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**INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL MEETS IN THE PHILIPPINES**

The International Council for JPIC met in Cebu City, Philippines, on 18-25 February 2008. Eleven conference presidents, the Animation Committee, the directors of the Rome office and the General Secretary for Evangelization and Mission (who was invited and participated actively in the meeting) gathered to evaluate the work of the last five years, to prepare for the upcoming General Chapter, and to discuss plans and strategies for future JPIC work.

Participants were very grateful to the friars of the Philippines, hosts of the meeting. Hospitality and organization were superb. The friars also prepared visits to help understand better the local reality. Visits included contact with the urban reality, with the rural/agricultural reality, and with the reality of the fisherfolk.

The friars of the Rome Office updated the Council on their work. Since 2003 this work has included: visits to many conferences and entities; preparation of a resource book on Chapter IV of the GGCC, in collaboration with the Secretariats of Formation and Evangelization; looking for ways to encourage implementation of the five JPIC decisions of Chapter 2003; organization and realization of

the JPIC course at the Antonianum in Rome; preparation of a resource booklet for new JPIC animators; preparation of resource booklets on ecology and non-violence; and efforts to extend collaboration between the services of JPIC, Formation and Evangelization.

The meeting began with a presentation of the reports from the conferences and the results of the four continental meetings (Africa, Sept. 2007; Europe, Oct. 2007; Americas, Nov. 2007; Asia/Oceania, Feb. 2008). Participants heard of many initiatives throughout the world to implement the five JPIC decisions of Chapter 2003. They noted that the five decisions deal with people and decisions that are integrally related to our Franciscan charism: the poor, the excluded, reconciliation and creation. They also noted that each of the five decisions calls for careful planning and much work. Much has already been done, but much remains to be done because the decisions are so large and comprehensive. For these reasons participants decided to offer the same five proposals to the Chapter, along with a new proposal asking that the director of the Rome JPIC office be given *ex officio* status at future General Chapters. The

proposals will be presented in the following form:

1. The General Chapter requests that, during the six-year period 2009-2015 and with the help of the JPIC Office, all Entities of the Order should:
  - a. Examine the impact of our lives on creation with special attention to the issue of climate change, and promote environmental justice in order to highlight the relationship between social and ecological questions.
  - b. Promote active non-violence in our lives, with particular emphasis on conflict resolution.
  - c. Give special attention to the excluded of our societies, according to the situation of each Entity.
  - d. Consider and promote the ethical use of financial and natural resources.
2. The General Chapter requests continuation of the JPIC course at the PUA, and recommends that similar courses be given in all

Franciscan Institutes of Higher Learning.

3. That the Director of the Rome JPIC Office be given *ex officio* status at General Chapters.

It was noted that at all levels of our activity it is necessary to make friars aware of these JPIC proposals, to help them understand the vocabulary and concepts that are being used (some of which are new to the friars),

and to offer clear and simple steps to implement the proposals. It was also decided that special emphasis will be placed on the question of environmental justice. Many of the conference reports spoke about problems related to the environment: climate change, climate refugees, mining issues, questions related to increasingly scarce natural resources like oil and water, drought, hunger, etc.. The world is faced with an ecological crisis,

and members of the International Council feel that as Franciscans we must find effective ways to address these problems, and to encourage others to become involved as well.

After preparing the proposals, the International Council considered the strategies needed to implement them.

Joe Rozansky OFM

## **WHEN HABITS AND RUBBER SHOES FIT WELL** **(Philippino Friars against corruption)**

The Philippines, at present, is facing a political problem. This political crisis is brought about by the ZTE-NBN <sup>1</sup>scandal, allegedly involving some government officials and the First Gentleman in million dollar kickbacks from this ZTE-NBN project deal with China.

Just days before the Asia-Oceania Continental JPIC Conference and the International JPIC Council Meeting were held in Cebu, Philippines on February 11-16 and 18-25, 2008 respectively, the political turmoil began to be felt intensely by people in Manila area (National Capital Region). Rodolfo Lozada Jr., a witness to the case at hand, exposed what he knows about the said deal in a press conference held at dawn of February 6. The information he told appeared to be credible to many. His statements were ac-

cepted by the people at large. Demonstrations after demonstration of people who want to know the truth about this ZTE-NBN deal were held after the exposé, and are still ongoing.

The OFM Philippine Province of San Pedro Bautista, through the initiative and coordination of the JPIC Office, is responding to this situation. There are studies and discussions among friars. The friars in initial formation on the one hand joined the other theology students of the Inter-Congregational Theological Center over discussions and in the making of a common stance with regard to this issue of ZTE-NBN deal. The friars in ongoing formation on the other hand tried to maximize the other possible media to enhance awareness among them and to keep the conversation going. The e-group (e-mail group) of the Province had been and still a good medium in this regard. Friars in Manila, both those in initial and ongoing, have already gathered together in order to discuss the issue and they were able to come up, in consensus, with some important points, mainly to join the people in their search for

truth and to fight corruption in all levels.

Those friars who have gathered were able to see again the value of sitting down together to discuss the issues that affect the lives of the people they are serving and the importance of taking the necessary actions to promote the common good.

Many friars in Manila and the students of the Our Lady of the Angels Seminary joined the February 29 Inter-Faith Prayer Rally held in Makati City, Philippines. The friars wearing habits and rubber shoes joined the 80 thousand people, approximately, in the said Inter-Faith Prayer Rally.

The Philippine Province of San Pedro joins those who are in search of truth with regard to the issue of ZTE-NBN scandal, a crucial issue that seemingly bring into the fore the reality of corruption there is in Philippine government. The Philippine Province of San Pedro Bautista is also willing to take the necessary actions in this fight against corruption.

Many friars are also inclined to believe that a new form of people power is taking place in the Philippines now, a people power that does not only seek to

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<sup>1</sup> ZTE is the name of the Chinese company with which our government entered into a kind of deal, in order to put a kind of computer system that would link via internet all the government offices here nationwide. NBN is an acronym for National Broadband Network. Thus, the issue at hand here is usually referred to as the ZTE-NBN deal and/or scandal.

depose a corrupt government official but one that does aspire to fight corruption in all levels, to fight the corruption that creeps into Philippine society, causing the abject miseries of the Filipino people at large.

It is in this new form of people power that the Province of San Pedro Bautista aspires to continue participating. This gradually makes the friars see the

need to reexamine their own selves vis-à-vis the reality of corruption and positively redirect their decisions towards denouncing corrupt practices, whether as individuals or as an institution. The friars believe that it is only after such reexamination and redirection that they will be able to help in a genuine societal transformation, one that basically happens in the grassroots when

people themselves begin to take the lead.

When people themselves take the lead, friars do not mind if their habits and rubber shoes do not appear that good in the standard of fashion. Habits and rubber shoes, after all, fit well if they serve the interest of a people who longs for real societal transformation.

Cristino Pine OFM

## VISIT OF THE JPIC DIRECTOR TO AUSTRALIA

The Province of the Holy Spirit recently invited Joe Rozansky OFM to Australia to assist with animation of our friars around areas of JPIC. His visit was preceded with a gathering of all JPIC friars of Asia in Cebu, the Philippines, looking at the work of JPIC throughout Asia and Oceania.

Friars throughout the Province had an opportunity to attend an *Ongoing Formation Session* and meal with Joe to discuss our involvement in issues of JPIC. The sessions were held in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane. Joe also met with the Poor

Clare Sisters in Campbelltown in Sydney's west, and students and staff at St. Clare's College (NSW) and Padua College (Qld).

The focus of our meetings was seeing how JPIC is an integral part of our everyday living. We were able to discuss such issues as spirituality, animation and activism. The discussions with Joe assisted us in understanding key local and global issues and how we can actively be involved in educating people about issues and supporting various activities and initiatives.

This visit, which also included seeing some of the beautiful sites and landmarks of Australia, proved to be an opportunity for the Province to assess and evaluate its JPIC practices and to hopefully make decisions about the future direction of JPIC. As a result we have begun the process of planning for 2008/2009 using the tools of JPIC outlined by Joe: Reading the signs of the times; using scripture from the Franciscan perspective of the poor; and working with social movements.

Sarah Menassa  
Promoter of JPIC  
Australia

## "SAN ANTONIO HOME" FOR REENTRY

Since 1996, the Franciscans of Avila (Spain) have maintained a home that welcomes ex-prisoners and young women with family problems in order to help with their reinsertion into general society and the labor market. This project started in 1995 to celebrate the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of St. Anthony of Padua and is maintained by anonymous donations given to "the bread of the poor of St. Anthony." The friar's parish in Avila is named after St. Anthony.

The home is run under the direction of the Association of Women for Social Advancement (AMPROS, in Spanish), and the staff consists of a director and two social workers.

The purpose of the home is to offer a model of a safe and dignified life to women who, for various reasons, have not had the experience of this for themselves. It is hoped that they can be self-sufficient when they leave the home.

How is this done?

- 1) Increase their level of self-autonomy by means of developing good habits, positive attitudes and to have an awareness of the need for:
  - Cleanliness and personal hygiene, care of their person and their belongings;
  - Expression and control of appropriate feelings and emotions;
  - Value the need to set up norms in order to live with others;

- Learning how to save and plan their financial affairs;
  - Create good work habits.
- 2) Increase their level of social autonomy by means of:
- Listening to and having respect for the others in the home;
  - Gradual utilization of private and public services (health clinics, filling out documents, how to make a job application, etc.);
  - Establishment of sincere and secure relationships, with the objective to be able to form a family environment which is the most normal that they can create;

- Within affective relationships, to give great importance to the family;
- Adopting the customs and habits used in normal society, something especially important in the case of women from outside the country.

*“By means of the different daily activities,”* explains Mrs. Mari Tere, director of the home, *“we try to develop and achieve various objectives. We pay special attention to how the women solve their own conflicts. We dialog with them to help them reflect on their performance and favorable or unfavorable consequences, based on the context in which the conflicts are created.”*

*“For us, the most important thing is that the values of respect, collaboration, truth and friendship predominate in their living together. We work for this everyday.”*

The St. Anthony Home hosts between three and five women, who live in a familiar setting. The women live in the home for between two and four years before returning to the wider society.

Since its creation, 23 women have passed through the program.

The home is not widely known within the neighborhood, in order to avoid problems with the neighbors.

Máximo A. Garcia, OFM  
Ávila (Spain)

## COURSE IN ROME FOR JPIC ANIMATORS

The II Course for OFM Animators of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation was held at the Pontifical University Antonianum 1-10 April. Twenty-nine animators from the following countries participated: United States (4), Spain (4), Philippines (2), Democratic Republic of Congo (2), Italy (2), and one animator from Ireland, Slovenia, Austria, Poland, Netherlands, Peru, Mexico, Peru, South Africa, Uganda, Kenya, Korea, Singapore, Indonesia and the Holy Land. This was an impressive number of animators. The number was undoubtedly influenced by the letter of the Minister General sent to all provincials. In it he asked them to encourage JPIC animators to take part in the course, especially recently nominated animators. The course is meant to provide special formation to help them in the task of animating the values of justice, option for the poor,

and the integrity of creation, as found in the General Constitutions, especially Chapters IV and V.

The course was organized jointly by the JPIC Office at the General Curia and the Antonianum, and it was organized in two parts. The first was run by the friars from the JPIC office, and was offered specifically for the OFM animators; it was held on the mornings of the first week, 1-4 April. The second was more academic, and was held on the afternoons of 1-4 April, and the mornings and afternoons of 7-10 April. It was open to a wider audience, and among the more than 40 participants were other OFM friars, members of the Franciscan Family, men and women religious from other Congregations and a few lay people. Presenters came from the Antonianum and other academic centers. Students from the Anto-

nianum who participated were granted two credits.

The themes treated during the course were: Biblical foundations for a commitment to justice and peace; a Franciscan vision of JPIC: non-violence and the integrity of creation in Saint Francis; the relationship between poverty and peace: the Anthropology of Gaudium et Spes; the fundamental principles of Catholic Social Teaching (universal destination of goods, solidarity, subsidiarity, the common good); conflict resolution; JPIC in other religions: Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism; issues of International Justice: international trade, the role of the World Bank, IMF and WTO, control of natural resources, poverty, and the arms trade; refugees; issues of democracy, human rights and forms of popular participation; inter-religious dialogue; current economic development model and

environmental questions (sustainability of the model and of the environment).

The special sessions during the mornings of the first week, for the OFM JPIC animators, were: the history of the JPIC commission of the Church and its

objectives; the General Constitutions and JPIC; JPIC structures in the Order; the role of the JPIC Animator; how to read the signs of the times, and how to prepare a provincial JPIC program.

The course was a positive experience for participants. It is expected that the course will be held annually. Dates for the next course have already been chosen: 20-30 April, 2009.

Vicente Felipe, OFM

## A VALID PATH –INSERTED FRATERNITIES

A vital and often forgotten aspect of our vocation is “to be a fraternity of lesser brothers.” In our time, this can be found in what are called “inserted fraternities” – a path that has validity, although not much practice, in our daily lives as Franciscans in the world.

In our province of Arantzazu, a fraternity of this type was started in 1990 in a poor and densely populated neighborhood. The importance of this initiative was mainly that it came up from the friars themselves. They worked together to see how to respond to the unrest caused by the modern world and for a life different from that in a traditional friary. They worked to respond to the “little ones of history” and the new General Constitutions. For two years, friars of different generations, including friars in initial formation, participated in these discussions. The results were presented for to the Provincial Council for approval. In September 1990, we began to live with the good people of *Barrio San Juan*, in Santurtzi, Bizkaia.

We were animated by the exhortation of the General Chapter of 1979 that said, “*to live the Franciscan life with a major insertion in the humble groups of society.*” We also read article 1§2 of the General Constitutions of 1978 which says, “*The friars, as followers of St. Francis, are bound to lead a radically*

*evangelical life, namely: to live in a spirit of prayer and devotion and in fraternal fellowship; they are to offer a witness of penance and minority; and, in charity towards all mankind, they are to announce the Gospel throughout the whole world and to preach reconciliation, peace and justice...*” Along with this, we had the agreement of the Secretariat of Fraternal Life, of our Provincial Chapter of 1998, which called for “*the creation of an inserted fraternity among the poor as soon as possible.*”

Following the establishment of this fraternity, another was established in the neighborhood of *La Milagrosa* in the city of Pamplona in 1992, and a third was set up in 1995 in a neighborhood called *Pajarillos* in Valladolid. After 1995, no more were established, but all continue despite our falling numbers and the aging of the friars in the province. We consider that it is a gift of our vocation that this form of living and presence continues to have meaning in today’s society. We also think that we must continue in these forms of life “continuing and making history with the *minors* of history.”

The most significant **characteristics** of these “inserted fraternities” are: a **presence in the poorer neighborhoods**, to go and live in these neighborhoods with the people and to live as the

people do (similar physical space, finances, working conditions, etc.); **without specific work** (that is, without a parish or similar structure); **working without fixed income**, that is, social or pastoral work for voluntary pay or even for free; **mixing the contemplative with action**, following from the dynamics of personal and common prayer; **with a simple lifestyle, open and welcoming** to the people.

The experience of all these years has helped us to understand and clarify our initial ideas, and to make a fraternity with the lesser ones of society. It also has helped us see the need and importance of this “form of life” today and how “the call and the spirit” that we had in the beginning is still active, more mature and enriching us day by day in our daily sharing with the people. We are aware that “we are on the way” and that we have not arrived, and never will arrive, at a “definitive goal.” We are aware that we have to continue the process of beings close to and similar to the everyday situation of many people and families with whom we can learn and perceive the presence of the God of life. We know that we must allow ourselves be continually questioned by the men and women and the reality which surround us.

These days, we ask ourselves about the future of the Order and “the grace of our origins.” From our experience, we say that there is no doubt (even though it is a

minority opinion in the Order) that it is worth the trouble to go the way of “fraternal life... and better insertion in the most humble groups of society...!”

Then, we will approach the depth of our call and vocation.

Fausto Yudego, OFM  
Arantzazu Province

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## The Daily Challenges

*“It is not possible to remain indifferent to the prospect of an **ecological crisis** which is making vast areas of our planet inhabitable and hostile to humanity. The rich countries are consuming resources at a rate which cannot sustain the equilibrium of the system, thus causing poor countries to become even poorer. Nor can one forget the problems of peace so often threatened by the spectre of catastrophic wars.*

***Greed, the craving of pleasure, the idolatry of power**, the triple concupiscence which marks history and is also at the root of present evils can only be overcome if the Gospel values of poverty, chastity and service are rediscovered. Consecrated persons must know how to proclaim, with their lives and with their words, the beauty of poverty of spirit and of chastity of heart which free one for service to brothers and sisters and of obedience which gives longevity to the fruits of charity.*

*How can we remain passive in the face of contempt for fundamental **human rights**? A special commitment must be made to certain radical aspects of the Gospel which are often less understood but which cannot, because of this, be given less importance in the Church's agenda of charity. First among these is the respect for every human life from the moment of conception to natural death.*

*In this **openness to the world** which must be ordered to Christ in such a way that all realities find their true meaning in him, consecrated lay men and women who are members of Secular Institutes hold a privileged position. Sharing the common conditions of life, they effectively work for the Kingdom of God by participating in the political and social reality bringing to them a new value, in view of their following of Christ. Precisely through their consecration lived without external signs, as lay people among lay people, they can be salt and light even in those situations in which a visible sign of consecration would be rejected or serve as an impediment”. (Starting afresh from Christ, 45)*