

ROME, ANTONIANUM 27 FEBRUARY 2018

### "THE CHALLENGES OF JUSTICE, PEACE, AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION FOR THE ORDER OF FRIARS MINOR TODAY"

## JPIC COURSE FOR ANIMATORS REFLECTIONS OF A CONVICTED BYSTANDER

BRO. MICHAEL A. PERRY, OFM MINISTER GENERAL AND SERVANT

Prot. MG 113/2019



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LAction on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation (1971 Special Synod of Bishops, Justice in the World, par. 6). /1/

The Church's social doctrine is an integral part of her evangelizing ministry. Nothing that concerns the community of men and women — situations and problems regarding justice, freedom, development, relations between peoples, peace — is foreign to evangelization, and evangelization would be incomplete if it did not take into account the mutual demands continually made by the Gospel and by the concrete, personal and social life of man [85] ... (Compendium of the Social doctrine of the Church, 2004, par. 66).

In effect, to teach and to spread her social doctrine pertains to the Church's evangelizing mission and is an essential part of the Christian message, since this doctrine points out the direct consequences of that message in the life of society and situates daily work and struggles for justice in the context of bearing witness to Christ the Saviour". This is not a marginal interest or activity, or one that is tacked on to the Church's mission, rather it is at the very heart of the Church's ministry of service: with her social doctrine the Church "proclaims God and his mystery of salvation in Christ to every human being, and for that very reason reveals man to himself." This is a ministry that stems not only from proclamation but also from witness. (Compendium of the Social doctrine of the Church, 2004, par. 67)



My dear brothers (and sisters), may the Lord give you peace!

1. It is a great joy and honor for me to share with you today some thoughts on the challenges that friars of the Order, indeed, all Christians, face as we struggle to come to terms with the conditions of what it means to be disciples of Jesus Christ, members of the Church, of the human community, and bearers of the joy of the Gospel (Final Document, OFM General Chapter, 2015). As the 1971 Final Document of the Special Synod of Bishops entitled Justice in the World cited above makes eminently clear, discipleship in the community of Jesus and the Church necessarily implies that we embrace an integral understanding of the faith. In 1971, the Bishops proclaimed that justice is an intrinsic dimension of the faith, of evangelization.

While some in the Church have made efforts to weaken this radical declaration, a growing number of Christians, of Friars, and other members of the Franciscan movement are opening their minds and hearts to a much broader, more integral vision of the intersection – better yet, the inseparability – of faith and human development, solidarity, and justice applied to both the social and the natural realities.

2. Recent efforts by some members of the Church's hierarchy and faithful have sought to drive a wedge between caritas and justitia but these efforts have met with little satisfying success. Still, far too many Christians, including Friars and other religious, fail to recognize the Biblical and ecclesial calling to embrace a wider vision of God's dream for humanity, and of the responsibilities for promoting a world defined by the practice of justice, mercy, truth, peace, solidarity, and care for the natural world, a vision promoted by Pope Francis in the encyclical entitled Laudato Si.

#### From Credo to Orthopraxis: Living the Gospel

3. I hope that what I now share with you will encourage you to look beyond the daunting challenges of trying to convince Christian believers who struggle to understand and embrace the spiritual unity that exists between Credo – I believe – and Praxis – therefore I love. Dualism is alive and well among some friars and, indeed, some Christians. There are still too many believers who stare off into the mountains and clouds "from where comes our help and our salvation" (Ps. 121) but who find it nearly impossible to stare into the heart of the world, of humanity, and of the created cosmos where the very God who is 'our help and our salvation' is to be encountered. In a salient reflection on the difficulty for Christian believers to recognize the presence and grace of God at work within the human heart and also in the created universe, St. Augustine writes:



Men go abroad to wonder at the heights of mountains, at the huge waves of the sea, at the long courses of the rivers, at the vast compass of the ocean, at the circular motions of the stars, and they pass by themselves without wondering (cf. Confessions, Book 10).

4. And they pass by themselves without wondering! If God is present in each and every living creature; if God is present to all creation; and if God is inviting us into covenant relationship with Him and with all who and that God has created, the conclusions for our understanding and practice of the Christian life should become much clearer. But how do we gain entry into this larger vision of God's plan for all of humanity and the created universe? And once obtained, how do we share this vision with others? This, indeed will require more than the simple art of persuasion. Perhaps there is need for a radical transformation of our concept of God, of the human person, of social, economic, and political life, and of the created world. It is here where the threat of a persistent dualism must be confronted, named for what it is, and authentic believers offered a viable alternative.

# The Central Conception of God in the Hebrew Scriptures

If it is of any consolation, already in the earliest narratives of the Sacred Scriptures – the Old Testament – we discover the challenges that the people of the Covenant faced when confronted by the reality that the God they were called to follow and worship was a God who 'took sides'. It is this singular act of God embracing the chosen people, taking up their cause, and casting his lot with theirs that is transmitted through the foundational narrative of the story of Exodus.



I am the Lord. As God the Almighty I appeared to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,

But my name, Lord, I did not make known to them. I also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they were living as aliens. And now I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are treating as slaves. I am mindful of my covenant. Therefore, say to the Israelites: I am the Lord. I will free you from the forced labour of the Egyptians and will deliver you from their slavery" (Ex. 6:2-6).



6. We must keep in mind that the Exodus accounts are the product of writers/schools during the monarchic period (1050 – 587 BC: Yahwist, Elohist schools), and the time during and immediately following the Babylonian captivity (587 BC onwards: Priestly school). Even though the theological content and foci differ slightly, what emerges from all of the traditions is the idea of a God who listens, intervenes, and takes sides. God enters into the reality of human suffering and makes his home among those who are persecuted, excluded, marginalized, those held in slavery, those forced to flee home and family and country in search of peace and security, those treated as less than human.

It is this foundation narrative of suffering, solidarity, and the long walk towards freedom that serves as the permanent symbol of the identity and the engagement of a God who does not stand on the sidelines watching his beloved children and beloved creation suffer. Ours is a God who gets his hands dirty; who makes himself friend to those without friends; defender of those who are powerless and without an advocate; protector and advocate for that God has created, the entire universe, inviting all to join together in recognizing goodness, beauty, dignity, and sacredness within each and every living thing.

7. This biblical understanding of the proximity of God to all God has created is present in the writings of Pope Francis, most especially in his Apostolic Letter, Evangelii gaudium (2013, cf. par. 178ff.) and in his Encyclical, Laudato Si' (2015, par. 65,66). God has created human beings to be in active, loving partnership with God, one another, and all of the created universe. "Human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbor, and with the earth itself" (Laudato Si, par. 66). This same central truth is proclaimed by Pope Francis when he writes,

"The mission of proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ has a universal destination. Its mandate of charity (justice) encompasses all dimensions of existence, all individuals, all areas of community life, and all peoples" (Evangelii gaudium, par. 181).



8. This partnership necessarily involves the vertical (love of God) and the horizontal (love of neighbor and of the created universe). Each are distinct, requiring a different manner of seeing, acting, and judging.



At the same time, each are integrally and inseparably bound, meaning that the neglect or failure to engage with one has direct negative consequences on the other. One cannot exist or be understood without the other. This is driven home with absolute clarity in the Gospels and the Epistles attributed to the Johannine community (e.g. Matthew 22:35; Mark 12:28-34; 1 John 4:7-8).

9. The pursuit and practice of justice, peace, and the integrity of creation are the concrete loci where believers also encounter the Eternal yet immediate presence of the all-powerful and all-loving Incarnate God. God has decided in Jesus to link his future to that of humanity and the created universe. Blessed John Duns Scotus insists that Jesus' being sent into the world is not an act of remediation, making up for the sufferings that are the consequences of some 'originating' sin. Rather, God made this decision from forever to forever out of pure, unconditional love. It is where justice and caritas meet and embrace and explode into the story of life and human history. Love is at the heart of all efforts to promote justice, peace, and integrity of creation. As the Evangelist John makes clear, love provides the very definition of who God is (John 3:16), and of how we are to understand and relate to one another. Caritas is an ordering principle for all efforts to fulfill the prophecy of the Prophet Micah:

You have been told, O human beings, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you: Only to do justice, love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God (6:8).

### New Reflections by OFM following Second Vatican Council

10. For us Friars Minor (OFM), our documents began to reflect the search for an integral vision of a faith that does justice, promotes peace, and urges attention to the created universe with the revision of the General Constitutions and General Statues of the Order of Friars Minor (GGCC, hereafter) in 1987:



The friars, as followers of St. Francis, are bound to lead a radically evangelical life, namely: to live in a spirit of prayer and devotion and in fraternal fellowship; they are to offer a witness of penance and minority; and, in charity toward all [human]-kind, they are to announce the Gospel throughout the whole world and to preach reconciliation, peace and justice by their deeds; and to show respect [reverentiam] for creation. (GGCC 1.2). /2/

This text was – and is - revolutionary for its time and proposal. What emerges from the text is an integral vision of the Gospel life, proposing a vision of Franciscan life that in interconnected, that links a deeply personal experience with God (prayer), with a profound commitment to fraternity, to simplicity of life (penance and minority), and a charity oriented towards the full reconciliation of all living creatures who are to be 'reverenced' or recognized for the indwelling presence of God's Spirit. The Constitutions propose a total restructuring of the human person of the friar, entering into the same Gospel logic proposed by Jesus in the Scriptures, and by Francis of Assisi through his example, writings, and preaching.

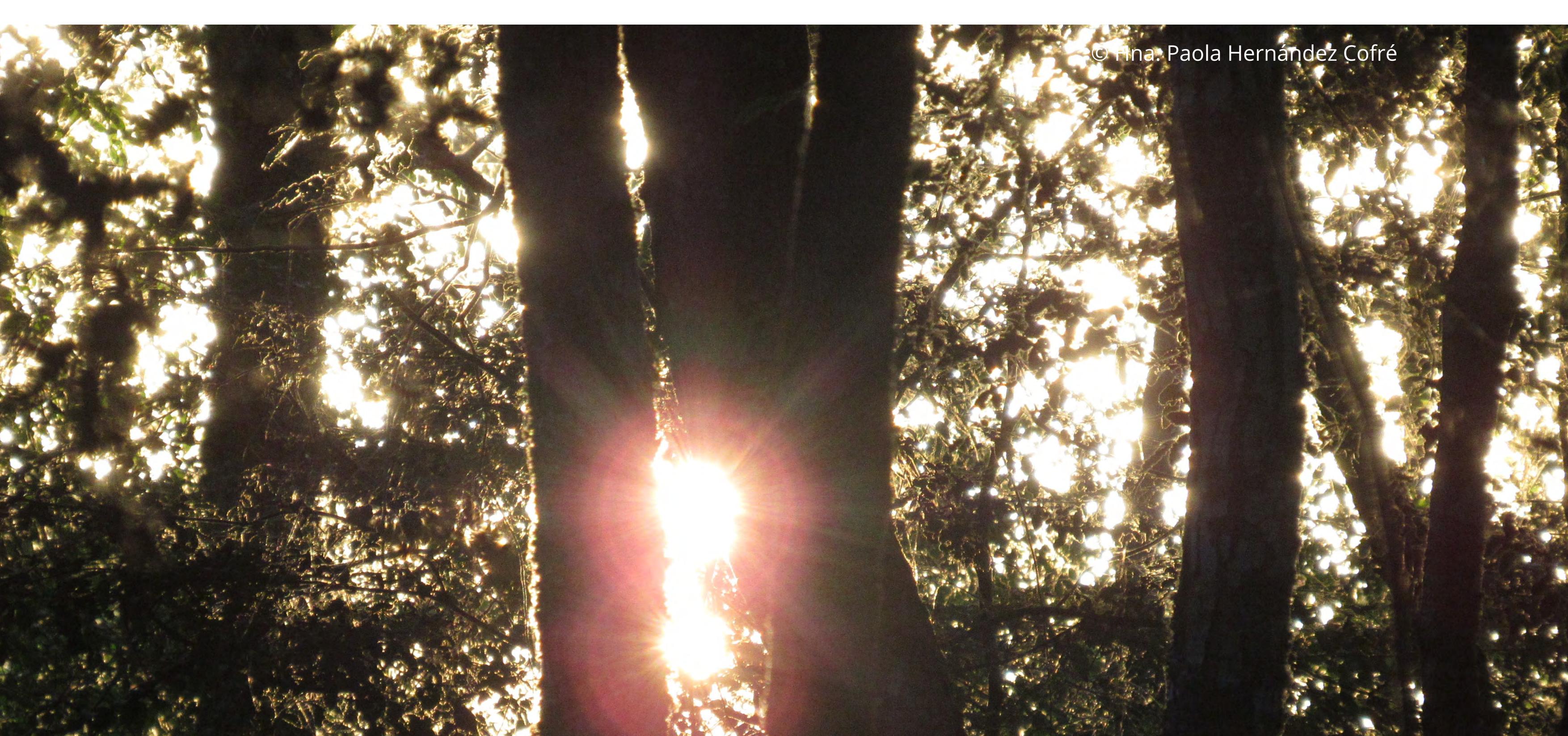
/2/ Please note the use in the Latin version: "et reverentiam erga creationem ostendere." The Latin word reverentiam conveys a much deeper meaning of how we are to engage with the created universe. This same sense of 'reverence' is most evident in St. Francis' Canticle of Creatures and in Pope Francis' Encyclical Laudato Si' (cf. par. 69 et alii).

- 11. Sometime around 2010, a new phrase was coined: JPIC was considered to be an essential (vital) element (component) of the DNA of Franciscan identity." But what does this expression mean? And what impact, if any, has its use in the documents of the Order had upon the personal and collective actions of the friars?
- 12. I will step out on limb here and try to give my own definition of what it means when we say that JPIC is an essential part of our Franciscan DNA. First, something about the nature of the molecular structure and processes involved in DNA. Deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) is type of acid present in all cellular life and in some viruses. It serves as a resource library, a coding center, providing a 'blueprint' for the construction of various components of the human cell. While DNA stores the memory of identity of each cell, it does not do all of the work in the construction phase.



Rather, it is assisted by a wide range of enzymes, which act on DNA, copying the encoding for identity, and then sharing that information with other components in cell reproduction (cf. Science Daily, https://sciencedaily.com/terms/dna.htm). Ribonucleic acid (RNA) helps complete the process of the construction of cells. Enough for our foray into the natural sciences. But in what way does the metaphor of DNA help us to recover, or discover and appropriate for the first time those absolutely essential elements of our human, Christian, and Franciscan identity?

13. When applied to the concept of a Franciscan vision of the intrinsic nature of JPIC at work in the construction of our identity, the DNA of Franciscan identity serves as an instrument for giving shape and expression to each and every thought, each and every action conducted by Franciscans everywhere in the world. When Francis of Assisi met up with those who were socially excluded, marginalized, those who were poor, the lepers, he recognized that God was present in these brothers and sisters. Conversely, when he took time apart to pray and reflect on his relationship with God, he felt also the presence of all of humanity and of creation present, especially the suffering of humanity and creation. It is for this reason that Franciscans living and working in Indonesia, South Sudan, Italy, Canada, Peru, Poland, Brazil or in any other part of the world should all be seeking to give public expression to the truth of their identity as Friars Minor and as members of the Franciscan movement/family.



The essential nature of this truth is that human beings, and, therefore, friars are created in caritas and destined to become bearers of the great message of justice, peace, and integrity of creation proclaimed by Jesus, St. Paul, and the early apostles and missionaries of the nascent Jesus movement and the early Church. There is not time when we are outside of the intersecting coding of caritas and JPIC. Caritas serves as the deeper code or blueprint; JPIC serves as enzymes that empower caritas to be set in motion and to seek to share its fundamental encoding in the construction of a life of Christian and Franciscan discipleship that reflects the authentic identity of who we are as beloved children of God called to live and share the very justice - Hesed - that is part of God's DNA. But with this proposed understanding, a second element emerges to the fore, namely the relational dimension enjoyed by God in and through Trinity, transmitted to the human person and present also throughout the entire created universe. Let us look briefly at this dimension before moving to an examination of some of the obstacles to Franciscans for living and for sharing this integral, inter-personal vision of life, faith, and mission.

14. In recent discussions with the Office for JPIC in the Curia, I was reminded of something that I also share as fundamental to our Franciscan lives: all things are personal; all are interpersonal; all are related! Each time I think about Francis' deeply intimate conversion experience, his embrace of a life of penance, prayer, fraternity, and mission, I am strengthened by the conviction that for him there is no such thing as God except a God who is relational, who truly cares, who suffers with those who suffer, who rejoices with those who rejoice. In both his Praises of God and Canticle of the Creatures Francis makes clear this deeply personal/interpersonal understanding about the nature of God, and, as a consequence, the nature of all things created by the uncreated God.



For this reason, when we look at the crucifix of San Damiano, we find a Christ who is surrounded by people, by the believing community, and by nature, which takes the form of a rooster. Wow! How Franciscan is that, the rooster who is called to "wake up the world," to borrow from words spoken by Pope Francis to the major religious superiors in Rome about who religious are to be for the world today (cf. Vatican, Union of Superiors Generals, November 29, 2013).

15. In the 'conversion' narratives of Jesus in the Gospels (cf. Mk. 1:9-15; Mt. 4:1-11; Lk 4: 1-13), most especially in Mark's account, we discover a man of deep faith who undergoes a conversion process, one that is 'accompanied' – by spiritual beings, angels, and by the wild beasts of the desert. This experience of being 'accompanied' will continue throughout the entire life and ministry of Jesus.

Jesus also is accompanied to the place of crucifixion and to his death by several different women called Mary, and most probably others who felt the pull of Jesus to join his movement, who struggled to understand the identity and mission of Jesus and the meaning of his life for theirs. Even in suffering and death, it is the relational dimension of a God who loves, who accompanies all of his creatures and his creation, offering the life of the Son, precisely in order that all peoples, all living things might be reconciled and brought into one in Christ Jesus. What we discover in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus is a vision of faith that is relational, that seeks to offer to all of humanity and creation an opportunity to return to a 'paradise refound', the return to an originating unity and harmony grounded in the very experience of the Trinity.

16. Throughout the life-long conversion process in the life of St. Francis, he is never alone: he is accompanied. In fact, it would be impossible to fully understand the process of lifelong conversion that took place in the life of St. Francis without taking into account this communal dimension. As in the life of Jesus, so too in the life of Francis, it is difficult to define with absolute precision what the moment that the process of conversion began. Thomas of Celano and other early biographers reveal elements of the early life of St. Francis prior to his 'conversion', something that Francis spoke of himself in his Testament. However, we know very little about Francis' life, and even less about his thinking prior to two intersecting events that took place after his year-long imprisonment in Perugia. I am speaking about Francis' encounter with the living Lord Jesus in a wooden object in a dilapidated chapel, and his encounter with the living Lord Jesus in the person of a member of the leper community outside of Assisi.

17. Thus, we see in the life of Francis an intersection of the 'spiritual' with that of the 'social': crucifix and leprosy - the spiritual and the social - become two powerful elements in Francis' conversion and will continue to play a determinative role throughout his entire life. His meeting with the person of the crucified Christ on the crucifix – the fullest expression of caritas – is more fully understood when placed before the event of Francis' coming to terms with the flesh-rotting, puss-emitting wounds of the leper. Francis progressively discovers the full meaning of caritas, which can only truly be understood when placed within the context of a profound experience of encounter that generated within the mind and heart of Francis a new vision of God, of the dignity of the human person and of the created universe. This dual experience of the crucified life of Jesus and that of the leper will be repeated in Francis' life through other forms of encounter: with poor and excluded brothers and sisters he meets 'on the road' (minores); with those who held political, economic, religious and social power (maiores); with the Muslim military commander in Damietta, Al-Malik al-Kamal; with the created universe revealed in Francis' Canticle of the Creatures. Thus, Francis catches sight of the 'blueprint', the divine DNA present in all things, and, through the practice of a life of justice, righteousness, the full power of caritas et justitia is released

18. Pope Francis, commenting on the vision that guided the life of the Saint of Assisi as described by St. Bonaventure, writes:



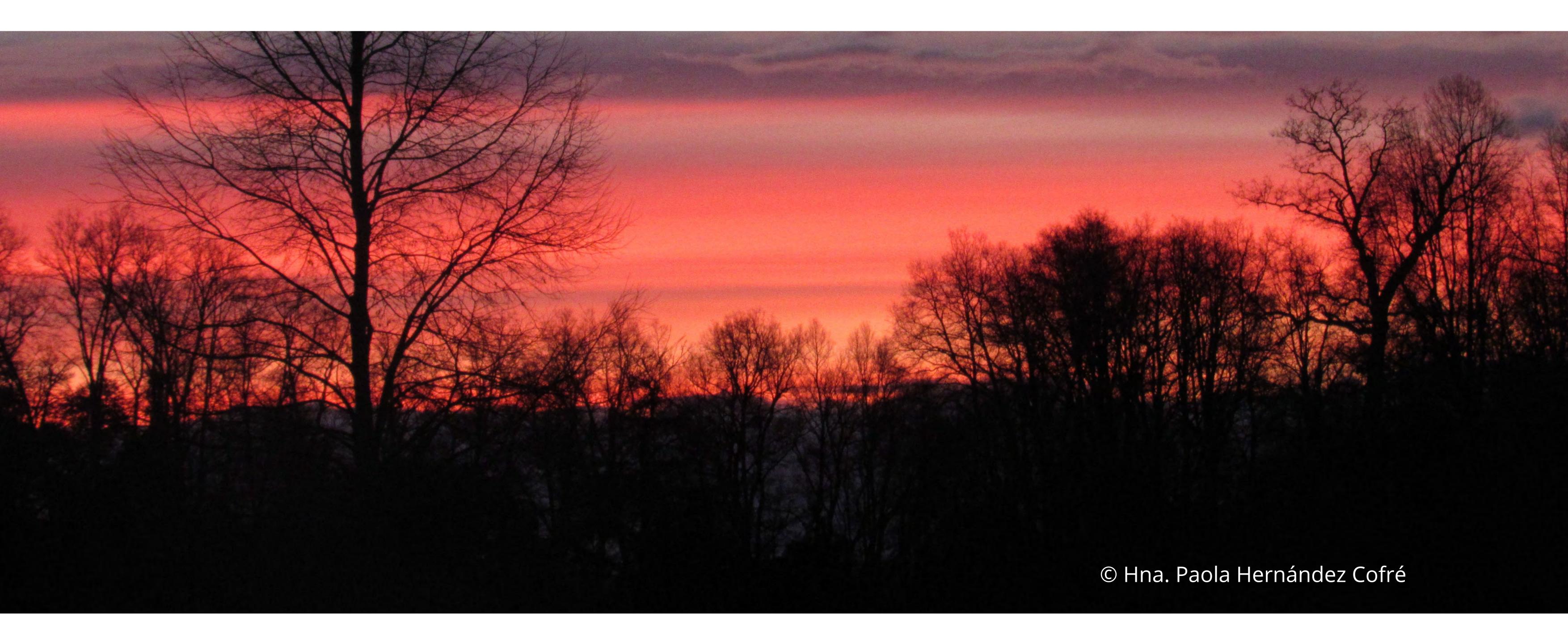
It is significant that the harmony, which Saint Francis of Assisi experienced with all creatures was seen as a healing of [the] rupture [i.e. of the originally harmonious relationship between human beings and nature]. Saint Bonaventure held that, through universal reconciliation with every creature, Saint Francis in some way returned to the state of original innocence (Laudato Si, par. 66).

# Lord, Help our Unbelief!

19. One of the major challenges confronting the friars of the Order, and for that matter the entire Church, is that we do not always believe and/or model for ourselves and those around us the potential power contained in the expression 'JPIC forms part of our Franciscan DNA'. For a certain number of friars still today, the vision of God, spirituality, Church is grounded in Manichean dualism: the separation of the 'sacred' from the 'profane'. In this view, the world is perceived as a fallen, depraved, evil place that must be saved by a secret intelligence or knowledge coming from outside. If salvation comes only from outside of human history, there is little or no need to engage in the circumstances of life; these are to be avoided, or, more specifically, to be endured until the time when God pulls those who are enlightened out of this endless cycle of darkness and meaninglessness.



Those who espouse this understanding of God and of human history and the natural environment will give little or no attention to anything that speaks of the pursuit of a life that promotes and defends justice, human rights, and the defense of the planet. In such cases, missionary evangelization, the pastoral care of God's people, takes on an exclusively 'sacramental' expression, as if the dispensing of the sacraments of the Church was the only or true manner for Franciscans, and for all members of the Church for that matter, to enter into authentic relationship with God, and experience authentic spiritual freedom.



20. Friars who operate out of a spirituality devoid of concern for and engagement in matter relates to justice, peace, solidarity, reconciliation, and integrity of creation find it very difficult understand and embrace the vision of Church and of Order proposed in the Final Documents of the Second Vatican Council and the documents of the Order of Friars Minor following the same Council. By extension, the entire history of the Church's social teaching is see as having little or no relevance. For all of these reasons, it becomes clear why it is so difficult for some (many) Christians believers, friars included, to welcome a more integrated vision of Christian discipleship that is found in the Church's well-developed social thought, and also in the teaching of Pope Francis.

One place where Pope Francis develops an integrated vision of the unity of caritas and justitia in his his Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii gaudium. Francis does nothing other than to re-propose in contemporary language the principle insights of Lumen Gentium, Gaudium et Spes, Ad Gentes, Justice in the World, Redemptoris Missio, and other documents on the identity of Christian disciples and the Church in the context of the contemporary world. In his Encyclical Laudato Si', Pope Francis has expanded these reflections to include a more integrated ecological vision of God and all of life. This qualitative addition builds on the thought and action of Saint John Paul II and the former Bishop of Rome, Benedict XVI both of whom sought to translate word in to action. One clear example of this can be seen in the efforts of John Paul II and Benedict XVI to make the Vatican City a 'green' zone. They reveal to us what might take place when faithinformed action, guided by justice, the justice of caring for a wounded - some would even say a dying - planet, working together with the best of technology in joint partnership.. /3/

# Some very specific, practical challenges facing the Friars and the Order

21. Let us turn our attention to some very specific, practical challenges that confront the Order of Friars Minor in attempting to understand and integrate the transverse values of JPIC into daily spiritual, fraternal, and missionary/pastoral life. The following are not meant to be exhaustive but rather illustrative.

- I. Lack of belief in integral understanding of God, Church, world/human community, the natural environment/ecology, and the radical demands of the Gospel life proposed by St. Francis and communicated in and through the Order's vision of itself (GGCC, other documents).
- II. Lack of commitment on the part of Ministers and friars in the Order to the transverse, integrating values of JPIC, and failure to take seriously this central aspect in the life of the Friars Minor and the life of the entity.
- III. Lack of discernment in selection of JPIC animators, thus reflecting the lack of importance given by leadership to this intrinsic (DNA) dimension of our Franciscan life and mission.
- IV. Lack of a credible witness on the part of some JPIC directors or other friars engaged on issues of relevance to JPIC.
- V. Lack of proper, adequate preparation of those entrusted with the task of serving as Animators for JPIC in their respective entities. The 2009 Guidelines for the Animation of Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation should be considered an essential part of formation for all friars of the Order but especially for all animators.
- VI. Need for all those engaged in JPIC animation to open themselves to ongoing human, Christian, and Franciscan formation, in light of the transverse values of JPIC.
- VII. Need for formation for interpersonal communications as a means for entering into the world of other friars (other people), and to engage all friars in common actions reflecting the core values of our Gospel life.

VIII. Learn new tools for JPIC animation, including formation in strategic planning and evaluation.

IX. Acquire tools necessary for conducting faith-inspired, informed critical social analysis, employing such tools as the Pastoral Circle, SWOT analyses, etc.

X. Work with other faith-based actors, organizations, and members of civil society, bringing together best practices and the strength of a values-based collaboration.



XI. Learn how to serve as bridges between friars and people who are suffering, who are excluded, marginalized, helping to reveal the humanness and dignity of those who experience suffering in all of its diverse forms, an dthe suffering of the planet.

XII. Learn the way of the Prophet Micah: Only to do right (practice righteousness), love goodness, and walk humbly with your God (6:8). Humility, minority, simplicity: three convincing tools for helping friars and all members of the Body of Christ to come to understand the inseparable link between "love of God" and "love of all who and what God has created." Here we find what I would call the Franciscan double-helix of our DNA: caritas and justice.

#### Several 'Structural' Limitations

22. The aforementioned twelve challenges to discovering and embracing an integrated and integrating spirituality of love and justice continue to negatively affect how we live together as brothers within the Order, within our respective Provinces, Custodies, Foundations, and local fraternities. These challenges or obstacles present also at the macro or structural level. Too much of the life and engagement of a Friar Minor is driven by an ethics of work, of activism. A work-oriented or activist approach to mission leaves little room for the development of what I would call a values-based approach. In the former, the specifically 'sacramental' form of mission and ministry comes to dominate all reflection and action.

Work oriented approaches tend to simply repeat 'what has always been' without questioning whether our understanding of and engagement in a specific project or pastoral work is an expression of our integral identity as children of God, disciples of the risen Lord Jesus, and also whether these are capable of responding to changing needs, changing understandings, to a world, a Church, and an Order that are no longer the same as they were 20, 40, or more years ago. Clearly, as human history moves forward, as the horizon of technology, artificial intelligence, the manipulation of the fundamentals of human and species biology assume an even greater role in shaping human identity and social exchange, I believe it becomes even more important that we Friars Minor embrace a more holistic, integrated vision of spirituality and ethically responsible action.



23. In preparation for the 2015 General Chapter, it was proposed that the delegates consider 'raising' the Office of Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation to the status of a General Secretariat. This was roundly defeated. I remain still today with the same question that I had in 2015: "Why do we not see that JPIC has a similar dignity as that of Missions and Evangelization, and Formation and Studies, and offers to the brothers an essential tool for learning how to integrate all aspects of our lives as disciples of Jesus and as responsible citizens.?" Perhaps this issue needs to be raised once again at the General Chapter in 2021.

24. The one central feature of JPIC in the Order is its capacity to serve as the 'enzyme', carrying the 'blueprint' of God's design for how human beings are to conduct their lives within the ecological space in which we find ourselves. Having said this, members of the Order, especially those entrusted with the mission and ministry of promoting an integral vision of caritas and justice – an integral ecological vision – have not always understood the potential role of 'convening', of bringing together different actors from different 'areas' of the life of the Order (SGME, SGFS, General Treasurer, General Definitory), and providing them with opportunities to work in an interdisciplinary or collaborative manner.

25. Nor have those who are entrusted with responsibilities in the other 'areas' of life (GSME, GSFS, etc.) always demonstrated an openness to collaboration, a willingness to learn and integrate the social doctrine of the Church into their lives and work. Above all, those engaged in JPIC animation must realize that they are called now more than ever to be 'credible, attractive witnesses' "of a different way of doing things, of acting, of living!" (cf. Pope Francis, 29 November 2013, Vatican, Meeting with Union of Major Superiors). It is, perhaps, more by attraction than by anything else that we will be able to 'Wake up the Order!"

### Moving towards the Future as Witnesses to a New Way of Doing, Acting, Living

26. My brothers, in closing I call your attention to the final document of the Plenary Council of the Order (PCO), Those Who Have Ears, Let Them Listen to What the Spirit is Saying...to the Friars Minor Today (Rome, 2018). In this short document, we are invited to participate in an ongoing process of listening, discerning, and devising a strategic plan for acting and evaluating our lives and vocation as Friars Minor in the world today. What is essential for all of us Friars Minor is to come to a renewed understanding of what it means to live fully the vocation into which we have been called as beloved children, members of the Body of Christ (the Church), brothers to all peoples and all of creation, radical disciples empowered by the life example of Christ and our founder Francis of Assisi. By examining their lives, and modeling our lives on theirs, we are offered the opportunity to catch sight of an integral vision of life, an ecological spirituality that enables us to participates in a more profound way in the reconciling act of Jesus who seeks to bring all things together in justice, truth, love, and peace. This same 'ultimate goal' of Incarnation, God's affirmation of all that God has created ("And God looked at what God had created and saw that it was good!").

27. This same goal and ultimate act of affirmation is reaffirmed in the Church's 1971 document Justice in the World where we read:



By his action and teaching Christ united in an indivisible way the relationship of people to God and the relationship of people to each other. Christ lived his life in the world as a total giving of himself to God for the salvation and liberation of people. In his preaching he proclaimed the fatherhood of God towards all people and the intervention of God's justice on behalf of the needy and the oppressed (Lk 6: 21-23). In this way he identified himself with his "least ones," as he stated: "As you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me" (Mt 25:40) (Justice in the World, 1971, par 31).

28. My brothers, this is God's dream, God's prophetic vision for the future of the world. This is the dream we are called to embrace and to live, seeking first the Kingdom of God, God's righteousness, and allowing God's dream to become ours!

