



# FDNSC united together for JPIC

FDNSC Generalate, Rome

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**Dear Sisters and Friends,**



In the introduction of “Docat” – the book in which the social teachings of the Church are introduced to the youth – Pope Francis says to the young people: “Only conversion of heart can make our world, which is full of terror and violence, more human. And that means patience, justice, prudence, dialogue, integrity, solidarity with victims, the needy and the poorest,

limitless dedication, love even unto death for the sake of the other. When you have understood that quite deeply, then you can change the world as committed Christians. The world cannot continue down the path that it is taking now. If a Christian in these days looks away from the need of the poorest of the poor, then in reality he is not a Christian.”

The way in which the participants of the *Cor Vitae* Program for Formators tried to understand this more deeply can be read in the following article, written by Fr. Benido Tumol MSC from the Philippines. Following that article, you will find the events on the World Justice and Peace Calendar, which invites all of us to action. “Did you know....” informs you about some actions that have already been undertaken within our Congregation and we end with a prayer.

## “Stepping into the shoes of the poor”

Look around us and we see people living in the slums in their shanties and people sleeping in the streets and under the bridges. We find many people begging in the streets and many street children ignored by people; drug addiction is rampant, with many stealing - snatching wallets and jewellery is common. There are many people scavenging in the garbage dump sites for scraps, anything they can salvage and sell. We hear hungry babies crying; we hear husbands and wives and neighbours fighting and cursing each other. We see labourers unjustly underpaid and we see landless farmers. Everywhere we see many people looking for jobs; millions are barely surviving; millions are suffering from poverty. We listen to the radio and we hear news of suffering, terrorism, wars and conflicts. We watch television and see people suffering from the lack of basic necessities in life; harassed, exploited and



neglected. These are just a few images of the vast poverty in our society and in the world.

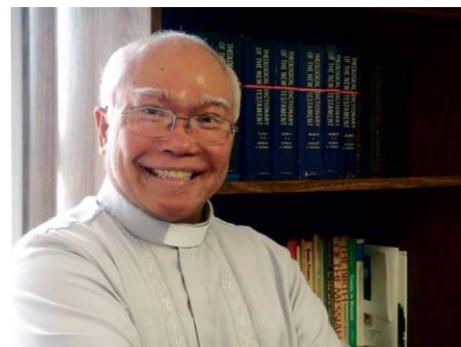
Take a look into the created universe, our common home; we see plunder of our natural resources, destruction of mountains, deforestation, land erosion, the drying up of rivers, and pollution in the air, water and land. We see our own people deprived of the richness of our country, but have made other countries richer. Due to this rapid destruction of Mother Earth, we experience the effects of climate change –stronger typhoons, tsunamis, storm surges, melting of ice glaciers, stronger earthquakes and unpredictable climatic conditions. Today, we see a “commercialized” world, i.e. everything is given a monetary equivalent.

On the other hand, when we take a look around us, we see many giant and beautiful houses, huge malls, shopping centres and supermarkets, factories, flourishing business establishments and thousands of luxurious cars moving in the streets every day. Take a look at the fast food centres, restaurants and coffee shops. We see many affluent people eating and drinking, enjoying the abundance of food while others are hungry. We see people with expensive clothes at parties in the company of their friends. These are just a few images of wealthy people in our society and of the world today.

We see a widening gap between rich and poor because of the uneven distribution of wealth. Oftentimes we hear many people blaming the poor as lazy people, labelling them as uneducated, uncultured, criminals, rubbish, drug addicts, rapists, street bad guys, drunkards, etc. Even some religious men and women think this way.

Our study of the topic ‘Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation’ (JPIC), an integral part of our Chevalier Family Charism, took place last July 3-6, 2017. It was timely and it helped us a lot to read and understand what is going on in our world today. It broadened our understanding of the concepts of human rights, justice, peace, integrity of creation. The reflection guides provided by our facilitator, Fr. Ben Alforque MSC have opened our eyes to see far more than we usually see. It gave us a new experience of how it is to be members of the Chevalier Family, i.e. to look into the situations around us, analyse causes and discern appropriate actions to guarantee human rights and change the hearts of the oppressors. It deepened our understanding and appreciation of our Charism and Spirituality.

What was so impressive in this topic was not so much learning the concepts, but experiencing the life of the poor and the rich in our society. On the afternoon of July 6, we were divided into two groups by drawing lots. We were told to keep secret what role was assigned to us and to behave accordingly the next day. That evening, some of us were



thinking we would be part of a sort of play. Some were thinking of what to wear and how to act and behave according to the role assigned to us. We were told to meet as a group in the afternoon of the next day.

Come the next morning .... As usual everybody woke up early and went to the chapel for Lauds and Mass. After the Mass everybody went to the refectory for breakfast as usual. When we arrived in the refectory, we noticed a new seating arrangement had been made. There was a long table with plates, chairs, food and a caption "For the rich only." On the other side, a round table with plates, food, chairs and a caption, "for the staff only." The area where bread and spreads were placed was also labelled "for the staff only."

Those who got the role of the rich went to their table, were seated and started their breakfast. Those who got the role of the poor were looking around to see which table was for the poor, but there was none. Deep within, we were caught by surprise and we questioned why it was like that. Some of the poor went and stole a piece of fruit, some begged from the rich a piece of pan cake, others rice and dishes, while some others just simply got hot water or coffee. The rich were seated at their table, while the poor were sitting on the floor and on the stairs, confused with what was going on and occasionally glancing at the rich who enjoyed their breakfast.



The same thing happened during lunch. The same number of plates and chairs were prepared and a table with food and with the caption, "for the rich only" and "for the staff only." Ice cream was served in the afternoon. The poor had no table to sit at and no food to eat. They begged from the rich and were seated on the floor and stairs.

That afternoon, all participants were seated together in a circle with the rich on one side and the poor on the other side. Our facilitator helped us to process our experiences and how we acted out our roles.

### **The rich were first asked to share their experiences.**

1. Some shared they were happy because they had food to eat. Others said they had acted their role well as rich people, in words and actions.
2. Some frankly said they did not like what had happened, seeing some people have nothing to eat. They felt ashamed, uncomfortable or uneasy sitting at the table reserved for the rich, eating their meals while others were watching them. Some of them withdrew from the table and found their own place, while others were drawn to join the company of the poor and shared their food with the poor.

### **The poor were asked to share their experiences too.**

1. Some felt bad deep within because of what was going on. Some felt uncomfortable and sad with the situation. Some experienced headache, stomach ache, shaking of hands, anger, feeling ashamed of being nobody in the society, wanting to cry, feeling neglected and feeling being treated as not human.

2. Some felt the injustice of having no food to eat while others had their fill. Many felt hungry and helpless; that was why some stole some fruit from the table of the rich. Some begged food from the rich and ate as much as they could without looking after other poor people, while some other poor people shared whatever they had with other poor. Others were confused by what was going on and felt they could not stand without something to eat because of their health, thus they begged.

### **Realizations of the participants**

1. We felt bad during this experience, suffered headache and mixed emotions deep within. Poverty is evil. We realized how much greater is the suffering of those people who are really poor and uncertain of where their next meal will come from. This changed our attitude as religious because sometimes we are upset with the poor always begging for food at our houses. Now we know how it feels to be deprived of basic needs. We realized and felt ashamed that sometimes we ignored the poor begging at our convents. It is easy for us to chase them away, to scold them, to refuse and say we do not have money, but we have money to recharge our cell phones, to buy snacks or meals in the restaurant and watch movies.
2. Now we realized and understood the behaviour of the poor. We came to realize why, when hungry poor people beg for food in our convents, some of them are demanding and some are angry. It is because of hunger and the mixed emotions they have. We know how they feel, because we experienced it. We realized that when the poor are given food, they eat as much as they can, because they do not know if they will have food for the next meal or when they can eat again.
3. We realized that it is easy for us to see and blame the poor because we identify their laziness and attitudes to life, but we cannot see the gigantic causes of poverty that make them poor. Our JPIC module helped us to understand that these poor people are forced into poverty and exploited by others who enrich themselves. The poor become the life-blood of the rich. The economic systems of capitalism, neoliberalism, globalization and the economy of exclusion are the main causes of poverty.
4. We further realized that the mixed emotions we had in our activity, is the presence of God's love in our hearts. We came to appreciate more profoundly our Charism and Spirituality and we are inspired to work for the liberation of the poor. Wealth is not evil and to be rich is not sinful if we show compassion to the less fortunate. We realized that working for the poor entails changing our mind set and behaviours.



## Events on the World Justice and Peace Calendar

**October 2, International Day of Non Violence:** is celebrated on the birthday of Mahatma



Gandhi, leader of the Indian independence movement and pioneer of the philosophy and strategy of non-violence. Quoting the late leader's own words, he said: "Non-violence is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind. It is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction devised by the ingenuity of man".

**We pray:** That we might become people of Gospel nonviolence, who allow God to disarm our hearts of the violence within us, that we might be nonviolent to ourselves and to every person we meet for the rest of our lives.

**October 16, World Food Day:** This is a day of action dedicated to tackling global hunger. Every year on this day, people from around the world come together to declare their commitment to eradicate worldwide hunger in our lifetime. The World Food Day 2017 focuses on Sustainable Development Goal number 2 - Zero Hunger.



**We pray:** Lord, give us today our daily bread. Let us remember those who do not have bread for today. May we willingly share your generous provision, with all who hunger and lack adequate nutrition in our own communities and across the globe.

**October 17, International Day for the Eradication of Poverty:** Irina Bokova, Director-



General of UNESCO said in her message for this day: "Ending poverty in all its forms everywhere by 2030 is an ambitious but achievable goal. Ending poverty is not just helping the poor, it is giving every woman and man the chance to live with dignity. By eradicating poverty, all humanity will be transformed. This is UNESCO's message today."

**We pray:** Creator God, Your image is alive in every human person, giving to each of us an inviolable dignity. Create in us a desire to act in solidarity, the ability to work together, and a willingness to share with others our time, our energy, our skills and talents and our wealth.

**November 10, World Science Day for Peace and Development:** By linking science more closely with society, World Science Day for Peace and Development aims to ensure that citizens are kept informed of developments in science. It also underscores the role scientists play in broadening our understanding of the remarkable, fragile planet we call home and in making our societies more sustainable.



**We pray:** Lord, we marvel at science's potential to enhance our lives, and whatever work we're doing today, may we think more of its impact on others than its benefit to ourselves.

**November 16, International Day for Tolerance:** Tolerance means to accept and respect other people with different lifestyles, ideologies, habits and customs. It is based on values like human rights and fundamental freedom for the individual. The date goes back to November 16 in 1995 when 185 member states of UNESCO signed the declaration of the principles of tolerance.

**We pray:** While the United Nations designates today an International Day of Tolerance, we know that you, God of all people, call us to something beyond mere tolerance. We pray that you enable and empower us to be people of love and compassion, who actively seek the good of others and work to see your kingdom come on earth.

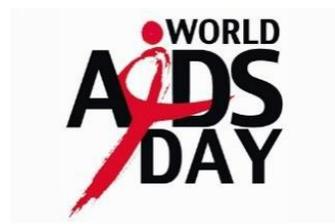
**November 25, International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women:**

This observance raises awareness of the continuing toll of gender-based violence. Violence against women and girls is one of the most prevalent human rights violations in the world. Globally, it is estimated that one in three women will experience physical or sexual abuse in her lifetime. How much do you know about violence against women? Take the quiz on: [www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/end-violence-against-women#quiz](http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/end-violence-against-women#quiz)



**We pray:** That all women and girls who are victims of violence will receive the care they need and that together we will work for the creation of a world of gentleness and equality.

**December 1, World AIDS Day:** is an opportunity for people worldwide to unite in the fight against HIV, show their support for people living with HIV and to commemorate people who have died. World AIDS Day was the first ever global health day and the first one was held in 1988. In 2015, there were 36.7 million people living with HIV.



**We pray:** God of mercy and creator of all: we pray for those afflicted with AIDS, their loved ones and all care-givers and researches, that from suffering, rejection and loss, may come strength, compassion and faith, and that we may be healed of fear and moved to give support to those in need.

**December 10, Human Rights Day:** commemorates the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. No matter where we live, what we believe, or how we love, we each deserve the most basic fundamentals of human needs. Every year, Human Rights Day marks conferences around the world dedicated to ensuring that these ideals are pursued, and that the basic Human Rights of every person are made a priority. Pope Francis reminds us “human rights are not only violated by terrorism, repression or assassination, but also by unfair economic structures that create huge inequalities”.



**We pray:** God, you have created us in your own image. May we always remember that to deny others their human rights is to challenge their very humanity. Inspire in us the courage to stand in solidarity with them, because every person is worth defending.

**December 18, International Migrants Day:** In 1997, Filipino and other Asian migrant organizations began celebrating and promoting 18 December as the International Day of



Solidarity with Migrants. This date was chosen because it was on 18 December 1990 that the UN adopted the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. In 1999 some organisations started campaigning online for the official UN designation of an International Migrant's Day, which was finally proclaimed on 4 December 2000. The day is seen firstly as an opportunity to recognize the contributions made by millions of migrants to the economies of their host and home countries, and secondly to promote respect for their basic human rights.

**We pray:** For the Church, give us strength and courage to continue to offer a dignified welcome to those new to our country and to recognise your face in those we welcome. Lord, hear our prayer.

Thank you, God, that you are stronger than our destructiveness and greater than our meanness, that you give us a fresh start, a second chance. Overwhelm us with the power of your resurrected love. Compel us with the challenge you issue for change. Lead us in the conquest of our own limits and restrictions. Drive us towards a new life of peace, justice and integrity. Amen.

### Did you know?

By contributing to education and health care, our Sisters in **Angola** promote Justice and Peace in their mission. A child in Angola is 20 times more likely to die before the age of 5 than one in the United States. Children in parts of sub-Saharan Africa are among the worst off in the world, according to a report from the international NGO, Save the Children. “Children in these countries are the least likely to fully experience childhood, a time that should be dedicated to emotional, social and physical development, as well as play,” according to Lily Kuo in *Quarz Africa*, June 12, 2017

Education in Angola has four years of compulsory, free primary education. However, many of the girls are not attending school and students have to carry everything to school, even a chair! Finding qualified teachers is one of the major problems.



In their report for the General Conference, our **Senegalese Sisters** told us how they took the initiative to clean up the school yard with the children, to make them more aware of their responsibility for the environment.

Our **PNG** sisters related in their report that each community was asked to do some fundraising. The money would be used to help with the education of our sisters in Kiribati, so that they would be able to assist the people in their combat against Climate Change. “The fundraising itself has helped us strengthen our solidarity with the sisters of Kiribati and we were very happy to help”, Sr. Relida wrote, “because our Papua New Guinea Sisters know what it means, because some parts of our own country have also been affected by Climate Change.

To deepen her knowledge of JPIC issues, Sr. Elly of the **Generalate** has completed two free online courses on [www.futurelearn.com](http://www.futurelearn.com) ; one on Climate Change and the other on modern slavery. It was a very enriching experience. Highly recommended to everybody! Soon a course ‘Climate Justice’ from UNESCO will start!

### **A Prayer for Our Earth**

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe  
and in the smallest of your creatures.  
You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.  
Pour out upon us the power of your love,  
that we may protect life and beauty.

Fill us with peace that we may live  
as brothers and sisters, harming no one.  
O God of the poor,  
help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth,  
so precious in your eyes.

Bring healing to our lives  
that we may protect the world and not prey on it,  
that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.  
Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain  
at the expense of the poor and the earth.

Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,  
to be filled with awe and contemplation,  
to recognize that we are profoundly united  
with every creature as we journey  
towards your infinite light.

We thank you for being with us each day.  
Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle  
for justice, love and peace. Amen

