

THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE AND PEACE:

WHY HAS THIS THEME BECOME SO IMPORTANT FOR THE OMI CONGREGATION?

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Throughout their history, the Oblates Congregation have maintained a close connection with people, consistently promoting justice and peace in large and small ways. The Oblates approach this mission with inner sensitivity to the sufferings of the poor and oppressed. Generally, Oblates exemplify the essence of a religious person called to love, with the same intensity as Christ, all those marginalized by society. In a world that desperately needs justice and peace, it is significant that our *magazine Oblatio* dedicates a reflection to this topic, which is central to the pastoral activities of the Oblate Congregation. In the following paragraphs, we will emphasize the importance of the ministry of justice and peace, as the Church ministry, settled first in the tradition of the Congregation and then in the ongoing efforts of the Oblates to respond to this vocation linked to our common mission.

JUSTICE AND PEACE AS A MINISTRY OF THE WHOLE CHURCH

Let us briefly reflect on the search for Justice and Peace as a ministry of the whole Church. All human beings share a common desire to pursue justice and peace. Societies and the Church are responsible for promoting efforts in this direction, particularly among God's people. This mission can be fulfilled through the existing structures within and outside the Church.

We must critically examine the underlying causes of poverty, conflict, and violence among people. It is essential to find ways to make the values of the Kingdom more visible and applicable in our everyday lives. To achieve this, we need to adopt a contemplative approach and engage in prophetic discernment.

The Church should support the diverse efforts to bring the evangelical message of Justice and Peace to our contemporaries by encouraging practical initiatives in this area. Those who advocate for justice and peace are tasked with guiding these efforts on global, national, and regional levels. To fulfill this mission, justice and peace must be pursued in collaboration with other religions and social groups, ensuring that these values are integrated into the societal fabric of countries where other faiths are predominant.

Our pursuit of justice and peace is rooted in the spirit of the Church, based on three fundamental pillars: the Holy Scriptures, the Social Teaching of the Church, and the experiences with the poor in their various and vulnerable life situations. The Ministry of Justice and Peace draws strength from the biblical foundation. From the Old Testament, God is revealed as a liberator of the oppressed and a defender of the poor (Ps. 72:12-14). His Spirit inspired prophets like Amos, Isaiah, and Jeremiah to boldly expose the social and political injustices of Israel as abhorrent and sinful in God's eyes.

The liberation of the Israelites from oppression in Egypt (Ex. 3:7-12) and the covenant between God and the People of Israel (Ex. 19-20) are central to God's plan of salvation. The Lord requires the people to have faith and to practice justice toward their neighbors. To truly know God—the Liberator of the oppressed—one must engage in justice for those around them.

The message of the Old Testament emphasizing justice and peace is unmistakably echoed in the New Testament through the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. The New Testament supports this idea of justice and peace for all. Jesus' life, teachings, and actions strongly reinforce the Old Testament's call for love of God and love of neighbor, which is expressed through the practice of justice as a pathway to salvation. His preaching and the miracles he performed demonstrate that God stands with the poor. Additionally, Jesus' followers are commissioned to proclaim the same good news and to work toward the establishment of God's reign. This reign is characterized by justice, reconciliation, unity, peace, and joy.

Social Teaching of the Church and our existential Experience with the poor are two essential pillars in the pursuit and practice of justice and peace among people. Over the centuries, the Church has developed a body of doctrine known as Catholic social teaching or the Social Doctrine of the Church to put social justice into practice rather than talk about it. Consequently, by the early 1970s, Justice and Peace groups were active around the world, particularly in Latin America. Here, Basic Christian Communities began to reflect on the Bible through the lens of their experiences with poverty. They affirmed that the Church must adopt a preferential option for the poor. In this way, the Church urges all of us to:

“Be alert to discern, recognize, denounce, fight against, and isolate the germ of sin and the sources of infection that turn us into oppressors of one another. We must be vigilant against the structures of exploitation and repression that stifle individual freedom and hinder dialogue. We should commit to this cause wholeheartedly, prepared to endure hardship, even to the point of suffering, emulating the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross. This is the only path for those who strive for liberation and salvation for humanity”.¹

On November 30th, 2021, we celebrated the 50th anniversary of "Justice in the World", a document published in 1972, pivotal in advancing justice and peace in our time. "Justice in the World" clearly affirms that the pursuit of justice and peace, along with the transformation of the world through action, is an essential component of the Church's mission to preach the Gospel (JIW, no. 6). We must remain vigilant, constantly drawing from the deep well of spiritual life that gives us the strength to speak out boldly and without fear. We cannot allow ourselves to be confined by positions that prevent us from recognizing injustice and addressing it.

Pope Paul VI's *Motu Proprio*, "Justitia et Pax," issued on December 10th, 1976, was a vital inspiration for the Church's pastoral mission, formation, and spirituality. This theme is also elaborated upon in many spiritual texts produced by religious communities. Justice and peace have been significant concerns for many Christians, who have engaged in profound reflection on these issues.

In summary, Pope Paul VI was correct when he stated that the Ministry of Justice and Peace fulfills the Council's final wish expressed in *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 90:

“That an organism of the universal Church be set up so that both the justice and love of Christ toward the poor might be developed everywhere. The role of such an organism would be to stimulate the Catholic community to promote progress in needy regions and international social justice. For this reason, the church steeple is often topped with a rooster, serving as a symbol of watchfulness for the faith and the entirety of Christian life, both historically and today. The Commission for Justice and Peace has been placed on the spiritual foundation of the council with the specific role of keeping the Church's eyes alert, her heart open, and her hand ready to extend in love

¹ Cardinal Roy, “The following challenge on occasion of the Vth Assembly in 23-29 September 1970”, in *Bulletin Pontifical Commission Justice and Peace*, no. 10, Rome, October 1970.

to the world. This is to promote the development of the poorest people and foster social justice among nations”.²

Therefore, the Church's faith formation program must give priority to the integration of the principles of justice and peace into pastoral ministry, as this is one of its most important aspects. Just as liturgical observance and prayer are essential to help the People of God understand Christ's concern for the poor and the need for a conversion of hearts, so too is the pastoral dimension of justice and peace in the promotion of human development and the awakening of public consciousness in the defense of the rights of the poorest and marginalized.

WHY SHOULD OBLATES BE INVOLVED IN JUSTICE AND PEACE MINISTRY IF THE TRUE CALL TO “JUSTICE AND PEACE” APPEARS ONLY IN C. 9 AND R 9A?

Here, it is essential to understand why the theme of “Justice and Peace” holds such significance for the Oblate Congregation, even though the explicit references to justice and peace in the Constitutions and Rules (CC.R.) are limited to C. 9 and R. 9A. Let me clarify this is not merely a phrase or a section from the Oblate Constitutions and Rules regarding the ministry of justice and peace. All our Constitutions and Rules, as well as all Oblate ministries, are involved in pursuing justice and peace. While the words "justice and peace" may not explicitly appear in every section of the CC.R., their essence is undeniably present throughout. We can affirm that all our CC.R. reflects the values of justice and peace in every article.

For instance, when we discuss how to live our mission as apostolic and religious men within the community, we must adhere to the principles of justice and peace (CC.R., Chapters 1-2). Additionally, both initial and ongoing formation for Oblates must be infused with the teaching of these values (CC.R., Chapter 3). In both regional contexts and the Central Government, the dimensions of justice and peace are crucial in leadership roles and the administration of temporal goods, contributing significantly to the ongoing improvement of our Constitutions and Rules (CC.R., Chapters 4-7).

The C. 9 and Rule 9a of our CC.RR. are the result of an extensive discernment process by the Congregation and reflect the Oblates' steadfast commitment to serving the poor in various contexts. In the post-Vatican II era, the Oblate community embraced Justice and Peace as shared aspirations and essential services for all people. As a core element of Oblate spirituality, the commitment to Justice and Peace has consistently been emphasized in most General Chapters of the Oblate Congregation, especially since the “Missionary Outlook” in 1972 and the “Acts of the General Chapter” in 1974.

We want to highlight that numeral XIII-2024/1, pages 145-152, of *Oblatio* contains an insightful commentary on the first ten CC.R. This commentary is essential for understanding and furthering the ministry of justice and peace within the Congregation. The commitment of the Oblates to justice and peace is clearly articulated as members of a prophetic Church, recognizing our need for conversion to bear witness to God's holiness and justice. Oblates proclaim the liberating presence of Jesus Christ and the new world born from His resurrection. For, the Gospel of Jesus Christ has called us from the very beginning of our Congregation to reach out to the poor and stand by their side. Every Oblate must be a missionary in today's world and must be actively concerned about contemporary poverty.

² Pope Paul VI, “Allocution to the Commission of justice and Peace”, in *Justitia Et Pax*, no.10, 1970.

Over the ages and in response to the injustices suffered by people, the Oblates have established and strengthened "Justice and Peace" committees to study the feasibility of organizing international gatherings to promote justice and peace within our ministries in communion with other civil and religious institutions.³ The message is thus launched to the whole Congregation in this way: "we cannot remain indifferent to the pledge of the poor. As Oblates, we see the world through the eyes of the Crucified Savior. We strengthen those who suffer with the hope found in the power of the resurrection, as our Founder, St. Eugene de Mazenod, did. He sowed the seeds that grew into a magnificent missionary community dedicated to serving the most abandoned members of our society".⁴

Saint Eugene de Mazenod observed the world of his time and recognized people whose lives had been untouched by the message of Christ. He ventured out with unwavering confidence in God, motivated by his faith, to serve the most abandoned by gathering a group of apostolic men. Then, many Oblates around the world are actively engaged in working with, among, and for the poor. Even if they don't explicitly use the terms "justice and peace", they uphold a commitment to justice for the poor and all.

For many years, the oblate vision of justice and peace has been firmly rooted in the concept of "social justice," particularly in the context of post-World War I. An illustrative example can be found in the well-known bulletin on "Social Justice", published by Fr. Peter Pillai in 1937 in the Archdiocese of Colombo. Reports in various newspapers, including non-Catholic ones, confirm that the movement initiated by the bulletin is gaining significant momentum day by day. He has rapidly gained collaborators and supporters for his program. Indeed, Fr. Pillai was in high demand for lectures across almost all cities in Ceylon.

Two pamphlets, titled *The Social Question* and *Our Social Responsibilities*, were also published in Sinhala. While attacks on the doctrines advocated by social justice are expected, Fr. Pillai and his team are confident that their adversaries are losing ground. Pillai's struggle is not directed against communism itself; rather, he targets the reforms needed to address the specific social conditions of Ceylon, circumstances that have pushed the poorer classes towards communism, and they must be addressed.⁵

Based on what we mentioned formerly, we can affirm that the Oblates are true apostles committed to justice and peace. They serve as the salt of the earth and the light of the world, witnessing the justice of God as revealed in Jesus. Additionally, they are witnesses of hope, paving the way for the Kingdom of God in this world. As workers of justice and peace, the Oblates fully embrace the gifts of the Spirit and attest to the renewing power of the Gospel.

Their unwavering commitment to the ministry of justice and peace reflects their desire for a more fraternal world united by the bonds of the Gospel. The Oblates believe that their homilies and actions on behalf of the poor will cultivate new customs, mindsets, and hearts within the community, leading to a deeper experience of God in environments that foster peace and harmony.

³ OMI, *Missionary Outlook*, no. 16 e, p. 23.

⁴ Ibid. *Missionary Outlook*, nos. 15 & 16 a, pp.17-21.

⁵See, *Missions of the Congregation of the Missionary Oblates*, Volume 71,1937, p. 557.

THE LAST 50 YEARS OF OBLATE'S MINISTRY IN FAVOR OF JUSTICE AND PEACE

The last 50 years of Oblate's ministry have been characterized by a strong commitment to justice and peace. As mentioned above, a closer examination of our Congregation's history reveals that since 1972, the Oblates have aimed to deepen their understanding of the reasons behind their commitment to the ministry of justice and peace. They have sought to discover just ways to integrate this ministry into the heart of the Congregation. This effort led to serious discussions about renewing their vision and implementing the ministry of justice and peace within the Congregation, culminating in the creation of the document titled "Missionary Outlook". The Oblates gathered at the General Chapter of 1972 affirm their fidelity to sharing De Mazenod's faith and embracing his mission as their own. This fidelity is a fundamental aspect of our mission today.

Oblate actions in the post-Vatican II context have highlighted this commitment: we are prophets in the Church, missionaries to the poor in various forms. The Holy Spirit has endowed our Congregation with this mission since its founding, making it a vital aspect of our charism. In this sense, "Missionary Outlook" encourages us to embrace our strengths and adopt a new approach to engaging in justice and peace as part of our consecration and charism (MO., nos. 9-13). Our life is pluralistic, reflecting the diverse ways in which our mission can be lived out. In some contexts, this mission requires a clear and decisive presence that responds to injustices as well as economic and social needs. We must also emphasize our solidarity with the poor and marginalized (MO., no. 15).

Living in communion with God entails living in communion with others. As Oblates, our goal is to engage deeply with the lives of the poor. "Missionary Outlook" fully supports Oblates who feel called to identify completely with the poor, embodying their social, cultural, and economic circumstances. We possess the qualities necessary for those engaged in the work of justice and peace alongside the poor. We must cultivate an open and respectful attitude toward the communities in which we live, paying special attention to what the young are trying to communicate to us. Young people can often appear restless, self-righteous, and demanding due to their sense of alienation from adult society. We must commit ourselves to a radical return to the Gospel and a profound personal renewal in the Spirit. Without this commitment, all our efforts would be techniques aimed at winning over the people of our time. We must seriously reevaluate our current commitments considering the Gospel and our missionary charism.

During the first Plenary Session in 1977, from January 24 to February 11, Fernand Jetté, Superior general, and the general Council convened in Rome. The Council consisted of Francis George (Vicar General), René Motte (first assistant for formation), Marcello Zago (second assistant for the mission), and General Councilors Albert Schneider (Europe), Lucien Casterman (Canada), Charles Breault (U.S.A.), Dalston Forbes (Asia), Patrick Hogan (Southern Africa), and Leo Guilmette (Latin America), gathered to continue their discussions on evangelization, which had begun in the "Missionary Outlook," and to make decisions related to mission and formation policy.

The primary focus of the discussions was promoting justice. Each member of the Council was asked to respond in writing to the question, "How does ministry for justice fit into the missionary action of the Congregation?" Additionally, each general Councilor presented a concise overview of their region's contributions to this ministry, highlighting trends aimed at achieving a more just social, economic, and political order. These papers showcased a variety of theological perspectives. Some participants articulated a vision of the Church as a family

where various institutes contribute their unique charism. Others approached the subject from the standpoint of ministry, interpreting it as prophetic, critical, and educational. A different group emphasized the vision of the Reign of Justice, Peace, and Love as proclaimed by Jesus. These varied perspectives underscored that, at least in this area of justice and peace, it is not necessary to have all definitions clear before acting. After further discussion, the Council agreed on six guiding questions to direct their reflection:

1. What aspects of our Oblate commitment to justice and peace do we want to emphasize?
2. How do we understand the relationship between our evangelical commitment to justice and the ambiguity present in its various temporal realizations (political, economic, social, ecclesiastical)? How can we maintain our commitment when the tools for its realization appear ambiguous?
3. In light of what the Oblates are doing, can we suggest criteria for evaluating our efforts?
4. In promoting justice and peace, how can we best leverage the international dimension of the Congregation?
5. How can we more clearly integrate evangelical justice into our lifestyle? What does it mean to be "prophetic" in the area of justice and peace?
6. What kind of program can we propose to the Congregation, or how can we assist in promoting justice and peace at the level of the general government?

To develop a program of action and clarify the evaluation criteria, two key points are essential:

a) Promoting justice is integral to the Congregation's mission of preaching the Gospel to the poor. All Oblates are called to advocate for justice.

b) While some Oblates hold specific responsibilities for directly promoting justice, it is important that a commitment to fostering a more just social, political, and economic order is central to our lifestyle and ministry.

To implement the decision made during the Plenary Session of 1977, Fr. George Francis, Vicar General, sent a letter to all Provincials and promoters of Justice and Peace. The purpose of this letter is to establish a network of Oblates who are deeply engaged in the ministry of Justice. This network will enhance communication within this sector of the Congregation and enable Oblates to connect with one another across national and provincial boundaries. He specifically asked them: *How does the ministry for justice align with the missionary action of the Congregation?*⁶ The pathway for Oblates to engage more deeply in the Justice and Peace ministry is now clear.

Moreover, throughout several General Chapters, such as "Missionaries in Today's World" (1986), and "Witnessing as Apostolic Community" (1992), the Congregation has been repeatedly called to act based on its identity and commitment to serving the poor. Frank Bullivan, who was then the Assistant in charge of the Archives at the General House, was invited by Fr. Daniel Corijn to attend the Justice and Peace meetings. In 1993, the Congregation officially recognized the role of Fr. Frank Bullivan as "*Secrétaire pour Justice et Paix*", marking a historic first for the Congregation. A dedicated room was allocated for the JPIC office at the east end of the second floor of the General House. This office was furnished with basic necessities and equipped with the necessary infrastructure, including a typewriter, four filing cabinets, cupboards, shelves, and

⁶ Communiqué no. 16/77, *Letter to Provincials and members of the Justice and Peace network*, Francis George, Vicar General, October 28, 1977.

more. JPIC books are stored on the shelves, while correspondence is organized by region in the filing cabinets. The "*Secrétaire pour Justice et Paix*" position was eliminated in the year 2000.

The first *Vade Mecum on Justice and Peace* was published and was approved by the then Superior General, Fr. Marcello Zago, on February 17th, 1997. The ongoing call in favor of Justice and Peace ministry, underpins the final revision of Rule 9a of our CC.RR. in the 33rd General Chapter, "Evangelizing the Poor at the Dawn of the Third Millennium, 1998", which strongly emphasizes the integral role of advocating justice and peace as part of our evangelization efforts in a renewed spirit. This General Chapter reaffirms our commitment to justice and peace as a mandate for the Congregation, and the pursuit of a prophetic approach to serve those most in need.⁷

On May 24, 2001, the Superior General in Council officially established the ministry of *Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation* (JPIC) within the OMI Congregation as a *General Service*. Its main mission is to preach the Gospel to the poor (C. 149, R. 149 a, f). The Statutes of the *OMI General Service of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation*, were approved by the Superior General Council on June 25, 2010, providing clear guidance for Oblate ministries throughout the Congregation. With the publication of the encyclical *Laudato Si'* and Pope Francis's explicit call to "develop an integral ecology capable of remedying the damage we have done" (LS.63).

The 36th General Chapter in 2016 confirmed the resolution regarding "action on behalf of Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation as an integral part of Oblate evangelization, particularly among the most abandoned". On May 23, 2016, the JPIC *Vade Mecum* was updated and renamed the "Companion in Mission", which was published in 2018.

The 37th General Chapter, titled "Pilgrim of Hope in Communion", celebrates the 50th anniversary of the Missionary Outlook. This document has guided our vision for the Ministry of Justice and Peace, emphasizing the importance of collective efforts rooted in the self-responsibility of all Oblates. Justice and Peace represent a significant journey that many Oblates have undertaken throughout their missionary lives. During this chapter, the Oblates made a clear and decisive commitment: "We will do much more to promote justice and peace". The Oblates reaffirmed their choice to stand with the voiceless and the poor dynamically. Thus, we must intensify our efforts for justice and peace, as Rule 9a encourages us. "This call is especially relevant to our parish ministry, where we have a strong presence. Oblate parishes, which should reflect a distinct missionary character, are ideal settings for addressing the widespread indifference toward the tragedy of migration and the degradation of creation".⁸

The 37th General Chapter has made it clear: this is the path forward. Goodness, love, justice, and solidarity are not one-time achievements; they must be realized each day (cf. PHC, *Communion*, no. 17). As missionaries of hope on a pilgrimage, we recognize the need to find new ways to respond to the challenges faced by the poor today. We remain steadfast in our commitment to advocate for justice for those on the margins who cry out for it. We will continue to pursue healing and reconciliation wherever it is needed (cf. PHC, *Conclusion*, no. 20.2).

Before closing this section, we are pleased to report that the dedicated efforts of Fr. Francis George and Bill Sheehan (1978–1985), Daniel Corijn (1986–1992 and 1992–1998), and Frank Sullivan (1992) have been instrumental in advancing our mission in the ministry of justice and peace. They played a key role in raising awareness about the Oblate ministry of Justice and

⁷ cf. *Acts of the 33rd General Chapter*, 1998, p.71.

⁸ cf. "Pilgrims of Hope in Communion", *B. Hope*, no. 13.

Peace and laid the groundwork for the General Service of Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) today.

Daniel Corijn, Didier Zanafradara, Gilberto Piñon, Bradly Rozairo, Camille Piché, Daniel LeBlanc, Jose Antonio Ponce, Kennedy Katongo, Kevin McLaughlin, Miguel Fritz, Miguel Pipolo, Paolo Archiati and others are among those who sought to piece together the available vignettes to reconstruct the historical context of Justice and Peace within the Congregation.

In a letter dated May 23, 2016, Fr. Louis Lougen, Superior General at that time, emphasized as Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, we are steadfast in our commitment to the ministry of Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation. This is an integral part of our mission to bring good news to the poor. Our commitment to justice, peacemaking, and caring for God's creation reflects our missionary lives and serves as a clear sign of Jesus' Kingdom among us. "This is a core value for Oblates and is echoed in the Biblical motto of our Congregation: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, and He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. I am here to proclaim deliverance to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind. I am here to release the oppressed and proclaim the year of the Lord's favor'"⁹

Therefore, today the Oblate Congregation is dedicated to serving as an ecclesial and communal ministry focused on promoting justice, peace, and equality worldwide. The General Service of Justice and Peace is deeply intertwined with all our ministries as Missionary Oblates.

MY MOTIVATION IN THE SERVICE OF JUSTICE AND PEACE

I would like to briefly discuss my motivation to serve as director of the General Service of *Justice, Peace and Integrity of the Creation* through the Oblates Congregation. It has long been a tradition within the Oblate Congregation that the director or secretary general of *Justice and Peace* also holds the position of General Counselor or Assistant General, or Vicar General. For example, in 1986, Fr. Daniel Corijn, Vicar General, took on him the role of Justice and Peace coordinator. This practice was established because the *Office of Justice and Peace* was still in its early stages and faced challenges in finding suitable candidates for leadership.

As time has passed, the traditions have evolved to remain relevant. After 2004, in addition to being a director, the *Justice and Peace Committee* involves three General Councilors: Fr. Clyde Rausch, Fr. Philipiah Jesunesan, and Fr. Loudeger Mazile. They were enthusiastic about revitalizing the Oblate Justice and Peace ministry. However, their responsibilities as General Councilors limited their ability to stay connected with the numerous events and pressing issues related to justice and peace that demand their attention.

We have documented the names of former directors of the *General Service of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation* who were officially appointed, including Eliseo "Jun" Mercado (2003-2007), Camille Piché (2007-2014), and Kennedy Katongo (2014-2016). Additionally, many Oblates have played a significant role in shaping the *Justice and Peace service* within the Congregation, particularly in response to the evangelization of the poor. Notable figures include Séamus Finn, director of the USA-JPIC; Gilberto Piñon; Daniel Leblanc, the UN representative, among others.

In September 2016, Kennedy Katongo, the former director of JPIC, passed away due to health complications after only two years in service, on the very same day as the opening of the

⁹ See. OMI-JPIC, *Vade Mecum Companion in Mission*, Rome, 2018, p. 9

36th General Chapter. For over four years, the JPIC office operated without a director, relying on a General Counselor, Fr. Guillaume Muthunda, to fulfill this role temporarily. Then, in October 2020, the OMI General Administration appointed me as the director of the *G.S. Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation* (JPIC), within the Congregation. I accepted this call with obedience and a spirit of service. From that moment on, I have led JPIC efforts with an intercultural and representative team drawn from the regions where the Oblates are active.

When I was appointed as the director of the *General Service of JPIC*, I took pride in echoing the words of the prophet Amos: “I am not a prophet or the son of a prophet. I am a shepherd, and I also take care of sycamore fig trees. The Lord took me from tending the flock and said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to my people Israel’” (Am 7:14-15).

It is undeniable that culture shapes individuals. It consists of distinctive behaviors — spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional— which characterize and energize a social group. I would like to say that my culture shapes me in search of *Justice and Peace* in addition, world events that greatly influence my sensitivity. I was born in Haiti, a country that has endured social violence, political instability, and turmoil for many years. These experiences have shaped my life, and I have viewed them as obstacles and opportunities for my ministry. As a seminarian, I had dedicated my work to the service of the most oppressed and justice-seeking people who were living under the dictatorship at that time.

I also carried out a good part of my priestly ministry in Colombia, where for many years I supported the poor and immigrants who arrived in my parish in the suburbs of the city of Bogotá. My work in Colombia has given me the strength to advocate for justice and support victims of oppression, poverty, and violence. At that time, I was cooperating with two parishes in vulnerable areas, helping those who were forced to flee their homes in *Buenaventura* and *Chocó*, due to internal armed conflicts that have already lasted more than 60 years. These conflicts have led to the forced displacement of the poor from their land and wealth to the benefit of armed groups and drug traffickers.

I have also witnessed people fighting against injustice in this beautiful and biodiverse country. All these experiences, along with many others, motivate me to join a diverse association that advocates for human rights and the dignity of all people. Additionally, I have had the privilege of sharing my insights with the Conference of Religious of Latin America (CLAR) to promote the dignity of Afro-Colombians and other ethnic groups and religious communities.

Now, I have been in Rome in the last four years, trying to make a significant contribution to the quest for justice and peace, and to help build a more just and equitable world from little initiatives.

WHAT DOES JPIC GENERAL SERVICE DO TO ATTEND AND COORDINATE THE INITIATIVES IN FAVOR OF JUSTICE AND PEACE IN THE CONGREGATION?

The *JPIC General Service* is crucial in guiding reflection and coordinating initiatives that promote justice and peace within the congregation. The *General Service of Justice and Peace and Integrity of Creation* has been fulfilling its mission for many years. The aim is to identify with the poor the roots of the injustices, share their experiences, and engage with them in the struggle for justice and peace while promoting the integrity of creation. The services offered are to proclaim the liberating presence of Jesus Christ and the new world that emerges from His Resurrection.

As *JPIC General Service*, we are committed to listening to, accompanying, and providing opportunities for those living in poverty to express their concerns. In solidarity with the Church and other individuals of goodwill, we act upon the root causes of suffering and injustice in the world. We try to be present in spaces where decisions affecting the future of the poor are made.

The primary focus areas of our ministry for justice and peace continue to be challenging because the situation for the poor is worsening. New forms of poverty and inequality are emerging, and the issues our Congregation sought to address years ago in the realm of justice and peace still lack adequate solutions.

The rapid changes occurring in our world affect everyone, particularly the most vulnerable and neglected individuals. However, we cannot remain indifferent; we must take action to create change and continually engage in discernment regarding the plight of the poor and victims of injustice, violence, war, human trafficking, and exploitation. We dedicated time to studying the Oblate ministry with migrants and refugees, recognizing them as some of the many faces of poverty today.

In the spirit of the 37th General Chapter of 2022, we continue to be witnesses, companions in mission, and pilgrims of hope, standing in communion with all the Units as they strive to achieve integral ecology in their life and mission. JPIC is making a significant impact by being close to people. We fulfill our mission with passion, competence, field experience, and a lifestyle that reflects Oblate values, as well as the principles of *Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation*. We call upon everyone to show solidarity and engage in prophetic action and offer the following services and input:

- *The General Service of JPIC serves as an agent of animation, successfully raising awareness and initiating action on justice and peace issues within our Congregation.* We aim to stimulate efforts among God's people, utilizing structures inside and outside the Church. Our mission promotes concrete activities aligned with the evangelical message of our times, encouraging participation in the integral ecology movement inspired by Pope Francis' encyclical.
- *The General Service of JPIC acts as a supportive agent, fostering an environment where spirituality is expressed through both words and actions.* According to Rule 9a, we must continually assess our community's situation from a deep spiritual perspective. This approach empowers us to address injustices with both bravery and compassion through prophetic actions. We must remain vigilant in identifying, condemning, combating, and isolating the roots of sins and the sources of harm that oppress us, both individually and collectively.
- *We support our Oblates in their ministries by acting locally and internationally in solidarity with others.* This allows us to provide various forms of support for those in need, including prayers, petitions, letters, and lobbying efforts. As a proactive organization, we create advocacy action plans and opportunities for the marginalized to voice their concerns. We also facilitate communication with the Congregation's leadership and regional *Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation* committees.
- *We advocate for policies and actions that transform the lives of the impoverished and create conditions that promote and sustain integral ecology.* Our approach ensures a balance between meeting the needs of present and future generations while protecting the environment. We represent the most marginalized through our presence at the United

Nations, with JCor, and through the Africa Europe Faith and Justice Network, a faith-based international network established in 1988, that focuses on economic justice between the European Union and sub-Saharan Africa. Additionally, VIVAT International is a leading non-governmental organization with over 25,000 members from 11 Catholic religious congregations.

- *The General Service of JPIC acts as a collaborative agent, relying on laypeople and Oblate Associates to ensure the success of our programs and projects.* They work with us in various locations around the world to fulfill the Oblates' mission. Our lay partners and Oblate Associates are our primary allies in our efforts to assist the poor. Furthermore, they enable us to advocate for justice and peace on various issues, including migration, health, charitable works, and environmental stewardship.

- Finally, *the General Service of JPIC is committed to being integrative, reaffirming our dedication to the spirit of Laudato Si' in our ministries.* We promote sustainable practices, and advocate for environmental justice, and additionally, we conducted a study of the Oblate ministry with migrants and refugees to identify future directions through a synodal process.

These works embody justice, peace, and the integrity of creation, because the Gospel of Jesus Christ calls us to reach out with compassion and love to the poor and suffering, standing firmly by their side.

TO CONCLUDE...

The actual *General Service for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation* has accomplished one of its most significant goals during this time: establishing the General Committee of Justice and Peace as a central hub for information exchange between the JPIC promoters and other Institutions linked to our Congregation. This initiative has made it a vital reference point for collaborative work with various institutions, thereby strengthening our commitment to serve the entire Church in matters of justice and peace. By integrating our evangelization efforts with civil society entities, we can enhance our effectiveness in advocating for justice. This approach will also help us embody the essence of being true men of the Gospel, grounded in spiritual teachings.

To make our vision a reality, we must provide oblate formation about justice and peace to the new generation. This training should be an essential component of the Oblate Units' investment in the integral development of their young Oblates. It should include education in the areas of Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation, as well as studies on the Social Teachings of the Church, Human Rights courses, and the Social and Economic Covenant. We will continue our journey filled with hope and communion until justice and peace are established for all.