



JUSTICE, PEACE AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION



FRANCISCAN COLLABORATION AND INCLUSION

Carolyn D. Townes, OFS, National JPIC Animator

“There can be no peace, there can be no justice, there can be no integrity of creation if the things you believe does not agree with what you do.”

Before his crucifixion, Jesus prayed that we all may be one, just as he and the Father were one. One mind and one heart. Every Sunday when we profess our faith, we say we believe in **one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church**. Yet, we tend to operate from our separate little compartments and divisions. In one part of our lives, we are Catholic. In another part, we are Franciscan. In another, we are our roles and titles. Yes, we have many parts, but we are one body, as the Apostle Paul reminds us. One body means that we are all working together for the good of the one body, the one Church. As Franciscans, we work together for the good of our Franciscan Order.

During the NAFRA Chapter, I met with Franciscans International, the non-governmental organization that works with the United Nations to address human rights injustices that impact the poor and the most vulnerable in our world. Inspired by Franciscan values, FI brings issues to the UN to influence decision-makers in the hope of bringing about more just laws and living conditions. As we are nearly 13,000 Seculars in the United States, my question to Amanda Lyons, Advocacy Officer at FI was, how can we collaborate with you to help bring about a more just world? From that conversation, a “come and share” was arranged in New York City at the Church of Saint Francis of Assisi and co-sponsored by the Migration Center at St. Francis. Also in attendance were representatives from the Franciscan Action Network, Franciscan sisters, friars and seculars; including Sr. Caritas Barajingitwa, the 2015 recipient of the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Award. We all gathered to learn about one another and to find out how we can collaborate and work together.

One thing I can safely say about Franciscans is we are all about helping to build the Beloved Community that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke of. We all want the injustices righted and the divisions mended. We all want a world of peace and mercy for all. This does not mean there will be no trials or hardships. But it does mean that when those trials and hardships land

on someone’s doorstep, a Franciscan will be there to lend a helping hand, a listening ear and a caring heart. I truly believe that when there is a need, there is a Franciscan!

I recently attended the board meeting of the Franciscan Action Network to further collaborate and work to right the wrongs of injustice in our world. It began with the reception for the Cardinal Theodore McCarrick Award. This year’s award recipient was Rev. Fletcher Harper of GreenFaith and the OurVoices campaign. It was very humbling being in the presence of Franciscan friars, sisters and Franciscan-hearted folks working tirelessly to create a more just world. I am so moved by the dedication and love of these Franciscans who see what is unjust and are compelled to right those injustices. It is moving and heart-warming to witness this level of compassion. The Franciscan Action Network board has created four sub-committees as we move forward: Animation, Administration, Communication and Development.

My challenge to us all: work toward the Beloved Community that is the Franciscan Family. Do all you can to encourage, inspire and uplift your brothers and sisters – because there are many who are silently hurting and in pain. It is our challenge and call to work for the good of the entire Franciscan Family. This is our call for Franciscan collaboration and inclusion. We are never called to a spirit of exclusion or elitism. We are Gospel people; and evangelical love is who we are and what we do. We are called to love those who challenge our loving.

If you encounter something that seems wrong or unloving by a Franciscan or Franciscan entity, instead of vilifying them, ASK SOME QUESTIONS. I do believe that we are all wonderful and good-hearted people, wanting what is best for the Order and for the Church. To help bring about that Beloved Community – which is our Order and our Church, I invite you to witness the presence of the divine seed in everyone and honor that presence, as our Holy Rule encourages us to do. And as you witness the presence of the divine seed within them, show that same presence from within yourself.