

Systematic Approach to the Work in the Field of JUSTICE, PEACE AND ECOLOGY



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Introduction. Ever since the start of the Commission for Justice, Peace and Ecology (JPE) of the Order of Friars Minor Capuchins in 1982¹ a lot of work has been done to raise the awareness of the brothers in regard to issues related to JPE. Still the sense of a number of the friars working in this field is, that not a lot has been achieved.

Although a lot of work has been put into raising awareness of the many challenges of our time by the previous secretariats and commissions, lately the challenges of multi-ethnicity, inter-religious dialogue, peace building and economics, there has hardly been any systematic approach to the work of JPE, its scope and objectives and moreover regarding its mechanisms within the Order.

This document is proposed as a first step towards filling this gap.

1 Conceptual Framework

The need to work for Justice, Peace and Ecology was recognised in the early 80's of the last century. With the recognition of the social teaching of the Church and the emerging theologies of liberation as well as other movements within the Church, it was seen by many that charitable work alone was never sufficient to bring about a significant change in the situation of the poor - and so the Good News for the poor remained outside its scope.

It was the Belgian prelate, Cardinal Joseph Cardijn, who proposed a method for a 'revision de vie' (reflection on our life as Christians), and provided us with the following three steps:

- See
- Judge
- Act

This method was designed to look first into the life of an individual and from there of a community to make it more and more a gospel and community. It was then adopted by the Latin-American Church especially and became a powerful tool for the transformation of the Church and of society.

By using this method, the underlying root causes of marginalisation and extreme poverty become more apparent, as do the various courses of action that can

¹Decision by the General Chapter on July 9, 1982, cf. *Analecta* (1982) **98** 254 and the installation of the commission on September 22/23, 1982 cf. *Acta Definitorii Generalis* (1982) Meeting 4, p. 29 item 9

be followed to help the poor to help themselves out of poverty. The emerging patterns of marginalisation and the many ways in which the poor experience injustice made many within the Church and the Order realise that a significant role for the friars, following in the very footsteps of Francis, was to be advocates of social change.

For many reasons, this movement never gained a strong momentum — except in some areas of the world — and so remained a sideline story within the Church and the Order. It seems that only a few friars became engaged in advocacy as a way of making the Good News concrete in the lives of the poorest people. For many years and for the majority of the friars, JPE remained a hobby-horse for some and thus it never entered into the mainstream of the Order's activities.

In talking to those who have been involved in previous JPE Commissions, it seems that some decision-makers in the Order felt that the big problems had been tackled through awareness-raising and international campaigns. No doubt this is vital work but it seems that there was still a lot of potential to try and engage the friars working at the grassroots with the big international issues of economic disparity, ecological degradation, the increase in armed conflicts etc. Often it was a 'top-down' approach which tried to encourage the friars to be more active in the field of JPE but at the same time not looking too closely at what was happening on the ground for the poorest of the poor in any given local situation. The establishment of local JPE commissions was seen by many friars in the Order as crucial for the success of this important work, though in many locations and entities the commissions soon died after their initial enthusiastic start. Today, where JPE commissions still exist, friars often express the concern that their impact is barely measurable.

For those engaged in bringing about change in the lives of the poor today, one of the most important questions is focused on looking at the activities of the policy-makers and those who shape the way our societies run. If this is the case, then the next question for us is: "What sort of contribution could the Capuchin Order make to help those decision-makers and policy-makers in their important work?"

Such questions make us realise that we probably need a rethinking of JPE activities. In my view it does not make too much sense to simply echo the big concerns of huge civil society organisations like Amnesty International and Greenpeace etc. Not that those concerns are not important. On the contrary, their work is utterly necessary. But the essential question for us Capuchins should be: **WHAT COULD BE OUR CONCRETE CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS FINDING SOLUTIONS TO SUCH ISSUES?** What are we friars doing, or what do we need to do at grass-roots level to gain expertise in contributing to the solutions of the pressing issues of our

times? What can we Capuchins do at the international level to contribute to the way solutions are discussed and decisions reached?

For the Capuchin Order, it is of utmost importance for the friars to understand that a hands-on engagement with the poor and marginalised, sharing their lives and concerns and trying to bring change to such situations, is primarily a work of evangelisation.

If our faith and spirituality are not to put the people off, but instead encourage them to seek the Kingdom of God and to make it ever more visible already in this world, so that its fulfilment will be reached at the end of time by Christ himself, we must work with and for those living in marginalisation and poverty, showing them concrete and tangible signs of hope.

Jesus himself, through his interactions with people, through signs and miracles, showed the people concrete demonstrations of real change in their lives. This does not mean that we are to rush out and perform miracles! But hope, real concrete hope, needs to be nourished by tangible signs of change, otherwise the hope we hold out to the poor can be in vain.

The work for charity and for the improvement of local situations is definitely a first step in the right direction. But it is a matter of wisdom not only to cure the symptoms of an illness but to look also for its causes. The works of charity and contemporary theories and praxis of development can provide us with the necessary knowledge of the situation on the ground. Of course in order to respond authentically and to implement the right measures on the ground, a good education and ongoing formation are needed so that we do not inadvertently do more harm in the long run by looking for short-term relief. We therefore need to adopt a double-sided approach to our engagement with and for the people, the one that has been entrusted to us, namely preaching the gospel in words and deeds.

2 See, Judge, Act within the Capuchin Order

The ‘top-down’ element in awareness raising, and even more in formation, is necessary to achieve a more effective engagement at the grass-roots level. Simple awareness-raising - trying to encourage the friars to see what is going on in their local situation and in the international arena - without working on possible solutions in collaboration with the related sciences is not going to bring the necessary results.

In this regard it will be very important to recognise that theological formation in and of itself is not going to provide the Order with all the necessary skills and

attitudes to see what is required and to work with the people. We need a broader base of knowledge within the Order.

The situations in which the marginalised find themselves are extremely complex and often defy simple remedies. Therefore, to be more deeply and more effectively engaged within the societies in which we live, we need to gather the information available in the various local situations and to discern the causes of these problems, so that we can make judgements about the sorts of action that are necessary for deep change.

The SEE, JUDGE, ACT method has proven to be a powerful tool, but as it was first developed for reflection on the life of individuals, it carries a danger: When someone from outside comes into a community, which is the usual case for us Capuchins², applying this methodology can remain an entirely individual act. Today it is of utmost importance to transform the three steps of this method into community action. With this shift of perspective, our role as Capuchins within

INDIVIDUAL	COMMUNITY
• See	• Listen
• Judge	• Decide together
• Act	• Act together

the communities we are working with changes significantly. We need to become facilitators and moderators of a community process instead of agents acting on the communities. Living amongst the poor and witnessing the gospel can gain an additional aspect here.

The communities will identify the changes which are needed and also the way to achieve them. Our role is to assist in the analysis of the situation and facilitate the process the community chooses. In the process of implementation the community will face resistance and challenges of many kinds. Often the political realities will call for involvement on a higher societal level. Therefore the local and international situations need to be analysed carefully by well-trained Capuchins and put into concrete suggestions for the communities on the one hand and for policy-makers on the other. This part of JPE work must and will then be a strictly ‘bottom - up’ approach. Good analysis followed by excellent co-ordination is key to success here.

For both directions – ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ – strong collaboration with other trustworthy and reputable organisations of good standing in the respective fields is vital.

²Even if a young Capuchin after finishing his formation comes back into his original community, he himself and his community have changed so much, as that he is more like a foreigner.

3 Engagement at the grass-roots level

To give hope to people by bringing concrete signs of change is one of the most important challenges as we preach the Good News of the gospel. As important as words are, if they are not followed by solid action and tangible change, the preaching of the gospel is heard and experienced as an empty promise. Of course we need to be realistic enough to see that the kingdom of heaven is still to come and some human situations are difficult to change. Nevertheless, to be faithful to the Good News means to persevere in our efforts to set the down-trodden free and to give sight to the blind. The most marginalised need these **tangible signs of hope** so as not to lose hope altogether and to fall more deeply into despair.

Such tangible change in the situation of the poor and marginalised, as well as for all of creation which has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth³, can be achieved by each friar working on the individual level and using the three steps – SEE, JUDGE, AND ACT – with which the Church has been equipped now for many years. When it comes to involvement with communities, we will then need to translate the methodology into a community-based approach such as: LISTEN, DECIDE AND ACT TOGETHER.

3.1 See, Judge, Act - The individual level:

See: Following the three-step method, the first and most important step is: to SEE. To see in this context means not only to look at someone's face or to look carefully into something, but to really and deeply perceive what comes to my eyes and ears as well as my tongue, nose and skin. It means to not only look at but to look into what enters the receptive systems of the senses and the brain.

And since perception is most powerful when it is immediate, the place where we perceive is crucial. Our SEEING will be entirely different in a first-class restaurant than in the poor shelters of the slums of Nairobi. The real 'place of perception', as much as it is shaped by the immediate surroundings that our senses experience, is finally more the place which shapes our way of perceiving. Looking at the same first-class restaurant from the point of view of someone who belongs to the slums creates a completely different perception than for the one whose point of view is shaped by such places because they are his everyday reality. The same holds true for the reverse case.

As the privileged place for us as Capuchins is amongst the poor and marginalised, our perception should be shaped by the point of view of those poor and marginalised

³Rom 8,22

persons. Since many of us do not originate from those places of poverty and marginalisation, a process is needed to change the 'place of perception'. Even if one originates from a place of poverty and marginalisation, sometimes the process of initial formation tears us further away from those situations. In such cases intellectual formation - as important as it is - leads to a further removal of oneself from the poor and marginalised instead of leading us towards them with an increased insight.

So the change of the place of perception requires deep and on-going immersion into such situations so that we really have the chance to perceive with all our senses (SEEING as mentioned above is perception with all our senses, especially with our nose⁴). Seeing is not an entirely intellectual act: it also involves our feelings in a situation. The concrete perception of marginalisation, poverty and degradation of nature, intellectually and emotionally, is key to seeing. The perception of a concrete situation is not only an immediate event; to see also means to take into account the experience of people living in and with a certain situation so that our own views and horizons are broadened. Real perception does not stop at the immediate, it looks for patterns and leads to the gathering of background information.

Judge: Seeing and perceiving a situation is not enough. The real perception of a situation calls for a judgement (of the situation, not necessarily of people!).

In order to make a good judgement one needs to gather a lot of information. Judgement requires us to look into history, to ask people with experience of the local situation, as well as up-to-date and relevant scientific analysis of the situation. We need to ask: Who tells us which part of the story? and: What are his or her own interests in this concrete situation?

Finally we need to ask ourselves: What does this situation call for? And more importantly: What are the people asking for? This is often very different from what we think the people should ask for! Of course prudence is important here. But finally, true collaboration with the people, which is necessary for real change, can only be achieved if people really need and want deep change.

Judgement requires us to look into who are going to be our allies in searching for change. Allies can be found within and outside of the boundaries of the Order or the Church. In this context, it is necessary to keep in mind that collaboration is possible, even if we do not agree on all the positions of our collaborative partners.

⁴As the nose is, in evolutionary terms, one of the oldest of our senses it is most closely related to our memories. Try it yourself: can you remember a smell you smelled after years, which brought up a memory very strongly? E.g. a smell you associate with an event of your childhood or youth.

Collaboration to reach an end goal, while disagreeing on some points which are not essential to the achievement of the long-term goal, can even be a good start to experiencing and modelling the peace building process.

While intellectual reaction and emotional discernment are very important in the process of judging a situation, it is important not to forget to bring all these concerns to the attention of the Father by asking him for the illumination of the Holy Spirit in such a process. Prayer and meditation, raising up our concerns and preoccupations, lifting our hopes and fears to the Lord will help us to find the right way ahead. It will help us not to lose our patience or our love for all God's people - even those who might oppose our initiatives and our involvement.

When St. Francis in his Testament talks about his encounter with the leper, he states that it was the Lord who sent him into that situation. Such an insight is not gained immediately in the encounter with the poor or in the immersion in their situation. It takes prayer, meditation and the ongoing reading of the scriptures to arrive at this insight. Furthermore, without a disposition towards deep contemplation of the one whom he encountered, Francis would probably never have claimed that this encounter, which used to be bitter to him, was turned into sweetness of body and soul.

Judgement - without prayer - is open to the danger of becoming void of compassion and love for all those with whom we are working and whom we encounter. St. Francis in his admonitions says:

Where there is mercy and discernment,
there is neither excess nor hardness of heart.⁵

Since mercy belongs to the emotional sphere and discernment to the intellectual, the whole person is addressed in this admonition. Both are needed: intellect and emotion.

Mercy alone can lead to uncritical action, and such action will finally neither respect the real needs of the other nor the needs of the one showing mercy. Mercy alone, out of the desire to do good, can easily lead to paternalistic behaviours taking control over the poor and marginalised, thereby moving them from one prison to another. Mercy when it becomes excessive is overwhelming and not respectful of the other person's dignity. Mercy without discernment and prayer can lead us to exhaustion and burn-out.

On the other hand discernment alone can reduce the person in need to a simple case which needs to be resolved. It might provide for all material needs but

⁵Adm 27,6

disrespect the emotional needs of a person, which finally is as bad as not caring at all.

Interestingly, if we look at the quote in the context of Admonition 27 as a whole, we see that St. Francis connects mercy with excess as its cure, and links discernment with hardness of heart.

Act: Finally, all the seeing and judging is futile unless it is followed by concrete and strong action. This does not mean hectic action, action for actions sake.

Concrete and strong action means that we need to get organised. It requires us to look at and assess our resources in a realistic way, knowing that we cannot do it all on our own. Authentic action means looking for strong partners wherever we can find them. Networking is crucial here. It is not for the sake of the Capuchin Order that we work. We work for the sake of the dispossessed and displaced people, and the fractured earth on which we all depend. It is to give hope by lighting a light, a concrete and tangible sign of hope for those living in despair and in the shadow of untimely death.

Concrete, strong action means to dedicate ourselves to what we are able to achieve. It also means not to lose patience when it seems that hardly anything is moving. The Kingdom of the Heavens is like a mustard seed - almost invisible, but once growing, almost unstoppable.

3.2 Listen, Decide, Act together - The community level:

When we as Capuchins engage with communities, which we usually do in many fields of work, the methodology of SEE, JUDGE, ACT needs to be recast in the context of a community, especially when we are dealing with poor and marginalised ones. Furthermore our role in and with the community needs to be redefined, so that we move from being the ones who do everything to being accompanists: the ones who listen and empower the community⁶. Therefore the first step is not called 'to see' but to

⁶Francis, accepting his own vulnerability, was able to relate to every individual and creature. The Capuchin use of power emphasises more the building up of relationships than the quick resolution of tasks and thus includes the following characteristics. It is:

- Non-exclusive/inclusive, i.e., everyone affected by decisions is included.
- Participatory, i.e., all participants have a real say
- Equal, i.e., final decisions equally respect the needs of all those affected.
- Marked by a willingness to dialogue with a view to reaching a possible consensus.
- Non-violent.

Listen. Listening in this context is of course meant to be a community exercise. In order to be so there is a need to establish community, where it does not yet exist. But not just any community is enough for the process of listening. Trust must be established within the community so that people feel encouraged to speak. Trust-building is a key step towards talking and listening in community.

But a community not only needs trust among its members. It needs a vision to see the purpose of its existence. Developing a vision with and for the community goes with trust-building. The vision must be something like a guiding star to the community, it must be big but not too unrealistic to achieve.

A third element is important for building a community that is empowering, giving the necessary skills to the people, so that they can move on their own, learning skills in terms of how to interact in community, how to organise it and how to tackle concrete issues identified by the community. This in turn requires brothers who are highly skilled in various fields of knowledge.

The process of listening takes quite some time, but it is of utmost importance that the community has the time to tell their stories, that they are listened to and that everyone wishing to speak has the chance to do so. Listening is not the mere absorption of acoustic signals. For the brother ‘accompanist’, it means trying to put himself in the situation of the one telling his or her story and to sense the accompanying feelings. It needs a great amount of empathy to encompass all the stories, the sufferings and feelings. Once the situation of the community has been perceived in this way the next step is to identify and

Decide together. Out of its vision the community identifies the issues and projects it wants to deal with. For the friar in charge it will require a great deal of humility and minority to subordinate himself to the decision of the community, which might identify something he had never envisioned himself⁷. In order to identify a need which the community is really capable of dealing with and to make a good decision as to how to approach it, it may be necessary to organise some input in terms of empowerment. Hence, here too, collaboration with other people and organisations is crucial.

These characteristics can also be a model for others in the world to imitate. VII PCO 19

⁷Society in the time of Francis was marked by the struggle for social dominance, which unleashed strong violence. Francis too was influenced by this, but after his conversion he turned to the fringes of Assisi’s society, choosing to live among the lowly and marginalised. This led Francis to the deep intuition that human relationships had to mirror the Trinitarian love of free persons without privilege or priority and then to make courageous choices of minority, which redeemed and radically reconstituted his relationships: authority without power which dominates; service characterised by humility; extension of fraternal relationships to all creation; a life lived on the social periphery. VII PCO 6.

Just as it is for the individual, prayer in community is important in this step, asking what the gospel is calling us to do and how we can translate that into the daily life of the community. But be careful: sometimes we will need to work with people of different faiths, cultural backgrounds and traditions. So it will be necessary to embrace also their richness and to make them fruitful for the community as a whole. Once the decision has been made, allies have been identified and have agreed to collaborate, then we need to:

Act together. Again a sober, realistic view on the capacities and resources is important, so as not to overstretch people and oneself. In a community context we - meaning the community - need to get organised. Structures are unavoidable, but they should be kept as simple, democratically based and non-hierarchical as possible, to ensure the inclusion of everyone in the community process.

The community may need some assistance from other groups. This will also help in the empowerment of the people. Again the communities should be open to anyone of good reputation and standing in the relevant field of expertise.

One important thing to remember is not to close down a group, but to remain open to new members and new challenges. In the end it is about acting TOGETHER, so that everyone has a place and a role in the action.

Of course we cannot stop at the simple stage of action. We need to know whether the measures put in place really achieve the envisioned goals. Therefore after a sufficient period of implementation we need to EVALUATE what we have achieved. Evaluation is a complex mechanism of looking into what was really done, how it was done and what effects it had. It looks at successes and failures and seeks to discover the causes for either.

Evaluation is in a way a restarting of the three step methodology. It is seeing what has happened after our interventions and what needs to be done to improve the situation still further. As we work for change and as change happens due to other mechanisms in place, the three-step methodology is a circular process. Evaluation restarts the process but looks more closely at what we have done, what we wanted to achieve, and how our performance has been.

Last but not least we should not forget to CELEBRATE. Working hard with the poor and marginalised, sharing the harsh conditions of their lives, is not an easy thing to bear, hence there is a need to celebrate. This means pausing a while to look back, but not only intellectually as in the evaluation, but as whole persons.

Feasts are necessary to celebrate successes - and maybe also failures. But coming together, giving thanks and praise to the Lord and also to all those who contributed, brings joy to our lives and helps us to continue. Celebration always means sharing. Sharing of food and drink, but also of experiences, hopes and fears. Celebration brings us together and offers us a glimpse of the eternal banquet.

4 Necessary Structures

All that has been said in the previous chapter is not enough. If papers and eloquent writings were enough, all the Catholic social teaching and the documents of the Order itself would be enough to motivate us to action. In order to become real, authentic action needs structures that are effective and workable. The international nature of our Capuchin Order is global in dimension and scope, and that is why we need to recognise, that our friars - and the poor whom they serve, - require our structures to be effective both in terms of the 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' approaches. If deep change is to happen within the lives of the poor because Capuchins are working with them, then everything about our Order - 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' - must be prayerfully but effectively co-ordinated.

4.1 The 'top - down' direction

The 'top-down' approach has basically two purposes: Giving direction and providing the necessary support for the activities on the ground. The most important ingredient for the success of these two parts is political will. Political will can only be achieved if the leadership of an organisation comes to the insight that certain challenges are important and that certain measures are the right approach to tackle the challenge. How can this be achieved?

One possible approach can be a collective formation experience for the leadership team. It can also be a common experience of daily challenges, which after a period of common reaction and discernment leads to the building up of political will to work for change in the situation perceived as a challenge.

In this sense, leadership can mean the so-called 'necessary percentage of a population⁸', the movers and shakers of a population. They have to be convinced in order to achieve real change. Hence, it is not enough to convince the head of a governmental structure to build up political will, but on the other hand it is not

⁸In some UN documents the percentage of a population, which is necessary to achieve a change is given to 12% only.

necessary to convince everyone in order to move a population. The focus must be on those who have influence.

Nonetheless, without this political will no real measures will be taken, as the issue has not been identified as important enough.

Giving direction. Political will needs direction. GIVING DIRECTION requires a focus: The issues must be identified and a vision elaborated. Vision is crucial here, as direction cannot be given by drawing a precise map of how to get from here to there but by identifying a ‘guiding star’ to arrive at where we need to go. The vision then must become a shared one for those movers and shakers within the Order.

But who are these movers and shakers within the Order? Certainly major superiors are part of the cluster of leaders, and we should also include the formators, since both provincials and formators, by the very fact of their intrinsic ministry, are essential for articulating the common vision. But one should not forget charismatic figures within the Order and its provinces, who are not necessarily in official leadership positions but still provide guidance. Sometimes it happens that the officials are not the real movers but there are other brothers who are more influential on account of their natural authority. It will be very important to convince these people that the Order needs them more than ever.

Apart from the difficult part of convincing many individuals one by one, we need to give the right direction in the official documents of the Order. These play an important role in the initial formative process (at least they should play an important role here). Giving direction is also important in decision-making bodies like provincial chapters and meetings of Conferences, etc.

Giving direction starts with awareness-raising but it does not stop there. It needs the leadership on all levels of the Order to call the brothers to prepare themselves for more effective work with the poor and marginalised, and to commit to the struggle on behalf of nature – God’s creation – counteracting the human causes of its ongoing degradation.

Giving direction starts in initial formation. While not forgetting our original motivation as followers of Christ, it will be necessary to seek for change in our ‘places of perception’. The Minister General (Br. Mauro Jöhri) in his fourth Circular Letter states:

The Constitutions clearly reflect the will of Saint Francis, which he forcefully expresses in a number of passages in the Earlier Rule: “Let all the brothers strive to follow the humility and poverty of our Lord Jesus

Christ, and let them remember that we should have nothing else in the whole world except, as the Apostle says, having food and clothing, we are content with these” And immediately afterwards Francis adds: “They must rejoice when they live among people who are of little value and looked down upon, among the poor and the powerless, the sick and the lepers, and the beggars by the wayside ”⁹. His words are dictated by personal experience, because he had learned at first hand what it meant to approach lepers and show mercy to them¹⁰. Identifying with Francis’ experience, we should go among the “lepers” of our age and commit ourselves to showing them ‘mercy.’” ¹¹. The poor are rarely easy to deal with and it is natural for us to want to steer clear of them, to behave like the priest and the levite in the gospel ¹². This is exactly why we are called to embark on a long journey of conversion, so that we learn to become their companions along the way and to lighten their sufferings. If ever we found ourselves preoccupied with the thought of how to avoid as much as possible the company of the poorest, most abandoned people of our age in the society in which we live, then we would need to seriously ask the question: by what right do we continue to call ourselves “lesser brothers”?

In this regard, a significant period of immersion in a situation of marginalisation and poverty could be helpful in the process of conversion, which of course does not stop there. Such a period of immersion could on the other hand also help some young friars to discern their direction in formation, to seek a direction other than sacred Orders.

Regardless of the formative direction taken in working with the poor and marginalised, the Franciscan virtue of minority is key to success. In true minority we will always first ask for what others need, instead of imposing our thoughts and solutions upon them.

Giving direction cannot stop at the level of initial formation, it needs to continue through all levels of formation, a formation that only ends when we embrace Sister Death¹³.

Providing support. Once there is a direction established and political will is built up, it is important in the ‘top-down’ direction to give support to local

⁹Saint Francis, Earlier Rule, IX,2

¹⁰Cf. Saint Francis, Testament, 1-2.

¹¹PCO VII, 2a

¹²Cf. Lk 10

¹³see also PCO VII, 29-30.

initiatives. Local initiatives always need the backing of the leadership as resources are needed, first in terms of personnel but also in terms of moral support and good advice. Even in terms of financial support it might be necessary, though any initiative should seek to be self-sufficient as soon as possible, since an initiative which depends entirely on foreign money in the end is not sustainable.

PROVIDING SUPPORT also means to provide forums of exchange for mutual support as well as means for ongoing formation in fields related to the initiatives. The Conferences could play an essential role here, because a critical mass of interested friars working in one field related to JPE may only be found at Conference level.

A working group of JPE-related friars could develop and organise such forums of exchange and the formative programs needed by the friars. In this regard it seems important that it should be the friars with hands-on experience who also do the co-ordination. At least it needs someone with a good knowledge of the situation and needs in the respective circumscription(s) to do the work of co-ordination and to organise formation.

Formation programs are to inform the brothers of the latest scientific insights gained in the fields related to their work, to render them as effective as possible and to avoid mistakes which would be regretted in the future. Part of these formative programs must be awareness-raising among our brothers of the underlying root-causes of the problems they face. This will be crucial for the ‘bottom - up’ direction.

4.2 The ‘Bottom - up’ Direction

In the ‘bottom - up’ direction a first important step is information. It is indispensable to transmit information on what charitable or other JPE-related initiatives are going on at grass-roots level in the Order. Once forums of exchange have been established in the various circumscriptions the concerns and issues of those working with the poor and marginalised can be brought together and analysed.

For lobbying work, be it on the national or international level, the positive involvement or at least informed consent of the leadership of the respective circumscription must be sought. Furthermore it will be crucial to bring the gathered information and the envisioned plans to the attention of the General Curia (here the definator of the relevant region and/or the Office of JPE).

At the level of the provincial and general leadership, support for any kind of action can be guaranteed only if information and better consent for the action is sought. Hence, the office for JPE is also the first contact with ‘Franciscans International’ in case support on the international level is needed.

Furthermore, once the information has been received, the general leadership can initiate links with other organisations, either within or beyond the Church's boundaries.

Again, either direction, 'top-down' and 'bottom - up', will not work effectively if political will has not been built up in the first place. A focus on the period of 1994 - 2006 was the implementation of the mechanisms of solidarity, be it of personnel or financial. Guiding principles have been developed and implemented in the framework of the so-called 'fraternal economy'. Such a concise approach shows political will at least in the 'top-down' direction.

4.3 'Top-down' & 'Bottom- up' working together, *or* Good Governance.

Real movement in an organisation – and the Capuchin Order is also an organisation - can only be achieved if both directions, 'top - down' and 'bottom- up', work together in a harmonious way. This in turn means there is a huge need for communication and co-ordination. Four principles of GOOD GOVERNANCE are essential here, to which the discussion within the Order in the last decade has added a fifth. Though these principles have been developed in the context of the 'fraternal economy' they do have their value in governance, too. Those five principles are:

1. Participation
2. Transparency
3. Equity
4. Solidarity
5. Austerity

What is their meaning in the context of GOOD GOVERNANCE¹⁴? This will be highlighted in the following paragraphs.

¹⁴According to the UNESCAP good governance comprises the following principles, which are highlighted in italics in the following paragraphs: *Consensus oriented, Participatory, Following the Rule of Law, Effective and Efficient, Accountable, Transparent, Responsive, Equitable and Inclusive.*

Participation in decision-making. If decisions are to be accepted and carried out by at least the majority of those affected by the decision, this requires broad participation in decision-making. This in turn means that the issue must first be brought to the attention of all those affected.

Participation should also seek the broadest possible consensus to ensure the collaboration of all those affected in the period of implementation and enforcement.

Participation is an important means for involvement as long as the concerns and visions of the friars are listened to and are reflected in the final decision. Since participation means work for everyone involved the fruits must be visible so as not to end in total frustration.

Transparency in the decision-making process: open discourse is crucial for good governance. Good governance seeks the optimisation of the common good. This needs to be reflected in the decision-making process. Transparency in argumentation and decision-making reflects this. If the motivation truly seeks the common good, there is no need for hidden agendas. Transparency does not avoid disagreement but helps to find a synthesis of opposing positions. Hiding information and secret discourse are only necessary if it is not the common good which is searched for, but the privileges and political influence of certain groups or individuals.

In the struggle for justice and peace and also for care for creation in the world - firstly of course within the Order itself - privileges of certain classes, castes, regions or similar can never be accepted. By their very nature they act against the common good, since they contradict equity and also the spirit of minority.

Transparency is important in both directions. Decisions taken by leadership must be transparent to the grass-roots, but also decisions taken at the grass-roots level need to be transparent to others and to the leadership. Only transparency on either side will build trust between all who are part of the same process of decision-making, implementing and enforcing.

Transparency always goes together with *accountability*. They render each other possible and enforce each other.

Accountability without transparency does not add any value to an organisation, since hardly anyone will be able to assess the data and therefore know what is going on. Not knowing what is going on creates an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust within a group or organisation.

On the other hand transparency without accountability can lead to great frustration and distrust, as everyone only gains a very limited insight into the decision-making, implementation and enforcement processes. There will always remain a

feeling of being manipulated.

The worst-case scenario is where both are missing. In such a case, a sense of being excluded is almost unavoidable, which in turn will lead to an atmosphere of distrust and impede taking ownership of common projects and decisions.

The vow of obedience in today's context is more and more understood as a mutual listening of adult partners. But in order to be able to listen, someone has to talk. Talking means giving insight into what is happening, it means making things visible, audible, perceivable for the other party. Obedience has transparency as one of its primary prerequisites.

On the other hand transparency has its limits, particularly where the privacy of a person is involved.

Equity does not propose that everyone has the same capability or insight, but it respects that everyone has the right to contribute his experience and insight to the decision-making process. Equity rejects the valuing of people according to their positions or influence. Equity in decision-making guarantees that the concerns and visions of all those affected are taken into consideration; it ensures *inclusiveness*. Equity in applying decisions is of the same importance. It ensures the inclusion of all those affected by decisions taken.

Solidarity in decision-making is a very important value. It will ensure that the capabilities and limits of everyone affected are taken into consideration. It guarantees that the common good is the focus of decision-making. Solidarity leads to *responsiveness* in decision-making. If we feel solidarity with our brothers and with the people in pain and suffering, our decisions will be responsive to such situations and not put our priorities elsewhere.

Solidarity also ensures that decisions taken by individuals do not counteract the common good of a province or the Order. Solidarity of course includes solidarity with the friars as well as with the poor and marginalised in the world. Solidarity is based on the experience of St. Francis - that all we possess comes from God and that the only thing that is truly ours is our sin. (RnB, XVII: 7 and XVII: 17.)¹⁵ Solidarity impedes individualism and the search for privileges.

Austerity. Finally Austerity, how does it enter in a decision-making process? Austerity in lifestyle and therefore also in decision-making prevents us from searching for privileges and seeking advantage over others. It ensures that we *follow the rule of law* rather than of us ruling the law; law and decisions, of course, taken

¹⁵Letter from Porto Alegre, p. 3

while respecting the above principles! Austerity in lifestyle while not being judgemental leads to good relations with everyone and finally with God. Austerity as a whole fraternity helps us to overcome the need to hide our intentions and motivations and also to refrain from manipulative attitudes.

Furthermore austerity is an important means in the phase of implementation and enforcement of decisions. It can help us to overcome our slackness and carelessness in reacting to decisions taken by the community. Austerity will help us to be *effective and efficient*.

In a decision-making process and in the collaboration between the different levels of the Order's administration these five principles are good guidelines for a fraternal and truly Franciscan way of relating to each other and to the people living with and around us.

5 Bringing up the concerns.

From Grass-Roots Level to the International Sphere

The first and foremost prerequisite for any involvement in policy-making is concrete, hands-on experience in the respective field of concern. It means that we become stake-holders in a decision-making process. This expertise, or the stake we hold in the process, can originate from academic studies and insights as well as from a well-informed grass-roots experience. Knowing a situation is key, seeking and implementing concrete steps towards a solution of the problem is even better.

Brothers will experience resistance in trying to solve a problem. This resistance may originate from very different sources. As soon as the solution cannot be found locally alone but requires support from other entities and levels of society, there is a need to get involved in decision-making processes within those societies. On the other hand this implies that we have already become real stake-holders in the process.

The steps to be taken within the Order have already been described in Chapter 4.2. But in order to work for change on the level of a society the networks of the Order alone are often not sufficient. In collaboration with other organisations of the Church (e.g. the JPE offices of bishops' Conferences) or of the broader civil society (e.g. NGO's working in the respective field) those concerns can be brought to the attention of the national bodies and even governments. Normally this approach stands a good chance in democratic societies which follow the principles of good governance.

The first approach to seek for change is to enter into dialogue with those parts of society, administration or government dealing with the issue. Dialogue will only be fruitful if we are recognised as people with expertise and good standing in the field. Secondly, it will be important to enter into dialogue in the spirit of co-operation rather than confrontation. Although sometimes confrontation might be unavoidable for us Franciscans the crucial point is the way in which we disagree. This means entering into dialogue in the spirit of minority. Minority does not mean agreeing with everything or not knowing what to do. Minority shows its value in respect for the person we are talking to, while perhaps disagreeing with the issue. It also means to really listen to the position of the other side and to take it into consideration. Again this does not necessarily lead to agreement, but to a spirit of a joint search for an improvement of a situation.

If the partner in dialogue is not interested in listening and taking our interests into consideration then of course other means of getting people to the discussion table need to be sought. Here prudence is crucial. In democratic societies of course the media and other means of communication can be used.

In non-democratic societies often a dialogue with the national administration and government is hardly possible. In these cases we will need to go to the international level to seek support for a change. Involvement with national or international entities must not be sought without the explicit request of the friars working at grass-roots level.

On the international level the Franciscan family has its own voice, which is Franciscans International (FI) with its offices in New York, Geneva and Bangkok. As international diplomacy requires a high level of professionalism it will be of the utmost importance to get FI involved whenever the international sphere is needed to work for a change.

Nevertheless there is no point in involvement at the international level without the concrete and dedicated involvement with and for the poor and marginalised at the grass-roots level.

6 Proposals for concrete steps in the future

In the following section the structural reflections will be translated into more concrete proposals for the work of the Office of Justice, Peace and Ecology and additionally also for other entities of the Order. They will be differentiated, first according to the organisational level (the Order as a whole (A), the General Curia (B), the Conferences of the Order (C), the provinces (D) and finally the local level (E)) and secondly according to areas of concern ('Formation' (a), 'Communication

and Information' (b), 'Mission and Evangelisation' (c) (including 'implantatio Ordinis' and pastoral planning), 'Solidarity of Finances' (d), 'Solidarity of Personnel' (e), and 'Justice, Peace and Ecology' (f)).

Still, since this approach is in its very early stages the proposals will be limited to giving direction to the 'top-down' direction of governance. Nonetheless there is a vision of what changes are called for at the grass-roots level, which in turn shapes the measures proposed to get there. How are we to become more and more 'lesser brothers'? Here, a quote from a letter of Br. John Corriveau may serve as a first draft for a vision of what grass-roots involvement might increasingly come to resemble.

The option for the poor which we make "as a fraternity" must be marked by the compassion of Jesus. It must involve us in a ministry of compassionate listening. This presents us with an immediate and logical challenge:

"(This choice) ... *must be visibly shown*: by living with the poor ... by serving them, preferably with our own hands; by sharing bread with them, and defending their rights"
(PROPOSAL 9, VI PCO).

Only in this manner can the poor become for us persons rather than cases. Only in this way can we encourage them to express their deepest needs and claim the freedom and dignity that belongs to them in virtue of their creation and redemption.¹⁶

In this passage of the circular letter many important points in the work for justice and peace can be found: listening, living with, serving - with our hands, sharing and defence of rights. But in order to make these reflections on VI PCO more a reality on the ground, the following steps can be helpful in GIVING DIRECTION at the various levels of the Order's administration:

A) The Order. Two fundamental shifts need to happen at all levels of the Order:

First we need to work for a change of our place of perception¹⁷. This needs a

¹⁶Corriveau, J., (1999), Circular Letter Nr. 16, 3-4

¹⁷John Corriveau in his Circular letter Nr. 12 calls it: "Adopting the viewpoint of the poor."; Corriveau, J., (1997), Circular letter Nr. 12, 3-5; see further: Const. 59,8 and 60,6; PCO VII 25 and 27; PCO VII 49: It talks about a change of in theological location, which goes together (or at least ought to) with a change of our sociological location.

concise effort at all levels of the Order, basically in formation (initial, specialised and on-going) but also in pastoral planning, to make this important paradigm-shift.

Secondly, a shift needs to take place in the understanding of evangelisation or mission, or pastoral work itself. We need to understand that proclaiming the gospel has two equally important parts: the preaching of the word (including the sacramental aspect) and the practical action. This needs to be reflected more and more also in our theological reflections as well as in the pastoral planning undertaken by the various entities of the Order.

B) The General Curia and its offices. Given that the General Curia comprises all brothers in leadership and their respective collaborative offices, the process of GIVING DIRECTION to the Order as a whole has to start here. It cannot be stated often enough that concise action is needed for change to become real.

This in turn requires a well co-ordinated collaboration of all offices and leadership members to work for the same vision and goal.

B) General leadership. As the prime decision-making body of the Order it is crucial for leadership to recognise the importance of a two-sided approach to evangelisation, and further to apply and promote the five principles of good governance to formation, mission, solidarity of resources and justice, peace and ecology.

A,B,C,D.b) Office for Communication is key for working towards change, requiring information and discussion forums at all levels of the Order to facilitate the process of change.

B.a) General office for Formation. A huge amount of work falls on the office and council for formation due to its key position, as outlined earlier. Apart from imparting an understanding of evangelisation it will be crucial to develop a framework for an immersion period during the initial formation process. This is of particular importance so that an immediate adventure of living with the poor is transformed into a real experience. It is the experience which is needed to achieve the desired change in the place of perception. The process from discerning an adventure to acquiring an experience needs intellectual reflection as much as an emotional consideration of the immediate adventure.

In Order to make such an immersion period feasible we will also need to develop an organisational framework of exchanges of brothers in formation.

B.c) General office for Animation of the Missions. Again the double-sided approach to evangelisation and mission needs to be promoted by the Office.

More particularly we need to look into where we want to start new missions. In line with the importance of the place of perception, new missions should be accepted in poor and marginalised locations.

B.d,e) General office of Solidarity of finances and the commission for solidarity of personnel. The same holds true for the allocation of our resources. They should be go to places of poverty and suffering first, rather than for the improvement existing locations and institutions.

B.f) Office for JPE. The JPE Office develops a framework approach to work in the field of JPE.

There should be a data-base of grass-roots activities so as to build up a network of friars active in the field. It should develop a more detailed approach to grass-roots initiatives, as well as formation programs in the relevant fields of activities according to need.

Further it should collaborate with the Office for Formation to develop frameworks for times of immersion.

Once a well-functioning network is established, one of the Office's prime tasks will be the co-ordination of grass-roots initiatives, the networking with other organisations and the analysis of the grass-roots data gathered by the friars.

In order to become more effective in communicating issues and initiatives in the field of JPE it would be tremendously helpful to have at least a part time collaborator in Rome with good journalistic skills.

C) The Conferences play an important role in co-ordination and in the process of formation of opinion on the leadership level. Furthermore many formation programs are organised at conference level. Conferences play a crucial role especially in regions where numbers are still small or are in decline.

C.a) Formation. In formation it will be the Conferences which need to foster and organise the phases of immersion for brothers in initial formation. Identification of possible locations for this phase will be easier on conference level than on the level of a single circumscription.

In ongoing formation it will be important to include the issues of Justice, Peace and Ecology in the programs for the friars and/or develop special formation programs in this regard.

The promotion of the five principles of governance will be crucial in the formation of opinion. The achievement of a good level of understanding of these principles is key to their implementation on the provincial level.

C.f) JPE. Formation of working groups of friars involved in JPE-related activities will probably be most successful at this level, as the expected numbers of friars are not too big.

These working groups (or commissions) will have the purpose of co-ordination of the work, identification and planning of necessary formation programs for those working in the field, analysis of the pressing issues in collaboration with the office in Rome as well as networking with other regional entities relevant to the work.

D) The Circumscriptions usually are the basic entities dealing with the allocation of personnel, developing pastoral plans for their area and the administration of the friars. So it is the provincial leadership which needs to be convinced of a common vision to arrive at the necessary change at the grass-roots level.

D) Provincial leadership needs to promote and apply the principles of good governance to have the chance to move the friars of their circumscription. They need to understand and promote the double-sided approach to evangelisation and to recognise the proposed approach to JPE work.

D.a) Formation. The formation directors need to be convinced of the importance of phases of immersion and more importantly about the need to change the place of perception.

D.c) Mission. The mission offices should be supportive of projects that develop from the bottom up, rather than sticking to the usual 'top-down' approach in implementing mission projects. Those responsible for the missions need to insist on listening to the needs of the people rather than developing projects without the participation of the local people.

D.f) JPE. Working groups of friars engaged in JPE should be established wherever practicable. Their competences shall be those already explained for the conference level.

E) The local level is the first and primary place for the implementation and enforcement of directives. It is therefore unavoidable that local concerns will finally shape the direction taken.

E.d,e) Solidarity of finances and personell. For a true exercise of solidarity, a sober look at the needs will be crucial. Thinking globally in terms of the Order and of humankind while acting locally will help tremendously.

E.f) Local initiatives. Locally it will be the friars working with and for the poor and marginalised who will gather relevant data, undertake a first analysis of the situation they live in and who will have to report to a higher level and discuss the findings there. In the end, JPE projects can only be implemented at the local level.