

JPIC in Initial Formation

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This congress has thought about the need to reflect on how we can incorporate justice, peace and integrity of creation into initial formation.

To help us in our reflection I propose the following approach. Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation should be a constitutive part of the whole formative process of our Order, Provinces-Conferences. It is not a compartment for knowledge and experience that are taught in isolation or in other cases, as is our tendency, as a field only for some specialists who, from initial formation, take on that profile.

Placing ourselves in a common conceptual frame, our documents and especially the “Ratio Formationis Franciscanae” define for us that “initial formation is the privileged time in which the candidates, with a special accompaniment from the Master and the Formation Fraternity, are initiated into the following of Christ according to the way of St. Francis and the sound tradition of the Order, gradually accepting as their own and integrating with their own particular personal gifts the authentic and characteristic values of the Gospel vocation of the Friar Minor” (RFF 117).

As we can observe, we find important elements here such as: The following of

Christ, the way of life of St. Francis and the tradition of the Order, that we can make stronger in order to systematically integrate JPIC into initial formation as a constitutive part of our charism.

It seems to me that the testament of our Father St. Francis is the document that gives us the most suitable instruments to interpret the elements considered to be important. The following of Jesus in penance as a progressive path of conversion. The way of life of St. Francis as a friar minor in the midst of the lepers, and the tradition that in this document there is perceived, in some way in the practice of prayer, in the spirituality of work, in the way of itinerancy, how we should go through the world and mission as a configuring element.

It is not easy to develop an integral formation. At times some aspects are emphasized without achieving the establishment of others. It is very easy to stir up and make our friars more enthusiastic in the areas of liturgy, spirituality, sacraments and ministries but more difficult in all that pertains to the dimension of JPIC that is more along the lines of the social and prophetic.

We do not want to make this dimension absolute, however. We want to show how Jesus the Master and the intuition of Francis help to consolidate our formative process in an integral way and not only in aspects that please us or that are easier to put into practice.

If there is clarity in this approach there are then the conditions for making an effort to present some ideas that have been picked up from the path trodden by our Province "Our Lady of Guadeloupe" of Central America, Panama and the Mission in Haiti, that, in some way I believe, are the same as the paths taken by other Provinces of Latin America.

The Order and Other Groups

a. The Order: It is convenient that each Entity of our Order should elaborate a diagnosis of the formative reality so that they can identify the areas to be strengthened and which they think are opportunities to consolidate formation in an integral way. The weaknesses and the threats that do not allow us to set up this progressive development in the evangelical and Franciscan values can also be detected. Congresses, Chapters, etc can be taken advantage of.

The more participation there is among the friars; the better will be the results. It is important to say something about Formators. In my Province the experience is given in parochialized context. When a friar Pastor, or another who collaborates pastorally, wants to call a layperson to some commitment, he says to him "even as a catechist."

Formation is not questioned. There is a book of text and the job is simply to transmit knowledge. The same happens when friars are named to give service as formator, we don't prepare them, we give

them the plans of formation, the Provincial and Order documents and they strive to pass on the information. It is necessary to have a good formation for these services. So it is suggested that those who are going to give this service should be formed for a time before getting involved in formative affairs. It is too easy to get tired or lose the integral perspective of formation.

b. Other Groups: We should remember that our Order-Entities are not the only ones occupied with Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation. There are other groups, organisations and Churches that promote the life of people. The objectives and praxis of these sectors of society, especially in initial formation, should be known in order to stimulate making our friars in formation conscious of what is going on.

Some elements of Initial Formation

Right from the time of promoting vocations it is necessary to accompany the young person, speaking of Mission, in simple activities that do not compromise them too much. There is no greater motivator than success. You must go at their rhythm. When they recognise that promotion of life and of human rights are constitutive parts of our charism and basic to its sanctity, something new arises.

This process continues to deepen in the following formative stages in such a way that in each one the experiences that, in a progressive manner, consolidate the JPIC as part of the Mission become inte-

grated into the fraternal and personal project of life.

The geographical (theological) place where the formative fraternities are situated is important; the Franciscan intuition is to displace from the center to the periphery. Here the importance of fraternities inserted in popular districts. The experiences in initial formation should follow along the line of accompanying the poor, knowing their sources of work, the realities that exploit them, their organisations, their preoccupations, their joys and to unite our dreams to theirs. It is important, then, to bring about insertion gradually and progressively at each stage of initial formation that are the founding experiences in order to assume this aspect as part of our charism. There should be an objective and critical analysis to concentrate the attention on the area of minority and poverty.

It would be convenient to point out some concrete experiences that could help us achieve this objective:

An ad hoc analysis of reality (talks, TV, magazines, newspapers, etc.).

Experience of work and apostolic activity in poor districts (peasants, workers, on the frontier, etc.).

Workshops of JPIC (the manual could be used), Franciscan spirituality, evangelization, minority and option for the poor.

Celebration of martyrs (Franciscan and others).

Include JPIC as an objective in the project of initial formation.

Include JPIC in the fraternal and personal projects of life.

To finish up, I think it is important that parishes incorporate Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation in their pastoral plans as part of prophetic activity. For this it is necessary to nominate friars who are open to supporting these initiatives. They were formed through workshops that will allow them to become conscious that JPIC is a constitutive part of the Franciscan mission. It seems to me that these ideas can help in reflection and discernment during the round table discussions that this congress has prepared.

I wish to congratulate all those friars who, directly or indirectly, collaborated in bringing this congress forward and also those who made the manual of JPIC a reality. This is material that will be of great help to our Order.