

Justice Peace and the Integrity of Creation

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JPIC Session 1

Objectives:

- *Introduction to Catholic Social Teaching
- *Define in terms of the entire Rule
- *Two-fold approach
- *Familiarity with JPIC mission & vision
- *Mission and Goals of JPIC

Prologue

This chapter is intended to be an introduction to Catholic Social Teaching and Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation as reflected in the Secular Franciscan Order. The body of writing on the subject of the Social Teaching is enormous and covers a breadth of topics relating to human dignity and our relationship to others and God. This chapter is not meant to be exhaustive of the subject. It is the hope that you will explore areas further as your faith and vocation mature. At the end of the Chapter are resources to assist you. If, on the other hand, you are well familiar with Catholic Social Teaching, please view this as a refresher and make the necessary connections with the Franciscan vocation. Again, the list of resources may be helpful to encourage you to delve deeper.

Introduction

Throughout the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order Gospel living and Catholic Social Teaching (CST) go hand in hand. Thus the SFO has a special team to enhance our understanding of CST with regard to our Way of Life. It is called Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation, also known as JPIC. We turn to a vast body of written work from the Church as an overview of Catholic Social Teaching. It must be noted at the outset of this chapter that the *entire* Part Three of the Catechism of the Catholic Church explains SCT. It is highly recommended that you spend time reading this. Perhaps using this during Lent would allow a structured time for reflection.

Catholic Social Teaching may be found in the papal, conciliar, and other official documents of the Church. Since the late 19th century to the present day, this body of work gives definition and meaning to the Christian life through the Church. Catholic Social Teaching has as its cornerstone upholding human dignity in all

circumstances and for every person. The World Synod of Catholic Bishops published Justice in the World in 1971. From this document we read: “49. Christians' specific contribution to justice is the day-to-day life of individual believers acting like the leaven of the Gospel in their family, their school, their work and their social and civic life. Included with this are the perspectives and meaning which the faithful can give to human effort.”

The document goes on to say : “56. The basic principles whereby the influence of the Gospel has made itself felt in contemporary social life are to be found in the body of teaching set out in a gradual and timely way from the encyclical Rerum Novarum.... As never before, the Church has, through the Second Vatican Council's constitution Gaudium et Spes, better understood the situation in the modern world, in which Christians work out their salvation by deeds of justice. Pacem in Terris gave us an authentic charter of human rights. In Mater et Magistra international justice begins to take first place; it finds more elaborate expression in Populorum Progressio, in the form of a true and suitable treatise on the right to development, and in Octogesima Adveniens is found a summary of guidelines for political action”

In more recent times Centesimus Annus gives further depth to the dignity of the human person and calls for a courageous effort to intensify our efforts for social justice by synthesizing the essence of all previous documents on CST. This creates a heightened focus and enumerates further challenges for the Church in its new evangelization. Most recent in our own time is Caritas in Veritate by Pope Benedict XVI “In Christ, *charity in truth* becomes the Face of his Person, a vocation for us to love our brothers and sisters in the truth of his plan.” This encyclical is a reflection of Populorum Progressio of Pope Paul VI, 1967, in light of the signs of the times.

It is important to review the mission of the Church. As Secular Franciscans by our Profession we pledge ourselves to “work intently to build the ecclesial community and fulfill its mission among all people.” (Rite of Profession) Once again we turn to Justice in the World for a brief review.

The Gospel Message and the Mission of the Church (quotes are from: Justice in the World, World Synod of catholic Bishops, 1971)

“29. In the face of the present-day situation of the world, marked as it is by the grave sin of injustice, we recognize both our responsibility and our inability to overcome it by our own strength. Such a situation urges us to listen with a humble and open heart to the word of God, as he shows us new paths towards action in the cause of justice in the world.

30. In the Old Testament God reveals himself to us as the liberator of the oppressed and the defender of the poor, demanding from people faith in him and justice towards one's neighbor. It is only in the observance of the duties of justice that God is truly recognized as the liberator of the oppressed.

31. 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).

32. From the beginning the Church has lived and understood the Death and Resurrection of Christ as a call by God to conversion in the faith of Christ and in love of one another, perfected in mutual help even to the point of a voluntary sharing of material goods.

33. Faith in Christ, the Son of God and the Redeemer, and love of neighbor constitute a fundamental theme of the writers of the New Testament. According to St. Paul, the whole of the Christian life is summed up in faith effecting that love and service of neighbor which involve the fulfillment of the demands of justice. The Christian lives under the interior law of liberty, which is a permanent call to us to turn away from self-sufficiency to confidence in God and from concern for self to a sincere love of neighbor. Thus takes place his genuine liberation and the gift of himself for the freedom of others.

34. According to the Christian message, therefore, our relationship to our neighbor is bound up with our relationship to God; our response to the love of God, saving us through Christ, is shown to be effective in his love and service of people. Christian love of neighbor and justice cannot be separated. For love implies an absolute demand for justice, namely recognition of the dignity and rights of one's neighbor. Justice attains its inner fullness only in love. Because every person is truly a visible image of the invisible God and a sibling of Christ, the Christian finds in every person God himself and God's absolute demand for justice and love.

35. The present situation of the world, seen in the light of faith, calls us back to the very essence of the Christian message, creating in us a deep awareness of its true meaning and of its urgent demands. The mission of preaching the Gospel dictates at the present time that we should dedicate ourselves to the liberation of people even in their present existence in this world. For unless the Christian message of love and justice shows its effectiveness through action in the cause of justice in the world, it will only with difficulty gain credibility with the people of our times.

36. The Church has received from Christ the mission of preaching the Gospel message, which contains a call to people to turn away from sin to the love of the Father, universal kinship and a consequent demand for justice in the world. This is the reason why the Church has the right, indeed the duty, to proclaim justice on the social, national and international level, and to denounce instances of injustice, when the fundamental rights of people and their very salvation demand it. The Church,

indeed, is not alone responsible for justice in the world; however, she has a proper and specific responsibility which is identified with her mission of giving witness before the world of the need for love and justice contained in the Gospel message, a witness to be carried out in Church institutions themselves and in the lives of Christians.

37. Of itself it does not belong to the Church, insofar as she is a religious and hierarchical community, to offer concrete solutions in the social, economic and political spheres for justice in the world. Her mission involves defending and promoting the dignity and fundamental rights of the human person.

38. The members of the Church, as members of society, have the same right and duty to promote the common good as do other citizens. Christians ought to fulfill their temporal obligations with fidelity and competence. They should act as a leaven in the world, in their family, professional, social, cultural and political life. They must accept their responsibilities in this entire area under the influence of the Gospel and the teaching of the Church. In this way they testify to the power of the Holy Spirit through their action in the service of people in those things which are decisive for the existence and the future of humanity. While in such activities they generally act on their own initiative without involving the responsibility of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, in a sense they do involve the responsibility of the Church whose members they are.”

We note from the above paragraphs many of the same words and phrases used in the SFO Rule and General Constitution. Beginning with our own daily conversions, the penitential life revealed in our Franciscan tradition, truly is the basis of our gospel living and evangelization of the good news. To direct the faithful further, the US Conference of Catholic Bishops has defined seven themes of social teaching. In so doing they assist us with the knowledge that every area of life is in need of God’s grace and Christification.

From the seven themes certain areas are in closer focus. The three pillars (as they are known) are Human Dignity, Common Good, and Subsidiarity and Solidarity. Sometimes these are stated as Human Dignity supported by the Common Good, Subsidiarity and Solidarity. Regardless of how it is written the meaning and intention are the same.

Seven themes of the social teachings: From USCCB

1. Life and dignity of the human person

“At the center of all Catholic social teaching are the transcendence of God and the dignity of the human person. The human person is the clearest reflection of God's presence in the world; all of the Church's work in pursuit of both justice and peace is designed to protect and promote the dignity of every person. For each person not only reflects God, but is the expression of God's creative work and the meaning of Christ's redemptive ministry.” - The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response U.S. Bishops, 1983

“Being made in the image and likeness of God the human individual possesses the dignity of the person, who is not just something, but someone. He is capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession, and of freely giving himself and entering into communion with other persons. And he is called by grace to a covenant with his creator, to offer him a response of faith and love that no other creature can give in his stead.” (CCC#357)

2. Call to family, community, and participation

“It is imperative that no one, out of indifference to the course of events or because of inertia, would indulge in a merely individualistic morality. The best way to fulfill one's obligations of justice and love is to contribute to the common good according to one's means and the needs of others, and also to promote and help public and private organizations devoted to bettering the conditions of life.” - Gaudium et Spes: Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World Second Vatican Council, 1965

The human person is both sacred and social. Everything in our organization of society affects human dignity. Marriage and family is the core of society and require support and strengthening in all circumstances. With rights and duties to participate in society, all people together seek the common good. We are especially aware that the poor and vulnerable must be included in this participation.

3. Rights and responsibilities

It is agreed that in our time the common good is chiefly guaranteed when personal rights and duties are maintained. The chief concern of civil authorities must therefore be to ensure that these rights are acknowledged, respected, coordinated with other rights, defended and promoted,

so that in this way everyone may more easily carry out their duties. For 'to safeguard the inviolable rights of the human person, and to facilitate the fulfillment of each one's duties, should be the chief duty of every public authority.'" - *Pacem in Terris: Peace on Earth John XXIII, 1963*

Everyone has the right to food, shelter, work, medical care, religious freedom, etc. These are rights given by God because of our dignity as human beings. Along with rights, we are responsible for committing our efforts to ensure the rights of others are maintained. It is not enough to feel sorry for others, we are obliged to decrease what we have and give to others.

4. Option for the poor and vulnerable

As followers of Christ, we are challenged to make a fundamental 'option for the poor' – to speak for the voiceless, to defend the defenseless, to assess life styles, policies, and social institutions in terms of their impact on the poor. This 'option for the poor' does not mean pitting one group against another, but rather, strengthening the whole community by assisting those who are the most vulnerable. As Christians, we are called to respond to the needs of all our brothers and sisters, but those with the greatest needs require the greatest response." - *Economic Justice for All: Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy U. S. Catholic Bishops, 1986*

It is a basic moral test: how are the most vulnerable managing. Scripture tells us we must put the needs of the vulnerable and poor before our own.... and not just when it is convenient.

5. Dignity and rights of workers

Society as a whole, acting through public and private institutions, has the moral responsibility to enhance human dignity and protect human rights. In addition to the clear responsibility of private institutions, government has an essential responsibility in this area. This does not mean that government has the primary or exclusive role, but it does have a positive moral responsibility in safeguarding human rights and ensuring that the minimum conditions of human dignity are met for all. In a democracy, government is a means by which we can act together to protect what is important to us and to promote our common values." *Economic Justice for All: Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy U. S. Catholic Bishops, 1986*

Work is a way of participating in the creation, redemption, and service of the human community, not only a means of making a living. The work place must be a place where dignity is maintained and respected. Workers rights also must be upheld.

These include (but not limited to) the right to a fair and just wage, humane conditions, ability to organize and join unions.

6. Solidarity

The solidarity which binds all men together as members of a common family makes it impossible for wealthy nations to look with indifference upon the hunger, misery and poverty of other nations whose citizens are unable to enjoy even elementary human rights. The nations of the world are becoming more and more dependent on one another and it will not be possible to preserve a lasting peace so long as glaring economic and social imbalances persist.” - Mater et Magistra Mother and Teacher Pope John XXIII, 1961

Each person is interdependent with all of humanity, collectively and individually we firmly commit ourselves to the common good. Solidarity comes forth from faith and is essential to the Christian view of social and political organizations. Pursuing justice and peace is the heart of solidarity.

7. Care for God's creation

True stewardship requires changes in human actions - both in moral behavior and technical advancement. Our religious tradition has always urged restraint and moderation in the use of material goods, so we must not allow our desire to possess more material things to overtake our concern for the basic needs of people and the environment.” - Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2001

Our care for creation is stewardship. All creation belongs to God. We are called to protect and use it in a manner that will last for all generations. Everyone has the right to clean water and air and to have places set aside to enjoy beauty of nature. There are ethical and moral dimensions to stewardship.

We are obliged to be knowledgeable of the breadth of these teachings. No one theme stands alone, each is interdependent with the others. Thus, the Church calls all people to build a just society while living holy lives amidst the challenges of today's world. Each of us is given a unique call to evangelization derived from our particular gifts, prayer life, personality, and life circumstance. Each of us must work “together with all people of good will ...to build a more fraternal and evangelical world so that the kingdom of God may be brought about more effectively.” (Rule, Art 14) Unless we work in concert with one another knowing that it is Christ who sends us into the world, our efforts become out of balance and even divisive. It requires a maturity of person, faith, and SFO vocation to overcome the pettiness in ourselves and to rise to the challenge given us by the Church to reach out with the love of Christ to all. “United by their vocation as ‘brothers and sisters of penance’ and motivated by the dynamic power of the Gospel, let them conform their thoughts

and deeds to those of Christ by means of that radical interior change which the Gospel itself calls conversion.” (Rule, Art 7.)

Being and Doing:

In what way do your apostolic works reflect your relationship with God?
Check out Catholic Social Teaching on the USCCB website www.usccb.org
Research one of the seven themes that you know little about. How are you moved to respond?

We also find that the CST is incorporated into the Ten Commandments. Especially found in numbers four and seven, but not exclusively, an authentic interpretation of the Ten Commandments must include the moral precepts of Justice and Charity. As Catholics and especially as Secular Franciscans we are obliged to discover the truth of who we are called to be by the Church in our present day through prayerful review and study of the Decalogue as found in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. (2401-2463). The mission of the Church and the vocation of the laity to evangelize in our every day circumstances by living holy lives make it more necessary than ever that the coming of the Kingdom mean more than personal piety. We need only turn to the words and example of Jesus. Let’s review a portion of Matthew’s Gospel. Recall the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:1-16); this includes the lines exhorting us to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Jesus gives us encouragement to think more deeply about the situations and suffering of earthly life. Mathew 4:23-25 tell us of Jesus traveling about teaching, proclaiming the good news, and curing “every kind of disease and illness.” Moving on are two important exhortations: The Great Commandment in Mt 2: 34-40 and the Last Judgment Mt 25: 31-46. In these we discover discipleship and our solidarity with the whole of humankind. Our SFO Rule and the CST clearly give direction for Gospel living and loving. Let us move into a few quotes from the Commandments as found in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. *

**“Article 4 – The Fourth Commandment (Catechism of the Catholic Church [CCC])
Honor your father and mother that your days may be long in the land which the Lords God gives you.**

2198 This commandment is expressed in positive terms of duties to be fulfilled. It introduces the subsequent commandments which are concerned with particular respect for life, marriage, earthly goods, and speech. It constitutes one of the foundations of the social doctrines of the Church.”

The fourth commandment outlines the duties of members of families, citizens, and those in authority, (with some overlap) parents, teachers, employers, and civil authority. Respect and honor are towards those in authority. However, those in

authority have a reciprocal duty to respect those in their charge. The depth of this commandment cannot be taken lightly as the family is the cornerstone of society.

“Article 7 - The Seventh Commandment You shall not steal.[185¹]

2401 The seventh commandment forbids unjustly taking or keeping the goods of one's neighbor and wronging him in any way with respect to his goods. It commands justice and charity in the care of earthly goods and the fruits of men's labor. For the sake of the common good, it requires respect for the universal destination of goods and respect for the right to private property. Christian life strives to order this world's goods to God and to fraternal charity.

2414 The seventh commandment forbids acts or enterprises that for any reason - selfish or ideological, commercial, or totalitarian - lead to the enslavement of human beings, to their being bought, sold and exchanged like merchandise, in disregard for their personal dignity. It is a sin against the dignity of persons and their fundamental rights to reduce them by violence to their productive value or to a source of profit. St. Paul directed a Christian master to treat his Christian slave "no longer as a slave but more than a slave, as a beloved brother... both in the flesh and in the Lord." [193]

2446 St. John Chrysostom vigorously recalls this: "Not to enable the poor to share in our goods is to steal from them and deprive them of life. The goods we possess are not ours, but theirs." [238] "The demands of justice must be satisfied first of all; that which is already due in justice is not to be offered as a gift of charity": [239] When we attend to the needs of those in want, we give them what is theirs, not ours. More than performing works of mercy, we are paying a debt of justice. [240]

2447 The works of mercy are charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbor in his spiritual and bodily necessities. [241] Instructing, advising, consoling, comforting are spiritual works of mercy, as are forgiving and bearing wrongs patiently. The corporal works of mercy consist especially in feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, and burying the dead. [242] Among all these, giving alms to the poor is one of the chief witnesses to fraternal charity: it is also a work of justice pleasing to God: [243] He who has two coats, let him share with him who has none and he who has food must do likewise. [244] But give for alms those things which are within; and behold, everything is clean for you. [245] If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit? [246]

2448 "In its various forms - material deprivation, unjust oppression, physical and psychological illness and death - human misery is the obvious sign of the inherited condition of frailty and need for salvation in which man finds himself as a

¹ *See Catechism of the Catholic Church for their footnote references.

consequence of original sin. This misery elicited the compassion of Christ the Savior, who willingly took it upon himself and identified himself with the least of his brethren. Hence, those who are oppressed by poverty are the object of a preferential love on the part of the Church which, since her origin and in spite of the failings of many of her members, has not ceased to work for their relief, defense, and liberation through numerous works of charity which remain indispensable always and everywhere." [247]

Respect for the integrity of creation

2415 The seventh commandment enjoins respect for the integrity of creation. Animals, like plants and inanimate beings, are by nature destined for the common good of past, present, and future humanity. [194] Use of the mineral, vegetable, and animal resources of the universe cannot be divorced from respect for moral imperatives. Man's dominion over inanimate and other living beings granted by the Creator is not absolute; it is limited by concern for the quality of life of his neighbor, including generations to come; it requires a religious respect for the integrity of creation. [195²]"

The Seventh Commandment also speaks of just societies and the limits and extent of the actions of governments, local, national, and international. This section of the Catechism is of great importance as it requires of us maturity of faith. It is not in keeping with our call by God to remain in the simple understanding of the commandments taught to us as children.

In Terms of the Rule

Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC) "exists to bring about an awareness of the power of the SFO Rule to truly transform the life of the Secular Franciscan thereby having a Gospel effect on the world and our society. In its broadly based goals, it looks at the whole Rule in terms of peace making and bringing about a just society through the everyday experience of Secular Franciscans who, by right of the sacrament of Baptism, are called to create a more "fraternal and evangelical world." (Guidelines for JPIC Committee)

Through the integration of our Profession—permanent commitment to Gospel living, The SFO Rule---our way of life, and the General Constitution---defines our identity as secular Franciscans, Candidates reflect upon the manner in which they respond to the vocation, "united more intimately with the Church...Go forth as witnesses and instruments of her mission among all people, proclaiming

² ibid

Christ by their life and words.” (Rule, Article 6) In this reflection “we can suppose that:

- there is a keener awareness of God’s presence and power in our lives which dictates our actions;
- there is a hunger for deepening our relationship with the Divine;
- there is an ability to make the right choices out of a faith conviction;
- the ability to reconcile is an integral part of one’s life;
- imitation of Jesus in His compassion becomes part of our nature;
- we become people of sure and certain hope.

The lived experience of Secular Franciscans will necessarily be expressed in what is just, peaceful, and respectful of all created things and people.” (Translating the Mystery, prologue to the JPIC Mission Statement) “In the spirit of conversion, they should live out their love for the renewal of the Church, which should be accompanied by personal and communal renewal. The fruits of conversion, which is a response to the love of God, as works of charity, are the interactions with the brothers and sisters.” (GC, Art 13.2)

For now, the focus is on “being” secular Franciscan, (purposeful lower case’s). Our being, our Franciscan essence, springs forth from our many and continual conversions. Opening ourselves to God’s grace, waiting expectantly, we gradually see the truth of who we are and gain a glimpse of who we are invited to be by God, “to be truly myself, to fulfill all the dimensions of who I am in myself and in God.” (15 Days of Prayer with Saint Francis of Assisi, Thaddee Matura, ,New York City Press, Hyde Park, NY, 2009, p. 37)

Authentic conversion leads to life in Christ, not only for us but also for all people and all creation. Our eyes open to the needs of others; our hearts are moved to respond as we become Gospel people. “Thus it is evident to everyone that all the faithful of Christ, of whatever rank or status, are called to the fullness of the Christian life and to the perfection of charity; by this holiness as such, a more human manner of living is promoted in this earthly society. In order that the faithful may reach this perfection, they must use their strength according as they have received it, as a gift from Christ. They must follow in his footsteps and conform themselves to his image, seeking the will of the Father in all things. They must devote themselves with all their being to the glory of God and the service of their neighbor. In this way, the holiness of the People of God will grow into an abundant harvest of good, as is admirably shown by the life of so many saints in Church History.” (Lumen Gentium 40.2) One of the saints who lived this life was Francis of Assisi; the Rule of life given to the Secular Franciscan Order by the Church gives expression to his manner of life according to the needs of the church today.

Our Rule, our penitential life, and our whole way of living are now more than ever hinged on the Catholic Social Teaching concerning the Dignity of the Human Person. The dignity of every human person comes from God. In the Genesis story of

creation, God specifically created humankind. We were not created with the other animals. We were created out of the dust of the earth...an already created thing, not nothingness. Once formed, we are breathed into life by God; His very breath quickened us. No other creature has this distinction.

We are created in the image and likeness of God, image of the Son Jesus Christ, body and soul. Our soul is given specific faculties: intellect, memory, and will. These will remain forever with us. Created in the image of God who is in eternal relationship, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we are thus social beings. Our human nature requires us to be in relationship. Created by the same Father we are of one and the same human family.

Two-fold Approach

We've talked about the personal conversion and the everyday circumstances of life. This is a necessary first step to understanding JPIC. The second intention of JPIC is on a larger scale. Secular Franciscans work diligently with other Secular Franciscans, other members of the Franciscan family, and the whole Church to bring gospel values to all people through courageous initiatives to make changes in society at every level.

This requires recognizing the signs of the times, knowledge of issues of our day and Catholic Social Teaching in a Franciscan light. Thus aware of the needs of others we unite our voices to strengthen the call for and support legislation with preferential option for the poor and marginalized, upholding the dignity of life in every circumstance, striving "to create conditions of life worthy of people redeemed by Christ." (Rule, Art 13)

In the General Constitutions, Article 18.3 states, "They should work together with movements which promote the building of fraternity among peoples: they should be committed to 'create worthy conditions of life' for all and to work for the freedom of all people." To this end, there are many resources available to us beyond JPIC of the SFO Here are a few of these resources:

*USCCB... US Conference of Catholic Bishops www.usccb.org

* Catholic Charities www.catholiccharitiesusa.org

*FAN... Franciscan Action Network www.franciscanaction.org

*FI... Franciscan International www.franciscaninternational.org

All Secular Franciscans need to be familiar with these and other organizations "to bring about a more fraternal and evangelical world". (Rule, Art 14) Everything

we do is concerned about serving God. Therefore, even the small day to day volunteering, work at a local food pantry, soup kitchen, child care while mom's take classes...the list is endless and as varied as you and I are different. These daily activities are crucial in the plan of God. We cannot wait for the political realm to change everything...yet we must also work on the root of the problems. Feed the hungry and ask why people are hungry. Both problems need addressing. The "why" may have many facets.

World problems have both an immediate need and a far reaching cause that demands time and energy that only the Spirit of God can direct. All are pathways to conversion and blessing. I'm sure you will think of many areas of life that have a basic here-now-today need and a larger root that requires many hands and much toil and commitment. Both here-and -now and larger needs require justice and charity.

Take note that Pope Paul VI reminds us the "justice is the minimum of charity." With this in mind, and as a framework for living our Rule, we are able to see that both the "small" and the "larger" view are always necessary, that both are working towards social justice as defined by the Church.

Pause to Reflect

Look up one of the websites listed. Spend time exploring the themes of social justice. How do these impact my Secular Franciscan vocation? How do they call me to conversion? What action am I called to undertake?

Mission Statement for JPIC

*The mission of JPIC is to assist Professed Secular Franciscans as they reflect on their relationship with God as manifested in the fruits of conversion in their lives.
This with special regard to the daily choices made in the areas of justice, peace making and respect for all created things and people; as brothers and sisters of penance, bringing life to the Gospel and the Gospel to life.*

Goals of JPIC

- A. To foster an atmosphere in fraternity, the privileged place, where with openness and trust, we may share with each other, the manner in which our personal conversions are shaping our Franciscan lives.

- B. To reinforce the appreciation of the dignity of the human person in the choices made in our professed lives by responding in charity and patience to all we meet and to respond as Franciscans to anything which would denigrate the dignity of the human person, beginning with our own personal communications with one another;
- C. To assist in the living out of obedience to the common good as intended by God so that the professed Secular Franciscan builds up all that is good for all of Creation and does nothing which would damage the fabric of communal interdependence;
- D. To strengthen the professed Secular Franciscans' commitment to solidarity with all of Creation enabling them to make those choices in life which would bring about a more fraternal and evangelical world. (*Build up the world fraternity*)

Being and Doing

- Read & pray the Prologue and Chapter 2 of the Rule. Pay close attention to the phrasing and the strength of the verbs. Read chapter 2 two to three times per week, then weekly. Each time listen for something new, tie together the articles, one moving into the next rather than one at time in isolation. Be sure to read the corresponding articles of the General Constitution especially Articles 17 – 27.
- What is the Church asking of me as my part in her mission? How does my daily conversion reflect upon this?
- What one new way can I find to energize my life in the Church?
- What one new way can I find, as a Candidate, to energize my life in Fraternity?

Suggested Reading

Responses to 101 Questions on Catholic Social Teaching, Kenneth R Himes, OFM
Paulist Press, 2001

Fourth Revised and Expanded Edition Catholic Social Teaching Our Best Kept
Secret,
Edward P DeBerri, James E. Hug, with Peter J. Henriot and Michael J.
Schultheis, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY, 2003

Additional website: Office of Social Justice Diocese St Paul/Minneapolis
www.osjspm.org This is an excellent “one stop” site for basic information and
expanded resources including full texts of encyclicals and Church documents. The
site is user friendly.

Documents of interest: this is not an exhaustive list

Rerum Novarum (On the Condition of Labor) Leo XII, 1891

Quadragesimo Anno (Reconstructing the Social Order) Pius XI, 1931

Mater et Magistra (Christianity and Social Progress) John XXIII, 1961

Pacem in Terris (Peace on Earth) John XXIII, 1963

Gaudium et Spes (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World)
Vatican II, 1965

Dignitatis Humanae (Decree on Religious Liberty) Vatican II, 1965

Populorum Progressio (On the Development of Peoples) Paul VI, 1967

Octogesima Adveniens (Call to Action) Paul VI, 1971

Justitia in Mundo (Justice in the World) Synod, 1971

Laborem Exercens (On Human Labor) John Paul II 1981

Sollicitudo Rei Socialis (O Social Concern) John Paul II 1987

Centesimus Annus (One Hundred Years of Catholic Teaching) John Paul II, 1991

Caritas in Veritate (On Integral Human Development in Charity and Truth) Benedict
XVI 2009

JPIC Session 2

Objectives:

- Living the Rule: Chapter 2
- Special Assistance: Praying with Eyes Open
Theological Reflection

Living the Rule of the SFO

Though our Rule does not give a specific and detailed plan of life, it does form a path and shapes our vision of gospel living. As you know from others chapters in this text, The Prologue continually gives clarity to our daily conversions and reminds us that it is only by the grace of God that we are able to carry Christ in ourselves to others. By the power of the Holy Spirit we respond to God and to others. There are radical consequences of transformation in Christ.

Our emphasis here is Chapter Two of our Rule, how we share Christ's mission through life in the Church. We note that Articles 4-6 tell the meaning of Gospel living in the Franciscan Tradition. They speak of intimate union with Christ through sacrificial binding of one's self to the person of Christ (Profession).

We seek the active and living person of Christ and share Christ's mission through life in the Church. Articles 7-8 give us the necessary preconditions for Gospel living: conversion and worship.

Art 9-19 exhort us to evangelization, sharing the Good News.

We break this down further as 10-14 which gives our manner of life and 15-19 which tells what we do. It is in the "what we do" that CST becomes evident. Our Rule gives specific areas of life for evangelization and JPIC emphasis.

Review of the Articles of the Rule

Article 15 *Let them individually and collectively be in the forefront in promoting justice by the testimony of their human lives and their courageous initiatives. Especially in the field of public life, they should make definite choices in harmony with their faith.*

The Church has much to say about the testimony of our lives and working together courageously to take up the call to service. These are not “optional extras” such as one may choose from in buying a car or a computer. The call to service is one and the same as fully living the Gospel. Several statements for the bishops and popes reflect this understanding and exhort us to broaden our scope of ministry.

What Church documents tell us:

“Our relationship to our neighbor is bound up with our relationship to God; our response to the love of God, saving us through Christ, is shown to be effective in his love and service of people. Christian love of neighbor and justice cannot be separated. For love implies an absolute demand for justice, namely recognition of the dignity and rights of one's neighbor. Justice attains its inner fullness only in love. Because every person is truly a visible image of the invisible God and a sibling of Christ, the Christian finds in every person God himself and God's absolute demand for justice and love.” (**Justice in the World, 1971**)

“It is imperative that no one, out of indifference to the course of events or because of inertia, would indulge in a merely individualistic morality. The best way to fulfill one's obligations of justice and love is to contribute to the common good according to one's means and the needs of others, and also to promote and help public and private organizations devoted to bettering the conditions of life.” (**The Church in the Modern World, #30**)

“The life and words of Jesus and the teaching of his Church call us to serve those in need and to work actively for social and economic justice. As a community of believers, we know that our faith is tested by the quality of justice among us, that we can best measure our life together by how the poor and the vulnerable are treated.” (**Economic Justice for All, #8**)

Article 16 *Let them esteem work both as a gift and as a sharing in the creation, redemption, and service of the human community.”*

This goes beyond work as a job. Everything we do is “work” in the sense used in our Rule. We are called to be active participants in God's plan. Human dignity takes on a new light. The dignity of those we encounter everyday in the marketplace,

government, schools, etc. all form the new society built of Christ. Workers have both rights and duties. Again we turn to the words of the Church to guide our way.

“Work remains a good thing, not only because it is useful and enjoyable, but also because it expresses and increases the worker's dignity. Through work we not only transform the world, we are transformed ourselves, becoming ‘more a human being.’” (On Human Work)

“All work has a threefold moral significance. First, it is a principle way that people exercise the distinctive human capacity for self-expression and self-realization. Second, it is the ordinary way for human beings to fulfill their material needs. Finally, work enables people to contribute to the well-being of the larger community. Work is not only for one's self. It is for one's family, for the nation, and indeed for the benefit of the entire human family.” (Economic Justice for All, #9)

“Created in God's image, we were given the mandate to transform the earth. By their work people share in God's creating activity....Awareness that our work is a sharing in God's work ought to permeate even the most ordinary daily activities...By our labor we are unfolding the Creator's work and contributing to the realization of God's plan on earth. The Christian message does not stop us from building the world or make us neglect our fellow human beings. On the contrary it binds us more firmly to do just that.” (On Human Work)

“Work is in the first place "for the worker" and not the worker "for work." Work itself can have greater or lesser objective value, but all work should be judged by the measure of dignity given to the person who carries it out.” (On Human Work)

Article 17 In their families they should cultivate the Franciscan spirit of peace, fidelity, and respect for life, striving to make of it a sign of a world already renewed in Christ.

By living the grace of matrimony, husbands and wives in particular should joyfully accompany their children on their human and spiritual journey by providing a simple and open Christian education and being attentive to the vocation of each child. The family is the first and foremost foundation pillar and stands as a key for all else. The blessings of marriage and family, nurturing and educating children for the love of God strengthens all of society.

Secular Franciscans through their own family honor the Trinity, model of all relationships, and source of all love, inspiration and grace. This article too, goes beyond the immediate family. We are called to be caring and supportive of families everywhere. Family-relationship is extended to all people—as secular Franciscan fraternity, family is at our core.

Our relationship to everyone is as brother, sister, mother, father etc—the family of God-- whether baptized or not—we are children of the same Father. Responsibility to be family, though not easy, is essential if society is to continue and

grow in the Good News. This requires courageous initiatives and being mindful that Secular Franciscans are people of peace. Here are a few statements on Family.

“The most challenging work for justice is not done in church committees, but in the secular world of work, family life, and citizenship” (**Communities of Salt and Light**)

“To overcome today's individualistic mentality, a concrete commitment to solidarity and charity is needed, beginning in the family.” (**The Hundredth Year, #49**)

“The first and fundamental structure for a "human ecology" is the family, founded on marriage, in which the mutual gift of self as husband and wife creates an environment in which children can be born and grow up.” (**The Hundredth Year, #39**)

“Economic and social policies as well as organization of the work world should be continually evaluated in light of their impact on the strength and stability of family life. The long-range future of this nation is intimately linked with the well-being of families, for the family is the most basic form of human community. Efficiency and competition in the marketplace must be moderated by greater concern for the way work schedules and compensation support or threaten the bonds between spouses and between parents and children.” (**Economic Justice for All, #93**)

“The well-being of the individual person and of both human and Christian society is closely bound up with the healthy state of the community of marriage and the family.” (**The Church in the Modern World #47**)

Article 18 *Moreover they should respect all creatures, animate and inanimate, which “bear the imprint of the Most High, and they should strive to move from the temptation of exploiting creation to the Franciscan concept of universal kinship.*

We are stewards of the goods of the earth. They have been donated to us for the manifestation of the glory of God and proper use towards the common good mindful of generations yet to come. Listen as the Church speaks of stewardship, and care for all of creation.

“Freedom and the capacity for moral decision making are central to what it means to be human. Stewardship—defined in this case as the ability to exercise moral responsibility to care for the environment—requires freedom to act. Significant aspects of this stewardship include the right to private initiative, the ownership of property, and the exercise of responsible freedom in the economic sector.

Stewardship requires a careful protection of the environment and calls us to use our intelligence "to discover the earth's productive potential and the many different ways in which human needs can be satisfied."

(Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good, USCCB, 2001 #16)

“True stewardship requires changes in human actions—both in moral behavior and technical advancement. Our religious tradition has always urged restraint and moderation in the use of material goods, so we must not allow our desire to possess more material things to overtake our concern for the basic needs of people and the environment. Pope John Paul II has linked protecting the environment to "authentic human ecology," which can overcome "structures of sin" and which promotes both human dignity and respect for creation.” (**Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good, USCCB, 2001 #18**)

“God destined the earth and all it contains for all people and nations so that all created things would be shared fairly by all humankind under the guidance of justice tempered by charity.” (**The Church in the Modern World, #69**)

“Material goods and the way we are developing the use of them should be seen as God's gifts to us. They are meant to bring out in each one of us the image of God. We must never lose sight of how we have been created: from the earth and from the breath of God.”

(On Social Concern)

“By the work of our hands or with the help of technology, we till the earth to produce fruit and to make it a dwelling place fit for all of humanity; we also play our part in the life of social groups. In so doing we are realizing God's plan, revealed at the beginning of time, to subdue the earth and perfect the work of creation; at the same time we are perfecting ourselves and observing the command of Christ to devote ourselves to the service of our sisters and brothers.” (**The Church in the Modern World, #57**)

Article 19 Mindful that they are bearers of peace which must be built up unceasingly, they should seek out ways of unity and fraternal harmony through dialogue, trusting in the presence of the divine seed in everyone and in the transforming power of love and pardon. Messengers of perfect joy in every circumstance, they should strive to bring joy and hope to others.

Since they are immersed in the resurrection of Christ, which gives true meaning to Sister Death, let them serenely tend toward the ultimate encounter with the Father.

This is the summation of living the Rule: transformation in Christ, messengers of peace and hope in a world with ever more violence, marginalization, secularity, and poverty. Our task is enormous, but by the grace of God and the guidance of the Holy

Spirit, we will continue to be Good News to others as we await the Father's arms. Again we hear from the Church writings.

"Biblical justice is more comprehensive than subsequent philosophical definitions. It is not concerned with a strict definition of rights and duties, but with the rightness of the human condition before God and within society. Nor is justice opposed to love; rather, it is both a manifestation of love and a condition for love to grow."

(Economic Justice for All, #39)

"To wage war on misery and to struggle against injustice is to promote, along with improved conditions, the human and spiritual progress of all men, and therefore the common good of humanity. Peace cannot be limited to a mere absence of war, the result of an ever precarious balance of forces. No, peace is something that is built up day after day, in the pursuit of an order intended by God, which implies a more perfect form of justice among men." **(On the Development of Peoples, #76)**

"Listening to the cry of those who suffer violence and are oppressed by unjust systems and structures, and hearing the appeal of a world that by its perversity contradicts the plan of its Creator, we have shared our awareness of the Church's vocation to be present in the heart of the world by proclaiming the Good News to the poor, freedom to the oppressed, and joy to the afflicted." **(Justice in the World, #5)**

Pause for reflection:

**Re read Mt 25: 34-46 and the Corporal and Spiritual works of mercy. Spend time in prayer and meditation. Specifically, how are you called to a Eucharistic life and to a greater awareness of other peoples' needs?

Creating worthy conditions of life and the ability to work sharing in creation, redemption and service to the human community, once again requires transformation.

Our fallen nature tends toward the self in all its negative connotations. Overcoming this (chipping away at) this tendency through prayer, personal discipline, vigilance, frequenting the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist keep us aware of the glory of God in the mundane and difficult. Rejoice in the blessings of God the Father!

Our Rule gives us many phrases to ponder and use as everyday words of wisdom. Living these phrases expands our consciousness of the world around us,

opens our hearts and eyes to the situations that cry out for compassion and action. Read these phrases carefully and prayerfully. Allow them to become ingrained in your mind and heart.

Examples of the phrases are:

- ◇ Christ inspiration and center of life
- ◇ careful reading of the Gospel
- ◇ encounter the living and active person of Christ
- ◇ Eucharistic life (thanksgiving)
- ◇ living members of the Church
- ◇ more intimately united with the Church by profession
- ◇ proclaim Christ by life **and** words
- ◇ radical interior change
- ◇ courageous initiatives
- ◇ esteem work
- ◇ move from the temptation of exploiting creation
- ◇ Franciscan concept of universal kinship
- ◇ fraternal harmony
- ◇ council & minister: animate & guide (collegial)
- ◇ Holy Spirit, the Comforter

Living justice, peace and protecting the integrity of creation is courageous Gospel living.

Pause for reflection:

- How do the above phrases change your perception of living with Christ as your center? Re read the Prologue and Chapter 2 of the Rule.
- What new insights do you now have?

Special Assistance I

Praying with Eyes Open:

There is an Eastern Catholic and Orthodox tradition of gazing at an icon and keeping one's eyes open while praying. Through this practice relationship develops and deepens with the "subject" of the icon. It is nothing new using an icon or Western depiction of Jesus, Mary, saints, or an event as a focus of meditation. Keeping our eyes open the entire time is new. One begins to see with the eyes of Jesus—you *become* what you gaze upon.

In a letter to Agnes of Prague, St. Claire outlines a prayer tradition in a similar manner, a Franciscan prayer tradition:

Gaze... to look at with loving attention
Mediate... thoughtfully consider
Contemplate... oneness with, listening/openness
Imitate... become what you contemplate

With eyes open one's gaze is intermixed--- Christ with the surrounding world. We often close our eyes in prayer to rid ourselves of distractions. Yet, the distraction begs for our prayer and attention. I don't mean the idle wandering of the mind when I speak of distraction; rather that a particular person or situation coming to mind. This compels listening for how to respond.

Praying with eyes open broadens the view of the world around me. Everything is more vibrant, more alive, perhaps more real than previously experienced.

Every decision to respond to the needs of others is sacred and filled with all that is holy. Every decision not to respond is empty of sacredness. Praying with our eyes open transforms us and aids in making present the Kingdom of God.

Pause for reflection:

Being and Doing:

Pray with your special holy image with your eyes open. Ask for the grace to see with the eyes of Christ and to respond with a transformed heart.

Throughout the day interiorly return to the image. Allow your prayer time to slow down the hurry of life and awaken a sense of the sacred in you towards everyone and all of creation.

Be blessing to others and receive blessing from those you bless. Pope John Paul II says this returned blessing is the other half of our conversion. (*Rich in Mercy*, John Paul II)

Special Assistance II

Theological Reflection

There are many issues in our time that require careful examination and an authentic Catholic/Franciscan response. The US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) speaks to these issues. Our common sense in the light of faith is appalled by recent greed and violence to name but a few areas that beg our attention. There are ways to effectively review and evaluate our response. One such way is Theological Reflection. JPIC encourages all fraternities frequently to incorporate this style of ongoing formation in regard to the questions of our time.

Theological Reflection

1. **Preparation:** A well prepared reflective session is essential. What specific social issue/question are you pondering? Write it out; name it. Gather background material, i.e.: What does the USCCB say about this issue? Does the Catechism of the Catholic Church deal with this issue? Does Vatican II address this? What does our Rule and Constitution express? Etc. Make sure there is a review of materials ahead of time by the planners and that the resources are available for study by the fraternity.
2. **Personal experience:** Begin the session with an introduction of the issue to be explored then give time for the individual to pause to think about his/her own experience of life that may bear on the topic. If the issue is given to the fraternity ahead of time, give time for the members to “re-collect” their thoughts. Does any of my culture play a role in how I think about this issue? For example, I grew up in the Midwest, is this reflected in how I view issues in New England? You may come up with your own

examples of culture on its' many levels. Go beyond the obvious. Reflect in terms of your religious tradition. Again, go beyond the obvious!

3. **Mutual Conversation:** Use group discussion and group review of the supporting materials. This may be handled in smaller groups for a large fraternity. Mutual invitation is a great way to begin the session. The RESPECT guidelines also may enhance the reflection time. When this phase is done well it inspires creative thinking and leads to transformation of the person.
4. **Transformative Action:** What flows from mutual conversation becomes the "lens" we use for setting a course of action. Some examples are: "It appears we function as agents to make Christ present in the world when...." Or "Our neighborhood has need of.... We are motivated by our charism to..." Etc. Look at the resources available, people, talent, time, and of course funds. I'm confident you will come up with your own list of resources.
5. **Evaluate:** Once the plan is implemented it is essential to evaluate it. Are we true to our Rule and the Church's teaching? Did we meet the needs of others as intended or did we impose on them our need to do something? How is God calling me now? Begin the reflective process again.

Like anything new, Theological Reflection takes more time in the beginning. More than one fraternity gathering may be required to complete the process or you may come together for an entire day or weekend.

The possibilities are open. Many issues may be reflected upon in this manner with your fraternity. If used on a regular basis, Theological Reflection can be a tool that opens the door to integrating the Rule in ways never imagined.

Adapted from:: Theological Reflection for Transformation, prepared by Dianna Bergant, CSA; Faustina M. Crus, SM; Kathleen Dorsey-Bellow; Bernard J. Lee, SM; Maureen R. O'Brien, The Center for the Study of Religious Life, Chicago, IL, 2004

Pause for reflection:

Being and Doing:

Consider again Matthew 25: 34-46 or Luke 10:25-37

What new insight do you now experience?

How is God calling you now? Formulate a plan of action, be specific.

Go to the websites listed in JPIC Chapter I, what support do these sources give you?

What other initiatives do these sites inspire you to action?