratio and after pointing out the importance that Justice and Peace have in it, it is proposed that all formation be sustained by a particular spirituality and formation in Justice and Peace also. There are three elements to the fore in the Ratio shaping a "spirituality of Justice and Peace": a spirituality of discipleship of Jesus, the Just and Peaceful; a spirituality that contemplates God in the victims; a spirituality of incarnation and praxis. In the second part of this chapter, the Guide gathers the objectives in relation to Justice and Peace that the Ratio assigns to formation in order to make effective the

great objective of getting the friars to be disposed to embodying effectively the Gospel in the world of today. It is necessary to encourage in the friars a triple attitude and activity: a look at reality from the point of view of the poor; an affective compassion for the poorest; and activity in favor of justice in peace and of peace in justice.

The fourth chapter, "Contemplation, unity with God and work for justice, peace and the integrity of creation", relates contemplation and prayer to the work for JPIC showing that they are not something opposed to one another but rather complementary. Christian contemplation does not distance a friar from the world but helps him to look with more attention and with the eyes of God at what goes on in our environment in order to unite us to God in his salvific activity. God does not live outside our history but within it. We need time to withdraw from our activity with the objective of understanding better that which is happening and to reincorporate ourselves with greater courage into the activity of God there where He lives and works.

As can be seen in this first part, besides the other uses of which I will speak later, the Guide can be very useful for personal reading and reflection.

**3.2.** The second part is made up of seven important themes of the Franciscan charism of clear, current social and ecclesiastical importance: option for the poor, peacemakers, integrity of creation, the

value of life, human rights, woman, ecumenical, inter-religion and intercultural dialogue. There is only a short theoretical development because there was no desire to have an ample treatment that would exhaust each theme but rather have we wanted that they would serve to present the questions and stimulate reflection and action. Besides these could not be developed with greater broadness without the bad effect of making the book too big. The short theoretical development ends with the redaction of experiences and testimonies of friars from all parts of the world, which makes us see how the ideals that our GG.CC. present to us are not unrealizable utopias and they suggest to us a multitude of possibilities for action in accordance with the situation in distinct places. Each theme ends with a questionnaire to facilitate personal or group reflection.

**3.3.** The third part has two sections. The first speaks about the history of the movement in favor of JPIC in the Order during the last 25 years. A description is given of the structures of the Order in all that refers to JPIC. It shows how the Provinces and Conferences are organized in these fields. It gives the history of the International Council of JPIC; and reference is made to the inter-Franciscan collaboration in JPIC that is being carried out in the Inter-Franciscan Commissions of JPIC that exist in Rome, in different countries and in Franciscans International. The second section proposes ideas and initiatives on how JPIC could be present

in everyday life and in the different ministries: parish, mass media, education, mission, and evangelization, initial and on-going formation. These are ministries that are fairly common and widespread in the Order. It is not necessary to "invent" new activities if they are not wanted... The most important would be that the values of JPIC would influence the frame of mind and the objectives of whichever ministry is carried out.

Between these two sections of the third part we include a chapter about "Social analysis." It was difficult to place it anywhere but it seemed to us to be absolutely necessary to include in a guide to JPIC being convinced of its importance, not only for those who work in JPIC but also for an effective commitment of Fraternities. All Fraternities, even those of formation, when they make out their community project should make an analysis of the reality that surrounds them and should ask what God is asking of them through this reality.

**3.4.** The fourth part, eminently practical, comprises of some annexes or appendices that bring together an anthology of texts that speak on these themes from the OFM General Chapters and Plenary Councils (it is most interesting for our field to be able to read in succession what our General Chapters and Plenary Councils have been saying since 1971 about the option for the poor and the commitment to JPIC), and quotes from the texts of the GG.CC., Sacred Scripture, the Franciscan Sources, the Social Teaching

of the Church and Ratio Formations. This anthology and these quotes on a series of themes are very useful at the time of preparing a talk or a prayer meeting. Other annexes gather prayers, the addresses of international organizations with which we can relate and of places where it is possible to study or research our themes.

#### **4. To Whom It Is Addressed**

When we decided to make this guide we thought to address the Delegates and Provincial Commissions of JPIC, to give them an aid for their work of animation. Also, from the beginning we thought that maybe it could be useful to formators, for themselves and for their task of formation. For the past few years we have been concerned to have JPIC included in initial formation even though up to now little has been done at the level of the Order (with some Provinces it is somewhat different). We believe that to form our candidates in the values of JPIC, so important in our life, is decisive for the renewal of the Order, for the service we must give to the world and for its significance.

Besides these two kinds of principal addressees, having the material to hand now, it seems to us that it could be useful to the Fraternities for on-going formation and prayer, and, in addition, for all the friars in their personal reflection and pastoral activity.

It is certain that one of the most important uses that it could be put to would be the

mental preparation of each and every one of the friars. It would help us to become conscious of the clear tendency we have to separate theory and practice. We are guilty of "inflating" the first and practically leaving the second to remain in the inertia of times past. Often it does not correspond to the needs, realities and requirements of the present world and that which this world asks and expects of us. This guide tells us that our theoretical reflection on being Friars Minor, of being a Fraternity inserted in the present-day world, requires concrete application (and in this sense it offers us enough examples, not only on the personal level but also on the community level).

The guide questions us on the way we view the world, on the vision of Church that we hold, on the kind of Institution that we value, on how we allow ourselves be won over and watered down in a non-critical consumerist and individualist social model.

I will now make some suggestions on the possible uses of the guide by the mentioned addressees.

**4.1. Delegates and Provincial Commissions of JPIC:** Here are various reasons why a guide of this kind should be convenient for Provincial Delegates:

Many friars, when they are appointed to this service need to begin reflecting on our mission in the context of the present-day world. The first and second parts especially can help in this reflec-

tion. This material can also be used in our attempts to promote a reflection and search that generate a Franciscan spirituality in which the values of minority, peace, reconciliation, non-violence, etc. are very much present. This material shows that the struggle for JPIC is not just another theme subject to the goings and comings of the personal likes of those who take turns in responsibilities. JPIC are determining evangelical and Franciscan values that shape our style of religious and Franciscan life: the community life, prayer, presence in the environment, evangelization.

Whoever begins this ministry also needs to know the path the Order has followed since the Council, the approach it has taken in this area, the structures of JPIC in the Order, the initiatives that have been taken in this area in the different parts of the Order that can indicate other initiatives that could be undertaken in one's own Province. This can be found in the third and second part of the guide.

The delegates also need aids for reflection and materials to propose to the Fraternities and friars for on-going formation or on special dates or celebrations. The first two parts of the guide will be useful to them in this respect. The second section of the third part also offers indications of reflection for the Provincial teams in parishes, missions, education and formation.

They can also benefit the Delegates as aids for preparing prayers, or to prepare a talk. The annexes of the fourth part could

be helpful to them. Although, as I have said earlier, this is one of the aspects on which the Delegates and Commissions can work more to create catechetical, celebration and prayer materials. Effectively, the experience says that it is necessary to offer the Fraternities these kinds of materials for use on special occasions, as for example, the celebration of the spirit of Assisi on the 27th of October, or also for the liturgical seasons of Advent or Lent.

#### 4.2. Formators

We all have the experience of the difficulties that exist among our brothers to assume the approach to the Franciscan life in which the values of JPIC are integrated as normal since they are an inescapable part of our spirituality. In the Province that I know best, that of the Spanish-Portuguese Conference (although I feel it is something in general), it was not and is not easy to assume the present GG.CC., especially for those friars formed in another cultural and ecclesiastical situation and in another model of religious life. Although the texts of the Constitutions are very clear, with clarity in their expression and the content expressed in present-day language, I am convinced that it is difficult for many friars, for the reasons mentioned a moment ago, to understand the novelty that is present in this re-reading of our "life and Rule". For many friars it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to understand many articles of the Constitutions and their basic options. Poverty and the poor,

peace, minority, for example, have always been Franciscan themes, but what can be said of articles 69, 97, to quote but a few, that speak of the friars: *Making options in favor of the "marginalized", of the poor and oppressed, joyful at living among them learning a lot from those among whom they live, principally from the poor who are our masters defending the rights of the oppressed denouncing all class of military action and the arms race being together with all people of good will founding a society of justice, liberation and peace in the resurrected Christ?*

What I want to say with all of this is that it is very important that, if on the one hand, on-going formation helps the friars in their renewal through a profound study of our GG.CC. and that this includes minority and its consequences for the model of Franciscan life distanced from the conventual model and close to the model of insertion; it must be acknowledged that for many friars it is going to be impossible to assimilate this model. It is most important to work in initial formation so that the new generations, formed in another theology and in another ecclesiastical and social-cultural framework, continue to respond to the signs of the times and live naturally the social dimensions of the faith and, therefore, the values of JPIC. It seems to me that here we have one of the most important challenges for many of our Provinces. The Ratio Formationis Franciscanae greatly facilitates this type of formation, as we already saw on sum-

ming up the fifth chapter of the first part of our Guide. But I dare say that the greater part of formators have not studied profoundly the Ratio from this perspective of JPIC. This would be our first objective: that formators would reflect on "how we form our candidates in Justice and Peace that is such an important dimension of our life" as the Secretary for Formation and Study wrote in an open letter to the Secretaries for Formation in the Conferences a few months ago. In the Spanish-Portuguese Conference it was proposed to make time for a meeting between the JPIC team and the Provincial Formators to reflect on these themes, but the meeting has not taken place yet. I don't know if in other Conferences anything similar has taken place.

In any case, our Guide can be an aid to make this reflection. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 of the first part, and especially Ch. 5 that is an excellent study of Justice and Peace in Ratio Formationis Franciscanae, are the most indicated, together with another chapter from the third part that is more practical and titled "JPIC in Formation". It reflects experiences being lived along the lines of that said in the Ratio. But the whole book can be useful for the incarnate frame of mind because it is based on the Bible, the Franciscan Sources, the teaching of the Church and the GG.CC.

In addition to using it for your own reflection it can also be of use with those in formation:

*To know the evolution of the Order in the aftermath of the Council.*

*To form in a spirituality of discipleship of Jesus that discovers God in history, especially in the poor; that should be incarnated and lead to a commitment to solidarity.*

*So that there can be a synthesis between faith and life, that life be present in prayer and that this should lead to a liberating commitment.*

*To form them in a series of aspects of human, Christian and Franciscan growth such as: the capacity to read "the signs of the times", solidarity with the poor and marginalized, the sense of the presence of God in the world, the search for justice and peace, the prophetic, ecumenical and missionary spirit, determination for reconciliation and pardon, respect for nature and the environment (Cf. RFF 56).*

*For initiation in the analysis of the surrounding social reality, given that "Franciscan formation takes place in fraternity and in the real world" (RFF 43), "is inculturated in the environmental conditions of life" (RFF 49) and "is attentive to the renewed calls of the world and of the Church" (RFF 50).*

*To lead to a deep study of many articles of the GG.CC.*

### 4.3. Fraternities

There can be no doubt that this book, especially the first and second parts, can also be used by the fraternities for some aspects of their on-going formation. Among other objectives, these two parts

can help to deepen the study of many articles of the GG.CC.

All the fraternities should also reflect on how they can live the values of justice, peace and integrity of creation in everyday life, and how they should practice the analysis of reality. Indications on these two aspects can be found in the third part. Depending on the predominant activity of each fraternity they can be helped in their reflections by the expositions found in this third part on JPIC in different ministries: parish, education, formation, different kinds of pastoral activity.

The appendices of part IV can be useful in various senses: the suggestions on

prayer, if chosen, can help one to get out of a routine and connect life and prayer better. The quotes from biblical, Franciscan and Church social doctrine texts can be used on more than one occasion in pastoral activity when preparing talks or gatherings for reflection.

### **Finally**

Brothers, this is what I have thought to propose to you as possible uses of the Guide to JPIC. It has been a simple reflection, as I said at the beginning, which could be notably enriched through the contributions of all. I hope for this so that this Guide can give an ever-greater service to the Order. Thank you.