

JPIC supplement to Initial Formation - Inquiry
by Andrew Conradi, ofs (JPIC National Animator), 2016
Some ideas/points that could be included at the discretion of the formator

INITIAL FORMATION - INQUIRY

Chapter 5 “Lay Secular Spirituality”

The Franciscan Journey (Updated version 2010) by Lester Bach, OFM Cap.

Note 1: *Understanding JPIC (UJPIC)* can be found here:

<http://www.franciscanvoicecanada.com/> Click on “Understanding JPIC” at the foot of the page. [It is best to get it from this source as it will post the amendments quickly after they are made so you will get the latest updated version]

1.

From FJ p 46: “Secular Franciscans need to understand secular Franciscan spirituality.”

Comment: We need to know what makes us a Franciscan and not just a Catholic Christian; sometimes that difference is just a matter of a particular focus and emphasis, and we need to know where it came from and why (and how it relates to JPIC). Here is a question we frequently (continually?) ask: what defines us as Franciscans and specifically as Secular Franciscans? What are Franciscan values?

From UJPIC:

“Spirituality integral to vernacular theology

3.3.1. What is Spirituality? “Spirituality is the way a person is attracted to the Lord and how he or she develops this attraction into a discipline of life.” (Campion Murray, OFM) Although all Catholics are united by the Catechism of the Church and Mass, there are different forms of spirituality and prayer which have developed over time. The major religious orders and lay associations have their own unique spirituality of prayer and way of living out the Gospel. Franciscan spirituality and vision, as expressed in “vernacular theology” and the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition (FIT), form the third basis of our commitment to JPIC.

Characteristics of Franciscan Work for JPIC, 1993

3.3.2. Before we look at the Franciscan Heritage Series as it relates to JPIC, a good introduction can be found in the 1993 document of the International Inter-Franciscan Commission for Justice and Peace (Delegates for Justice and Peace by Six Branches of the Franciscan Family) which produced *Characteristics of Franciscan Work for Justice, Peace and Integrity of*

Creation in which they stated that our response to JPIC “needs to be authentic and Franciscan.” (1993, 1) Following are extracts from this document.

3.3.3.

They took *Pace e Bene!* (Peace and All Good!) as a starting point. The early Franciscans moved out of their secure areas and lived among the poor and marginalized. “The implicit social analysis expressed in their way of life was not motivated by humanitarian concerns alone, nor by philosophy nor a condemnation of the “-status quo-”. Rather they were impressed by God's Incarnation. ... Their attempts to follow literally the Gospel-life of Jesus in utter simplicity became the foundation and rule of their life. Unlike similar “-evangelical-” or prophetic groups of their day, Francis and Clare were persistent in securing the confirmation and approval of the Universal Church for their personal inspirations and convictions.” (2)

3.3.4. God's perfect meekness, humility and poverty were models for Francis and Clare. (2) “Most Franciscans see themselves as working on behalf of the poor; many work with and among the poor; and some have become completely identified with the poor in their lifestyle and work. Pursuit of God's “-perfection-” led Francis to espouse Lady Poverty and to the peace of “-perfect joy-”. Throughout her life Clare insisted on the absolute necessity and privilege of Perfect Poverty for her company of Poor Ladies. ... The Franciscan approach to life is marked by a recognition of the importance, beauty and goodness of Creation created by a good God for no other reason than love. We share this earth, its resources, our lives and work with all of God's creatures, who are our brothers and sisters. ... Francis' practical theology and spirituality gave him a social analysis that all persons have responsibilities and equal rights before God. Franciscan awareness of the sacred value of the individual flowered in the thinking of John Duns Scotus. Each individual, a person, a plant, a stone, an amoeba is precious. No creature, no part of creation, can be dismissed as insignificant.” (3)

3.3.5. “The early ban on weapons for members of the Secular Order helped to collapse the feudal system in Europe. Franciscans were responsible for establishing some of the first pharmacies in Europe, initially to meet the needs of infirm pilgrims flooding into Assisi. To protect the poor who were being crippled with huge unjust interest payments on loans, friars in Italy organized the “-Mons Pietatis-”, a financial society which was the precursor of the modern banking system. Countless Franciscan men and women have

opened their homes to homeless young people, giving them the protection and education not provided by their societies. In countries where the poor could not afford health care, Franciscan women and men responded in practical ways by establishing hospitals and health care systems.” (4)

3.3.6. “According to Francis, the Gospel is to be proclaimed primarily by our witness of Gospel life, not only by words. ... Historically and theoretically, Franciscan life implies mutual respect, co-operation and collaboration among men and women. ... When the Church was waging a Holy Crusade against its enemies, the Saracens, Francis' interpretation of Gospel life and its demands were revolutionary. He was non-violent, creative and active in his approach to conflict. He was not passive. He took the initiative as an arbitrator and sought opposing parties for dialogue to achieve reconciliation.” (5)

3.3.7. “Francis' joy came with the recognition that God's Spirit was sustaining him in his most painful situations. ... Franciscan joy is not a naive denial of human suffering and problems. It is a conviction that despite all that is bad in life, God's Spirit is always within us, in others and in Creation. Joy kept Francis from growing bitter in the midst of suffering and disappointment. ... Franciscans have conscious and unconscious traditions of reading signs of the times revealed in the needs of the poor. Responses to these needs have been practical, often small, steps which have helped to unravel oppressive cultural systems.

3.3.8. Today, our collective and personal challenge is to develop these traditional Franciscan charisms according to our particular circumstances and cultures. While addressing the root causes and not merely the symptoms of problems, we must work diligently to devise constructive practical remedies.” (6)

3.3.9. “We hope that our Franciscan formation programs, both initial and continuing, will contain biblical, religious and moral reflections on justice, peace and the integrity of creation, as well as offer familiarity with the social, psychological and political sciences. We urge a more public and collective witness of our work and advocacy on behalf of peacemaking, concern for the poor and the care of creation.” (7)

Franciscan Heritage Series (2003-2012)

3.3.10. Returning to FIT, since it is a very large subject and probably beyond the scope of the average OFS member to study, an attempt has been made to offer a brief outline of it, as it relates to JPIC, based on the Franciscan Heritage Series (2003-2012).

3.3.11. This has been attempted for two reasons. Firstly, because it deepens our understanding of the reasons for Franciscan commitment to JPIC and enables us “to begin to plumb the spiritual depths of our inheritance and comprehend the important uniqueness of its intellectual expression.” and secondly because: “We hope that some teachers and practitioners will translate the basic themes presented in [the series] into still more popular forms and make them accessible to an ever-wider public of interested parties.” (Joseph Chinnici, OFM in Delio, 2003, v, viii)

3.3.12. Francis is one of the first to be considered a “vernacular theologian” i.e. not an academic but one whose insights and spiritual vision were based on his own experience, understanding and reflections and expressed in the common everyday language of the laity. In this was he foreshadowing Vatican II? Boff (2006, 16) calls Francis a “Postmodern Brother.” “Even more striking is the different way these traditions [Augustinian, Franciscan & Dominican] relate theology to spirituality.” FIT “clearly is a spiritual-theological vision” (Osborne, 2003, 14 & 69), important because perhaps we can say that if theology is theory, spirituality goes from theory to application (praxis).

3.3.13. It could be said that Franciscan spirituality and vision, as expressed in the FIT, pre-date CST and contributed to its evolution. A characteristic of the FIT is its strong link between the intellectual and the spiritual life. In the FIT “we find again and again, in different languages, using different genres, the same fundamentals of our vision of Catholic Christian life.” (Joseph Chinnici, OFM in Osborne, 2003, xiii).

Retrieval & revitalisation of FIT

3.3.14. Although the Franciscan Tradition enjoyed equality with the Augustinian and Dominican traditions or at times a period of dominance in the past, the church, feeling under attack and as a reaction to “modernism” adopted and relied mainly on St Thomas Aquinas from the late 19th century until the present time. Pope Leo XIII in *Aeterni Patris* (1879) made this the theology to be taught in all Catholic schools of theology and then imposed

Thomist theology starting in 1907 and included the imposition in the 1917 Code of Canon Law.

FJ p 57 mentions **Presence in the world**.

UJPIC:

“5.1.28. In March 2003 the Presidency of the International Council of the OFS (CIOFS) established the “Presence in the World Commission” (PIWC). Its mandate includes JPIC. The OFS Rule (art 13-19) and the OFS General Constitutions (art 17-27) form the basis of the Commission's work. The PIWC presently has two Coordinators, two members and one collaborator. It reports to the Vice Minister General.

...

5.1.30. ... the delegates to the General Chapter of the OFS International Fraternity (Hungary, 2008) concluded:

“For too long, the Order has not fully entered into its active mission in the world. The moment has come, and it can no longer be deferred, to “enter the city”, to exercise with determination and full visibility its own responsibilities to witness, and to promote justice, peace, human rights and the integrity of creation”. (emphasis added)

5.1.31. This General Chapter adopted five priorities for 2009-14, which included “Presence in the World.” At the time of writing (2013), the PIWC, mentioned above, reports to the Vice Minister General of CIOFS. The PIWC is relatively new and still charting its way forward. [The PIWC has been renamed the JPICC.]

5.1.32. Among the conclusions of the XIII General Chapter of the OFS in 2011 were: “Franciscans must be agents of social transformation.” (n.1.1) and

“Since “the lay faithful are never to relinquish their participation in ‘politics’” (*Christifideles Laici*, 42),¹ it is necessary to underline the importance of political education for citizen advocacy, based on the social doctrine of the Church. This Chapter urges OFS Councils, at all levels, to organize regular political education classes that will help members to acquire the skills necessary to respond without delay to what the church asks of us at this time.” (n.4, emphasis added). In fact, this is really part of “*See, Judge, Act.*”

¹ This is from the OFS document. The word used in the original *Christifidelis Laici* in Italian is «*politica*» and in English “public life.” The OFS have translated it into English as “politics.”