



***Let me begin with “logistics” as this
is exciting news.***

**By Pat Brandwein-Ball SFO
JPIC Chair**

At their October 2009 meeting, the NEC voted to give permanent status to JPIC. Present members are Cherryle Fruge, SFO, from St. Joan of Arc Region, and Sandra Thompson SFO, from St. Elizabeth of Hungary Region, and myself as Chair. Additional 1-2 members are anticipated. All regions have submitted a contact person. That person should be part of the SFOPJNet list. If you are not receiving information and forwarded alerts please contact me.

This week a 7.0 earthquake crumbled the nation of Haiti, already one of the poorest countries. Aid from many nations, organizations, and churches were mobilized and sent. As a National Fraternity we contributed. Many donated money and supplies. Horrendously devastating natural disasters seem to be increasing...perhaps we just have better global communication.

But this brings up a few points for reflection as we begin Lent. First, what was my initial response deep in my heart? Whatever that was tells much about my own “state of compassion and solidarity.” Such complete destruction as this earthquake inflicted wakens a sense of being an integral member of God’s people. What did I know about Haiti prior to now? I knew it was a poor nation, but did I realize it was *that* poor? Did I recognize Haiti as my neighbor? My neighbor...those geographically close and those for whom I am to care about as if they are not strangers. What do I know about the people in my own neighborhood, those people across town? I don’t mean “know” in an intellectual sense. To know, in a personal experience way, takes on a deeper meaning. Receiving, “those people” return a blessing. Without this mutual blessing and thus relationship, those we seek to help are further victimized.

Blessing is that marvelous mystery, the giving forth and receiving back in order to give forth again. Poverty takes on a fresh sacredness. God’s giving belongs to everyone. God’s blessing extends to all. Are we a blessing to others? Do we allow others to bless us?

The second question for reflection begs, “What can I learn about myself today...about the situations I am in right now.” Do I say I love you; do I speak kind words and offer a smile to a stranger. Do I seek to enter relationship, or do I try my hardest to give, but not of myself, avoiding messy ministry. Relationship calls for integrity, calls for listening, calls for quiet, frequent prayer.

By the time this issue comes into your hands weeks will have passed and time itself will reveal the heart of each one of us. How are you living Articles 11 and 13 of our Rule?

Being and Doing:

Read and pray articles 11 and 13 of our Rule. Look in the Constitution how they are further understood. Now read the prologue and then reread the above articles. How is the Holy Spirit speaking to me today? Do this frequently during Lent. How am I being transformed?

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Reflections for Franciscans

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those who hate you, pray for those who abuse you (Luke 6: 27-28). Let all that you do be done in love (1 Corinthians 16:14). Or as the Rule puts it ... seek out ways of unity and fraternal harmony through dialogue ... and in the transforming power of love and pardon (SFO Rule #19).

Whether at Eucharist or at any other time the value of love and compassion remain foundational for the life of Franciscans. In fact, the SFO Rule clearly expects us to act in this way. ... The brothers and sisters, led by the Spirit, strive for perfect charity in their own secular state (SFO Rule #2).

Why wait? Each moment of life requires this kind of response. Francis offers us a special blessing in his Prologue to the SFO Rule.

Oh, how happy and blessed are these men and women when they do these things and persevere in doing them, because “the spirit of the Lord will rest upon them” (cf Isaiah 11:2), and he will make his home and dwelling among them” (cf. John 14:23), and they are the sons (daughters) of the heavenly Father, whose works they do.