

Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation

*I cannot do all the good that the world needs,
but the world needs all the good I can do.*

Advent 2019

Advent greetings!

Advent is a time of many things - watching, waiting, reflection, preparation. A time of turning again to look at who we are as Franciscans in the world. This report, prepared for Chapter 2019, is offered as such a reflection.

Justice, Peace, Integrity of Creation

This year there has been only 1 newsletter sent out – that was in response to the Christchurch massacre. My thanks to Margaret Bedggood and Rose Christie-French for helping me sort the content for that.

It is hard to know how to engage with our Order about JPIC and yet justice, peace and care of creation are integral to our Principles. I had planned to write a report this year about what is happening around the Areas, as I know through word of mouth that much has been going on. However, apart from a couple of Areas, I have had no response to requests for articles for a Newsletter or a report for Chapter.

I have been giving much thought to this. Is it the words which put people off? Do people totally understand what is meant by Justice? By Peace? By Integrity of Creation?

It often feels as though JPIC is a 'tack on' to what we do / who we are. For me, the heart of the Gospel is JPIC or social justice – this is what we are called to do / who we are called to be.

There is a wonderful quote from Rowan Williams which I think is a really helpful way to think about this - "it's not the Church of God that has a mission, but the God of mission who has a Church". In other words, JPIC (mission) should not be a separate task for a separate group, or a minority interest for a peculiar few, but should instead inform every aspect of Franciscan life. There should be no division between Franciscan life and JPIC. JPIC belongs at the heart of who we are - it is central to our very being.

It's easy to see JPIC as something that happens elsewhere - perhaps that is a reason for it being seen as a 'task' for a committee to be responsible for. I firmly believe that 'home mission/JPIC' is as vital as 'world mission/JPIC', if not more so. They enhance each other.

The language we use to think about JPIC is important in shaping how we feel about it. We often think of JPIC as something that is done *to* or *for* others. I think it is more helpful to think of it being done in partnership, *with* others on a basis of equal status - where we can both give and receive. Thinking this way would likely change *how* we respond.

Our priority is to live out God's Kingdom values - Jesus' first words in his public ministry as recorded by Luke: (4:18-19)

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.

This is the Kingdom of God!

I was reading an article about mission in relation to the church recently which suggested "start with the Church and the mission will probably get lost. Start with the mission and it is likely that the Church will be found." I found myself thinking that actually this is a very Franciscan way of living - a different way to think about how we live - a real challenge but a very exciting one.

To help us think about what we actually mean when we talk about Justice, Peace, Integrity of Creation I asked three in our Order - Margaret Bedggood, Anne Moody and Art Daniel – to write a short article clarifying what these terms might mean for members of TSSF, Province of the Pacific.

I'd be really interested in your thoughts.

Pip Colgan

October 2019

Justice

The call to **justice** is part of the threefold JPIC requirement which encapsulates the Franciscan mission. These are not optional extras but a life-changing lens on our call to action in the world, part of our DNA as Franciscans (as stated clearly in the TSSF Principles 7 to 9).

But what do we mean by justice? Surely, in this context, something beyond the aspiration of a legal system? For what we are talking about here is God's justice, an aspect of who and how God is.

There are many clues in the Old Testament (eg Psalm 72). Perhaps the best known is the prophet Micah 6:8 "*What does God require of you but to do justice and to love mercy/kindness and to walk humbly with your God.*" It is often related to our treatment of 'others' individually or collectively, especially the marginalised, and has something – or everything – to do with relationships, with **the establishment or restoration of right relationship** in all sorts of contexts.

This is spelled out more clearly in the New Testament: in the second commandment to love one's neighbour as oneself as part of loving God entirely and in the call to 'repentance', to turn again and see. And in many of the parables: the return of the prodigal son and the good Samaritan, for example, are both about restoring right relationship. But God's justice and these relationships are tempered also by other considerations (see the combination with 'mercy/kindness' in Micah, as so often):

for example in the story of the labourers who are signed on at different times for the same wages or the different positions and treatment of the two brothers by their father in the story of the prodigal son's return.

All this is echoed by Francis, whose devotion to Christ is reflected in his recognition of utter human equality before God. His embrace of the leper, the embodiment of the most marginalised, his entering into dialogue with the Sultan, his perceived enemy, are both again concerned with the (re)-establishment of a right relationship. This is linked too with the need to oppose oppression, to give voice to the voiceless, to stand with others in true empathy – and with Francis' opting for material poverty.

What then might the call to "do justice" entail for Tertiaries, collectively and individually in the context of Aotearoa New Zealand and our three tikanga church? In our society we can affirm the recommendations of current working groups and NGOs speaking out for the homeless, the poor, beneficiaries, for tax reform, for social justice not charity. We can advocate for the strengthening of bicultural partnership and Treaty observance and penal reform, all as aspects of restoring right relationships in our society. We can seek speaking rights in our various diocesan synods and hold our church to account. In the international context, we can help lobby for changes in refugee policy, in trade and finance and development. In the Church we should try to represent all these values and actions as the Gospel way – as "applied Christianity", as Michael Joseph Savage held.

The chorus for Colin Gibson's hymn with its OT echoes provides a nice summary (the verses are pretty helpful as a check-list too!):

Let justice roll down like a river,
Let justice roll down like the sea,
Let justice roll down like a river,
Let justice begin through me.

Margaret Bedggood

Peace



Peace - what does this mean for us as Franciscans? I have started this with a picture from *In God's Name* by Sandy Eidenberg Sasso. The words under it are "The tired soldier who fought too many wars called God *Maker of Peace*". This picture has many metaphors in it - the tree of life, the poppy, the lion sitting peacefully with the soldier and a dove with the olive branch.

Spinoza said: Peace is not the absence of war, it is virtue, a state of mind; a disposition of benevolence; confidence and justice.

Jimi Hendrix said: when the power of love overcomes the love of power the world will know peace.

So how do we, as Franciscans, understand what peace means - It is more than the absence of war, it is the absence of disturbance, of oppression, of bullying. It is the acceptance of difference and of the other. It is a state of tranquillity, of connectedness, of wholeness.

Jesus tells us that: "peace I leave to you, my peace I give to you. *Jn 14: 27a*

Paul tells us the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace ... *Gal 5:22*

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. *Php 4:7*

So how do we make peace a part of our lives - it does start with us in our own lives.

Francis said, "While you are proclaiming peace with your lips, be careful to have it even more fully in your heart."

The story of Francis' visit to the Sultan 800 years ago, in the midst of a truce so both sides could bury their dead, is an amazing one - look it up if you do not know it. Like Francis, we need to look for opportunities to foster positive inter-faith relationships

Our history in the Province of the Pacific, have many stories, both here in Aotearoa/NZ and Melanesia of making peace. The story of Ngakuku and his daughter, Tarore's death, and his subsequent not wanting utu - revenge for her death. The story of Parihaka teaches us so much, but how many NZers know it. It is the story of passive resistance of Maori from different tribes coming together to greet the troops with aroha and food, to say we do not want war, but want and need our land. It is a story about the abuse of power and a people, about reconciliation for individuals and for us as a country. As our mentor relayed to us the story of Parihaka and how it had been lived out in her life, each of us had a different understanding of the trauma it had caused individually and collectively. It also reminded us that healing and therefore peace often starts with the individual and so to the community.

So how can we follow Francis' words and not only speak peace, but also know it in our hearts. There are so many ways - we can learn about our history - look up the book on Anglican website called *For All the Saints* and you will find lots of stories of struggle right here in Aotearoa/NZ; recognising the presence of God in our lives - practising the presence of God to gain that sense of connectedness and peace. We can sign petitions, such

as this one I signed on gun control - info@guncontrol.nz. We can either, on our own or with others write a submission on matters relating to peace - think about one thing you can do for peace in the next while.

I finish with this blessing -

The peace of the earth be with you,
the peace of the heavens too;
the peace of the rivers be with you,
the peace of the oceans too.

Deep peace falling over you;
God's peace growing in you.

Anne Moody

Integrity of Creation

Jesus taught that if we would "first seek God's Reign (Matthew 6:33) and obey his command to "love God and love one another" (Matthew 22:37-40), all the rest would take care of itself. We would no longer defy the laws of nature but seek to live in harmony and sustainability with Earth and her creatures. We would respect the integrity of creation.

St Francis spent many days, weeks, and even months walking the roads of Umbria and letting nature teach him. Francis knew and respected creation, calling animals, sun and moon, and even the weather and the elements his brothers and sisters. Through extended time in nature, Francis became intimately connected with non-human living things and came to recognise that the natural world was also imbued with soul.

Hildegard of Bingen (1098 – 1179) spoke often of *viriditas*, the greening of things from within, like photosynthesis. She saw

that there was a readiness in plants to receive the sun and transform it into energy and life. She recognised that there is also an inherent connection between the physical world and the divine Presence. This connection translates into inner energy that is the soul and seed of everything, an inner voice calling you to "Become who you are; become all that you are." That is our 'life wish' or "whole-making instinct."

We Franciscans, like Hildegard, like the early Celtic Christians, and in like manner to many indigenous people's world views, believe that the Christ story is the universe story. The birth of the divine-human child is a revelation, a lifting of the veil to show us that all life has been conceived by the Spirit in the womb of the universe, that we are all divine-human creatures, that everything that has being in the universe carries within itself the sacredness of Spirit. When we see this reality is true for ourselves, we will see it is true for all of creation and through the grace of God will naturally live in a way that honours and protects the integrity of our earthly home.

Help me to grow in consciousness which embraces the vastness of interstellar space and the minuteness of a drop of water or a snowflake and to realise it is my joy and responsibility to meet you at the centre of this beautiful world you have created, moving beyond self-interest to a new set of values to protect the environment that all may share in peace and justice. - Brother Colin Wilfred SSF

Art Daniel

