

Verona Statement



The International Council for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation met in Verona, Italy, from 30 May to 3 June and its members greet our Franciscan brothers and sisters throughout the world

We have reflected upon the work done in JPIC since our last meeting in Jakarta in 2014 and the document prepared there. We looked also at the decisions of our last General Chapter, the encyclical of the Holy Father *Laudato Si'* and the guidelines of the General Definitory, *Moving to the Peripheries as Brothers and Lesser Ones*. We heard with pleasure the report of the fine work being done, and the struggles, of the brothers in each conference. This has caused us to propose to you some guidelines of assistance for the next two years.

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.

In the spirit of *Laudato Si'* we are called to look critically at our own personal and communal **LIFESTYLES**, to assess their impact upon others and the environment. With every passing year we see before us the consequences of fractured relationships with the earth and within our own fraternities. We must assess what we can change and embrace that change.

We set before you too the problems that **MINING** has caused throughout the world. The ores and minerals of the earth bring many gifts to us, but too often the techniques of mining, the displacement and disempowerment of people, the poisoning of soil and water, corruption and arrogance of many mining groups and the unjust sharing of the wealth of mining prompt us to question its true worth. Time and again we heard from brothers of the harm of mining and their ongoing struggle to establish justice for all in this industry. We exhort brothers and sisters to stand in solidarity with the poor and the earth to redress this imbalance.

The imbalance of an economic, social and religious crisis has also created the phenomenon of **MIGRATION**. This has always been with us but on this

scale many nations and groups have curtailed hospitality and welcome to those forced to flee their homes and families, leaving them without financial aid or shelter. This situation is likely only to increase in the years ahead as climate change drives many more from their traditional homelands. How we respond to these our sisters and brothers will be one of the great issues of the future and challenges us to stand in solidarity with the powerless pilgrims of our age.

This moment is a *kairos* to put into practice what we proclaim with Francis: a way of life that is ‘the Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ’. Today’s world and church ask us to be credible witnesses of what we have professed, to adopt lifestyles that bring us closer to the excluded, and to defend our sister Mother Earth and all creatures in an attitude of service and minority. We invite you to move to the peripheries of society with the joy of the Gospel. ‘Let us start again, brothers and sisters...’

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