

PROMOTING JUSTICE AND PEACE IN A GLOBALISED WORLD

The Promoters of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation of the Carmelite Family
Fatima, August 2006

The second international course for promoters of justice, peace and the integrity of creation in the Carmelite Family was held at Casa Beato Nuno, Fátima, from the 31st of July to the 15th of August, under the title, Promoting Justice and Peace in a Globalized World. The 50 participants came from 20 countries. Each day's liturgy reflected the style of a particular country, and each group worked to include many languages in the process. The course followed a fundamental method of See, Judge and Act. The following is a report on the development of each of these three sections:

Section 1: See the reality of what is going on in the world

The study of the situation of the world of today was led by Arcadi Oliveras a professor of Economic Sciences from the University of Barcelona. In his five talks he dealt with the meaning of the globalised world from an economic point of view, the presence of injustice and its causes, and the background and effects of war. He ended by indicating a series of paths that might be taken in order to get ourselves out of our present situation.

Globalisation

While globalisation can represent a time of opportunity for many people evidence shows that the gap between rich and poor in the world is growing at an alarming rate. In the early 1980s the difference between a citizen of Bolivia and a citizen of Canada was in the order of 30% it is now in the order of 95 %.

The phenomenon of globalisation depends on the acceptance of one ideology and one single conception of the world. In its most negative aspects it revolves around political, economic and social structures that create economic injustice and wars.

The reasons for economic injustice include, colonialism in its traditional forms and its modern forms, the free trade agreements that do not compensate the weakest partners, the international debt that makes it impossible for countries to develop and so acts as a continuing exploitation of them, and human migration that strips a poor country of its best resources.

The key word for a solution to the problems of poverty induced by globalisation is redistribution. Some countries will have to lower their standard of living in order to allow others to raise theirs. This will depend on the cancellation of the international debt of the poor countries of the world, the regulation of tax havens, the emergence of more equitable tax regimes, the reduction of military spending, the sharing of labour by reducing the working day, and the strengthening of trades unions around the world. This is at the political level. There is also the possibility of alternatives at the personal level that include, the utilisation of ethical banking, a refusal to pay unjust taxes, and greater responsibility in the purchase of products (fair trade)

War and Peace

The many wars that are going on at present in the world are a result of many things that have to do with globalisation: military spending even though there may be no immediate threat, the continual recruitment of military personnel, the continual development of military intelligence and the ever-growing arms trade. While arms seem to travel from north to south, drugs seem to travel in corresponding quantities from south to north. Alternatives to this situation include, the conviction that war is never the solution to human conflicts and problems, the acceptance of the need to disarm, education for peace, the strengthening of pacifist movements and the support for conscientious objectors and the willingness to reduce the demand for drugs and arms.

As part of the process of seeing, each participant shared information about what is going on in his or her own country and about the work that Carmelites are doing in justice and peace. D^a. María Amélia Cardoso y D^a. María do Rosario Farmhouse presented us to two real situations of Justice and Peace in Portugal: social centres, especially the one in Carmelite parish in Santo António dos Cavaleiros, and the situation of immigration and the political refugees. These reports then became the ground for listening to the cry of the poor that is the basis of the actions recommended (section 3).

Section 2: Interpret and judge the reality of what is going on the world with the wisdom that comes from the Bible and the Christian and Carmelite Tradition.

The process of judging began with two days of retreat, conducted by the Prior General, Fr. Joseph Chalmers, O.Carm. In his three talks the Prior General, by reflected on Mary as contemplative, prophet, mother and sister, challenged us to see the will of God as the foundation of our commitment to justice and peace rather than any notion of self satisfaction that we might have.

Carlos Mesters O.Carm. and Míceál O'Neill, O.Carm. then led us through a series of reflections on the wisdom we find in the Bible and in our own traditions that will help us to so judge what is going on the world that we will know even more intensely that we are called to work for justice and peace in this globalised world.

As Carmelites we are the sons and daughters of the prophets. We are called to speak in the name of God and not in our own name. But, how are we to proclaim the truth in this globalised world? How do we confront a secularised world in which it appears there is no space for God? How are we to be prophets in a world of social disintegration in which the economic interests of the powerful make slaves of the poor and powerless? How do we speak about Jesus Christ in a world that is torn by war, in a world that is not interested in what is weak and small but honours the god of consumerism?

The Image of God

We first looked at the Image of God in the Bible. Much of the Old Testament was written in the period of the Babylonian Captivity, and Carlos suggested that there are similarities between that epoch and ours. The small remnant of the people of Israel, rather than bending to the power of the Empire, looked for a new way forward that would allow them to recover their identity and maintain their dignity. At this time the story of Elijah proved to be a great inspiration. Elijah came to a new experience of God in the gentle breeze. The

way forward emerged from the peoples' willingness to ask, What is God doing in our present situation and what is God asking us to do?

We discovered that some images of God in the world of today support and sustain the work of justice and peace and some do not. Some images are liberating and some are oppressive. The image of God that we have justifies the type of option that we make for justice and peace. Attachment to one image makes that image an idol. Openness to new images of God helps us to grow. Jesus is the perfect image of God, a God who is revealed in the Old Testament as the God who sees the oppression of his people, hears their cry, knows their suffering and is coming down to help them. (Ex 3:8)

We looked at the response that Jesus gave to the globalised world in which he lived. His response, inspired by what the prophet Malachi said about Elijah (Mal 4:7), was to do everything to rebuild the community relations that the system of oppression at that time had done everything to destroy.

Jesus Christ revealed the true face of God in the social context that was dominated by the Roman Empire and was marked by a religious system that had turned its back on the poor. He identified himself with the Suffering Servant of Yahweh (cf Is 42:1-8) and he accepted service as the one and only privilege that was possible in his life. He revealed the image of God as Father-Mother, the God who comes down to set his people free. He is the redeemer but he does not impose himself. Rather he listens, he engages in dialogue and draws close to the life of the people in tenderness and mercy. He is the good Samaritan (Lk 10:29-37) who makes himself a neighbour to the poor and oppressed.

In the face of the Empires of today the response of the people in the Babylonian captivity and the response of Jesus can give us new reasons for hope and strengthen our resolve to rise above the limits of our situation.

The Meaning of Justice

We looked at different ways of defining justice. Today many people understand it as right relationship between people, between people and creation, between people and God. Right relationships happen when the partners grow. Justice may also be understood as God's way of acting, a way that is characterised by gratuitousness. This is justice without measure. Such justice demands something more of us. (Carmelite Rule 24)

There can be no justice until, like Yahweh, we are able to hear the cry of the poor. We asked the question, Who are the poor? They are the materially poor, the poor in spirit, the poor by conviction and that category of people that are not poor but whose humanity is incomplete because of their lack of poverty. Like Yahweh, we are to be faithful to our calling. His calling was to be faithful to the cry of the poor. That too is our calling. The Church's option for the poor gives us a way of acting that will help us answer this cry and be effective witnesses to the Gospel.

Contemplation, which is at the heart of the Carmelite way of life, leads us to see the God of our Contemplation as the God who urges us to work for justice and peace. The Carmelite Rule may be seen as a manual for building just relationships. This process begins in our communities where we live as brothers and sisters. The Carmelite Rule urges silence, as the servant of this kind of justice. The Carmelite Saints whose lives were clear expressions of

the wisdom of the Carmelite Tradition, such as Miguel del Fuente, Therese of Lisieux, Titus Brandsma and Edith Stein, teach us that love and justice are united in the Carmelite vocation.

In our globalised world, the poor continue to cry. Carmelites out of the prophetic silence that fosters justice, will find ways to be close to the poor, to listen to them and help them. Carmelites will be prophets of the tenderness and mercy of God.

Section 3 Proposals for action in response to the cries of people in our society and the cries of Creation itself.

As preparation for the third phase, Sr Jane Remson O.Carm. presented the history of the Carmelite involvement in developing an NGO that is represented at the UN and the status of the project to date. She also reviewed pertinent principles of the Church's social doctrine tradition. Mr Tony Hill of the UN presented more information about the nature of the work of the NGOs in contemporary discussions. They help to create world opinion that is now becoming like a 2nd world power. We were saddened that Fr Bill Harry, O.Carm., was unable to attend because of travel restrictions imposed by possible terrorist threats in London.

We then divided into four areas. What follows are the participants' judgments about suitable action by the Carmelite family. We recommend that they provide an opportunity for further discussion throughout the Carmelite Family.

CRIES AND RESPONSES

I. NORTH/SOUTH

JUSTICE THROUGH TRUTH (John Paul II)

In Matthew 25:31-46 God reveals to us the criteria for eternal life; "...I was hungry and you gave me food. I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was naked and you clothed me..."

Cries that we have heard

We hear the cry of the poor in their scream to be RECOGNIZED as human beings made in the image of God and not as work animals only good to work so that some way live in luxury.

We hear the cry for TRUTH in both the North and South, so we can live in freedom without fear and not become victims of silent fear.

Actions

We Carmelite must be involved in proclaiming the truth in order to change the global economic structures that create so much poverty and suffering.

We propose the following actions:

1. That those communities who can do so, conduct local forums where the truth of their situation can be told by the poor and that we communicate the results of these forums to the Carmelite Family and to other organisations as appropriate.
2. That Carmelites distance themselves from all recourse to arms and support campaigns and processes for disarmament in whatever way possible.
3. That Carmelite resources be invested only in corporations that serve the common good and environmental security. The pharmaceutical industry deserves special attention in this regard.

II. EDUCATION/COMUNICACION/FORMATION

Cries that we have heard

We have heard a cry from the **young people who are in the time of formation** as are all those men and women Carmelite religious who are in a process of permanent formation.

We want to deepen and to understand the dimension of justice and peace which form part of our charism. The contemplative attitude, central to our vocation as Carmelites as followers of Christ, should increase in the service in the midst of the people. We want them to deepen this understanding.

We have heard the cry of **children and young people** who are in the sage of being formed, of going to school, of playing with their friends, of enjoying their infancy, adolescence and young adulthood.

We want to be children, we want to have time to grow up. Education is one of our fundamental rights which helps us to grow in culture, in knowledge, and in relationship with others of our same age. We want to be respected and to have the means necessary to grow.

We have heard the cry of **women** who are forced to lose the dignity of their person by means of violence against them, of their bodies being used for prostitution, of the women who are victims of violence in general. There has been a cry of silence, of fear, of being hidden. We are created in the image and likeness of God, violence against the dignity of the most vulnerable means losing the dignity of everyone.

We want to defend our rights, and cry out in order to defend our dignity.

We have heard the Cry of **God** as well. Do not use my name for war, for violence, for justifying.

As Carmelites we want to see – contemplate – reality with the eyes of God and to offer by the witness of our live and our history the image of God in Jesus Christ who is and is always faithful to humanity as The Merciful Father.

We have heard the cry of **those who have access to the means of communication and of those who do not have them.**

We want to know the Truth. Technology makes it possible for our world to be a village where we can know what is happening in every area. We want to have access to information that is certain, objective, and factually accurate. We want the means to share this information no matter where we are or what we have.

Actions

1. We thank the formation directors who in their formation programmes help Carmelite candidates to understand the close relationship that exists between the quest for justice and the Carmelite charism. We recommend the inclusion in formation process of experiences of multicultural immersion.
2. We propose that at least one course for the education of the promoters of peace and justice in the Carmelite Family be held in the period between the General Chapters of the Carmelite Friars.
3. We propose that there be regional gatherings of peace and justice among the Carmelite family to encourage face to face dialog.
4. We propose that the Carmelite NGO at the United Nations be a *think-tank* that attracts Carmelites from around the world to gather, study, reflect and pray together.
5. We propose that we encourage studies on human motivations in order to get a better understanding of the causes of violence, especially: War, Crime and the Prison System, Relational - Domestic Violence, Rape, and that we foment Non-Violence as an attitude and as a biblical strategy
6. We propose that we work to expand educational opportunities for all children.
7. We propose that we help to develop laws to protect the human rights of children, especially, Education, Respect, Housing, Nutrition. and to denounce the following as violations of those rights, sex trafficking, child prostitution, sex tourism, incest, and other forms of sexual abuse, child labour, the use of children as soldiers
8. We propose that we work to educate our school children and parishioners to appreciate the cultures of others and so to work against racism and ethnocentrism which often are causes of war, violence, and neighbourhood-tribal conflicts
9. We propose that we explore the role of Elijah in encouraging interfaith dialog among the religions of the book, for religion and the name of God are also seen as causes of many wars.
10. We propose to raise up a critical conscience regarding the mass-media and the kind of information that comes from them. As Carmelites we have a duty to be prophetic in denouncing the manipulation of truth that has become characteristic of so much of the mass-media.

III. INTEGRITY OF CREATION

God calls us to “act justly, love tenderly, and to walk humbly with your God.” (Micah 6:8) In response to this call we hear and see the harm being caused to the environment by us as exemplified by: global warming, deforestation, loss of indigenous cultures and land,

privatization of natural resources (water/blue gold/oro azul), and GMOs -Genetically Modified Organisms.

As Carmelites, we see all of Creation as gift from God..."that must be freely returned, in whatever way can best serve the good of the Church and our Order, for the human and social development of all. (Carmelite Constitutions 4.52)

As men and women of contemplation, we feel compelled to respond to the cry of Creation through the following actions:

1. Set up effective means of communication for the mutual encouragement and support of work for Justice and Peace within the Family Carmelite.
2. Call for the inclusion of issues pertaining to the environment in Initial and ongoing formation programmes.
3. Encourage the participation in and support of activities of our own initiative and those other organisations on issues pertaining to a just environment: UN, NGOs, parishes, schools, ministries, etc.
4. Analyse our investment and purchasing practices to insure our participation in the local and global economy reflects justice to all of Creation.
5. Seek and provide information on GMOs and their impact on the environment and the human family.
6. As individuals and in community, discern the integrity of our vow of poverty in the midst of a consumerist society, i.e. Fair Trade, lifestyle, etc.

IV. VULNERABLE PERSONS AND GROUPS

IV.1 IMMIGRANTS

The Cry that we have heard

Migrants leave their countries of origin, and end up in subhuman situations of all kinds (political, economic, social). Many die on the way in their attempts to cross borders. Others will have to suffer exploitation in the countries in which they settle. Young people especially come looking for an illusory world, deceived by the mass-media.

Actions

1. As Carmelites we have to stand by these brothers and sisters of ours whose presence is an enrichment for us.
2. In our own lives we have to practise and reinforce the values of acceptance and listening, of hospitality and solidarity.
3. We have to help them to achieve social integration, by offering them juridical advice and assistance.
4. We have to invest in the creation of centres of welcome.
5. We have to fight against the kind of public opinion that is opposed to immigrants.

6. Condemn the laws that criminalise the illegality of immigration. We cannot call any human person illegal simply because their papers are not in order. The Carmelite NGO will strive to ensure that the word “illegal” will disappear from references to immigrants.
7. We have to cooperate with and support campaigns that demand the payment of the 0.7% and the cancellation of international debt.

We have to help to create conditions of development in the poor countries in order that the citizens of those countries will no longer feel forced to leave them.

IV. 2 Health

The cry that we hear is:

Hear me – unconditionally.

Psalm 139 is an expression of God’s unconditional acceptance of us.

For I need access to:

1. Health~care (physical, mental, spiritual, emotional, drugs, medication ..)
2. Information and education
3. Support for my family.

Action

1. As Carmelites, we will learn to listen to one another’s cries, recognising our own vulnerability both as individuals and as communities.
2. We will start a dialogue within the Carmelite Family about JPIC, especially about health issues.

IV.3 Women, men, children, adolescents, youngs, adults, family and indigenous villages.

Cries that we have heard

- Hunger
- Generalised exploitation
- A lack of hope
- Sadness
- Anguish /depression
- Machismo (male chauvinism)
- Drug dependence/alcoholism
- Domestic violence / sexual abuse of children in the home / prostitution
- Failure
- Discrimination in general
- Neglect of human rights
- Break-up of the family.

- Loss of values
 - In general: Violation of human rights, of the value of the human person. The human person is not the priority.

Action

Take up the new situations of suffering in new styles of fraternity: learning to listen and to respect the person, being generous with our time and compassionate in our approach, with an appreciation of the gratuitousness that we find in our charism. The human person has to be our priority.

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By way of general comment, in order to support what we have proposed, we believe that the work of justice and peace will be enhanced:

1. When the relationship between justice and peace and our Carmelite Charism is better understood.
2. When every province, congregation, and group that is related to the Carmelite Family has a Commission for Peace, Justice and Integrity of Creation or at least one person who coordinates such activities in their group.
3. When communication is improved and Justice and Peace activities are communicated internationally through the Carmelite Non Governmental Organization at the UN..