

Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation

JPIC

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Over the past couple of years we've reviewed aspects of living our Rule and how to reflect upon the issues of today in a fraternity on going formation setting. Moving on from there, it is past time to delve into the deeper exhortation of our Rule. Article 3 tells us that this "Rule adapts the SFO to the needs and expectations of the Holy Church in the conditions of changing times." How have we adapted to the needs of the Church? Are we even aware of what the Church considers the needs of the changing times of the world? There is that famous quote from Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper?" The social teaching of the Catholic Church gives a resounding answer, "YES!" The Social Teaching of the Church is the wisdom that addresses this.

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 the family are 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 are 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 apostolic action 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

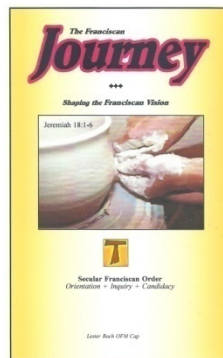
balance and even divisive. It requires a maturity of person, faith, and SFO vocation to overcome the pettiness in ourselves and to rise to the challenge given us by the Church to reach out with the love of Christ to all. “United by their vocation as ‘brothers and sisters of penance’ and motivated by 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?



New Book: A completely new formation book for orientation and initial formation is being published. The title is: *The Franciscan Journey –Shaping the Franciscan Vision* by Leser Bach, OFM Cap. It incorporates the recommended content from the SFO General Chapter in Hungary in 2008. A chapter on the Prologue and each of the articles of the SFO Rule are included together with quotations from the Constitutions/Statutes, words of

Francis and Clare, Church documents, SFO members and other Franciscan authors. It shares the Franciscan-Trinitarian spirituality vision. The book may also be used for ongoing formation purposes. Publication is slated for the first few months of 2010 by Smokey Valley Press (formerly Barbo-Carlson). As publication is finalized, further information (on costs, etc) will be available in TAU-USA

Save the dates! Franciscans International offers two programs in 2010: (1) from February 26-28 prior to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), and (2) from May 1-2, prior to the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), both programs at the FI New York Office.

The theme of the CSW and our program is a review of the Beijing Platform for Action. Our speakers will also update us on trafficking and the world financial crisis and include a presentation on the spirituality of the Franciscan NGO. **The CSD program** will focus on climate change, the Millennium Development Goals, poverty, and human rights. Both programs will conclude with the NGO Consultation Day held on the eve of the Commissions. Application deadline is Dec. 15. For further information, e-mail Kathie Uhler at uhler@fiop.org or phone: 1-212 490-4624. N.B. The Annual UN NGO Conference will be held in Melbourne, Australia in September 2010; dates TBA.