

OFM JPIC NEWSLETTER

PREPARED BY THE OFM OFFICE OF JUSTICE, PEACE AND
INTEGRITY OF CREATION IN ROME

CONTACT

OCTOBER~DECEMBER
2017

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1. EDITORIAL, LIVE LAUDATO SI'

Dear brothers and sisters, may the coming of the Messiah bring to our hearts the thirst and hope of peace!

We present the latest issue of this year's "Contact" newsletter from the JPIC Office. We want to share news and reflections with you that spring from the work of the JPIC Offices in the Order.

Continuing with the themes proposed by the International Council of JPIC 2016 we would like to end this year remembering the importance of the encyclical, *Laudato Si'* of Pope Francis:

"We are blessed by the wisdom and example set before us in Laudato Si', an encyclical drawing so deeply from the spirit of Francis. In its content and method, we commend it to the brothers and exhort all to take up the challenges of this document and the invitation of the General Definitory for 2017 in accordance with the decisions of the General Chapter 2015 to embrace the ecological conversion which it puts before us. This document provides a framework for us to live as men of peace and justice and attuned to the cry of our sister, Mother Earth." (ICJPIC – 2016)

We wish you a good start to the year 2018, and at the same time, we thank all the brothers who have collaborated with news and articles for the *CONTACT* newsletter.

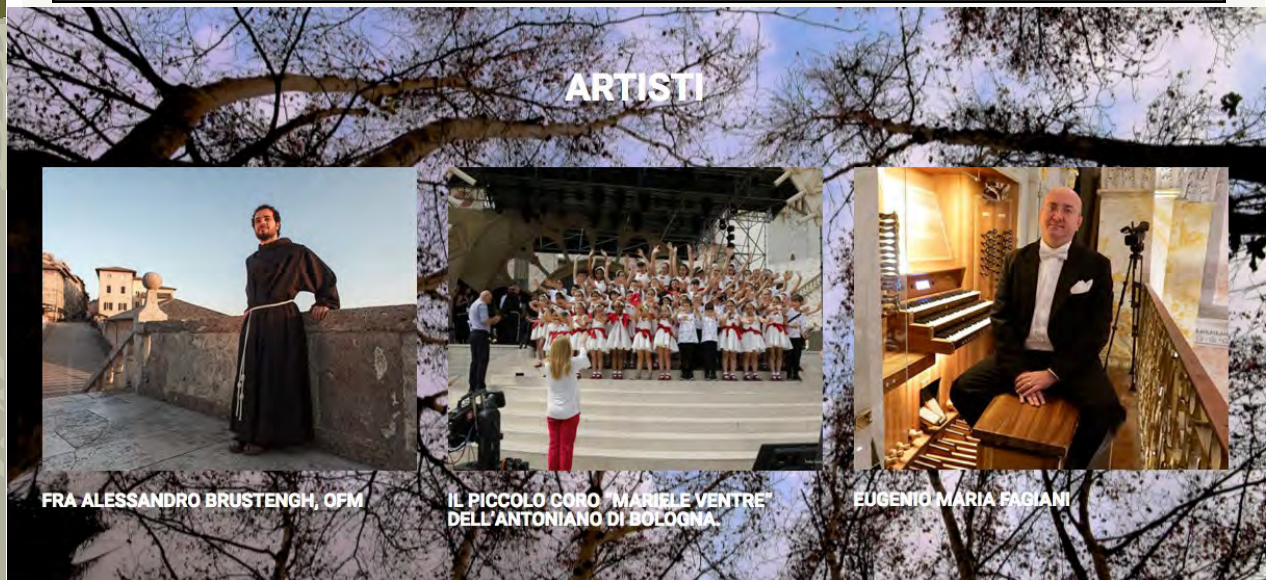
Don't forget to share this newsletter with all the members of your entities and the other brothers and sisters of the Franciscan family interested in the promotion of JPIC values in your region.

May the good God bless us.



Br. Jaime Campos F., OFM
The Director of JPIC General Office – Rome

2. LAUDATO SI CULTURAL EVENING



***Laudato Si'* Cultural Evening**

"This is the work of the Lord: a marvel in our eyes" (Ps.117)

March 23, 2018, Basilica St. Anthony at Lateran.

This initiative is to appreciate the words of Pope Francis in his encyclical, *Laudato Si'* on the care of the common home and to show a sign of restitution to the Lord God Most High, because we recognize that all goods are his. For this reason, we Friars Minor want to share with the whole Church and the civil society a cultural evening to say all together: *Laudato Si', mi' Signore*.

A cultural evening to raise awareness on how to care for the environment and the common home, as Pope Francis often says, becoming a sign of commitment to the values promoted by the aforementioned Encyclical Letter. We believe that the care of what is weak belongs to the essence of our charism, and as Franciscans and Franciscans we are always called to answer this particular aspect so dear to St. Francis.

Invited by: Br. Michael Perry, OFM, Minister General.

Organized by: JPIC Office - General Curia

www.seratalaudatosi.org

3. SEASON OF CREATION



SEASON OF CREATION

Season of Creation Hong Kong

As a response to *Laudato Si'* we have initiated Lenten workshop on JPIC Way of the Cross with themes of interpersonal justice, social justice, peace-making and the integrity of creation.

Moreover, we have initiated the Green Auditing Scheme for Catholic Buildings. Pilot Scheme started from our St Bonaventure Parish and St Joseph Primary School and planned to be extended to all Catholic Buildings, together with the Hong Kong Catholic Justice and Peace Commission.

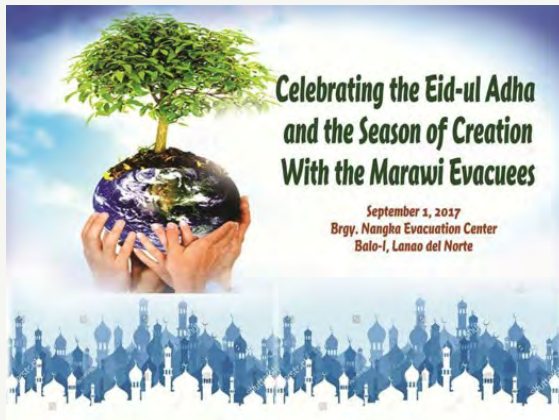
We co-organized the Season of Creation activities with Justice and Peace Commission and other parochial social concern groups also. We composed an introductory article in the diocesan weekly newspaper. Our program started with a prayer meeting in the Cathedral, followed by a variety show, and ended with a mass in nature celebrated by Bishop Joseph Ha. In between, we organized a seminar about over-consumption, movie shows about environmental protection, an animal blessing in parishes and a visit to the green project in Taiwan.

Br. Raymond Yim Yeung, OFM
JPIC animator – Hong Kong



3. SEASON OF CREATION

Celebrating the Season of Creation in Philippines



When the Catholic Church joined the celebration of the World Day of Prayer for Creation on September 1 2015, the local Church of the Philippines with the Global Catholic Climate Movement has been actively participating and promoting this month-long celebration in the many islands of the archipelago.

Early morning on September 1st of this year, 2017, a lot of participants from different places, congregations, movements and organization gathered at the historical *Luneta Park* to formally begin the Season of Creation. The Most Reverend Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle presided the Eucharistic Celebration and it was followed by the praying of the Angelus for Creation. This event marked the different activities and advocacies that promote not only prayer but also actions for the care of creation.

On the feast of Saint Francis of Assisi last October 04, 2017, the closing of the Season of Creation was held at *Baclaran Church*.

Br. Mark Angelo S. Vito, OFM
Team JPIC – Manila, Philippines



4. LAUDATO SI' EXHIBITION

Laudato Si' Exhibition in Seoul

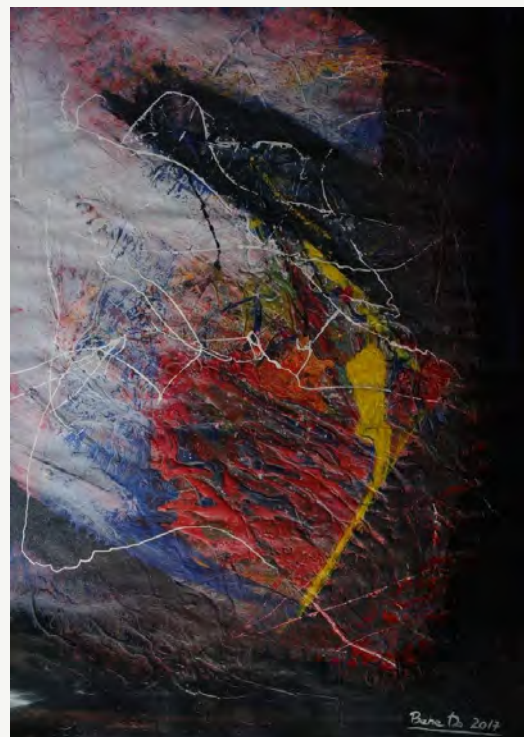
*On the occasion of the feast of St. Francis, Br. Benedict Do has held his first exhibition on the theme of **Laudato Si'** at the Franciscan Education Center in Seoul, South Korea. He has sent us some photos of his paintings and his story about his works.*

Dear brothers and sisters,

I'm Br. Benedict Do, a humble Franciscan brother in Korea who has joined the Order at the age of thirty and has been amazed every day by the depth of the Franciscan spirituality ever since then. As I have been looking for a better way to share the inspirations that I got from St. Francis, I happened to encounter the master of Christian art in Korea, Rev. Simon Jo, Kwang-Ho, who eventually taught me painting. I found the possibility to appreciate and to express the Franciscan spirituality profoundly in painting.

After five years of hard work, I could hold an exhibit of my works on the "Canticle of the Creatures" this year. I tried to express in the first seven of the ten paintings the intuition of St. Francis who had seen the Divine presence in the creation and exalted the Creator with the "Canticle." The following three paintings about forgiveness and death show that St. Francis had a profound understanding of the dark side of human existence and turned it into the "Canticle."

I think that we suffer from the hunger for the meaning of existence despite the unprecedented material prosperity. People are suffering because they are being forced to climb up higher and higher in the society, but they are not able to make it in the end. But I realized that St. Francis of Assisi has indicated an opposite direction in the "Canticle."



Brother Sun



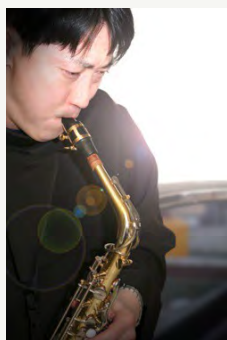
Brother Wind

4. LAUDATO SI' EXHIBITION



This realization has brought me to the conclusion that one can be happy even if he/she may be poor and marginalized. I wanted to express this understanding on canvas. Unlike my little expectation, the exhibition was published on the Korean Catholic radio and Catholic newspaper, which proved the public interest on St. Francis. I have explained the meaning of my works to the visitors. Some of them had tears well up in their eyes when they heard the stories of St. Francis regarding peace, perseverance, and his embracing the sister Death. I believe that there is a tremendous possibility to deliver the message of the Franciscan spirituality to the world through the means of art because the coming age is the age of culture.

Lastly, I'd like to recall the words of Fyodor Dostoevsky, "Beauty will save the world!"



Br. Benedict Do, Jong-Hyeon OFM
A painter and a spiritual assistant for OFS
Seoul, South Korea

5. THE FRANCISCAN ECOLOGICAL WEEK - ECUADOR



The Franciscan Ecological Week—Ecuador

Dear brothers, peace and all good

On behalf of those of us who are part of the Secretariat of Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation, I sincerely appreciate all the effort and work you have done so that the Franciscan pilgrimage could become a visible sign of our presence and work in the Church and the society.

We have walked for almost a year in the hands of St. Clare and St. Francis, visiting a considerable number of Franciscan fraternities in Latin America, promoting the message of the encyclical of Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*; generating institutional and personal commitments. We have been invited to be protagonists in the care of our Common Home and promoters of an integral and human ecology in our countries of residence.

The Franciscan pilgrimage *Laudato Si'* was not meant to be an ecological campaign anymore. We already have many of them. The pilgrimage sought to be a movement for life. The fruit of this pilgrimage should be a genuine revolution that unlocks us from the comforts we may enjoy. It should be something that sets us on the path to the defense of life to become its promoters not only in words or one-time gestures but in determined attitudes that can affect those who are part of our journey in the construction of a more humane and just world.

Today, the centenary shrine of St Francis of Quito, Ecuador, an architectural construction more than five centuries old that witnessed the history of evangelization in South America, also sees the closing of this Franciscan pilgrimage in Latin America. This pilgrimage demands of us to be icons of St. Clare and St. Francis in each one of our entities where obedience calls us to be the instruments of peace and mercy of God.

5. THE FRANCISCAN ECOLOGICAL WEEK - ECUADOR

Let's be now the icons of Clara and Francis that promote peace, justice, care for the common home and love for life. Let us be the altars of peace and the promoters of the good. Let us be the living stones in the construction of our Church that needs men and women determined in the mission of the Kingdom. Let's be the preachers and the promoters of God's mercy. Brothers, let us be faithful to our vocation, and the rest will follow besides.

Thank you all very much. May the Lord always accompany us.

Faternally,

Br. Freddy Sucuzhañay, OFM
JPIC animator – Ecuador



6. JPIC CONTINENTAL MEETING - ASIA-OCEANIA

Final Document 4th Continental Meeting of Asia – Oceania Conclusions and Proposals

We the two Conferences, EAC and SAAOC, came together for the Continental Meeting of JPIC animators in Seoul, South Korea from Oct 9 to 14, 2017. The participants were from India, Myanmar, Vietnam, Pakistan, Australia and New Zealand, Malaysia and Singapore, Philippines, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and Hong Kong. We were altogether 13 animators, including friars from the JPIC Rome Office.

The theme of our meeting was “The Issue of Human Rights in the Asian Context.” The reports of the various entities were presented, and later the presentations on the issues of migration and human trafficking in the Asian region, peace in Asia, and climate change and energy followed. According to the priorities chosen in the International Council of JPIC in Verona, 2016, the participants have discussed on the future actions and decided on the following proposals for the next three years (2017-2020):

1 – Migration

Each entity will study, identify and work out the action plan accordingly.

Explore and promote the collaboration between the entities, and relevant NGOs for the favor of the immigrants.

Providing shelter-homes for migrants, if necessary.

2 – Mining

Promote the collaboration with local and international NGOs to address the problem of mining.

Promote conscientization within the Franciscan families through studies and exposures.

Promote collaborative effort among the entities regarding mining issue.

3 – Lifestyle

Promote conscientization about the need of changing our values, preferences, and habits towards a sustainable future.

Promote reduction of CO2 footprints in every sphere of our life.

Being aware of serious social and ecological inequality, and promote the ethics of “Need not Greed.”

Promote simple lifestyle by learning from the poor.

Promote inter-religious collaboration on the issue of climate change.

4 – Peace

Promote conscientization on the negative impacts of expanding militarism in Asia.

Promote the culture of active non-violence within the Franciscan families and the broader society.

5 – Communication and Collaboration

Strengthen communication between and within the entities of the Conferences, utilizing new technologies.

6. JPIC CONTINENTAL MEETING - ASIA-OCEANIA



7. THE PARTICIPATION IN COP23

The Franciscan Participation in COP23



The Franciscan delegation has participated in COP23, in Bonn, Germany, from Nov. 3 to 10. In 2015, the 21st COP (Conference of Parties) in Paris has produced the Paris Agreement which is the landmark in international effort to fight against global climate change. COP23 is very important because the delegates of the Parties should discuss, negotiate and make agreements on the Paris rulebook in detail, which will be approved in COP24 in Warsaw, Poland, next December.

The participation was planned by the JPIC Office of the General Curia, the Franciscans International (FI) and the *Missionszentrale der Franziskaner* (MZF). The Franciscan delegation included Br. Rufino Lim OFM, Br. Benedict Ayodi OFM Cap., Br. Joseph Blay OFM Conv., Budi Tjahjono (from FI) along with Franciscans in Germany such as Sr. Beate Krug, Fr. Markus Fuhrman, and Fr. Francis Kaviyil (from MZF).

The objectives of participation were to show Franciscan solidarity with the people affected by climate change, with the civil society, and with other religious communities, to mobilize local Franciscans, and to raise consciousness on the issues regarding climate change within the Franciscan family itself. The delegation has participated in some of the official negotiation sessions as well as various side events of the civil society, the climate march, public protests with NGOs, and interfaith/ecumenical events.

Once the Paris rulebook is given an official approval in COP24, Warsaw, the Paris Agreement will become legally binding. However, since the issues such as *Adaptation fund* and *Loss and Damage* are not the priorities for the Parties, the religious communities and NGOs need to push them to take the human rights issue in the center of this course of negotiation. The delegation decided to continue to raise awareness in the Franciscan family and mobilize them in this direction.

Br. Rufino Lim OFM
JPIC Office – Rome

8. REFUGEES OF RHODES AND KOS

Pastoral Mission for the Refugees of Rhodes and Kos

Report from September 2015 to today



The Aegean Islands have always been a heterogeneous mixture of many races, religions, and cultures; for this reason, the locals don't treat tourists and immigrants as foreigners. However, in recent months, there has been an extraordinary influx of refugees from Syria, Afghanistan and other countries in the Middle East and North Africa. Syrian refugees have fled from the terrible war that devastated the country in the last six years.

I briefly describe the experience of the two islands in which the Franciscans have parishes: Rhodes and Kos. In 2015 the news re-

ported daily of impoverished Syrian families forced to live on the streets. It was unfortunate to see the arrival of these people who, embarking on fragile plastic boats, had left the family and the house, taking with them only a few things to carry by hand. But this tragic story highlights an incredibly positive side: it is the generous manifestation of goodness and compassion of the inhabitants of Rhodes and Kos, demonstrated concretely and practically. While local hotels guaranteed hot meals twice a day, the local people provided essential needs for every person to live in dignity and hygiene, distributing soap, shampoo, and toothpaste.

For some years, the parishes have collected food to organize a "food bank" dedicated to those who present themselves every day at the door of the convent. Unfortunately, the economic crisis that has also struck Greece has caused immense difficulties in the local families for their maintenance. Most of them work only during the six months of the tourist season. But then? Until a few years ago, during the winter, the State supported these people with a small sum. Today it does not happen anymore, the number of the poor is in continuous growth and, therefore, the requests for help also increase. It's a painful situation!

In this country, which already suffers economic difficulties, the poor people from Syria also arrive. The Greeks share the few things they have. The people (tourists and locals) who attend Sunday Masses have been wonderfully generous. Some, in local supermarkets, have purchased food and other things for personal hygiene; others have given donations. I often ask people to bring chocolate so that children can enjoy at least one dessert every day. Children are not responsible for the political



8. REFUGEES OF RODHES AND KOS



events that caused this mass migration and, of course, they cannot understand what is happening. When I address them in Arabic, they smile because my accent is strange, but for me to see the smile on those little faces is a high reward.

From 9 to 14 October 2017, the Italian Commissioners organized their annual conference in Rhodes. Tuesday, October 10th, three of the friars, Br. Matteo Brena, from Tuscany, Fr. Antonio Iacona, from Palermo and our beloved brother Giuseppe Battistelli, from Umbria, helped us to distribute food to the 250 people who come every Tuesday at the door of the convent. They were surprised by the number. People were delighted to see new friars helping us and, even if they did not speak Greek, their smiling faces and kind gestures said more than many words.

Wednesday, October 11 we left for the island of Kos. A journey, on the smooth sea, of about three hours. We were greeted at the port of Kos and accompanied to our small chapel of the Holy Cross. Alas, this poor chapel suffered a lot during the earthquake last July. The friars observed the immense damage to the chapel and the small convent next door, both useless because they were considered dangerous. Thanks to the lovely weather, every Sunday we can still celebrate holy mass outside the chapel for the parishioners and the many tourists who take part in the celebration during the weekend.

We then continued our journey to the village of Pili, where the State built a Refugee Center, known as the "Hotspot." We have seen the massive construction only from the outside; visitors are not welcome. They informed us that there are not 600 refugees inside, but 3,000!

We have witnessed some tragic events suffered by refugees who have come to us from Syria via Turkey; many are drowned and are known only to God. The others are treated in Rhodes thanks to the help of volunteers. There are about 100, twenty of which are children.

In the afternoon, the first group of friars visited the Refugee Center. The refugees, especially the children, were enthusiastic, but the friars were very sorry and sad about the conditions in which these people live. They are staying in the old slaughterhouse, with evidence of its past still visible: cranes and other tools used to slaughter animals. There is no heating system, and there are no windows in the windows. Some friars were visibly afflicted, but the children were so happy with our visit because we brought toys and chocolates as gifts.

8. REFUGEES OF RODHES AND KOS

Recently, the children have got admission in the Greek school, so they showed us their school books, and we noticed the progress they are making. Br. Matteo of Tuscany and Br. Antonio of Palermo played with the children, blowing them up and swinging. How much joy mixed with tears, what a wonder to see! Abdullah, a five-year-old who lost his mother and sister in an airstrike, was particularly enthusiastic and, while he was eating a pear, with his left hand made us the sign of victory!

We must never despair. God is always near us even in the darkest moments. Even when there are tragedy and pain, there arouse deep feelings of compassion and mercy in the human heart.



Br. John Luke, OFM
Parish priest of Rhodes and Co
Member of the JPIC Commission
Custody of the Holy Land

9. INTER-FRANCISCAN JPIC SEMINAR—SEOUL

Inter-Franciscan JPIC seminar on Ecology

The Inter-Franciscan JPIC commission organizes annual ecology camp in summer and JPIC seminar in autumn. This year it was held on 4th and 5th November at the Franciscan retreat center in Seoul, Korea. 120 members of the Franciscan family have participated.

The theme of the seminar was “*Ecology and Global Climate Change*,” and it was intended to be a good opportunity to learn the green lifestyle of St. Francis who lived the universal fraternity. The commission invited three speakers. Prof. Tae Ok Jeong, a professional on Teilhard de Chardin SJ, gave a talk with the theme of “*Kingdom of God: Not a place to enter through belief, but to be built through deeds*.” Rev. Joon Woo Kim, the executive director of the Korean Christian Institute, talked about “*Climate Change and Ecological Theology*.” The last session was about “*Climate Change from the Perspective of Art*,” led by Prof. Ho Seob Yoon, a forerunner of eco-designing in Korea.

The public interest in the Catholic Social Teaching is growing significantly in Korea these days. However, even though the Franciscan family has been organizing various lectures and seminars on the Catholic Social Teaching and JPIC, it seems still quite difficult for the Christian population to take some concrete and direct social actions. Because the reality of the divided country on the Korean peninsula continues to evoke political and ideological conflicts in the society out of fear mechanism and psychological barriers among people, it may take some more time for them to bring their knowledge about the social teaching into concrete action.



Br. Aloysio Kim OFM
JPIC animator – Seoul, South Korea

10. PEOPLE'S DIALOGUE IN ZIMBABWE

People's Dialogue exchange visit to Zimbabwe was interrupted by the arrest of all its participants.



From November 8 - 12, People's Dialogue Network (PD) held an exchange visit to Zimbabwe to explore and understand the situation of artisanal mining and participate in the commemoration of the 9th Anniversary of the *Marange* Diamond massacre, outside *Mutare*. The commemoration is an annual event to remember the massacre of the Operation *Hakudzokwi*, to honor and remember the hundreds of artisanal miners who were

gunned down by Zimbabwe's national army in November 2008.

The exchange visit objective was to understand the role of artisanal mining and whether it offers any alternative to the looting of the multinational mining companies in our countries. Furthermore, the exchange visit was also exploring and sharing ideas of how artisanal mining was organised and what its role could be in resource nationalism. Zimbabwe was selected because over 1 million people are involved in artisanal mining.

On the morning, 10th of November, the 22 PD delegates were arrested and charged for illegally entering into the *Marange* diamond fields. The allegations against us, which led to the charge of crime, do not hold. There were no signs in the area, and it is not a mining field. There live more than 6000 people and at the time of our arrest we were together with more than 2000 people gathered at the commemoration meeting.

The arrest

A few hours after the commemoration had started, the police in a combined operation with immigration officials and intelligence services tried to interrupt the meeting. It was later observed that heavily armed police in riot gear had been stationed at a nearby business center to provide backup in case of a riot.

Immigration officials tried to disrupt the gathering by trying to grab the microphone from the master of ceremony but this was resisted. After a long stand-off, we Brazilians handed ourselves to the immigration officials who said they only wanted to verify whether our passports had been stamped. Later other delegates followed suit. We were then taken to the nearby Police Station at Bambazonke, about 10-15KM away.

By late afternoon, we were taken to Mutare Central Police Station. At 9 o'clock in the night, we were finally informed about the reason for our arrest. They handed us a paper to sign with the alleged crime that we would have committed.

We spent the night in 2 cells that are certainly not fit for human habitation. The conditions in those cells are deplorable. We were very sorry for the prisoners who were already incarcerated there.

10. PEOPLE'S DIALOGUE IN ZIMBABWE

On Saturday 11 Nov, we appeared in court and were represented by a team of lawyers from Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights. They advised us to plead guilty saying if we deny the charges we were likely going to stay longer in detention. An official from the Brazilian Embassy came to follow the procedures, as well as the Apostolic Nunciature of the Vatican sent the bishop of Mutare. The Court ordered us to pay \$100 fine or spend a week in prison.

Shortly after our release the lawyers were told the people from the President's Office were pushing that we be re-arrested and this prompted the lawyers to order that everyone except we the locals be moved out of Mutare. An alternative bus was found which took the delegates to Harare Saturday night, while we Brazilians were taken to Harare by the Embassy car. The first hired bus had been taken by Police in Marange.

Restricting a community

Declaring Marange communal lands a restricted area comes with many problems.

First, over 6 thousand people whose freedoms of movement, association and assembly are greatly curtailed by this restriction inhabit the area. People who don't live in that community impose the restriction on the community. Thereby make Marange an imprisoned community that is cut off from the rest of the country. During the commemoration, several community members narrated traumatizing stories of how they have been arrested and tortured whilst herding cattle or drinking with friends at the local shopping centre.

The second challenge with this restriction is the failure by government to put in place the necessary signposts marking the entire restricted area and putting personnel to inform the public that they are now entering a restricted zone. There is only one small sign with a message on the said restriction. Government assumes that everyone knows that the area is restricted.

It is also not clearly who is restricted from entering the area since, as mentioned above, there are over 6 000 people in this ward. Also, it is not clear which area exactly is restricted because the locals are also being tortured for trespassing within their communities.

Violence against communities affected by mining and artisanal miners continues to this day and has been growing since the acquisition of diamond fields by the newly formed diamond company Zimbabwe Consolidated Diamond Company (ZCDC). Among the human rights violations committed in Marange we also have the forced displacement of 1,300 families. Displaced families are experiencing new poverty because they do not have enough land for agricultural cultivation.

Mining, in the world, enriches a few, leaves a trail of violations of human rights, destruction of nature and poverty. In Zimbabwe, the situation of communities affected by mining and miners is extremely serious and needs support and solidarity.

Fr. Rodrigo Péret, OFM

JPIC animator, the Custody of the Sacred Heart, Brazil

11. FLICKERS OF HOPE - PHILLIPPINES

Becoming “FLICKERS OF HOPE IN MOMENTS OF DARKNESS”:

The on-going ministry of the friars in Balo-i, Lanao del Norte for the internally displaced persons (evacuees) from Marawi city



“Crises or tragedies can reveal the worst or the best of humanity.” True enough, the violence and war in Marawi shows how we, human beings, are capable of doing something evil or inhuman. At the same time, the way we respond to these situations can reveal the best and the innate goodness in us. In moments of darkness, we can either choose to be indifferent and do nothing or we can do something so that, even in our little efforts, we can become flickers of hope to those who are suffering.

Since May 2017, few days after the war between government security forces and ISIS linked-Maute group broke out, the Franciscan friars in Balo-i, Lanao del Norte have been responding to the needs and concerns of the internally displaced persons (IDPs or evacuees) from Marawi City who are mostly Maranao Muslims.

Through the help of various groups and organizations as well as of the members of the Franciscan family in the Philippines, we were able to conduct a series of humanitarian missions such relief operations, medical missions, distribution of hygiene kits, and psycho-social interventions. We made sure to prioritize evacuation centers and home-based IDP communities who are hardly reached by the assistance from the government. Aside from Balo-i, Lanao del Norte, our areas of concentration are the IDPs who have sought temporary refuge in the towns of Pantar, Lanao del Norte; Pantao Ragat, Lanao del Norte; Saguwaran, Lanao del Sur and Iligan City. All of these programs and outreach activities for the Marawi IDPs are still on-going and we hope to continue them until such time that they can finally go back to their homes and start the process of rebuilding their disruptive lives. Furthermore, we are also exploring some possibilities on how we can be of help to them in the process of rehabilitation particularly in the aspect of livelihood assistance.

Part and parcel of the mission to the IDPs is facing threats and dangers. There were several instances that we had to brave going to some remote districts so as to deliver the necessary help and assistance because these are the areas that are hardly reached by the help from the government. Our on-going activities and programs for the IDPs have allowed us to have concrete and meaningful engagements with them.

11. FLICKERS OF HOPE - PHILIPPINES

It has given us the opportunity to listen to their stories, their pains, their fears, their predicaments as well as their hopes and aspirations. Furthermore, the situation enabled us to establish connections and collaboration with the local Muslim residents, the leaders of various Muslim communities as well as with other groups and organizations. We were able to create a group of Muslim and Christian volunteers who are working together for the welfare of the IDPs. We hope to continue animating this inter-faith movement so as to strengthen our mission of dialogue and peace-making in this part of Mindanao.

Reflecting on these experiences, I cannot but thank God for giving us the privilege to become instruments of His goodness to His suffering people. The situation has become an avenue for us, despite of the reality of fear, to witness to the Love of God that goes beyond the boundaries of cultures and religions. It has given us the chance to enter into a concrete act of solidarity and dialogue with the Maranao people. For me, it is a concrete expression of the “fundamental truth” that God’s love discriminates no one and that religion or culture is not and will never become a hindrance or obstruction for us to show compassion and mercy to others!

I remember one instance, a Muslim social worker asked us if we were Christians and I said: “Yes, we are.” He then asked if we were members of the Iglesia Ni Cristo (a local Christian sect in the Philippines). I told him that we are from the Catholic Church. He appeared to be very much surprised when he knew that we were Catholics. He said that he is quite amazed that despite the fact that the Catholic Church in Marawi was destroyed and desecrated, we still wanted to be of help to the IDPs who are predominantly Muslims. In another instance, in one of the evacuation centers in Balo-i, a Muslim woman told me that she is really edified to know that we, Christians, really make an effort to be of help to them despite our differences. It is my hope and prayer that our efforts to reach out to the IDPs no matter how small they are, have allowed them to see that there is always hope even in the midst of utter pain and suffering and that moments of crisis can become an opportunity for us to come together and uphold our common humanity - our oneness as God’s people!



13. SEASON OF CREATION

Our encounters with the IDPs have also become an experience of on-going conversion and self-transformation for me. Faced with the concrete reality of pain and suffering, one can no longer think about personal comforts or convenience, recognition or expecting something in return. I can say that only those who are truly driven by the desire to respond to the suffering of the other can really have the capacity to go through the discomforts and sacrifices that it entails. In reaching out to the suffering other, one also shares in his or her pain and vulnerability. In the same manner, I have realized that living out the spirituality of dialogue, especially in the context of war, violence and disasters; necessitates self-effacement or self-emptying. It is only when we are ready to sacrifice and empty ourselves that we can really be in solidarity and enter into concrete act of dialogue with the other. In this sense, solidarity becomes a pre-requisite to dialogue. Moreover, the support and presence of the brothers in the community is very vital in such situation. One of the factors that really kept us going in all our activities and programs is the presence of each other and the support that the whole Custodial fraternity has given.

The call and challenge to respond to the needs and concerns of the Marawi IDPs still on-going. The war may have ended already but there is the greater task of rehabilitation not just in terms of structures or infrastructures but also the healing of wounds, of memories of pain and suffering, of hatred, of biases and prejudices. There is also the greater challenge of countering ideologies that promote extremism, fundamentalism, intolerance and division with the narrative of forgiveness and reconciliation, “unity amidst diversity,” harmony, compassion, peace and justice. Here we can see that the mission of dialogue and peacemaking in Mindanao particularly here in Balo-i is still very much relevant and needed. It would be truly great if more friars would willingly volunteer to work in Mindanao and hopefully continue responding to the call of becoming “flickers of hope in moments of darkness!”



Br. Elton L. Viagedor, OFM
Team JPIC – Balo-i, Philippines

12. WORK-FREE SUNDAY - CROATIA

DAYS OF SOCIAL COMMITMENT AND ESTABLISHMENT OF CROATIAN WORK-FREE SUNDAY ALLIANCE



Franciscan Institute for the Culture of Peace from Split (www.franjevaccki-institut.hr), in cooperation with many other associations, has organized, this year for the first time, the festival of social sensibility, solidarity and charity, named *Days of Social Commitment* (November 5 - 19, 2017). Most of the events of this year Festival were held in Split, and the organisers are trying to extend the initiative throughout Croatia.

Days of Social Commitment have offered different programmes: humanitarian, social, cultural and educational dealing with issues of culture of work, stigmatization of the poor, family relationships, demography, a process of forgiveness and conciliation, internet and gambling addictions.

Among other events, Split was the venue of the charity concert of spiritual music (November 11, 2017) which attracted a large audience, although the concert hall could host only 5000 persons. Famous singers and bands delighted the public which participated actively and joined the artists in singing their songs. With equal enthusiasm, the audience listened to the appropriate meditation delivered by Fr. Ante Vučković, the director of the Franciscan Institute, focused on the evangelic topic of *Little Apocalypse* from the Gospel according to Matthew, (Mt 25,31-46). All the income from tickets (180.000 HRK, i.e., 24,000 €) is delivered to the Caritas of Split Archdiocese to provide for medical treatment of children from ten poor families.

Media and social attention were particularly attracted by Initiative meeting for establishment of *Croatian Sunday Alliance* (November 15, 2017). The reasons for the establishment of the Alliance are poorly regulated labour relations in Croatia: increase of share of uncertain and temporary work models (122% while in EU 28 in the same period it recorded 14,5%), abuse of students' work, unsettled overtime work hours, irregular settlements of the salary, and particularly work on Sunday and holidays reimbursed with only symbolically increased hourly wage (ca. 0,6 €).

12. WORK-FREE SUNDAY - CROATIA

Franciscan Institute for the Culture of Peace, together with trade unions and other civil society associations, has already in 2004 launched the campaign aimed at regulating the Sunday and holiday work. The campaign has managed to obtain for the changes of the law, even twice (in 2004 and in 2009). However, these amendments have not survived the corruptive legislative environment and pressure of mighty capitalists. The need for much stronger coalition has become evident. Therefore, following the model of other national alliances in EU countries, the Initiative has been launched to establish *Croatian Work-free Sunday Alliance*.

The Initiative currently has 16 members, among them all key trade union headquarters. At the event in Split, supported by the foundation *Konrad Adenauer Stiftung*, trade union representatives and other lecturers from Croatia presented unfavourable indicators of working conditions in Croatia. Dark sides of this condition were even more clearly outlined when confronted with Austrian and German experience presented by Snježana Brajinović, Kammer für Arbeiter und Angestellte für Wien, Markus Blümel, Katholische Sozialakademie Österreichs, Andreas Luttmer-Bensmann, DE Katolische Arbeiter Bewegung.

The participants could see the same contrast in the documentary film *Sedmi dan* (Seventh Day), directed by Boris Orešić, which compares the situation in Croatia with Austria. The need, will and potential for change may be observed from the results of the survey, undertaken for the *Institute*, at the representative sample by the Agency IPSOS from Zagreb. Two-thirds of the interviewed persons confirm the negativity of the current situation and expectation for its change.

The initiative has faced unexpected media coverage. Already for two weeks, all national TV stations have kept on reporting about the Initiative and discussing this topic by themselves. Just the same as radio stations and all printed media.

The initiators of the *Croatian Sunday Alliance* are going to organise a similar event in Zagreb, February the 28th 2018, along with the passing of the formal founding articles of *Croatian Sunday Alliance* and its adhesion to the *European Sunday Alliance*.

Br. Bože Vuleta, OFM
JPIC animator – Split, Croatia

13. ANNUAL JPIC 2018 COURSE

“Migration: Causes, Walls and Franciscan Perspectives”

April 9-16, 2018
Guadalajara, Mexico.

The JPIC Office of the General Curia of the Order organizes the annual JPIC Course. The Office has held this course for the last eleven years mainly for the formation of the new JPIC animators of the Provinces and Custodies. The next year's course will be held particularly outside of Rome (the past ten courses had been already organized in collaboration with the Pontifical University *Antonianum*), because we look for integrating local contexts in it, and in a certain way, and decentralizing the process of training new animators. We expect the new venue that welcomes us could be enriching, in this case, the City of Guadalajara in Mexico.

The objective of the annual JPIC Course is to provide different perspectives of analysis on socio-environmental justice and peace to an audience, not precisely of academics, who will use the contents in the animation of the tasks entrusted to them. In 2018, we would like to deepen the theme of migration as a phenomenon that, although it has always accompanied us in history, has increased dramatically in recent years and in many regions of the world it appears as a humanitarian crisis. Therefore, we seek to illuminate the reflection from the causes of it, from the realities that allow the phenomenon to continue to develop and finally from the perspectives that we as Franciscans can approach from our spirituality, to engage and actively work.

14. INTERNATIONAL DAYS

JANUARY

January 1	World Day of Peace
January 15	World Day of Immigrants and Refugees

FEBRUARY

February 8	International Day of Prayer and Awareness Against Human Trafficking
February 20	World Day of Social Justice

MARCH

March 3	World Wildlife Day
March 8	International Women's Day
March 21	International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
March 21	International Day of Forests
March 22	World Water Day