

JPIC Presentation at General Chapter

At the International Council meeting held in Jakarta last year and at the Animation Committee meeting held last month in Rome, the service of JPIC for the Order evaluated its work for the last six-year period, considering both positive and negative elements. In our discussions we found the following three advances:

1. Building on input from our Entities, we were able to present to the last two General Chapters proposals for our work based on the needs of friars and the people with whom we serve and cooperate throughout the world. Mandates to work on spirituality, peace and reconciliation, environmental justice, care of the excluded, and ethical use of resources have been shared with and promoted at all levels of the Order. The annual JPIC course, which is prepared together with the Pontifical University Antonianum in Rome, and also with the friars in Latin America and Asia and regional courses this past year, has become an important resource not only for OFMs, but for the Franciscan Family as well. The JPIC course was organized in response to a request on the part of many Entities to provide training for JPIC animators. Over the last nine years many of these animators, along with other friars and participants as well, have benefited from the quality reflection and training provided at the annual course.
2. We have promoted JPIC as a set of values, as a spirituality, as part of the DNA of our Franciscan life and ministry. Building on the call to promote the values of JPIC found in the Scriptures and Catholic Social Teaching, and on the JPIC structures that exist in our Constitutions and Statutes, we have worked to show how all the dimensions of our Franciscan life, including JPIC, are intimately related and interdependent, and how each one of them demands the others. We have challenged our JPIC animators to be good friars, to work with the administrations of their own Entities, and to

listen to the stories of friars who are already engaged in JPIC while challenging them to do even more to address the structural sin that is present in our societies today.

3. We have encouraged collaboration within the Order in the spirit of Mandate 32 of the last General Chapter, which calls for such collaboration between the various offices and secretariats. We have also promoted collaboration with the Franciscan Family, with other religious, with the Church, and with civil society. We have worked closely with Franciscans International, the NGO of the Franciscan Family at the United Nations and, in conjunction with Pope Francis and the two Popes who preceded him, we have dedicated much time and effort to problems related to our current environmental crisis. We have made special efforts to highlight the call of John Paul II for an “ecological conversion.” Such a conversion reminds us of the impact that our lifestyle has on the environment, and invites us to promote a lifestyle that is more sober and that promotes greater solidarity with all our sisters and brothers throughout the world.

In the evaluation of our JPIC work we also found the following three challenges for the future:

1. We need to make even greater efforts to promote collaboration between the services of Evangelization, Formation and JPIC, at all levels of the Order. Our overall work for animation in the Order will be greatly strengthened by promoting collaboration between the various services. Some provinces have exceptional programs for this type of collaboration, and they might serve as models for such efforts.
2. In the Lineamenta prepared before this General Chapter, there was substantial concern voiced about insertion of our Franciscan life into the difficult realities of people and of the world. Such concern is a call to find new ways to express and implement the value of

minority in our life and ministry. Such efforts to deepen our commitment to minority will help us to “learn from the poor,” as we are instructed to do in our General Constitutions.

3. Together with Pope Francis, we are called to preach the Gospel by “going out” into the world. Like Jesus and Francis, we are called to minister to the widows, the orphans, the aliens and the lepers of our day. We must continue to open ourselves to the world of the 21st century, to hear the cries of the people, and to struggle with them to confront the social, economic and environmental crises that we are facing.

Finally I would like to make note of a more recent area of interest for JPIC, which has been the upcoming encyclical of Pope Francis on ecology. In the spirit of Saint Francis, who proclaimed his love and concern for “our Sister Mother Earth,” the Generals of the Franciscan Family have asked the animators of JPIC to anticipate a Franciscan response to the encyclical. We believe that such a response is natural to our life as Friars Minor. John Paul II made Saint Francis the patron of those who promote ecology, and people expect us to exhibit a similar concern for nature and all God’s creatures. We invite our Entities around the world to join in studying and promoting the concerns expressed in this soon-to-be-published letter of Pope Francis. We plan to make available a study guide to encourage friars and those with whom we work to read and study the encyclical. We are also planning that the next JPIC course at the Antonianum will focus on environmental justice and on the issues raised in the encyclical.

Thank you.