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***Theological and Historical Basis for the OFS and YouFra’s Commitment to Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation***

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# Abbreviations

GS Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes CSDC* Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church

GG.CC. General Constitutions of the Secular Franciscan Order OFS Secular Franciscan Order

YouFra Franciscan Youth

# Introduction

**The call to work for justice, peace and integrity of creation comes from the Lord**, who speaks to us through diverse means. First, God calls us **through the Holy Scriptures** to live according to his plan of love for all humanity. This plan has been revealed through the history of Israel and in Jesus Christ, Son of God, who has renewed all creation through his incarnation, his life and preaching, and finally through his passion, death and resurrection, followed by the sending of the Holy Spirit upon his apostles to start the mission of his Church on earth.

God’s call for justice, peace and care for creation is also heard **when God’s word is proclaimed in the liturgy of the Church and when we reflect on the Scriptures** opening our hearts to God and our neighbours. God’s voice is also perceived in prayer and contemplation, which should also be the soul of all that Secular Franciscans are and do (cf. Rule 8, GG.CC. 12.3). In this way, as we engage in this work, we will stay focused and will be guided and sustained by the Holy Spirit.

God also calls us **through the signs of the times and places**, which we are called to discern and respond to. We read in the Gospel that Jesus told the Pharisees and Sadducees «You know how to judge the appearance of the sky, but you cannot judge the signs of the times» (*Mt* 16:3). In our times, the Vatican II Council affirmed: «the Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel». (*GS*, 4). Being followers of Christ also means to take to heart what happens to the men and women around us:

*The joys and the hopes, the griefs, and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts. […] That is why this community realizes that it is truly linked with mankind and its history by the deepest of bonds. (GS, 1)*

Without pretending to do a comprehensive and extensive presentation, we will consider **the following theological and historical basis** for the OFS and YouFra’s commitment to Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation:

# The call from the Scriptures,

1. **Catholic Social Teachings – Social Doctrine of the Church**
2. **Catholic Church’s Institutional Developments, and**
3. **Franciscan bases**
4. **The Call from the Scriptures**

The foundational principles and contents of the call to be instruments of justice, peace and care for creation come from the Holy Scriptures. Here we point to some of the main elements related to this topic, which are found in both the Old and the New Testament.

# Old Testament

* + 1. **Exodus: liberation from slavery and the gift of land**

*«According to the Book of Exodus, the Lord speaks these words to Moses: “I have seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters;* ***I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them*** *out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land,* ***a land flowing with milk and honey****” (Ex 3:7-8). The gratuitous presence of God — to which his very name alludes, the name he reveals to Moses, “I am who I am” (Ex 3:14) — is manifested in the freeing from slavery and in the promise. These become historical action, which is* ***the origin of the manner in which the Lord's people collectively identify themselves, through the acquisition of freedom and the land that the Lord gives them****». (CSDC, 21)*

# The Ten Commandments

*«The Ten Commandments, which constitute an extraordinary path of life and indicate the* ***surest way for living in freedom from slavery to sin****, contain a privileged expression of the* ***natural law****». (CSDC,*

*22) «There comes from the* ***Decalogue a commitment that concerns not only fidelity to the one true God, but also the social relations among the people of the Covenant****. These relations are regulated, in particular, by what has been called* ***the right of the poor****». (CSDC, 23)*

# The sabbatical and jubilee years

«*Among the many norms which tend to give concrete expression to the style of gratuitousness and sharing in justice which God inspires, the law of the sabbatical year* (celebrated every seven years) *and that of the jubilee year* (celebrated every fifty years) [Cf. *Ex* 23, *Deut* 15, *Lev* 25] *stand out as important guidelines — unfortunately never fully put into effect historically — for the social and economic life of the people of Israel*. Besides requiring fields to lie fallow, these laws call for the cancellation of debts and a general release of persons and goods: everyone is free to return to his family of origin and to regain possession of his birthright». (*CSDC*, 24)

**«***The precepts of the sabbatical and jubilee years constitute a kind of social doctrine in miniature*. They show how the principles of justice and social solidarity are inspired by the gratuitousness of the salvific event wrought by God, and that they do not have a merely corrective value for practices dominated by selfish interests and objectives, but must rather become, as a prophecy of the future, the normative points of reference to which every generation in Israel must conform if it wishes to be faithful to its God». (*CSDC*, 25)

# The Prophets’ preaching

*«These principles become the focus of the Prophets' preaching, which seeks to internalize them*. God’s Spirit poured into the human heart — the Prophets proclaim — will make these same sentiments of justice and solidarity, which reside in the Lord's heart, take root in you (cf. *Jer* 31:33 and *Ezek* 36:26-27). […] This *process* of *internalization* gives rise to greater depth and realism in social action, making possible the *progressive universalization of attitudes of justice and solidarity*, which the people of the Covenant are called to have towards all men and women of every people and nation». (*CSDC*, 25)

But this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days—oracle of the LORD. I will place my law within them and write it upon their hearts; I will be their God, and they shall be my people. (*Jer* 31:33)

The CSDC also reminds us that «…the prophetic tradition condemns fraud, usury, exploitation and gross injustice, especially when directed against the poor (cf. *Is* 58:3-11; *Jer* 7:4-7; *Hos* 4:1-2; *Am* 2:6-7; *Mic* 2:1-2)...». (*CSDC*, 323)

*Is this not, rather, the fast that I choose: releasing those bound unjustly, untying the thongs of the yoke; setting free the oppressed, breaking off every yoke? Is it not sharing your bread with the hungry, bringing the afflicted and the homeless into your house; clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own flesh? Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your wound shall quickly be healed. (Is 58, 6-8a)*

# The principle of creation and God's gratuitous action

*«…God freely confers being and life on everything that exists. Man and woman, created in his image and likeness (cf. Gen 1:26-27), are for that very reason called to be the visible sign and the effective instrument of divine gratuitousness in the garden where God has placed them as cultivators and custodians of the goods of creation». (CSDC, 26)*

*«It is in the free action of God the Creator that we find the very meaning of creation, even if it has been distorted by the experience of sin. In fact, the narrative of the first sin (cf. Gen 3:1-24) describes the permanent temptation and the disordered situation in which humanity comes to find itself after the fall of its progenitors. [...]. It is in this original estrangement that are to be sought the deepest roots of all the evils that afflict social relations between people, of all the situations in economic and political life that attack the dignity of the person, that assail justice and solidarity». (CSDC, 27)*

# New Testament 1.2.1.The gospels

* **The messianic ministry of Jesus**

*In the Gospel of Saint Luke, Jesus describes his messianic ministry with the words of Isaiah, which recall the prophetic significance of the jubilee: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” (Lk 4:18- 19; cf. Is 61:1-2). (CSDC, 28)*

# The Beatitudes: true happiness and true woes according to God: Lk 6: 20-26

*…”Blessed are you who are poor, for the kingdom of God is yours. Blessed are you who are now hungry, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who are now weeping, for you will laugh. […] But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. But woe to you who are filled now, for you will be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will grieve and weep […].*

# The Abundance of life brought by Jesus

Jesus also said: I came that you may have life and have it in abundance. (*Jn* 10:10)

# The Parable of the Rich Man and the Poor Lazarus: *Lk* 16:19-31

*There was a rich man who dressed in purple garments and fine linen and dined sumptuously each day. And lying at his door was a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who would gladly have eaten his fill of the scraps that fell from the rich man’s table. Dogs even used to come and lick his sores. (19-21)*

# The Universal Judgment: *Mt* 25:31-46

*…And the king will say to them in reply, ‘Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.’…* (Mt 25:40)

**1.2.2. Acts of the Apostles**

*All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one’s need.* (Act 2:44-45)

*The community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common. With great power the apostles bore witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great favour was accorded them all. There was no needy person among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them, bring the proceeds of the sale, and put them at the feet of the apostles, and they were distributed to each according to need.* (Act 4:32-35)

# Catholic Social Teachings – Social Doctrine of the Church

* 1. **The Fathers of the Church**

An important piece of our Catholic social teachings comes from the Fathers of the Church, of whom the *CSDC* says:

*«The Fathers of the Church insist more on the need for the conversion and transformation of the consciences of believers than on the need to change the social and political structures of their day. They call on those who work in the economic sphere and who possess goods to consider themselves administrators of the goods that God has entrusted to them». (CSDC, 328)*

# The *Magisterium* of the Church and the role of the laity in society

The Church’s teaching on the role of the laity in society is very rich and ample. For reasons of time and space we only quote one paragraph here from *Lumen Gentium,* which highlights the secular mission of the laity to sanctify the world, and to order and illuminate the temporal realities:

*«They live in the ordinary circumstances of family and social life, from which the very web of their existence is woven. They are called there by God that by exercising their proper function and led by the spirit of the Gospel they may work for the sanctification of the world from within as a leaven. In this way they may make Christ known to others, especially by the testimony of a life resplendent in faith, hope and charity. Therefore, since they are tightly bound up in all types of temporal affairs it is their special task to order and to throw light upon these affairs in such a way that they may come into being and then continually increase according to Christ to the praise of the Creator and the Redeemer». (LG 31)*

# Principles of the Social Doctrine of the Church

The *CSDC* lists four principles of the Social Doctrine of the Church (SDC) that are permanent, general, and fundamental, and are considered as the very heart of that teaching. Those are: the dignity of the human person, the common good, subsidiarity, and solidarity (cf. n. 160). These principles are not to be considered independently, but rather as part of “a unified doctrinal corpus that interprets modern social realities in a systematic manner” (n. 162). Their value stems from their capacity to “indicate the paths possible for building a good, authentic and renewed social life” (n. 162). They carry a weighty moral value, because they have to do with the primary foundations upon which life in society is constructed, as they relate to the behaviour of individuals, groups and institutions, whose freedom and choices affect such life (cf. n. 163). In its *Part One*, Chapters III, Section 1 (*Social Doctrine and the Personalist Principle***)** and Chapter IV (*Principles of the Church's Social Doctrine*), the *CSDC* enlists eight principles of the SDC:

1. The Dignity of the Human Person
2. The Principle of the Common Good
3. The Universal Destination of Goods
4. The Principle of Subsidiarity
5. Participation
6. The Principle of Solidarity
7. The Fundamental Values of Social Life
8. The Way of Love

In its *Part Two*, the *CSDC* develops other important aspects of life in society: Cap. V: The Family, the Vital Cell of Society

Cap. VI: Human Work

Cap VII: Economic Life

Cap. VIII: The Political Community Cap IX: The International Community

Cap. X: Safeguarding the Environment Cap. XI: The Promotion of Peace

In its *Part Three*, the *Compendium* presents the topic of ‘*Social Doctrine and Ecclesial Action’*. Of particular interest for the formation of secular Franciscans is the content of the last section named: *Social Doctrine and the Commitment of the Lay Faithful*, which is structured as follows:

1. The lay faithful
2. Spirituality of the lay faithful
3. Acting with prudence
4. Social doctrine and lay associations
5. Service in the various sectors of social life
   1. Service to the human person
   2. Service in culture
   3. Service in the economy
   4. Service in politics

# Defense and Promotion of Human Rights

The *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* also reminds us of the urgency of defending and promoting human rights:

*The Church, aware that her essentially religious mission includes the defence and promotion of human rights,* “holds in high esteem the dynamic approach of today which is everywhere fostering these rights”. The Church profoundly experiences the need to respect justice and human rights within her own ranks.

*This pastoral commitment develops in a twofold direction: in the proclamation of the Christian foundations of human rights and in the denunciation of the violations of these rights.* […] “The promotion of justice and peace and the penetration of all spheres of human society with the light and the leaven of the Gospel have always been the object of the Church's efforts in fulfilment of the Lord's command”.*1*

* 1. **Pope Francis’ *Laudato si’***

In his long-awaited Encyclical Letter *Laudato si’,* On Care for Our Common Home (24.05.2015), Pope Francis has made a significant contribution to the reflection, analysis and proposals to respond to the material and spiritual challenges placed on all humanity by the current conditions of the earth and society. Rather than trying to summarize this important document in a few phrases, I propose a few phrases taken from the final part of the Encyclical “to taste and see” how interesting and profound are its contents:

1. *[…] It must be said that some committed and prayerful Christians, with the excuse of realism and pragmatism, tend to ridicule expressions of concern for the environment. Others are passive; they choose not to change their habits and thus become inconsistent. So, what they all need is an “****ecological conversion****”, whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them. Living our* ***vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork*** *is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience.*
2. *In calling to mind the figure of* ***Saint Francis of Assisi****, we come to realize that* ***a healthy relationship with creation is one dimension of overall personal conversion****, which entails the recognition of our errors, sins, faults and failures, and leads to heartfelt repentance and desire to change […]*

1 PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE, [*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church,*](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html) Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2005, 159, Internet (30.03.13): [http://www.vatican.va/roman\_curia/pontifical\_councils/justpeace/documents/rc\_pc\_justpeace\_doc\_20060526\_comp](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html) [endio-dott-soc\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html)

1. *[…]* ***Social problems must be addressed by community networks*** *and not simply by the sum of individual good deeds.[…] The ecological conversion needed to bring about lasting change is also a community conversion.*
2. *[…]* ***As believers, we do not look at the world from without but from within****, conscious of the bonds with which the Father has linked us to all beings. […] We do not understand* ***our superiority*** *as a reason for personal glory or irresponsible dominion, but rather as a different capacity which, in its turn,* ***entails a serious responsibility stemming from our faith****.*
3. *Love, overflowing with small gestures of mutual care, is also civic and political, and it makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world. Love for society and commitment to the common good are outstanding expressions of a charity which affects not only relationships between individuals but also “macro- relationships, social, economic and political ones”.2 […]* ***social love moves us to devise larger strategies to halt environmental degradation and to encourage a “culture of care” which permeates all of society****. When we feel that God is calling us to intervene with others in these social dynamics, we should realize that this too is* ***part of our spirituality****, which is an exercise of charity and, as such,* ***matures and sanctifies us****.*
4. *Not everyone is called to engage directly in political life. Society is also enriched by* ***a countless array of organizations which work to promote the common good and to defend the environment****, whether natural or urban. Some, for example, show concern for a public place (a building, a fountain, an abandoned monument, a landscape, a square), and strive to protect, restore, improve, or beautify it as something belonging to everyone. Around these community actions,* ***relationships develop or are recovered, and a new social fabric emerges****. Thus,* ***a community can break out of the indifference induced by consumerism.*** *These actions cultivate a shared identity, with a story which can be remembered and handed on. In this way, the world, and the quality of life of the poorest, are cared for, with a sense of solidarity which is at the same time aware that* ***we live in a common home which God has entrusted to us****.* ***These community actions, when they express self-giving love, can also become intense spiritual experiences****.*

# Catholic Church’s Institutional Developments

* 1. **Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace.**

*The Second Vatican Council had proposed the creation of a body of the universal Church whose role would be “to stimulate the Catholic Community to foster progress in needy regions and social justice on the international scene” (Gaudium et Spes, No. 90). It was in reply to this request that Pope Paul VI established the Pontifical Commission “Justitia et Pax” by a Motu Proprio dated 6 January 1967 (Catholicam Christi Ecclesiam).*

*Two months later, in Populorum Progressio, Paul VI succinctly stated of the new body that “its name, which is also its program, is Justice and Peace” (No. 5). Gaudium et Spes and this Encyclical, which “in a certain way... applies the teaching of the Council” (Sollicitudo Rei Socialis, No. 6), were the founding texts and points of reference for this new body.*

*After a ten-year experimental period, Paul VI gave the Commission its definitive status with the Motu Proprio Justitiam et Pacem of 10 December 1976. When the Apostolic Constitution Pastor Bonus of 28 June 1988 reorganized the Roman Curia, Pope John Paul II changed its name from Commission to Pontifical Council and reconfirmed the general lines of its work3.*

# Dicastery for promoting Integral Human Development

On 17 August 2016, Pope Francis instituted the Dicastery for promoting Integral Human Development by an *Apostolic Letter Issued Motu Proprio* that states the following:

2 BENEDICT XVI, Encyclical Letter [*Caritas in Veritate*](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate.html) (29 June 2009) 2: AAS 101 (2009), 642.

3 *Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace*, *Origin*, on Internet (05.04.2017): [http://www.vatican.va/roman\_curia/pontifical\_councils/justpeace/documents/rc\_pc\_justpeace\_pro\_20011004\_en.ht](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_pro_20011004_en.html)

*“…So that the Holy See may be solicitous in these areas, as well as in those regarding health and charitable works, I institute the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development. This Dicastery will be competent particularly in issues regarding migrants, those in need, the sick, the excluded and marginalized, the imprisoned and the unemployed, as well as victims of armed conflict, natural disasters, and all forms of slavery and torture.*

*In the new Dicastery, governed by the Statutes that today I approve ad experimentum, the competences of the following Pontifical Councils will be merged, as of 1 January 2017: the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, the Pontifical Council Cor Unum, the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, and the Pontifical Council for Health Care Workers…”4*

# Franciscan basis

* 1. **St. Francis of Assisi: From Repulsion to Inclusion. The Transforming Power of Mercy**

According to his *Testament*, one of the experiences that impressed St. Francis the most was the bittersweet encounter with the lepers. In that encounter, he felt the power of mercy and compassion when he overcame his fears towards the ugly, the weak and the nasty.

By welcoming the lepers into his life and fraternal affection, Francis embraced the suffering Christ present in those who were not only physically ill but also excluded from the society of his time, the disposable people of his time! Touched by God’s grace, he resolved to show mercy towards those to whom he had felt repulsion until that moment. It was the same mercy that God had shown to him when he was lost in his former vanity and God invited him to seek the real beauty of life.

By showing mercy to lepers, the Testament explains that that which seemed bitter to his old self changed for him “into sweetness of soul and body”; he experienced with his whole being the sweetness of sharing Christ’s compassion and mercy with those who needed them most.

# OFS Rule and Constitutions

The *OFS Rule* and the OFS *General Constitutions* (particularly Art. 17-27, which refer to Active presence in the Church and in the World) present various elements of the secular Franciscans’ own **contribution towards a civilization** in which the dignity of the human person, shared responsibility, and love may be living realities. I**nspired by Saint Francis of Assisi** they should:

* deepen the true foundations of universal kingship (GG.CC. 18, Rule 13)
* be in the forefront ... in the field of public life (GG.CC. 22, Rule 15)
* firmly oppose every form of exploitation, discrimination, exclusion, and indifference (GG.CC. 18.2, Rule 13)
* build a more fraternal and evangelical world so that the kingdom of God may be brought about more effectively (Rule 14)
* work together:
  + with movements which promote the building of fraternity among peoples (GG.CC. 18.3, Rule 13)
  + in actively putting forward initiatives that care for creation (GG.CC. 18.4)
  + in overcoming the exclusions of others and those forms of poverty that are the fruit of inefficiency and injustice (GG.CC. 19.2)
  + so that all persons may have the possibility to work and so that working conditions may always be more humane (GG.CC. 21.1, Rule 16)
  + for the passage of just laws and ordinances. (GG.CC. 22.1, Rule 15)
* witness to their fraternal love and clear Christian motivations (GG.CC. 19.1, Rule 14)
* give preference to the poor and to those on the fringe of society (GG.CC. 19.2)

4 POPE FRANCIS, *Apostolic Letter Issued Motu Proprio instituting the Dicastery for promoting Integral Human Development,* Rome, 17 August 2016.

* live their membership both in the Church and in society as an inseparable reality (GG.CC. 20.1, Rule 14)
* generously fulfill the duties proper to their occupation and to the professional training that pertains to it (GG.CC. 20.2)
* maintain a balance between work and rest and should strive to create meaningful forms of using leisure time (GG.CC. 21.2)
* engage themselves through courageous initiatives in the field of human development and justice. (GG.CC. 22.2)
* take clear positions whenever human dignity is attacked and should offer their fraternal service to the victims of injustice (GG.CC. 22.2)
* take care that their interventions are always inspired by Christian love (GG.CC. 22.3)
* be bearers of peace in their families and in society (GG.CC. 23.1, Rule 19)
* respect the choice of those who, because of conscientious objection, refuse to bear arms. (GG.CC. 23.2)

# Franciscans International: A voice at the United Nations

*Franciscans International (FI) is a non-profit, international non-governmental human rights organization established in 1989. Its staff consists of professionals of diverse backgrounds working to translate grassroots voices in human rights advocacy action at the United Nations level. Franciscans International seeks to promote and protect human rights and environmental justice.*

***FI VISION***

*A global community in which the dignity of every person is respected, resources are shared equitably, the environment is sustained, and nations and peoples live in peace.*

***FI MISSION***

*We are a Franciscan voice at the United Nations protecting the vulnerable, the forgotten, and the wounded earth through advocacy.*5

# The Inter-Franciscan Commission for JPIC (Romans VI)

*The Inter-Franciscan Commission for JPIC (informally called Romans VI) is composed of the delegates appointed by the Ministers General of the Friars Minor, the Conventuals, the Capuchins, the TORs and the Secular Franciscans, and the President of the International Franciscan Conference of the Sisters and Brothers of the Third Order Regular (IFC-TOR).*

*The Inter-Franciscan Commission for JPIC is established for these purposes:*

1. *To assist the Ministers General and the President in their responsibilities to promote Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation within the Franciscan Family.*
2. *To facilitate an orderly response among the branches of the Franciscan family to Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation challenges in today's world.*
3. *To foster cooperation on the International level on Franciscan JPIC projects whenever possible in order to avoid needless duplication of resources.* 6

# Commissions of the CIOFS Presidency 4.5.1.PIW Commission

At its meeting in March 2003, the CIOFS Presidency established the “Presence in the World Commission” (PIWC), in accordance with the Conclusions of the 2002 General Chapter.

5 FRANCISCANS INTERNATIONAL, *About us*, at*,* Internet: <http://franciscansinternational.org/about/about-us/>

6 INTER-FRANCISCAN COMMISSION FOR JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION, *Information regarding*

*Romans VI.*

# International Surveys

In 2003, the PIWC conducted a survey in all national fraternities to determine the initiatives taking place around the world in support of the commitment of the Secular Franciscan Order in the realm of family, workplace, community, and society, and in the Church.

In 2011, the PIWC conducted another survey about national fraternities’ significant activities and projects in the social arena. Twenty-two national fraternities responded. In 2012, dossiers were elaborated, translated, and published on the CIOFS website on projects from 17 national fraternities. One could not be published because it was a sensitive situation and four were incomplete.

# Responding to emergency situations: natural disasters and social conflicts

* + Letters to OFS national fraternities
  + Letters to governments
  + Two Visits to Haiti after the earthquake (Jan 12, 2010), which caused 200,000 fatalities and a general devastation

# Formation materials

The Commission, with the collaboration of other OFS members, prepared a formation plan in 2013. Eight dossiers were published at the CIOFS website in the four official languages.

# Networking

The PIWC has worked to develop a culture of networking with national fraternities through the promotion of national JPIC Commissions, participating at General Chapters, OFS-YouFra Continental Congresses, etc.

# Conclusions from the XIV General and VI Elective Chapter of the OFS – 2014

In the section on “Presence in the World”, the Conclusions of the 2014 OFS General Chapter stated:

*The “Presence in the World Commission” of the CIOFS Presidency has become a privileged channel of information among national fraternities, especially when countries are affected by natural disasters or grave social conflicts. Therefore, National Councils are encouraged to establish a similar commission at the national level to maintain an ongoing communication and collaboration with the CIOFS Presidency Commission.*

In the same section, the recommendation n. 5 presents the following exhortation:

*Secular Franciscans should intensify their participation and commitment to care effectively for God’s creation in our world, considering the growing deterioration of ecological systems around the world, caused by human activities and manifested in diverse ways that are threatening the sustenance of all peoples -- especially the poor, their physical and social security, and the healthy development of present and future generations. (cf. Const. 18.4)*

# Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation Commission

On March 15, 2015, the CIOFS Presidency changed the name and structure of the PIWC to “Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Commission” (JPIC). Attilio Galimberti continued as the Coordinator.

# Conclusions

Many and strong are the foundations for Secular Franciscans and Franciscan Youth to engage in the service for justice, peace, and integrity of Creation. As followers of Christ, and in the spirit and charism of St. Francis of Assisi, we have been given a treasure of faith, knowledge and gifts that we are called to put at the service of the world and the Church, so that the kingdom of God may grow in the midst of our troubled times, which also are times of hope and opportunities. The Lord keeps calling us to «build a more fraternal and evangelical world» (Rule 14), through his Word, the Catholic social teachings, the Church’s institutional developments, and the Franciscan way of life that we have embraced through our profession.

May this Congress strengthen us all to be true witnesses of Christ to the poor and suffering and to all men and women in Asia and Oceania, for whom we are called to become compassionate neighbours as the Good Samaritan did.

**A Prayer for Our Earth** (From Pope Francis’ *Laudato si’*)

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, so that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming none.

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.

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