**JUSTICE AND PEACE AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION**

*Lola Kelly and Br Louis Schmid OFM Conv*

*Br Louis read the Summary of the* [*article*](z%20PROMOTION%20Cooper.doc) *written by Fr John Cooper OFM Cap, about promoting St Francis.*

*Afterwards, Lola spoke about Our Presence in the World as Secular Franciscans in Australia.*

**THE PROMOTION OF ST FRANCIS IS VITAL FOR OUR TIMES**

*St Francis, icon of justice, peace and the integrity of creation*

**Summary**

Saint Francis of Assisi is completely transparent. He leads us directly to the crucified Christ.

The person and the message of Saint Francis is vital for the tasks of the 21st Century.

Pope Francis knows that the *poverello* of Assisi is an icon of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation. Saint Francis, better than anyone else, can speak to all peoples.

The Holy Spirit focused Saint Francis on the Crib, the Cross, and the Altar. In this, Saint Francis understood that all things are offered to the Father.

It is Saint Francis’ witness to JPIC that has welcomed the Franciscan initiative to the United Nations.

We must promote the person of Saint Francis and make him accessible to everyone. Our saints are our true heroes! It should not surprise us that the comic book “Francis: Brother of the Universe” is the most read life of Saint Francis.

The example of some saints shines down through the ages with an immeasurable power which cannot be extinguished. Saint Francis is one of these saints

The treasury of St Francis is found in his writings, and in legends. They contain the memory, the mind, heart, and soul of the Seraphic Saint.

The Internet unlocks the scholarship of the critical sources for the life of Saint Francis to all of us who seek to know him better, but it is in a spirit of prayer and devotion that we meet him personally and understand his spirit.

If the vision of Saint Francis is presented clearly, it will bring unity of purpose to all movements towards universal fraternity. This was the vision of Pope John Paul II in bringing world leaders to pray together in Assisi.

This message of brotherhood calls for respect for the dignity of each person – indeed, respect for every creature.

We, in Australia, are a multicultural nation where the values of universal fraternity are essential if we are to not only respect others but to even delight in the differences and variety of the people who enrich our lives.

The Franciscan message of universal fraternity is a life-giving message for all time. The seraphic torch is passed to us. The message must be heard. Then it will work like a leaven in the midst of the secular world.

The good news of Gospel fraternity revitalized by our cooperation with the Holy Spirit will go out to the entire world. It will shape the world. Fraternity will be one of the foundations of universal peace and good – and our Franciscan greeting will be not only be a prayer but a prophecy fulfilled.

**OUR PRESENCE IN THE WORLD**

Secular Franciscans in Australia are people living the good news of the Gospel in the manner of St Francis in the world under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, thus helping to create a just and fraternal society.

We are striving to live as Article 18 GCstates: *1. Secular Franciscans are called to make their own contribution, inspired by the person and message of Saint Francis of Assisi, towards a civilization in which the dignity of the human person, shared responsibility, and love may be living realities.*

*4. Following the example of Francis, patron of ecologists, they should actively put forward initiatives that care for creation and should work with others in efforts that both put a stop to polluting and degrading nature and also establish circumstances of living and environment which would not be a threat to the human person.*

Rule 6 states: *They have been made living members of the Church by being buried and raised with Christ in baptism; they have been united more intimately with the Church by profession. Therefore, they should go forth as witnesses and instruments of her mission among all people, proclaiming Christ by their life and words.*

*Called like St Francis to rebuild the Church and inspired by his example, let them devote themselves energetically to living in full communion with the pope, bishops and priests, fostering an open and trusting dialogue of apostolic effectiveness and creativity.*

(AlsoArt 17:1 GCand *Admonition V11:1)*

We are reaching out in love to those around us, our families, work colleagues and our Parish, but especially the poor and unloved of the world.

In Australia for at least forty years, the Secular Franciscans as a National Fraternity have funded two major projects through Project Adoption.

In 2016, eighty-five families have been supported through the Franciscan Family Apostolate in the Diocese of Irinjalakuda, Kerala, India. The money was used for urgent necessities including food and drinking water, medical treatment, education of children and house repairs, etc

Alphonsa House is a boarding school for girls with severe disabilities who have been abandoned because of poverty. Over the years, money has been used to purchase a bus, medication and specialized educational equipment.

Different Regional and Local Fraternities support the following:

an orphanage in the Philippines, run by the Franciscan Sisters of St Anthony;

the Poor Clares in Bosnia, Croatia and the Philippines;

Sr Lourdes, Mana Lou in Timor-Leste;

the building of wells in Africa;

the Franciscan Mission in Papua New Guinea;

the Franciscan Sisters of the Heart of Jesus in Brazil;

the Franciscan Missionary of Mary Apostolate in Uganda.

Rule 11 states*: Trusting in the Father, Christ chose for himself and his mother a poor and humble life, even though he valued created things attentively and lovingly. Let the Secular Franciscans seek a proper spirit of detachment from temporal goods by simplifying their own material needs. Let them be mindful that according to the gospel they are stewards of the goods received for the benefit of God’s children.Thus, in the spirit of “the Beatitudes,” and as pilgrims and strangers on their way to the home of the Father, they should strive to purify their hearts from every tendency and yearning for possession and power.*

Also Art 15:1 GCsays: *Secular Franciscans should pledge themselves to live the spirit of the Beatitudes and in a special way, the spirit of poverty. Evangelical poverty demonstrates confidence in the Father, creates interior freedom and disposes them to promote a more just distribution of wealth.*

Evangelisation – each one of us is called to build a more fraternal and evangelical world.

Rule 14: *Secular Franciscans, together with all people of good will, are called to build a more fraternal and evangelical world so that the kingdom of God may be brought about more effectively. Mindful that anyone “who follows Christ, the perfect man, becomes more of a man himself,” let them exercise their responsibilities competently in the Christian spirit of service.*

(Also Art 20:1 GC)

Seeking those who are the lost and downtrodden of this world.

Rule 13: *As the Father sees in every person the features of his Son, the firstborn of many brothers and sisters, so the Secular Franciscans with a gentle and courteous spirit accept all people as a gift of the Lord and an image of Christ.*

*A sense of community will make them joyful and ready to place themselves on an equal basis with all people, especially with the lowly for whom they shall strive to create conditions of life worthy of people redeemed by Christ.*

At the local fraternity level in Australia, the Franciscans support their local parishes as well as working as volunteers for different charities.

Examples include

being involved in the ‘Society of St Vincent de Paul;

Vinnies Night Patrol – feeding the homeless;

Support the work of Missionaries of Charity Sisters by feeding the homeless and destitute including Aboriginal communities;

David’s Place – feeding and supporting the downtrodden of society;

Penola House - supporting refugee families.

Educating the children whom we meet, about the spirit of St Francis and his love of the Lord. For example, St Francis of Assisi Newton Parish School in Adelaide. I will talk more about this later. Also there are some Franciscans who are involved in preparing the children for their Sacraments in their local Parish.

Rule 17 states: *In their family they should cultivate the Franciscan spirit of peace, fidelity and respect for life, striving to make of it a sign of the world already renewed in Christ.*

*By living the grace of matrimony, husbands and wives in particular should bear witness in the world to the love of Christ for his Church. They should joyfully accompany their children on their human and spiritual journey by providing a simple and open Christian education and being attentive to the vocation of each child.*

(Also Art. 24.1 GC)

Noticing the inequality and injustice around us. Responding in any way we can to bring about equality. For example; Franciscan calendar/prayer cards are sent to our State Politicians and local Councillors.

Rule 15: *Let them individually and collectively be in the forefront in promoting justice by the testimony of their human lives and their courageous initiatives. Especially in the field of public life, they should make definite choices in harmony with their faith.*

Also Art 22 GC states*: 1. They should collaborate as much as possible for the passage of just laws and ordinances*

*2. The fraternities should engage themselves through courageous initiatives, consistent with their Franciscan vocation and with the directive of the Church, in the field of human development and justice. They should take clear positions whenever human dignity is attacked by any form of oppression or indifference. They should offer their fraternal service to victims of injustice.*

Charism of Christ giving His love, peace and joy to the world, that only He can give. We must allow Him to work in us to spread this to the world.

Rule 19: *Mindful that they are bearers of peace which must be built up unceasingly, they should seek out ways of unity and fraternal harmony through dialogue, trusting in the presence of the divine seed in everyone and in the transforming power of love and pardon.*

*Messengers of perfect joy in every circumstance, they should strive to bring joy and hope to others.*

*Since they are immersed in the resurrection of Christ which gives true meaning to Sister Death, let them serenely tend toward the ultimate encounter with the Father.*

Also Art. 23 GC states: *1. Peace is the work of justice and the fruit of reconciliation and of fraternal love. Secular Franciscans are called to be bearers of peace in their families and in society:*

* *they should see to the proposal and spreading of peaceful ideas and attitudes;*
* *they should develop their own initiatives and should collaborate, individually and as a fraternity, with initiatives of the Pope, local Churches and the Franciscan Family;*
* *they should collaborate with those movements and institutions which promote peace while respecting its authentic foundations.*

Eucharist is to be the centre of our lives as it was for St Francis. It gives us the strength, trust and hope to reach out to others. We are united to our Christ and become one body. Some Franciscans bring the Eucharist to the sick and the house bound and to those in Aged Care Homes.

Rule 8: *As Jesus was the true worshipper of the Father, so let prayer and contemplation be the soul of all they are and do. Let them participate in the sacramental life of the Church, above all the Eucharist. Let them join in liturgical prayer in one of the forms proposed by the Church, reliving the mysteries of the life of Christ*.

(Also Art 14:1-5 GC)

Wonder at the gift of Himself that our loving Lord gave on the Cross to bring each one of us to freedom. Each one of us is also asked to willingly endure suffering, insults and humiliation in our lives with patience, e.g., in our daily crosses or hardships or illnesses.

Rule 10: *Uniting themselves to the redemptive obedience of Jesus, who placed his will into the Father’s hands, let them faithfully fulfil the duties proper to their various circumstances of life. Let them also follow the poor and crucified Christ, witness to Him even in difficulties and persecutions.*

Also Article10 GC states: *“Christ, poor and crucified”, victor over death and risen, the greatest manifestation of the love of God for humanity, is the “book” in which the brothers and sisters, in imitation of Francis, learn the purpose and the way of living, loving and suffering. They discover in Him the value of contradictions for the sake of justice and the meaning of the difficulties of the crosses of daily life. With Him they can accept the will of the Father even under the most difficult circumstances and live the Franciscan spirit of peace, rejecting every doctrine contrary to human dignity.*

Order – we are a Secular Order (a true Order which constitutes a school of complete Christian perfection) and each one of us at the time of our Profession, is called to live our vocation in the Secular World.

Rule 20: *The Secular Franciscan Order is divided into fraternities of various levels – local, regional, national, and international. Each one has its own moral personality in the Church. These various fraternities are coordinated and united according to the norm of this rule and of the constitutions.*

Also Art 28 GC states:

*2. “The OFS is divided into fraternities of various levels”, the purpose being to promote in an orderly form, the union and mutual collaboration among the brothers and sisters and their active and communal presence in both the local and universal Church. The OFS shall also support the commitment of the fraternities in their service to the world, and specifically to the life of society.*

Radiating throughout the world. Each fraternity brings its own uniqueness to those around them.

Article 18 GC states:

*2. They should deepen the true foundations of universal kinship and create a spirit of welcome and an atmosphere of fraternity everywhere. They should firmly commit themselves to oppose every form of exploitation, discrimination and exclusion, and against every attitude of indifference in relation to others.*

*3. They should work together with movements which promote the building of fraternity among peoples: they should be committed to “create worthy conditions of life” for all and to work for the freedom of all people.*

Love – “I give you a new commandment: love one another; just as I have loved you, you also must love one another. By this love you have for one another, everyone will know that you are my disciples”. (John 13: 34-35)

Rule 13: *As the Father sees in every person the features of his Son, the firstborn of many brothers and sisters, so the Secular Franciscans with a gentle and courteous spirit accept all people as a gift of the Lord and an image of Christ.*

Doing the Lord’s will in our lives, answering His call by living out our Franciscan Vocation.

“What is good has been explained to you, man; this is what God asks of you: only this, to act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6:8)

*Rule 7: United by their vocation as “brothers and sisters of penance”, and motivated by the dynamic power of the gospel, let them conform their thoughts and deeds to those of Christ by means of that radical interior change which the gospel itself calls “conversion.” Human frailty makes it necessary that this conversion be carried out daily.*

*On this road to renewal the sacrament of reconciliation is the privileged sign of the Father’s mercy and the source of grace.*

(Also Art 13:1 GC)

I want to focus on a particular Apostolate:

A LOCAL FRATERNITY MAKES ITS PRESENCE known IN THE WORLD to children.

They reach out to the local Parish School, by presenting Year 7 students, who are the school leaders, with Tau Crosses and booklets at the beginning of the school year and with a San Damiano Cross and booklet as they leave the school at the end of the year. The students respond by enquiring further into the Tau Cross and even looking into of the Secular Franciscan way of life. They have also expressed their gratitude to us in writing. The Year 7 students also assist the OFS in providing refreshments, after every Mass of Anointing held in the parish church.

The Year 4 students are given a booklet of short stories, e.g., The Wolf of Gubbio. We also become ‘prayer buddies’ for the Year 4 students as they prepare to receive the Sacraments.

Many of the Fraternity members attend School Masses and on occasion attend the Teachers’ Days of Reflection at which they may give a short talk on the OFS.

This year they are giving to the Reception Class a booklet on St Francis so that they are being introduced to Franciscan Spirituality from the commencement of their schooling.

Finally, here are some comments written by the children that appeared in the School Newsletter

“*When I wear the cross I know it is very powerful and it is a symbol for me that has hidden messages in, it was St Francis of Assisi’s favourite thing and it shows that I am a person who loves God.” Sarina*

*“You are a great inspiration for us. I am always going to wear it. It reminds me of the time when St Francis healed the man’s leg with the Tau. I know it was a big part of his life so I will make it a big part of mine.” John*

*“Thank you for the Tau. I like it because I’ve learnt a lot about it like it’s the symbol for youth.”Aguil*

*“I am very grateful to have this gift. This Tau makes me feel one with God. It reminds me that I will have eternal life with God.” Joshua*

*“When I look at the Tau it reminds me of your kindness like what the cross is about. Now I can go around the world and everyone knows I’m Franciscan.” Clare*

Where are you casting your nets?