

Spiritan Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Ministry

We must make ourselves “the advocates, the supporters and the defenders of the weak and the little ones against all who oppress them”. (Rule of 1849; N.D. X 517) (SRL 14)

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PREFACE

This manual, *“Spiritan Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Ministry (JPIC)”*, is a valuable addition to our resources. It deepens the meaning of this commitment for us and provides us with an instrument of formation for this integral part of our mission. In today’s world, we cannot share the Gospel with the poor in a credible way if we do not integrate these ideas into our actions. JPIC is one of the major concerns of our time. Using it as a starting point, young people can be introduced to the meaning of our vocation and older people can find an answer to some basic questions – like, for example, the old lady, a friend of the Spiritans, who asked me when I was leaving for Africa: *“What exactly are you going to do out there?”*

There are some fundamentalist Churches which would regard a concern for social involvement as an adulteration of the purity of evangelisation; they look upon us as bad Christians because we pollute the Gospel with “humanism”. Even in our own Church, we sometimes find a refusal to commit ourselves to JPIC. After a recent large meeting of superiors of missionary institutes, where they shared their priorities and preoccupations, the minutes were not published because, apparently, those who arranged the meeting felt that there was too much emphasis being put on social engagement.

The great value of this manual is that it explains the full meaning of the objectives of JPIC for Christians and, in particular, for us Spiritans. It should reassure those who fear that the principal or even sole aim of mission is being diverted towards social change. It will help us to harmonise our social commitment with our sharing of the Gospel.

In this context, the manual has a challenging approach: it begins with a presentation of our founders whom we look on as examples of sanctity. Commitment to JPIC and the spiritual journey towards sanctity are not two separate things: we are presented with a unified vision of our mission – not something previously worked out based on programmes and strategies, or doctrines and accepted practices,

but a vision which is constantly reborn in new fraternal encounters and inspired by the witnesses of the Gospel with the poor. The lived experience of our founders leads us to the service and defence of the poor where they happen to be and with the means available to us today.

Our current priorities, based on the movement of unification in the world and the need to influence structures on a large scale, do not go against the charism of Claude Poullart des Places and François Marie Paul Libermann. By insisting on the priority of JPIC, we are convinced that we are being faithful to the meaning and dynamism of those who initiated and directed our spiritan story. JPIC gives the original charism its authentic development for our globalised world.

Poullart des Places was led by the Spirit not just to help the poor students with his own money, but to share everything he had with them, to live with them in a student community and to live in community with others like himself who wanted to educate poor clerics. His plans developed at the same time as his poverty; as the manual says on page 10, *“When the General Chaplain for the colonies saw the marvellous work done by a dozen priests who went to Canada and the Far East, he proposed that the Congregation accept officially the responsibility for the overseas territories”*.

Libermann himself was an excluded person – first in the Jewish ghetto of Saverne, then in the cultural milieu of Metz, the ecclesiastical world of Saint-Sulpice and lastly, the greatest suffering of all, as an epileptic barred from receiving ordination to the priesthood for which he had prepared with such fervour. He learnt in his own flesh what it means to be poor and excluded. It is evident that this multiple experience of poverty and rejection helped him to understand and love fervently the people of Africa to whom he sent his first missionaries. He stressed the respect they must have for their culture, the dedication to their education both scholarly and technical, while, at the same time, exhorting his missionaries to be holy – which, when all is said and done, is the only means of evangelisation.

This solid base of witness, along with the references to recent spiritan documents, has produced a rich spiritan spirituality of JPIC. The poor are given pride of place. They are not just the beneficiaries of our service: they themselves frequently inspire us by their humility, their courage and their openness to others. Our contacts with them are often a source of grace and joy for ourselves. So we are encouraged to undertake initiatives on behalf of all those who are in the same situation. In this way, our JPIC commitment is much more than the sum of our activities, our denunciations, demonstrations and lobbying: going to the poor and working alongside them becomes a pilgrimage to meet the Lord.

The manual includes practical guidelines and methodology for spiritan JPIC animation, along with very practical advice, programmes and extracts from recent spiritan documents. We now have a good working instrument and even a first reading will move us to reflection and stimulate initiatives.

Pierre Schouver CSSp

Superior General

Introduction

Our Spiritan Rule of Life is very explicit: the evangelisation of the poor is our mission (SRL 4). This has been seen as central to the task of our congregation since the beginning. Commenting on the followers of Poullart des Places a contemporary writer observed how they dedicated themselves to serving in difficult places where others were reluctant to work. More than a century later, Libermann in his rule, described the task of his followers as being “the advocates, defenders and supporters of the weak and ‘little ones’ ”. This dedication of the followers of des Places and Libermann to the causes of the oppressed, the most disadvantaged, the poor and marginalized over the last three hundred years, becomes very evident when we read the recently published *Spiritan Anniversary Diary*.

The methodology of using “relevant experiences” in the recent Itaici and Maynooth General Chapters, reminded us how central to our contemporary missionary task is the Spiritan commitment to the “weak and little ones”. Today our founders’ original missionary dedication to the poor is being lived out by numerous Spiritans in diverse situations – in areas of war and conflict, on the poor and violent peripheries of cities, amongst indigenous peoples, in situations of dialogue and witness, in living practical solidarity, amongst migrants and refugees, with victims of trauma and torture, alongside the unemployed, with the homeless and landless, with those who endure the burden of corruption and racial strife, with AIDs sufferers ... just to mention some missionary contexts today where Spiritans make an explicit option for the poor.

This booklet focuses on our heritage in serving the poor and provides some resources for our ministry in the area of justice, peace and the integrity of creation today. It outlines a brief historical background to our founders’ vision of our mission to the poor. It offers resources in the areas of spirituality and methodology and it brings together the relevant material from our principal recent documents in this area. It is hoped that it may also serve as a source

of animation material for Spiritans working in the varied situations of mission today and for our younger members still in formation.

The expression “Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation” (JPIC) may be new to some. It is what we Spiritans have traditionally referred to as “Justice and Peace”. In recent Church documents, in usage by numerous Congregations and in current theological literature, this newer expression is more widely used today. In many ways it is a richer expression than the older one, emphasising explicitly as it does, not only the importance of our work for justice and peace but also the importance and sacredness of all creation.

The preparation of this booklet has been a lengthy process. After the General Council asked that it be prepared, a first draft was sent to all circumscriptions for comments, criticisms and suggestions. I would like to thank the many individuals, communities and groups who returned comments and observations. I have tried to incorporate all of them into this final edition. The first draft edition and this final edition created a huge task for translators, proof readers and people who worked on lay-out. Such people are too numerous to list individually but I would like to thank them all very sincerely. Special thanks are also due to confreres Christian de Mare and Bernard Kelly who prepared the inspiring historical section.

Our JPIC commitment invites us to make a personal and community journey, a pilgrimage, to where the poor are and with the poor. May the Spirit accompany and encourage us today on this journey, as happened on the first Pentecost when the disciples risked leaving the upper room, and as has happened in the lives of des Places, Libermann and of so many Spiritans during the last three hundred years.

John Kilcrann CSSp

Spiritans JPIC Office, Rome.

Chapter 1

CLAUDE - FRANÇOIS POUILLART DES PLACES

Justice and Peace and Integrity of Creation: Foundation Stones in our Spiritan Tradition.



***Our
Spiritan
spiritual
tradition***

The Church and recent Chapters, insistently ask us to take account of the urgent need for Justice

and Peace in our present world as well as respect for the integrity of creation which frequently is tortured by the modern industrial era. This Manual shows the need to respond seriously to the challenge of the present time in terms of the intentions of the Creator. Does our

Spiritan spiritual tradition offer us support to tackle these challenges?

We should not search in the message of Poullart, who lived 300 years ago, for help for our present involvement in Justice and Peace. Nevertheless, through the story of his life, we know that he was involved in human situations requiring justice, and that he worked to show the mercy and salvation of the Father. This is also our call. The situations of the past and present, despite differences, have much in common. This is why the Spirit who led our founder can also invigorate us, his heirs.

In 1692, the dean of studies of St Thomas's College of Rennes assigned a group of high social class young boys to Father Bellier, chaplain of St Yves' hospital for the destitute. The task of Father

Bellier was to open their minds to the wounds of a society, in which they were privileged. Louis Marie de Montfort and Claude François Poullart Des Places, (5 years younger), were part of the group of privileged boys. Both of them afterwards spent their lives and devoted their talents to serving in many difficult situations in the French Kingdom.



Father Bellier was aware that the extreme poverty of the country was increased by the poverty of the priests: financial poverty, but also poverty in their theological and pastoral training. He brought together young, poor, country people who wanted to become priests, in order to train them for pastoral work in the country. This is

something that Poullart did not forget: to fight against poverty you have to be alongside the poor. Even though he liked to give alms, he was still the middle class young man of Rennes who hoped to become a magistrate and join the nobility in Brittany.

Helping poor seminarians

However, one day a big change happened in the life and future prospects of Claude: at 23 year of age he made an orientation of life retreat. Like Paul, he was overwhelmed by the revelation of the love of Jesus Christ; he had constantly heard about it since his early childhood, but he did not know Him personally. Claude emerged from this experience with the single ambition to become a real disciple of Jesus as a simple priest serving the little ones. In the fervour of his conversion, he perceived a more precise call from Providence through the poor students in theology who crossed his path. These poor scholars

begged their bread and their training to become priests in order to serve people ignored by society. Remembering Father Bellier, and freed from his earlier ambition, Claude understood this sign of Jesus as his own call. This was reported by one of his witnesses:

Mr Desplaces felt that God wanted him to join his sanctuary and train masters and guides for his people. He understood that, in order to succeed, he could not do anything more than continue to help the poor scholars to subsist and enable them to continue their studies. He not only looked after worldly goods: he planned to bring them together in one room where he could sometimes instruct them and look after them.

...You know (he said to his friend Grignon de Montfort) that for some time, I have shared all that I have to help the poor scholars to continue their studies. I know many poor scholars who have the right dispositions who would be very useful for the Church if they were supported but, due to lack of support, cannot progress and are forgotten. I would like to make whatever effort is necessary to bring them together in one house. I feel it is what God wants me to do...¹

**Poor
serving
the poor**

These young men, twelve in number, were very happy with Claude's generosity. They appreciated that their training would be improved from within the framework of a community of life and work.

And so they created together the community of the

Holy Spirit under the protection of the Holy Virgin Mary conceived without sin. This was the day of Pentecost, May 27th 1703. Claude, the elegant judge with the delicate manners of high society, took his first steps in community life through daily contacts with these young people, who were often without education. The housing of the

¹ Charles Besnard, *Vie de Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort*, Centre International Montfortain, Roma, 1981, 277 - 279.

community was basic and cramped, and the needs were ever demanding with the numbers constantly increasing. Not without personal pain, Claude had to go from the poverty he chose to the poverty the poor taught him day by day. The task undertaken was huge: how to keep alive, in those conditions, the essential aim of the community which was to give to these young people the best possible training.

After another retreat, Claude confronted these challenges by looking for collaborators. At the start of 1705, an auxiliary community was created for the trainers of these young people. They were also poor like them and were concerned to give the best formation for the future service of neglected people. These are the Fathers of the Holy Spirit, our ancestors.

The life of the Fathers of the Holy Spirit was the very same as the life of the young seminarians of the Holy Spirit. Living under the same rule of life, Claude was the keystone of that unique community. He and his confreres, with a total life dedication, were the humble servants of their students. Their respect for the people they were going to serve required them to be very demanding in matters of spiritual, pastoral and intellectual education.

We will accept in this house only people whose poverty, customs and ability for science are known. We should, on no account, accept people who can pay their pension. We can accept to receive scholars who, although not really in great distress, have not enough to live elsewhere. It would be good to ask them for some little contribution for the expenses of the house so that their stay will not diminish the number of poor students we would like to help. (Rules N°5-7)

**Missionaries
to the poor**

Approximately 140 years later, Father Libermann testified about the humble servant who is the founder of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit:

The Congregation of the Holy Spirit was founded on the day of Pentecost 1703 by Mr Poullart Des Places, from the Diocese of Rennes, with the aim to train priests destined to consecrate themselves to the most deprived people. That this work continued for a long time was due only to the gifts of charitable people; the venerable founder went himself to look for students, and then he served them out of his own pocket and rendered them the most humble services.²

The priests, called “Spiritans”, who came from the Holy Spirit seminary, went anywhere: to France, Canada,³ Indochina, China, St Pierre et Miquelon and Guyana. Wherever the people most needed them, they sacrificed themselves completely in order to bring the justice of the Gospel:

As long as the historical circumstances permitted the Spiritans to be missionaries (around 1730), the missions far away were added to the preferential tasks for the poor and abandoned. When the General Chaplain for the colonies saw the marvellous work done by a dozen priests who went to Canada and the Far East, he proposed that the Congregation accept officially the responsibility for the overseas territories.⁴

Claude Poullart’s disciples had a style of life and pastoral work, which showed the deep intentions of the founder:

They show an extraordinary degree of detachment and obedience. They dedicate themselves to the service and

² Notice about the Congregation of the Holy Spirit and Immaculate Heart of Mary and its undertakings, May 1950.

³ Father Koren has written about the work of the Spiritans in Acadia. See for example *The Spiritans*, chapter 3, p. 53 ; also Beauchesne 1982.

⁴ Henry Koren, *Essays on Spiritan Charism*, Spiritus Press, USA 1990, 51.

needs of the Church ...offering to go and stay in the poorest and most abandoned places for which it is especially difficult to find candidates. Whether it is a question of being buried in the remote countryside, lost in some obscure hospital, teaching in a college, lecturing in a seminary, directing a poor community, travelling to the farthest corners of the Kingdom or remaining in a difficult posting, whether it is a question even of crossing the seas and going to the very ends of the earth to gain a soul for Christ – they are always ready to carry out his wishes: Ecce ego, mitte me (Is 6,12) ⁵.

Ready to do your will? We could remember the reading of Jesus in the Synagogue: the Spirit has consecrated me to bring the good news to the poor, liberate the oppressed (Luke 4: 18 – 19) This also is the mission of Claude and his followers.

Christian de Mare CSSp.



⁵ Charles Besnard, *Op. Cit.*, 283.

Chapter 2

Francis Libermann and the Poor

“You shall not molest or oppress aliens for you yourselves were once aliens in Egypt” (Exodus 22: 20).



***On the side
of the poor***

I once asked a Spiritan in Africa what was the most indispensable quality in a missionary.

He replied that something good can happen if the missionary really cares for the people. A fellow student of Francis Libermann at Saint-Sulpice, Paris, recalls an experience of the period 1830-31. They were both involved in the weekly distribution of clothes to the poor, which did not always take place in the most orderly fashion. Libermann’s companion

was taken aback by the boisterous behaviour and suggested that next time nothing should be given to those who pushed and jostled. He was further taken aback by Libermann’s horrified reaction: “So we should penalize the unfortunate!”¹ Libermann found himself instinctively on the side of the poor. Their need touched him, cried out to him. Doing something about it was not to be complicated by a seminary sense of what is orderly.

Pierre Blanchard refers to Libermann’s spirituality as his “experience written down”: Libermann’s sensitivity to the lot of the poor had grown out of his experience in the ghetto of the poor Ashkenazi Jews of Saverne. His father, the rabbi, his mother who died when he was eleven and the seven Libermann children learned every day what it meant to belong to a barely tolerated minority.

¹ Cf. ND, I, 127.

They developed a feel for the disadvantaged, a solidarity with those who needed a helping hand.

At Saint-Sulpice, Libermann's belonging to the marginalized intensified with the onset of epilepsy. In the 1830s this was a frightening illness involving a humiliating loss of control. It was also an impediment to the priesthood. Libermann had now to learn to deal with rejection. Despite the understanding of the community of Saint-Sulpice, Libermann admits to a temptation to suicide. Depression had made greater inroads than his letters of the time indicate. Libermann was painfully coming to terms with insecurity, the mark of the poor of all time.

At Issy, on sufferance, Libermann made a reputation for himself working with the students in small groups. He decided nothing could be achieved by coercion but only by attraction. His success led to his appointment to the Eudist novitiate in Rennes. Here he went through the dark night. He experienced bitter personal



disappointment, a deep sense of failure. He hesitated and reflected a long time when “The Work for the Blacks” was proposed. He desperately needed a fresh start but self-doubt had seeped into his soul. Eventually the cry of “the poor and the abandoned” that Levvasseur and Tisserant spoke about prevailed.

Libermann had found his true focus in life. He was friend to the oppressed and he soon found his voice on their behalf. Fr Feret must have been surprised at the sense of outrage in Libermann's letter of 15 December 1839:

What you said to Mr Levavasseur about Mr de la Bruniere cut me to the quick when I heard it: "What a blunder you will make if you tear this young man away from France and take him with you to evangelise the blacks!"

So all those who are fervent, generous and of good character must stay in France! And the poor abandoned ones towards whom God is arousing such sympathy must be left rush to perdition en masse! Only the rejects, the plodders, the half-wits, the incapable should be sent to save them.

No, this is not God's way. Our Lord's horizon is wider. He came to save all. He sacrificed himself for all, for the most despised as well as for the most highly regarded. His priestly spirit is nothing other than a spirit of reconciliation and salvation for the whole human race.²

**Good
news to
the poor**

Libermann's affinity with the poor made him sensitive to their situation. But something more than sensitivity is needed. Of the three who came upon the battered stranger on the road to Jericho, only one "was moved with compassion" and went into action (Luke 10). Libermann was a person of practical bent rather than a theoretician. But he did not rush to judgement. He took discernment seriously; then, relying on divine providence, he acted boldly. In 1851 he described the missionary task of the congregation to Dom Salier:

To preach the good news to the poor, that is our general goal. Nevertheless, the missions are the principal object we aim at, and in the missions we have chosen the most wretched and abandoned souls. Providence gave us our work for the Blacks, whether in Africa or in the colonies; incontestably, these are the most wretched and abandoned people down to our own day.

² LS, II, 316.

*We would also like to work in France for the salvation of souls, but still having the poor as our principal goal, without abandoning those who are not.*³

Libermann continues, indicating that he would accept into the congregation candidates for work in France, but no one who made this a condition of entry. He envisaged especially extra - parochial work in France among those who did not come to church: e.g. the workers, sailors... as well as directing retreats for clerics. After ten years of missionary experience and a few years of fusion with the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, Libermann saw the need of a ministry in France, without relinquishing the aim of evangelising the poor, whom he identifies as those whose need is acute and is not met by the existing structures of the local Church. Henry Koren speaks of the creativity of Libermann in the face of nearby need.⁴ However the title “Work for the Blacks” definitely expressed the predominant thrust and activity of the young missionary society. The association with Mgr Barron had broadened its interest way beyond the islands of the Indian Ocean and the Caribbean to mainland Africa, where those who had been scandalously exploited were painfully assuming their freedom. To serve these poor and excluded, the missionaries would be poor themselves and lead simple lives. Especially they would divest themselves “of Europe”.

***Finding
the
treasure***

It is not easy to talk clearly about poverty and the poor. There are layers of meaning as well as an abiding ambiguity. Involuntary poverty is an evil to be stamped out. Voluntary poverty happily lived for the kingdom is a cornerstone of religious life. The poor in the Bible, the *anawim*, are the ones who put all their trust in the Lord. They are God’s favourites. They do

³ ND, XIII, 170 – 171.

⁴ Henry J. Koren CSSp, *To the Ends of the Earth : A General History of the Congregation of the Holy Ghost*, Duquesne University Press, Pittsburgh, 1983, 216-223.

not form an exclusive club though the invitation to join is difficult to accept (e.g. Mark 10:21)

The Spiritan Rule of Life quickly reveals its principal orientation concerning poverty. It points to Jesus as the one who exemplifies the poverty which Spiritans seek:

*Jesus stands before His Father poor in spirit and in fact.
All that he is and all that he has he has received as a gift.
In order to preach the good news he chose to humble
himself and to take on the condition of the poor. (SRL 61)*

For twenty years as a young Jew, Libermann had experienced the God who lovingly accompanied his people and brought them encouragement in their hardship. In his early twenties at Metz, he felt God had withdrawn and no longer intervened in the world, if only out of respect for his creation. In the experience of conversion to Catholicism in Paris, he was surprised by the intruder God-become-man, Jesus of Nazareth. Transcendence was now completed by a breathtaking availability and an exciting offer of intimacy.



Today we find it difficult to recognize our experience in the language of the French School of spirituality of the mid-19th century, especially in its lack of enthusiasm for anything simply human. Libermann's turn of phrase frequently turns us off. At the same time we must be grateful to the Sulpicians for the solid foundations of their spirituality: the Trinitarian framework, the radical Christocentrism, the importance of prayer, the place of Mary, the interest in mission.... Libermann thrived on it, while maintaining a healthy personal distrust of all "systems" of spirituality.

***The love of
Christ
overwhelms us
(II Cor. 5:14)***

The 1830s for Libermann were blighted by epilepsy, whose symptoms gradually diminished without disappearing. His rejection for clerical orders was probably nowhere near as painful as his rejection by his father, whose letter of malediction occasioned by the “treachery” of his son’s conversion reduced Libermann to tears. God rewarded his standing firm in his belief in Christ by a period of intimacy that almost escaped our knowledge (Libermann gave instructions that the letter describing it be destroyed) and without which we would have difficulty in understanding his enthusiasm for realities such as renunciation, adoration, surrender. These all derive their value from being moments of knowing Christ and his love. Knowing Christ is the treasure (John 17:3). But the paradox of the poor remains. The poor are best placed to receive this treasure. Those who have not yet received it are the most deserving poor.

In the Rule of 1849 there are prescriptions for a simple lifestyle: *“Each will be satisfied with the modest necessity” “They will seek especially perfect detachment from the goods of this world and an entire indifference to honour, rank, and the comfort that goes with riches”*⁵ All of this because they have come to know Jesus and been called to share in his mission.

They will be the advocates, defenders and supporters of the weak and “little ones” against those who oppress them. In these circumstances, the charity and virtue of Jesus Christ which inspires them should be manifest. Their conduct however should always be guided by gentleness and prudence, avoiding acting with too much

⁵ John Daly CSSp (Editor), *Spiritual Wellsprings*. Dublin, 1986, 149 – 150, cf. Part II, Section III, Chapter III, Articles VIII and II of the Rule.

*anger against oppressors, for fear of provoking them still more.*⁶

Libermann felt that the principal deprivation in this world is not to know Jesus Christ. Evangelisation was his calling and at the heart of evangelisation was respect. He fiercely defended the Blacks if they were under attack. He maintained that all that they lacked was opportunity. Appropriate education would help greatly in solving many of their problems.

In getting to know Christ, it was not so much instruction that was needed as holiness. The truth which he learned in his dealings with the small groups at Issy resurfaced. What is most important is witness. Attraction exerts influence more powerfully than other means of persuasion. In 1851, he wrote to a young missionary, Fr Laire, that most people are not converted by the efforts of clever and capable missionaries. Rather he said that

It is the holiness and sacrifices of their priests which will save them.

Be holy as Jesus was holy.

This is the one and only way to redeem and sanctify souls.

*May Jesus' Spirit animate all your actions...*⁷

He goes on to describe the action of the Spirit of Jesus and then he points to two pre-eminent missionary virtues; gentleness and humility of heart. These have pride of place precisely because Jesus himself issued us an invitation in simple words: "Learn from me for I am gentle and humble in heart." (Matthew 11: 29)

Libermann struggles to emphasise that he and his missionaries are involved not primarily in their own project but in God's work; that the breakthrough will come not when they expect it but "in God's moment". What matters most is to be holy, in the likeness of Christ.

⁶ Ibid. p. 119 Part II, Section I, Chapter III, Article IX of the Rule.

⁷ ND, XIII, 142 – 145.

This Christocentrism is a central theme of Sulpician spirituality, well exemplified in the prayer “O Jesu vivens in Maria”. Joseph Lecuyer CSSp indicates that after 1840 references to Jean-Jacques Olier and Jean Eudes were gradually replaced by references to the gospels and to Paul.⁸ The Pauline verse “I have been crucified with Christ, and I live now not with my own life but with the life of Christ who lives in me” (Galatians 2:20) gives brief but eloquent expression to Libermann’s spiritual stance.

Paul Coulon CSSp explores the parallel with Saint Paul in his presentation of what may be Libermann’s best known letter to missionaries, that to

The self-emptying of Jesus is echoed in the missionary in the form of cultural self-effacement and service which is frightening long before it is rewarding.

the community of Dakar and Gabon of 19 November 1847.⁹ The intimate association with Jesus comes at a high price to both parties. The self-emptying of Jesus is echoed in the missionary in the form of cultural self-effacement and service which is frightening long before it is rewarding.

*Do not judge by first impressions. Do not judge according to what you have seen in Europe, according to what you have been used to in Europe. Rid yourselves of Europe, of its customs and spirit. Become black with the Blacks, and you will judge them appropriately. Become black with the Blacks, to form them appropriately, not in the European fashion, but leaving them what belongs to them. Be to them as servants should be to their masters.... This is what St. Paul calls making oneself all things to all, so as to win all for Jesus Christ.*¹⁰

⁸ Cahiers Spiritains, *La Spiritualité du Père Libermann*, No 12, 1980, 37.

⁹ Paul Coulon, Paule Brasseur et Collaborateurs, *Libermann 1802 – 1852*, Les Éditions du CERF, 1988, 489-546.

¹⁰ ND, IX, 324 – 331.



Libermann had now arrived at a personal poverty that governed his whole outlook. A year later he would write to Levavasseur complaining about the luxury of the office he inherited at rue Lhomond in Paris, but one feels that he is talking on another level. To the communities at Dakar and Gabon he was speaking about the heart of the matter, about the inner reaches of poverty.

Michel Fromont speaks of progress in the spiritual life as moving *de la sainteté désirée à la pauvreté offerte* (from wanting holiness to offering poverty).¹¹ I felt this was a journey that Libermann had made. There was the initial fervent desire for holiness without which no further steps would have been taken; then came the inroad of experience, the illness, the failure, the frustration with bureaucracy, the wear and tear of administration, of community life.... Maybe not everyone sees acknowledging and offering one's personal poverty as a sign of achievement? But it is. It involves moving away from the Pharisee and closer to the publican (Luke 18: 9-14).

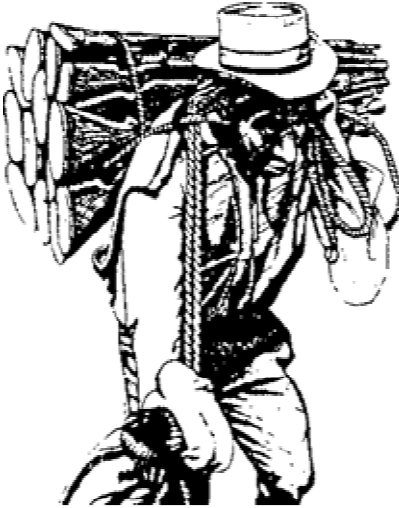
The Social Context

The first news of the revolution of 1848 reached Amiens in February. Less than a month later Libermann writes to his friend Fr Gamon and engages in a little "transcendental" social analysis.

You ask what I think of our revolution. I think that it is a stroke of justice on the part of God against the fallen dynasty because it sought its own consolidation rather than the good of the people confided to it; because to favour its own advancement it sacrificed the interests of God and of

¹¹ In *Jubilee avec des Seges de l'Ancien Testament*.

*the Church.... This stroke of justice will touch all the crowned heads of Europe....I really believe that the tide of the French revolution will reach them and perhaps sweep away many of them. And the autocrat in Russia will also have his turn.*¹²



Liebermann sees the toppling of Louis Philippe as a matter of divine justice. God heard the cry of the poor and intervened, and will intervene again and more extensively if offences against justice continue. One of the very interesting things about this letter is the categories of thought. There is a statistic about the unemployed in Paris, advice about exercising the right to vote and a clarion call to the clergy to leave behind the practice of another day and to grasp the present opportunity.

The interpretation of the revolution in terms of justice is not really a surprise. A passion for justice has been an underground stream in Liebermann's life, imperceptibly nourishing his concern for the poor; for the Blacks, for the aborigines of Australia, for those who were adrift in French society. In "A Light to the Gentiles", Adrian van Kaam points to many instances of this concern. *"I cling with all the energy of my soul to the work for labourers and disenfranchised people. That gives you some idea of my profound interest in the success of the Bordeaux project..."*.¹³ He also refers to Liebermann's essay on illegitimate children expressing how he

¹² ND, X, 146 and 147.

¹³ Adrian van Kaam CSSp, *A Light to the Gentiles*, Duquesne University Press, Pittsburgh, 1959, 211; cf. ND, IX, 274-275; ref ND, IX, 274.

cannot understand their exclusion from religious life nor the fact that no one was doing anything about it.¹⁴ A passion for justice, as he then saw it, was the leitmotif of his rejection of organized religion in his letter of 1826 to his brother Samson. Then the voice of a university student cried out in complaint to an unjust God.

How can we believe that God showed his favours for Abraham, Isaac and Jacob by so many wonders?... Why didn't God have a like interest in so many philosophers of antiquity?

The same applies to the punishment of Adam....Must I be so unjust as to believe that God avenged the crime of Adam in the latter's descendants?....

Would it not be unjust on the part of God to choose a single people on earth to enlighten and reveal the true principles of religion?....

I conclude from all this that all God demands of us is to acknowledge Him, to be just and human....¹⁵

To return to the letter to Fr. Gamon, we may detect some revolutionary enthusiasm in the immediate aftermath of events. This does not however become starry-eyed optimism. In the letter, Libermann is reluctant to forecast the future:

It is the hand of God that has struck. So the building has been brought to the ground. God blew upon it and it collapsed. But what will come to replace it? I don't dare risk a prediction. But what I believe to be certain is that if the Republic is faithful to the extent that the other governments have been unfaithful, it will prosper; if it is

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 213; ref ND VII 211.

¹⁵ Walter van de Putte (Editor), *The Spiritual Letters of the Venerable Francis Libermann, Vol 11, Letters to People in the World*, Duquesne University Press, Pittsburgh, 1963, 2.

*unfaithful it will fall like the others, just as the government of 1789 fell.*¹⁶

Libermann has been too long on the side of the poor to believe that any dramatic transformation of society will take place instantly. Advances can be made and should be celebrated. But every step must be fought for. “Compassion fatigue” and “burn-out” constantly threaten. Libermann would certainly agree with the wisdom common among modern social activists that survival in the field is possible only through regular recourse to contemplation.

***Libermann
today***

In our mission as servants of the poor we are not alone. We must support each other and drink from the same wells as others who share our calling. In this spirit Libermann challenges a group of priests of the Society of St John the Evangelist, which met weekly at the Spiritan motherhouse in Paris:

*Today new needs are making themselves felt. Each priest, without actually having the job assigned to him, should study these needs, identify the wounds of society and take every opportunity offered him in his situation to bring relief to these needs, remedy to these wounds.*¹⁷

This challenge of 1849 echoes down the years to all Spiritans and Spiritan associates today and everyday.

Bernard Kelly CSSp

¹⁶ ND, X, 149.

¹⁷ ND, XI, 536, account of the meeting of 13 February, 1849.

Chapter 3

Constructing a Spiritan Spirituality of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation.

***Our
Spiritan
sources***

We Spiritans are fortunate in that we have an abundance of material, which helps us construct our own spirituality of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC). There are, for example, the writings of our Founders which provide us with very rich insights into what is specifically a Spiritan spirituality of JPIC. There is much we could glean from our history – from the writings, reflections and actions of our Spiritan predecessors during the last 300 years. However, if we were to examine all of this our task would be huge. Instead the task proposed here is a much simpler one. We will examine the recent official documents of the Congregation – the Spiritan Rule of Life (1987), and the documents of the last two General Chapters – Itaicí (1992) and Maynooth (1998), - to see how they present an authentic Spiritan JPIC spirituality. In the annex of this booklet you will find a list of the JPIC proposals and orientations organized according to six themes as found in these documents. The extensiveness and richness of this material is impressive.

It is interesting to note the methodology our recent documents have used to construct this spirituality and theology and some of the consequences of this. “*Significant experiences*” were central to the reflection carried out in both the Itaicí and Maynooth Chapters and were used as a starting point for the process in both Chapters. Selected confreres presented their experiences from a rich and varied range of life and ministerial situations and these accounts formed the basis for reflection and decisions during the Chapters. The surprisingly rich result of this process encouraged the Superior General, Father Pierre Schouver, to remark in the introduction to the Itaicí document that

You will probably be surprised to receive the General Chapter papers written in narrative style. To tell a story, or put what is personal to some participant into a Chapter document is perhaps to fall short of the expected seriousness. And still isn't it the way that the Bible itself was written?

What is more it is not entirely a new thing; our Rule of Life is itself enriched by our Founders' life experience and what we have seen and done in our days...¹

The centrality of the poor

In other words the concrete experiences and contexts lived by our Founders as well as experiences lived today by Spiritans are essential ingredients in documents as central as our Rule of Life and our General Chapter statements. Just as one of the theological reflections of the early Christian communities on the mission of the first disciples of Jesus became known as the “Acts of the Apostles”, the significant experiences presented in Itaici are also referred to as “The ‘Acts’ of Spiritans Today”.² The Maynooth Chapter document reminds us of the importance of this methodology when it comments that “*that the most important thing for the Congregation is to tap into the living sources where it is once more seeking meaning and energy for a difficult mission*”.³

A summary of what our Rule of Life and recent Chapter documents say to us about our JPIC commitment is presented in the annex according to six themes. However, if we look for one word to hold these themes together it is the “*poor*”. At times, descriptive adjectives are used to give more explicit meaning to the term “*poor*”. These adjectives include “*oppressed*”, “*abandoned*”,

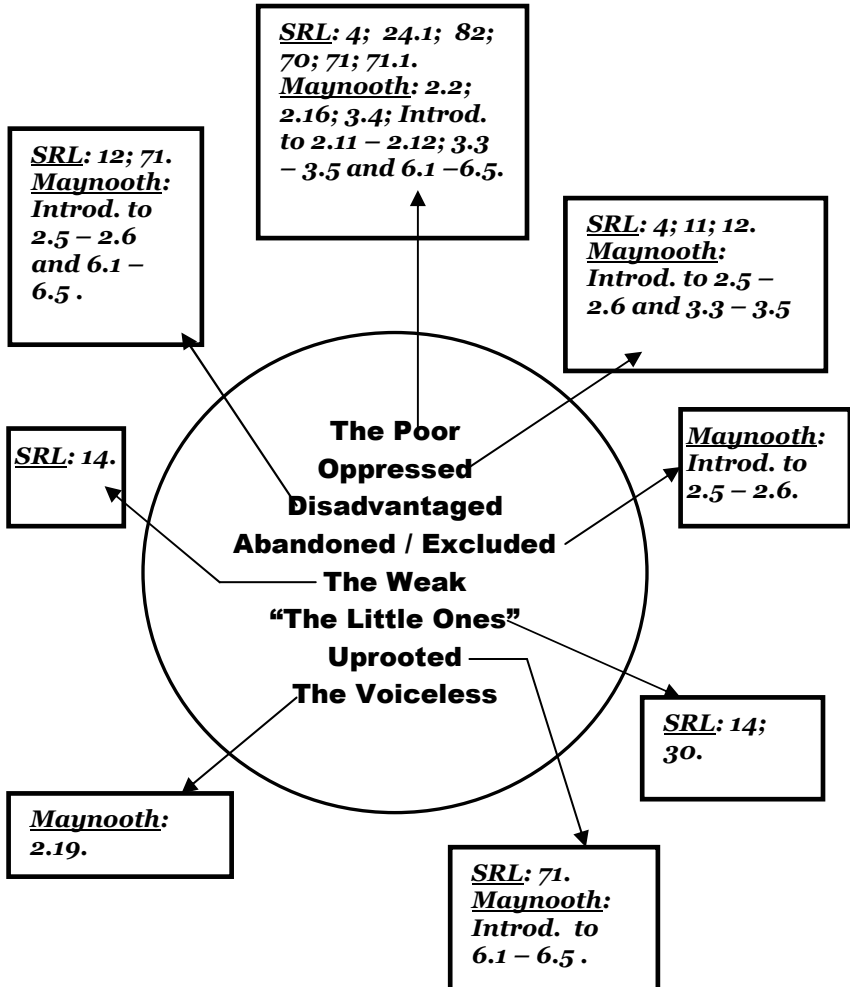
¹ Itaici 1992, p. V.

² Itaici 1992, p. 1.

³ Maynooth 1998, p. 7.

“excluded”, “the weak”, “the little ones”, “disfavoured”, “uprooted” and “the voiceless”.

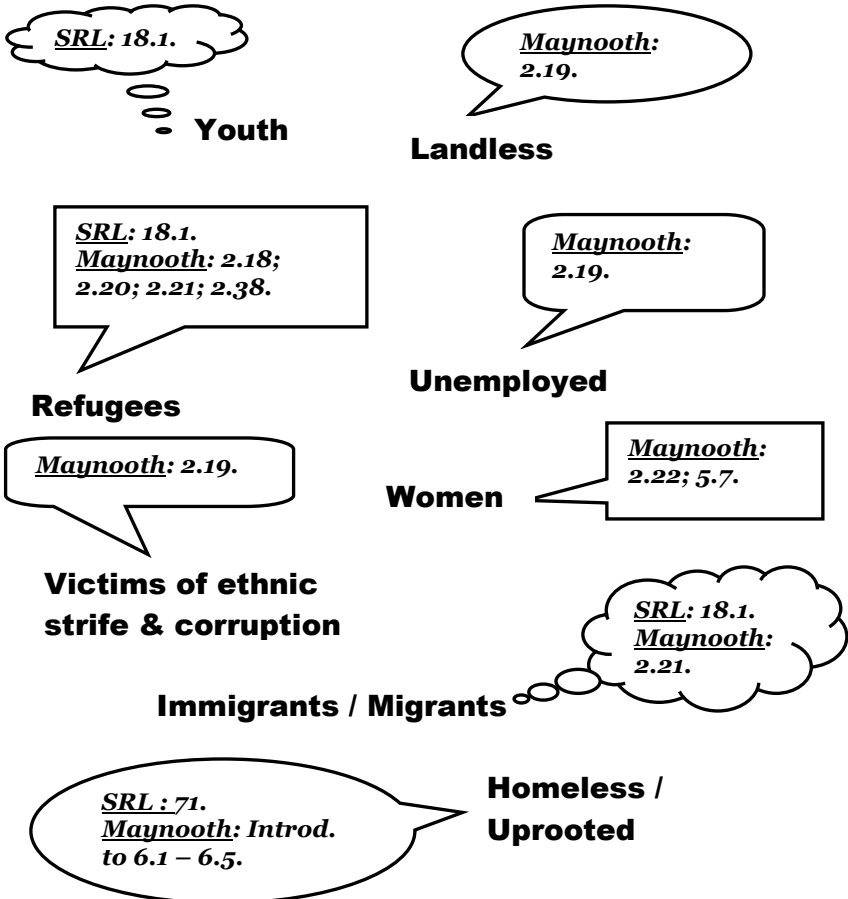
Figure 1 : Who are the poor in Spiritan documents ?



Elsewhere our official documents list categories in which we find the poor today (See figure 2). These include *refugees, immigrants / migrants, the homeless, the landless, the unemployed, the victims of*

ethnic strife and corruption, and *women*. It can be said then that the recent official documents of our Congregation are very explicit regarding the peoples and the groups whom we are called to serve and evangelise.

Figure 2: Categories of poor in Spiritan documents.



When we look at details of the situations in which Spiritans minister as outlined in the “significant experiences” reports presented at the Itaici and Maynooth Chapters, we can even see with greater clarity who the “poor” are for us and what a JPIC spirituality entails. The

appropriate theology and spirituality for our response to the poor are usually explicitly expressed in these presentations. Many examples could be given but a few will suffice.

At the Itaicí Chapter, describing the situation of the marginalized poor in Trinidad, Malcolm Galt outlined the local Spiritan approach to ministry amongst the poor which he called “*respectful intervention*”. Characteristics of this approach included the context of the poor; a journey by a Spiritan into their world; dialogue and listening as central to mission in this world and the shedding of values we hold as important in our context when we minister to the poor:

... one of our confreres, Fr. Gerry Pantin, resigned as science teacher at St. Mary's College, and went into the “hot spot” of the unrest to meet the people and to ask them a simple question. “What can we do to help?” He went to listen. He went to help the people set their own agenda and decide their own needs.

... no matter how convinced we are that our own ideas are right, we must put aside cultural arrogance which tends to make us feel that we have a monopoly of the truth, and we must proceed to dialogue.⁴

At the same General Chapter, Augustine Shao spoke of the ministry of the confreres in the East African Province to AIDS victims. Emphasised here is the fact that our frontiers of mission to the poor change with time; to recognise the new frontiers we need the help of the Holy Spirit; as frontiers move we too need to learn and make adjustments and in order to move to the new frontiers we need solidarity and encouragement from our confreres and from those among whom we work:

Trying to live our Spiritan charism in our time, the East African members have taken missions at home and

⁴ Malcolm Galt, *Itaicí 1992*, pp. 58 – 59.

*missions far afield. Shifting from the ministry of slaves to the ministry of Refugees, of Youth and AIDS victims, this apostolate needs encouragement from the Holy Spirit. One of the greatest human miseries we must face in our time is the AIDS issue. It is serious and yet it is not taken seriously enough. Our confreres, both at home and far afield, need the knowledge and the techniques to fight this great evil of our time. We have realised the need of going deeper into our African cultures, because the problem of AIDS in Africa is rooted in our culture. ... To accomplish this mission, increased solidarity, unity and co-operation amongst ourselves and between us and the people we serve are indeed of vital importance.*⁵

**Consequences
of our option
for the poor**

The documents of the Maynooth Chapter frequently describe the consequences of making an option for the poor. For example, Antonio Jansen, when speaking of his experience in Amazonia, Brazil, describes this very beautifully. The poor are seen as God's sacrament, God's revelation of self to us. We go to the poor not as powerful people but as servants ready to give totally of ourselves:

*... just like the 'Servant of God' in the Bible, the missionary opts to carry the sin and hurt of the people.... Being with and among the people is an invitation to personal emptying and the discovery that the grace of God comes to us through the poor, the great sacrament of God. Giving of oneself to the service of our brother and sister, assuming the attitude of a servant, admitting to weakness and failure (a kind of martyrdom) creates in us patience, respect, fidelity and compassion.*⁶

⁵ Augustine Shao, *Itaicí* 1992, pp. 56 – 57.

⁶ Antonio Jansen, *Maynooth* 1998, pp. 53 – 54.

This presence as servant and disciple amongst the poor, frequently in the midst of great suffering, was an important aspect of our spirituality as outlined by Gabriel Mbilingi when he described the Spiritan response to widespread suffering caused by the civil war in his native Angola. Gabriel pointed out that Spiritans in the Angolan war situation

... gave witness by the simple fact of remaining with and sharing in the conditions of their people (the apostolate of presence). They stayed when everybody advised them to leave and flee....

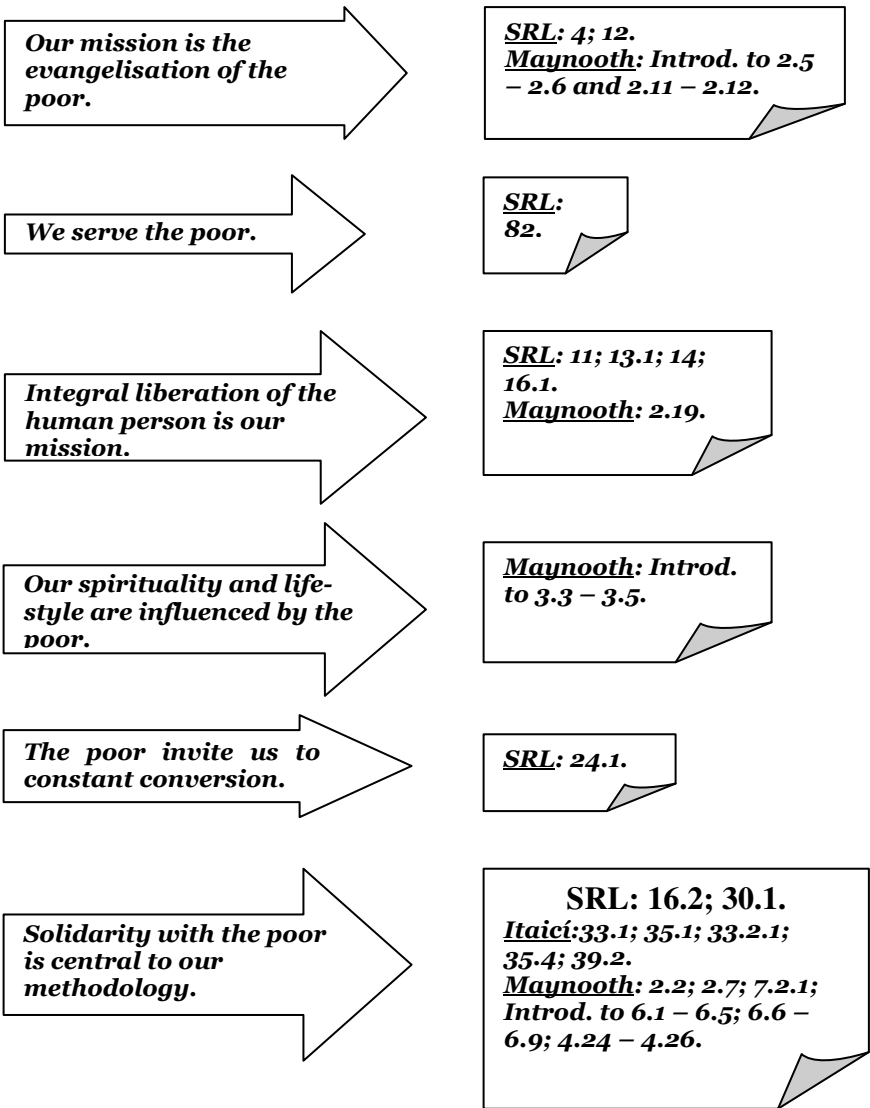
A situation of conflict is a true test of one's faith. It is a test also of the transforming power of prayer, of hope and of one's capacity to respond with love.⁷

What does our commitment to the poor mean?

Our commitment to the poor means that we live out this option in very concrete ways. Figure 3 lists what our documents say about this. Our option for the poor is lived out in very specific ways which include action for Justice and Peace (SRL 14; 18), advocacy (SRL 14), doing social analysis (SRL 14.1; Maynooth 2.1; 2.13), listening to Spiritan prophetic voices (SRL 14.2), acting as defenders of the poor (SRL 14), influencing national and international political decisions in favour of the poor (Maynooth 2.18) and living a simple lifestyle (SRL 24.1). Our community life is directed towards the poor (SRL 30; 24; 71; Maynooth: Introduction to 4.16 – 4.18) and our finances and material goods should be used in their favour (SRL 71.1; Itaicí 33.2.1). A significant aspect of our task is to make the local Church aware of its mission to the poor (Maynooth: Introduction to 2.10; 5.4). We give special attention to marginalized groups (refugees:

⁷ Gabriel Mbilingi, *Maynooth 1998*, pp. 47 – 48.

Figure 3: What does our option for the poor mean in practice?



SRL 18.1, Maynooth 2.18; 2.20; 2.21; 2.38 and women: Maynooth 2.22; 5.7). We also work for reconciliation and in conflict resolution (Maynooth 2.23).⁸ Formation, - both initial and ongoing, should prepare confreres to work with the poor (Itaicí 36.2.4; Maynooth 2.16; 2.24; Introduction to 2.25 – 2.32; 2.30; 3.4; 5.12).

***An option
for the poor
involves a
conversion***

It is also important to recall that an option for the poor on our part as individuals entails a conversion as SRL 24.1 reminds us. Various people who presented “significant experiences” at the Maynooth Chapter spoke in a very touching way about such a conversion. Gérard Meyer, who has worked for many years in Muslim areas in Africa, reflected on this conversion during the Maynooth Chapter as follows:

Being with the people and living with them, expressing solidarity with them in their efforts to improve the quality of their lives - all this leads to a double conversion, that of the missionary and that of the people.

The places of conversion are many – but to undergo conversion in this context is perhaps fundamentally ‘to go towards others’ to ‘go out’, to dare to live on the frontiers of the Church so that each people might re-live the wonders of that first Pentecost where each heard in his own language the wonders of God.⁹

⁸ The Special Jubilee letter written by the Superior General, Pierre Schouver, in late 1999, entitled “*Let Yourselves be Reconciled*” gives very concrete steps as well as an excellent theological foundation on how in the context of ministry Spiritans might involve themselves in the process of reconciliation. Another Generalate document recommended for an overview of our JPIC commitment is I/D 43, November 1988, “*Committed to the Poor: Action for Justice and Peace*”.

⁹ Gérard Meyer, *Maynooth 1998*, pp. 22 –23.

Solidarity as the concrete expression of our option for the poor

Our option for the poor involves a solidarity which brings us to share in the world of the marginalized. When we opt for the poor, we opt not for poverty as such but for people who are unjustly poor.

Solidarity involves entering the world of the poor. The Maynooth documents put this beautifully:

*We go to a people not primarily to accomplish a task, but rather to be with them, live with them, walk beside them, listen to them and share our faith with them. At the heart of our relationship is trust, respect and love... Mission is not to be conceived primarily in geographical terms but as a crossing of cultural boundaries and a reaching out to groups of people who are abandoned, excluded and oppressed. As these frontiers of mission change, the front-line of mission must also move.*¹⁰



Solidarity defines for us where we stand or place ourselves when we live an option for the poor. Maynooth speaks of a journey involved in living solidarity (a crossing

of boundaries; a reaching out to others; a living and walking with others). We are no longer out there looking in at the poor as they unjustly suffer. Having made this journey which brings us across boundaries, solidarity impels us to take on as ours the struggles, challenges and undertakings of the poor in the construction of a just world. Figure 4 outlines some of the ways in which our documents suggest that we live solidarity.

¹⁰ *Maynooth 1998*, pp. 99 – 100.

The living of solidarity is not something we do by our own power. Maynooth 0.4.1 reminds us that the Spirit has a vital role here:

*The Spirit leads us to be at the service of all people, especially the poor, the excluded and the marginalized, to support them, to live and work with them, to bring about a realization of the Kingdom of God in works of justice, peace and reconciliation.*¹¹

Our documents also call for solidarity amongst Spiritans. The scandal of the huge gap between the north and south can at times also exist amongst ourselves and this calls for an even more intense solidarity. (Itaici 33.1 and Maynooth: Introduction to 4.24 – 4.26). Here we are reminded that solidarity within the Congregation needs to be practised not only on the financial level but in other areas as well, such as the sharing, personnel and expertise. The manner in which we practice solidarity within the Congregation has practical implications for the way in which we function. We need to be transparent in the management of our resources (Maynooth: Introduction to 6.1 – 6.5). We need to build solidarity into our budgets (Maynooth: Introduction to 6.6 – 6.9) and it should be organised, stimulated and guided by the General Council (Maynooth 7.2.1). Here our Cor Unum fund plays an important role (Itaici 35.4). Significant emphasis is placed also on our solidarity expressed towards our confreres working in difficult situations such as war, trauma, refugee work, defence of human rights and major disasters. (Itaici 33.2.1 and 39.2).

Characteristics of our solidarity

We can put “flesh” on what our proposals and directives for living in solidarity with the poor mean when we look at the significant experiences presented at recent Chapters. Pat Clark described in Itaici how this solidarity is lived out in a very practical manner in the slums (*favelas*) of São Paulo, Brazil where he ministers. This solidarity is

¹¹ *Maynooth 1998*, p. 10.

Figure 4: Spiritan solidarity with the poor.

SRL: 16.2

***We are present with
the people in their
joys and sorrows.***

**SRL: 30.1.
Maynooth:
Introd. 6.6 – 6.9**

***The Spiritan community
also lives this solidarity.***

**Maynooth: 2.2;
Introd. to 6.1 –
6.5.**

***We live out our solidarity
especially with the
poorest, the vulnerable,
the excluded, the
disfavoured and the
uprooted.***

**Itaici: 35.1.
Maynooth: 2.2;
Introd. to 6.1 – 6.5.**

***Our solidarity
brings us closer
to the poor.***

**Itaici: 33.1; 33.2.1; 39.2; 35.4.
Maynooth: Introd. 4.24 – 4.26.**

Solidarity is also lived within the Congregation.

“incarnate” he claims and is an event of grace, conversion and martyrdom. He maintains that it is a response to the evil which fundamentally can be described as the enslavement of human beings. This is intolerable to those who believe in the significance of the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ and God’s abundant love. He

describes the lived implications of this ‘*incarnate solidarity*’ as follows:

...the Church in Brazil views herself as a pilgrim Church, a sent Church (missa est), a Church which seeks out the fallen on the foot-paths, in the gutters, on the hills and hollows of the favelas, in the fields and valleys of the immense land of the disinherited. And so in turn the Church assumes the suffering features of the Negroes, the Indians, the women, the children, the day-labourers, the workers – features simultaneously exploited and profoundly mystical.

... Another form of being Church is expressed in the simple being present on the street, in the favela, in the jails, in the red-light district, wherever there are broken people, be they rural or urban.¹²

During the Maynooth Chapter, Philip Massawe described the ministry of our confreres in East Africa in the refugee camps. Listening to such pain-filled people, being present with them, involvement in advocacy to try and unite them with their families once again, offering educational opportunities to them as well as working on reconciliation and healing are some of the ways that our East African confreres live in solidarity with the refugees.

Our confreres see the deprivations, misery, confusion, the hopelessness, and they listen to the cries of distress. The trauma experienced by the refugees is not only physical. Even more devastating is the emotional suffering and psychological anguish. Most have lost all of their belongings and often their loved ones. The shock is numbing... Spiritans are actively present among the refugees, searching for ways to bring about changes in the

¹² Pat Clarke, *Itaicí* 1992, pp. 68 – 69.

*lives of these afflicted people. Presence is the essence of this ministry.*¹³

**Crossing
boundaries,
going on
pilgrimage**

A simple way to look at the richness of the meaning of solidarity lived by Spiritans as they cross boundaries into the world of the poor is to list some of the key words in the quotes from the two confreres in the short passages presented immediately above.

Words describing the sufferings and injustices the poor encounter in their world include: *deprivations; misery; confusion; anguish;*



broken; distress; cries; hopelessness; trauma; fallen; emotional; shock; physical [trauma];

material, psychological and spiritual dimension [of suffering and injustice]; afflicted.

If we were to broaden our focus to describe more completely the world of the poor, our word-list would undoubtedly increase significantly.

Vocabulary used in both extracts quoted above to describe the ways in which

confreres offer solidarity include: *pilgrim; sent; [being with] broken people; actively present; seeking out the fallen; assume the suffering features [of the poor and marginalized]; listening to the cries of distress; searching; bring about changes.*

The word “*pilgrim*” or words associated with it such as pilgrimage, suggest a journey. As pilgrims on a journey, we are usually on our way to a holy place, a place of special significance. When we practice solidarity we also are on a pilgrimage, on a journey to a

¹³ Philip Massawe, *Maynooth 1998*, p. 39.

special place. In other words when we speak of solidarity, we are indeed speaking of a real journey which is not merely measured in kilometres or by a change of address: We make a radical move from where we are to where the poor are. But it is definitely measured by a change in such areas as our personal options, mentality, values, concerns, interest in people, the use of our time and material resources etc. This pilgrimage has also its risks and its difficulties. The subtitle of the Maynooth Chapter documents – *“Launch out into the deep”* - hints clearly at such difficulties and risks. However Pierre Schouver reminds us in the introductory letter of the Chapter documents, that in this journey of *“new and radical options (not necessarily spectacular) in the service of the most abandoned, to a greater co-operation with others”*¹⁴ the Spirit is with us.



Perhaps the best way to describe this journey is to use a concept presented in the documents of the Maynooth Chapter – that of *“crossing of cultural boundaries and a reaching out to groups of people who are abandoned,*

excluded and oppressed”.¹⁵ In other words, we cross boundaries during this pilgrimage into the world of the poor. This text continues by reminding us that this pilgrimage never finishes; it is dynamic and we need to be aware of new boundaries or frontiers which are emerging: *“As these frontiers of mission change, the front-line of mission must also move.”*

¹⁴ Pierre Schouver, *Maynooth 1998*, Introductory letter.

¹⁵ *Maynooth 1998*, p. 100.

Solidarity then involves a personal journey, a pilgrimage. It is a journey which we make inspired by God's solidarity which we see expressed frequently in the Bible and especially in the Incarnation and life of Jesus. We move from what is familiar and comfortable for us to places and situations which are unknown and strange. We move into a new world inhabited by the poor, the marginalized, the pain-filled and the victimized. We learn how to live in that world and be present to its inhabitants. A real self-emptying takes place during this pilgrimage.



Chapter 4

Methodology of Spiritan JPIC Animation.

A JPIC Model

This reflection seeks to present a model which might help Spiritan JPIC ministry and animation in a number of ways. Such a model might enable us look at our own individual commitment to JPIC and help us to see how such a commitment might grow and be strengthened and practiced. It is also hoped that this model will suggest a methodology which may help with JPIC animation at circumscription level.

The model presented contains four stages. Since our noviciate formation (or perhaps from an even earlier stage in our formation), many of us are familiar with the idea of stages in spiritual development. We heard of the stages of prayer, of Saint Bernard's stages of humility, the stages of love and charity etc. One of the most interesting ways to look at JPIC ministry and animation is also to use a model of stages. A short published talk by Albert Nolan O.P. a few years ago provides a useful four-stage approach to a JPIC methodology.¹ Fr. Nolan, who is well known as a writer on JPIC questions, works in South Africa.

The model outlines a four-stage approach in a commitment to the poor and marginalized. From the outset it is important to emphasise that any model, and certainly the present one, has both strengths and weaknesses. Its strength is that it simplifies and helps us understand difficult concepts. Its weakness is that it may over-simplify a complex issue. It is also important to note that a person, community or circumscription does not pass through each and all of the stages following a neat progression. There may be gains and setbacks, overlapping or indeed we may find ourselves oscillating between

¹ The talk was given at the Catholic Institute for International Relations in London at its annual meeting on June 29, 1984 and has been published in several languages.

two of the stages. Insights and skills learned or attitudes and stances adopted at any point will usually be carried further as we move through subsequent stages.

***Stage 1:
Compassion***

Compassion is the predominant characteristic of the first stage. Here we have either first hand experience of the sufferings and the injustices experienced by the poor or these have been very graphically presented to us, perhaps on TV or in a newspaper or magazine article, and what we have experienced, seen or heard moved us. In other words, we have been exposed to the pain of others and we have been moved to feel compassion for them. And the more we are exposed to the suffering



of others at this stage, the deeper our compassion usually grows. Direct exposure to pain, suffering or injustice usually helps to increase our compassion in quite a dramatic way. All of us can recall how such exposure affected us – for

example the pain and despair of families who have lost loved-ones because of war or violence; our contact with seriously malnourished children or with AIDS sufferers or the effects on us of the terrible smells of large urban slums or tenements. Of course the growth of compassion implies openness. If, as happens in some cases, our first reaction is “There is nothing I can do”, or “This is none of my business”, compassion can be stifled; in fact we may find ourselves struggling to stifle compassionate feelings coming to the surface.

In the area of a response we can easily recall many examples of what compassion brought about either in our own lives or in the lives of people we know. It may, for example, have involved us in

campaigns to collect food or clothing for the poor or to work in voluntary programs such as soup kitchens. It frequently provokes another reaction in the lives of those touched by the pain and suffering of the poor. They may decide to simplify their life-styles; they may do without luxuries or may sometimes try to save money so that they may give it to the poor. This latter response follows a very ancient Christian tradition of almsgiving and voluntary poverty.

Our response

Stage 1 of the model outlined above shows that direct contact with those suffering injustice in so many ways and contexts causes compassion to be born in us and further impels us towards a commitment in favour of those who are society's victims. And this could indeed speak to us Spiritans! How much direct contact do we have with today's victims of injustice and marginalization? True



what we read and what we see on TV makes us indignant many times. But is this sufficient? Or do we keep a safe distance from such victims? Are we willing to have "hands-on" contact with the poor and marginalized? For some Spiritans this direct contact may be easier than for others. Some confreres have intense daily

interaction with such individuals and groups. Other confreres however are burdened with commitments or have reached retirement age and have not the same amount of time or energy as earlier in their lives. Nevertheless it is important to ensure that we do not isolate ourselves from the many victims we have in our societies.

Examples of how we might avoid such isolation could include volunteering for a short period each week to work in places where the poor and marginalized are more frequently found - in a soup kitchen or in a slum or by visiting AIDS sufferers or a refugee centre.

Or why not invite such victims to come to at least one community meeting or share our table now and again and simply tell their story – drug-addicts, refugees, street people, abused women or victims from several other categories? What is important in terms of a JPIC methodology is that confreres have not just an “academic” approach to such victims, that their information is not merely what is gathered from newspapers, books and TV. The parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 29 – 37) shows us the importance of contact with the poor and those suffering injustice and marginalization. Like the Good Samaritan, a direct contact with such victims, a contact where the victims can easily and comfortably share about their lives, has a different effect. It helps to engender compassion which is the first stage in developing a JPIC commitment.

***Stage 2:
Structural
problems as
root causes of
injustice***

The second stage brings us to a deeper commitment and usually begins gradually when we discover that injustice and poverty in today’s world do not simply come about by misfortune or by accident. They are provoked by structural problems including corruption and the gross misuse of power.

In other words, poverty and the consequent suffering, injustice, discrimination and inequality are a direct result of political, social and economic structures; they have not come about by chance but have been created. From this viewpoint then, poverty is perceived as an injustice and its victims are seen to be suffering a terrible wrong. For many, the realisation that they are part of a system which provokes this injustice, or at least are well served by this system, induces a great shock and at times a trauma in their lives.

There are usually dramatic reactions in the lives of people who arrive at this consciousness for the first time. These reactions range from indignation to anger. Anger may be expressed in several ways – for example against the rich, or against governments and their policies which cause the poor to suffer, or against politicians. This anger is frequently compounded with guilt because of the fact that for many Christians anger is something to be avoided. However, we frequently fail to take into consideration, for example, the biblical

treatment of God's anger. In this context such anger could be seen as a sharing in God's anger: our anger does not imply a hatred of the wrongdoer (the person or organisation which provoked the injustice and suffering) but a hatred of the sin, the wrongdoing. In other words, anger here can be seen as the opposite side of the coin to compassion and indeed can be a necessary incentive to enable compassion to grow in our lives.

As soon as we realise during this second stage that poverty and injustice are provoked by structural problems, our response and reaction are somewhat different to those in stage one. Now we opt to work for social change. In stage one the response focused largely on relief work. Relief work now is seen somewhat like curative medicine dealing with symptoms rather than causes. Work for social change is seen like preventative medicine – it attacks the root causes of the problem. Usually activity and involvement increase significantly at this second stage. We want significant social change and we want it NOW. Very active involvement in politics, and participation in campaigns are examples of this intense activity.

Unfortunately this second stage causes a minority to have a feeling of being overpowered. They feel so small and insignificant; the problems seem enormous and practically impossible to face up to. To confront international political and economic structures for example is like the fight between David and Goliath for such people. A kind of paralysis, a feeling of being totally lost may set in which causes intense suffering in the life of the person affected in this way.

***Stage 2:
Our response***

In Stage 2 of the process outlined, we become aware that poverty, injustice, marginalization are widespread and do not happen by chance. These are provoked by what are now known as structural problems. An important aspect of our JPIC activity is to discover and understand the root causes or structural causes provoking such grave problems. The process known as "social analysis" can help us significantly here. Over the last few years, many simple but helpful guides have been published in various languages which help us carry out a social analysis of

injustices we encounter in the various ministerial situations in which we work.

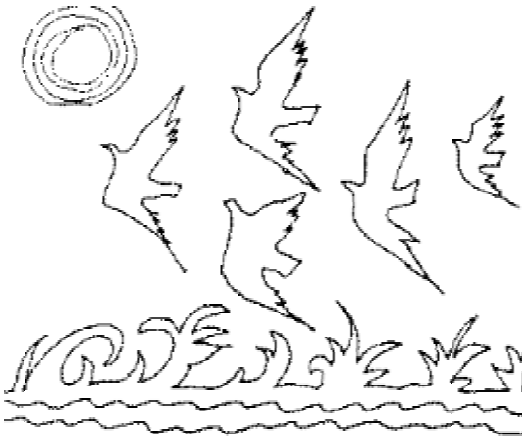
Our Spiritan documents insist on the importance of social analysis. SRL 14.1 reminds us that *“in order to contribute effectively to promoting justice, we make every effort to analyse situations, to lay bare the relationship of individual cases to structural causes”*. SRL 71 calls our attention to the fact that *“we work with them too (the poor) to change unjust social structures which victimise them.”* Maynooth 2.1 comments that *“to achieve a better communion with the people, each circumscription and community will commit itself to a serious effort to analyse and interpret the situations within which it is living”*. Maynooth 2.13 insists that in our ministry we should sensitize youth to structural problems of injustice. Itaicí 36.2.4 outlines the importance of training our young Spiritans during formation in the use of social analysis.

***Stage 3: Humility
in our service of
the poor***

The third stage unfolds as we discover that the poor must and will save themselves. This stage could be described as a discovery of humility in our service of the poor. Before we arrived at this point we generally felt that **we** could, indeed **we** had to solve the problems of the poor. We who have resources or access to them, we who have had a high level of formal education and training have a need (or even a mission!) to rescue the poor from their helplessness, injustice and pain. Here there is clearly a **we** and **they** dynamic at play. We, the better off, are going to help or teach them, the poor, to help themselves. Frequently in such a setting the poor are perceived as helpless creatures.

During the third stage, we may be quite shocked when we gradually discover that the poor understand much better than we what to do and how to do it, even in solving structural and political problems. Now we begin to realise and accept that social change can only come from the poor. Here we begin to learn from them: they know better than we do what can be done and how it can be done. This discovery is a crossroads situation in the lives of many people in ministry. It can provoke a crisis where we may be tempted to give

up or, on the other hand, it may be instrumental in bringing about a conversion in our lives. A conversion takes place when we realise that the poor, and not so much we, are God's chosen instruments in history to save a brutal and crazy world. God ultimately will save this world from its cruel madness through the poor.



Having come to this realisation, one of the hazards is to romanticise the poor. In this scheme of things the poor are always right. We may not perceive that the poor are totally human and indeed have all the human imperfections we know so well: like greed and laziness.

They may also be manipulative or lack courage. When such human weaknesses are found amongst the poor whom we may have idolised, some who have made a serious option for the marginalized will experience a crisis of disillusionment and disappointment and may be tempted to abandon their commitment.

Responding to the poor

Pastoral theology today insists very much on the importance of consciously using a methodology in ministry. Such methodologies would help us progress through Stage 3 into Stage 4. Probably the best known of the pastoral methodologies is the "See, Judge, Act" process. It is also one of the easiest to use.

During the "See" phase, the concrete situation (and not just impressions or comments about the situation) is examined in all its aspects – political, social, cultural and economical. Moving to the "Judge" phase, this reality is judged in the light of the Word of God,

Church documents, tradition and other faith principles. This leads to the final phase: having seen and judged the situation, the community or group will then be encouraged to choose an adequate pastoral response. Frequently, a later component of this part of the process involves an evaluation of the “act” phase and necessary readjustments or further planning are then included in the process. Clearly, this methodology, like others, works from the principle that our pastoral response, even though it may be very well intentioned, cannot be haphazard but must be well thought out, planned and coordinated.

Real solidarity begins when we opt to be together on the same side against oppression

***Stage 4:
Solidarity
with the
poor and
oppressed***

Solidarity with the poor and oppressed is central to stage four of this process. The real beginning of this stage is the disappointment and disillusionment that we experience when we discover that the poor are not what we romantically thought they were. Real solidarity begins when we move away from the mentality of *we* and *they*. A ‘we and they’ mentality effectively separates us from the poor and oppressed; it creates a huge gap between us and them. The beginning of a real solidarity is when we discover that all, no matter what social class they find themselves in, have faults and weaknesses.

Despite our faults, shortcomings and class differences, this real solidarity begins when we opt to be together on the same side against oppression. This solidarity grows when we mutually respect each other, when we no longer talk or think in terms of those who are superior and those who are inferior and when we become aware of the importance of struggling against unjust systems and policies. In other words, at this stage by our solidarity we make a firm option for the poor. This solidarity is modelled on God’s own option for justice and the defence of the weak, exemplified through the Bible

and especially in the life of Jesus Christ. This solidarity is indeed a very high ideal and will only be reached in our lives after we undergo many shocks, challenges and struggles.

***Our efforts at
solidarity
building***

In the past, the poor were frequently seen merely as recipients of solidarity and were not seen as its promoters. Now all, and especially the poor, are seen as practitioners of solidarity. The ultimate objective of this solidarity is to bring about change which will place the human person in the centre (and the most important place) in all systems –



economic, political, cultural and social, as well as in all plans and decisions. Obviously our faith perspective has a very important role in emphasising the central importance of the human person. Indeed, seen in this light, solidarity can be defined as a political act. Now we need to ask ourselves if the *we* and *they* model of response to poverty and injustice

outlined earlier may unconsciously be still well implanted in our methodology and way of thinking.

For the exercise of solidarity in this new model several categories of practices are used. If we are to effectively offer solidarity, we need to be aware of the dynamics which are taking place. One such practice are the *ways of resisting* social exclusion and injustice used by the poor. These can include responses in several areas: psychological, moral, religious, economic, political and cultural. Conscious as they are of suffering, the poor and marginalized frequently devise numerous ways to express their own solidarity and to practice resistance in order to create conditions to survive with at

least a minimum of dignity. Here we need to ask ourselves a number of questions. Are we aware that such dynamics may be taking place and can we identify them? To what extent are we willing to participate with the poor in the use of such dynamics? How concretely do we help the weak and marginalized to resist? What criteria do we use to judge such action by the poor in their solidarity building? Our efforts at solidarity building should have a number of characteristics. These include an option for non-violent action; respect of the rights of those who may be classified as “adversaries” of the poor; openness to the non-poor; realistic expectations; aiming for integral human liberation; lack of resentment and insistence on the need for permanent conversion.

Conclusion

A JPIC commitment demands much of us Spiritans. Not least, it demands an earnest response at personal, community and circumscription levels as well as a serious methodological approach to our ministry to ensure that our efforts and options bear fruit. The words of Pope John Paul II in his message for the World Day of Peace on January 01, 2001 summarise well the challenge being offered to the world and specifically to Spiritans. He recalls what he had earlier written in *Centesimus Annus*, (58):

... the promotion of justice is at the heart of a true culture of solidarity. It is not just a question of giving one's surplus to those in need, but of "helping entire peoples presently excluded or marginalized to enter into the sphere of economic and human development. For this to happen, it is not enough to draw on the surplus goods which in fact our world abundantly produces; it requires above all a change of lifestyles, of models of production and consumption, and of the established structures of power which today govern societies".²

² Message of His Holiness, Pope John Paul II, for the celebration of the World Day of Peace, January 01, 2001, *Dialogue between Cultures for a Civilization of Love and Peace*, Paragraph 17.

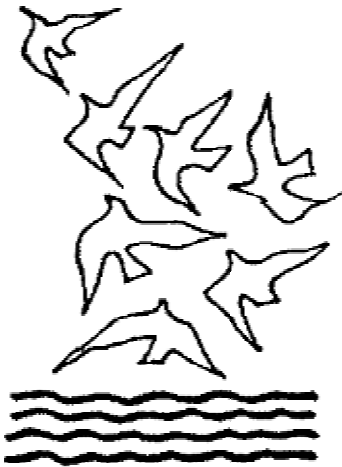
Chapter 5

Practical guidelines for Spiritan JPIC animation.

**Spiritan
leadership
and JPIC
animation**

A ...foundation at Bordeaux. Their one aim would be to work for the salvation of the poorest people whom the parochial clergy find it difficult to contact and serve - for example manual workers, soldiers, sailors and others.(Francis Libermann, letter to Mgr. Donnet; July 03, 1847; ND 9, 220 –221)

The leadership team in each circumscription has a central role to play in encouraging confreres in understanding and accepting the



centrality of a JPIC commitment in their lives and ministry. For this reason, a number of specific JPIC tasks are an important component of leadership animation at circumscription level. One such responsibility is the appointment of a JPIC co-ordinator. Ideally, this person should be chosen following consultation between the leadership and the members of the circumscription. The name of a new appointee should be communicated to the Generalate JPIC Office as soon

as possible after the appointment is made. The length of assignment of the JPIC co-ordinator will normally follow the same time frame as other appointments in the circumscription.

Suggested tasks for this confrere's work will be outlined later. However, each circumscription is also encouraged to include other

JPIC-linked responsibilities specific to the local reality. A clear job description in writing should be given to the co-ordinator at the beginning of the mandate. Care should be taken as well that adequate financial and material resources are available to those appointed to JPIC co-ordination.



Work in the JPIC area is generally demanding and difficult. Leadership, especially at circumscription level, should provide continuing support and encouragement for those in JPIC ministry. Many such confreres, working frequently as they do in situations of dehumanising poverty, violence, suffering and injustice, may become victims of trauma provoked by such circumstances.

Spiritans in leadership positions are asked to be sensitive to this, to take steps when necessary to prevent trauma and to provide the best care and treatment possible for confreres who are trauma victims.

Confreres in leadership in the circumscriptions are responsible for implementing JPIC tasks which have been mandated in the Spiritan Rule of Life and in recent General and local Chapters. The JPIC co-ordinator, working with the leadership team, plays a key role here. These tasks include:

- To help confreres analyse situations so that the structural causes of poverty and injustice may be seen. (SRL 14.1; Maynooth 2.1)
- To pay attention to prophetic voices and through discernment to help develop new apostolic initiatives. (SRL 14.2)

- To ensure that our communities maintain the closest possible contact with their surroundings and especially with the local poor, the weak and those who suffer injustice. (SRL 30)
- To ensure that our communities are models and examples in the practical living out of justice and peace principles amongst their members. (SRL 24, 37; Maynooth: Introduction to 4.16 – 4.18)
- The drawing up of a Justice and Peace programme for the circumscription. (Maynooth 2.17)
- ‘Solidarity’ is a word very frequently used with JPIC connotations in the SRL and in recent General Chapter documents. Those in leadership should promote reflection on the meaning of this term in the concrete context of the circumscription and will follow up on proposals made on how solidarity could be practised.
- To ensure that some confreres are trained as specialists in education, especially for the service of the poor (Maynooth 2.16), as well as training Spiritan specialists for justice and peace work. (Maynooth 2.24)

The JPIC co-ordinator at circumscription level

*Love for Jesus cannot be idle; it passes from the heart to the hands, from affection to action – otherwise it is not love ... There is no greater proof of love we have from God than that which we have for our neighbour, who, through the words of Jesus as he was dying, has taken his place on earth in order to be the nearest and the most immediate object of our affections ... And as among our brothers the most destitute are the dearest to our father and good mother, it is they also who will be objects of our affection: the poor, the sick, the afflicted, to whom I would add the sinners. (Handbook of the Assemblée des Amis, of which Poullard de Places was a member, - *Pratique des Vertus Chretiennes Propres à la Congregation de Notre Dame*, Paris, 1654, Second Part, Chapter 9, Page 90).*

The principal task of the JPIC co-ordinator in each circumscription is to animate the confreres to put into practice the words of SRL 4 - “the evangelisation of the poor is our purpose”. This person will be



truly interested in JPIC issues; have had an experience in ministry to the poor and have the support of the confreres in the task of JPIC co-ordination. Also necessary are

communication skills as well as the time and energy required to carry out this important task of animation. While the job description and tasks of the JPIC co-ordinator will vary according to the concrete circumstances of each circumscription (size of the circumscription, for example), the following are some important aspects of this ministry:

- The JPIC co-ordinator will both animate and enable members of the circumscription in being “the advocates, the supporters and the defenders of the weak and the little ones against all who oppress them”. (SRL 14)
- This implies that the co-ordinator will help confreres to plan and put into practice action programs that will identify the poor and will enable confreres to have direct contact with groups and individuals described as the “little ones” in the SRL.
- Co-ordinators will promote and encourage an on-going analysis to examine the reasons of such poverty and injustices.
- They should also encourage Spiritans to work with the poor for the social change that the marginalized espouse.
- The JPIC co-ordinator will also help, support and encourage Spiritans in difficulty because of their engagement in matters of justice and support of the poor.



Ideally the JPIC co-ordinator in each circumscription will set up a small team that will help in animating the confreres in their work with the poor and marginalized. Examples of where such teamwork has an important role to play are the organisation of awareness and training programs, the planning and organizing of active non-violent action as well as in preparing liturgical and prayer events that focus on JPIC issues.

A JPIC team will help to ensure that older and infirm confreres may participate in such activities. The contribution such confreres can offer by their prayer, for example, is of supreme importance. Other areas where such a small team could help significantly in JPIC animation are in providing or indicating appropriate sources of JPIC liturgical, theological, spirituality and educational resources and materials to confreres. This small team, working with the circumscription's JPIC co-ordinator, has also a key role in preparing or indicating material appropriate to this area for Spiritan publications. The JPIC co-ordinator, or a member of the team, should participate in the organisation of programmes and campaigns of the local Church on social questions, national and international justice and solidarity matters and issues concerning the poor and will bring Spiritan concerns and perspectives to such events.

Ability in communication is an important aspect of JPIC animation. Spiritan JPIC co-ordinators should have an important communication function not only within the circumscription but also between local Spiritans and the Generalate JPIC office. Tasks here include the sending of regular reports to the Rome office on the involvement of confreres in JPIC issues and projects as well as the distribution of documents which are prepared by the Generalate on this topic. Similarly the highlighting and dissemination of local and international JPIC issues, and the encouraging of confreres to

participate in networking and lobbying efforts on such concerns, is an important part of the co-ordinators' remit.



Recent General Chapters gave us special tasks or called our attention to specific questions. The JPIC co-ordinator will encourage and facilitate the members of the circumscription in attending to such tasks. The Maynooth Chapter (2.17) requested each circumscription to draw up a JPIC programme. The JPIC co-ordinator, together with the leadership of the circumscription, has an

important role in ensuring that this programme is prepared and that it is kept constantly up to date. (The following section of this booklet suggests some headings for the drawing up of this programme).

Recalling the fact that “[God has] given us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5:18) and the call of the Maynooth Chapter (2.23) to give reconciliation and conflict resolution a special place in our lives and work as Spiritans, JPIC co-ordinators should animate confreres to see the centrality of these tasks in our ministry. Since Spiritan co-operation and solidarity are frequently stressed in the Itaicí and Maynooth General Chapters, the co-ordinator should maintain contact and promote collaboration with other circumscriptions on JPIC issues. JPIC co-ordinators will normally represent their circumscriptions at regional and international Spiritan JPIC meetings. The SRL and recent chapters have also called for special attention to be given to specific groups amongst those who are marginalized. These include refugees, immigrants, and women. The JPIC co-ordinator should encourage Spiritans to make a preferential option for these groups in their ministry.



Respect for the environment is today seen as central to our JPIC commitment. Over a decade ago, in his speech for the World Day of Peace on January 01, 1990, Pope John II reminded us that “*the ecological crisis is a moral issue*” (paragraph 15). In the same document we are reminded that “*the dramatic threat of ecological breakdown is teaching us the extent to which greed and selfishness - both individual and collective - are contrary to the order of creation...*” (paragraph 8). One of the co-ordinator’s tasks in

this area is to keep before confreres the sacredness of creation, reminding and conscientising them of the link between environmental and social injustices as well as the link between economic policies, production and consumption on the one hand and environmental degradation on the other. The co-ordinator should also encourage confreres to participate in actions and campaigns at community level and also at local and national levels which defend and nurture the environment.

***JPIC and the use
and
administration
of our finances
and material
goods***

Our works in Europe will concentrate on the poorest classes in France who are in need of help, such as sailors, soldiers, workers in general (still the most neglected), prisoners, beggars, those working in the galleys...Such work is not opposed to the aim or the spirit expressed in the Rule. It is true that

in the beginning we did not envisage this sort of thing because it was impossible; God was leading us to the work for the Black People, but at the same time, we felt the need to broaden out a little more, so that the Rule talks of the poor and abandoned in general ...

(Francis Libermann; letter to P. Le Vasseur; October 14, 1847; ND 9, 288 – 289.)

Confreres who administer our finances should be aware of the justice implications of our investments and should ensure that our assets are invested according to ethical principals. For this reason, circumscriptions should draw up, and regularly update, criteria



indicating locations unsuitable for the investment of our funds and criteria for investing. The Spiritan Rule of Life (71.1) asks us to set aside a sum of money for the poor in each budget. Each community will discuss the size of this sum and how it will be used when the annual budget is being drawn up. Internal financial solidarity within the Congregation, and not just the redistribution of

our surplus, is a priority if justice and fraternity are to be practised within our own missionary family. (Maynooth: Introduction to 6.1 – 6.5)

In purchasing, preference should be given, where possible, to products which are environmentally friendly, can be recycled or are made from recycled material. We should encourage the recycling of discardable materials by our communities. We will also give preference when purchasing to buying “fair trade” goods and commodities offered for sale by co-operatives and organisations belonging to or benefiting the poor.

When feasible, we should open possibilities for the use of our properties and buildings to the poor and to those who are actively working with and for the poor. We should be scrupulous in ensuring that our employees are given all their rights and that they receive not only a legal but also a just salary. As a sign of our solidarity with the

poor we should ensure that the simple life-style, hospitality and sharing called for in our Congregation's documents are practised.

**Formation
and JPIC
animation**

The Society ... has for its purpose to educate poor clerics in ecclesiastical discipline, zeal and love of virtue (especially of obedience and poverty), who will be ready for everything in the hands of prelates, to serve in hospices, to evangelise the poor and infidels, and not only to undertake but to love wholeheartedly and to prefer to everything else the meanest and most laborious ecclesiastical duties for which ministers are found with difficulty. (Rule of 1734, Chapter 1, number 2)

The Spiritan Rule of Life and recent general chapter documents place emphasis on the centrality of JPIC issues during formation. Amongst the aspects which the documents stress are the following:

- Justice and Peace should receive special attention during formation. (Maynooth 2.30)
- Formation will be modelled on a type of apprenticeship where students remain very close to the lived reality of the people, especially the poor. (Maynooth 3.4)
- During formation emphasis will be placed on the social sciences which allow a new reading of the reality. Justice issues should pervade all our study of theology just as they are present everywhere in mission. Insights gained in this way should lead to discernment and action. (Itaicí 36.2.4)
- Specialist training in the area of Justice and Peace is stressed. (Maynooth 2.24)

The Guide for Spiritan Formation (GSF) lists further elements of training for JPIC. These include:

- Apostolic work during formation should help those in training to become aware of the needs and hopes of those marginalized by society. (GSF 14)

- This apostolic work should be accompanied by continuing reflection both at community level and at personal level with the help of a member of the formation team. (GSF 15)
- Students should be helped to understand the social and economic realities they experience so that they develop a responsible and realistic attitude and a healthy political awareness. This, amongst other things, implies that students must have significant contact with the poor. (GSF 31 and 93.1)
- An important aspect from the beginning of formation is to encourage those in training to practice justice, to share, to promote solidarity with the poor and to have a simple life-style. (GSF 28 and 97)
- Since our life-style inevitably has consequences for the environment, an appreciation of nature, the setting in which people live, especially the poor, and creation issues in general will be emphasised during formation. (GSF 98)



The period of formation also offers other opportunities for providing not only training in the JPIC area but for engaging in worthwhile commitments. For example 'stage' (OTP) is an ideal period for those in formation to have an in-depth contact with the poor and marginalized. While an extensive evaluation of this experience should be carried

out by a competent formator when this period is completed, an appropriate person should be appointed to reflect on this experience on an on-going basis with the students during the 'stage' period. Especially during 'stage' but in so far as time permits during the rest of formation, students should be encouraged to become acquainted with Church and NGO social justice and human rights' organisations and programs and to become involved in events, campaigns and networking promoted by such groups.



The moulding of attitudes in the promotion of life and human dignity are also important during formation. Incorrect attitudes which provoke injustice and suffering for individuals and groups such as women, for people with different sexual orientations and for people of different colour, creed, ethnicity or race should be critically analysed. A firm conviction of the inviolable dignity and rights of every human person should be shown to be central to our mission as

Spiritans. The social teaching of the Church as well as a JPIC based and orientated spirituality should form an important part of the formation experience and syllabus.

***The co-ordinator
at Generalate
level***

The proposal you have made to me is very much in line with the spirit of our Congregation. Our global aim is to evangelise the poor. However, our specific object is the Missions, and in

the missions we have chosen the most miserable and abandoned people. Providence has led us to work for the Blacks in Africa or the Colonies; there is no denying that at this time, these are the most unfortunate and neglected peoples.... (Francis Libermann; letter to Dom Salier; May 30, 1851; ND 13, 170)

The SRL (14) refers to action for Justice and Peace as a “constitutive” part of our mission of evangelisation. We are all called to the service of the poor. The Itaicí and Maynooth Chapters reaffirmed our commitment to the poor and emphasised that JPIC is one of the particular areas that must be taken into account in our mission today. In this context, the JPIC co-ordinator at Generalate level should ensure that a JPIC animation which leads to action and



commitment in the circumscriptions will be provided. The following are some of the principal tasks of the Generalate JPIC co-ordinator:

- One of the chief responsibilities of the Generalate JPIC co-ordinator is to provide animation and support for

leadership and co-ordinators in the circumscriptions in this area.

- Constant contact is very important here as well as the provision of the necessary resources for JPIC animation.
- Resources range from information and animation material to assistance and support in the general area of the theological and spiritual dimensions of what motivates our JPIC action and the use of social analysis.
- The Generalate co-ordinator should be available to help circumscriptions in such specific areas as the incorporation of JPIC into initial and ongoing formation programs, animation (including courses and visits) and working with confreres to develop JPIC responses in their concrete situations.
- Spiritan JPIC contacts and networking between circumscriptions and at regional levels is actively encouraged by the co-ordinator. To facilitate this process, the co-ordinator in Rome should maintain regular contact with co-ordinators at circumscription level.
- Contact and collaboration with JPIC groups at international level, both those which have Church links and with civil society organisations should be an ongoing task for the Generalate co-ordinator.

Recent Chapters have given explicit orientations regarding projects and new areas where Spiritans should be involved in JPIC activity in coming years. These include the drawing up of a local Spiritan JPIC plan, solidarity, reconciliation, ministry to specific marginalized groups and specialist training in the JPIC area. The Generalate JPIC co-ordinator should be available to attend specific requests for assistance in these and other related areas coming from the circumscriptions.

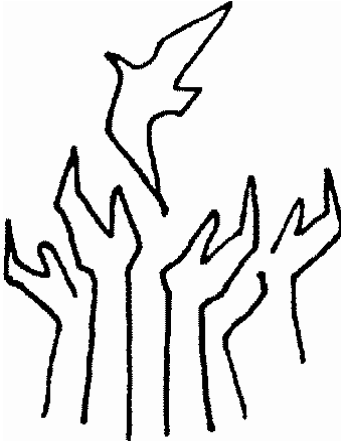


A number of important specific tasks also form part of the Generalate JPIC co-ordinator's remit. One such task is the analysis of complex social settings, searching out, identifying, articulating and providing a regular supply of information on important JPIC issues. In this way the co-ordinator should offer guidance on JPIC

issues in various mission situations, give practical advice to confreres in their ministry and should promote a deeper and more spiritual attitude towards JPIC issues. Of importance here also will be the contribution made to enable us to appreciate more deeply the spirituality of our Founders with regards to the poor and marginalized.

Chapter 6

Drawing up a circumscription programme for JPIC.



The Maynooth Chapter (2.17) called on each circumscription to draw up a programme for JPIC. Ideally, the exercise of drawing up the programme should involve all Spiritans in the circumscription. Normally this task is co-ordinated by the JPIC co-ordinator with the support and encouragement of the leadership team. Periodic revision of this programme will also be necessary. While the style of programmes may differ considerably from circumscription

to circumscription according to local conditions and the work of Spiritans there, the following are suggestions and headings which might be useful when the programme is being drawn up.

***Spiritan
JPIC
programme***

Normally, the introduction to the programme should contain an overview of social, economic, political and cultural conditions in the country and a social analysis of the resulting situations which contribute to the impoverishment and marginalisation of the local population. The programme should then go on to outline the Spiritan JPIC response to the local situation. Some of the following headings and questions may help in drawing up such a programme.

- Describe the JPIC project(s) of the circumscription.
- What are the problems which each project is addressing and what are the causes of these problems?

- How concretely does a Spiritan presence in these projects address the root causes of the problems outlined above?
- How does each project fit in with the plans and priorities of the local Church?
- Who are the Spiritans involved in each project? Describe the role of non-Spiritans collaborators?
- What are the circumscription's plans to ensure an adequate Spiritan presence in each of the projects? For how long will a Spiritan presence be necessary?
- Is funding for the circumscription's JPIC projects and commitments sufficient; will it be adequate for the future or will provisions need to be made to ensure that it is satisfactory?

Depending on the local conditions some or all of the following headings and questions may also be important JPIC issues for inclusion in the programme of the circumscription:

- The concrete proposals to integrate JPIC issues into the circumscription's formation programme.
- The circumscription's plans to train confreres for JPIC work. (Maynooth 2.24)
- List of courses / reflection on JPIC issues planned for the circumscription – themes, resource person(s), locations etc.
- The upcoming liturgical and prayer events planned with JPIC themes.
- In circumscriptions with schools and other educational facilities, what are the plans to make students aware of JPIC issues and involve them in concrete action in favour of the poor?
- The budget proposals of the circumscription and its communities to favour the poor.



Annex

Our JPIC commitment according to our recent documents

1. *JPIC as an integral part of our mission:*

- The evangelisation of the “poor” (cf. Luke 4:18) is our purpose (cf. N. D. XIII, 170). Therefore we go especially to peoples, groups and individuals who have not yet heard the message of the Gospel or who have scarcely heard it, to those whose needs are the greatest, and to the oppressed (cf. N. D. II, 241). **(SRL 4)**
- We are participating within the Church in the mission of Christ, in communion with him and all people, proclaiming a salvation that is a gift from God, liberation from all that oppresses people, joy in knowing the Lord and being known by him. (cf. E. N. 9). **(SRL 11)**
- In faithfulness to the intuitions of our Founders, to their experiences and to the living tradition of our Congregation, we give preference to an apostolate that takes us to... those oppressed and most disadvantaged, as a group or as individuals. **(SRL 12)**
- Mission is not to be conceived primarily in geographical terms but as a crossing of cultural boundaries and a reaching out to groups of people who are abandoned, excluded and oppressed. **(Maynooth: Introduction to 2.5 – 2.6)**



2. **Our JPIC methodology in mission:**

Our Mission: The Poor and the Weak.

- We count the following as constitutive parts of our mission of evangelisation: the “integral liberation” of people, action for justice and peace, and participation in development. It follows that we must make ourselves “the advocates, the supporters and the defenders of the weak and the little ones against all who oppress them” (Rule of 1849; N. D. X, 517). **(SRL 14)**
- Our closeness to the poor brings us to hear afresh the gospel that we are preaching. It becomes an unceasing summons to conversion and an invitation to adopt a simple style of life. **(SRL 24.1)**
- Our Spiritan community maintains the closest contact with its surroundings and in a very special sense with the “little ones” (cf. Matthew 25: 40; Rule of 1849; N. D. X, 517). **(SRL 30)**
- Our consecrated obedience gradually frees us from the urge to hold power and puts us at the service of the poor.... **(SRL 82)**
- From the beginning, our mission has favoured the poor. ... Today, we reaffirm our commitment to the poor, singling out three particular fields (which often overlap). (First Evangelisation, Education and Justice and Peace). **(Maynooth: Introduction to 2.11 – 2.12)**
- The presence and action of the Spirit can be discerned in the lives of these people, especially the poor and oppressed. They inspire us with their hospitality, simplicity, generosity and deep faith. The closer we identify ourselves with them and their suffering, the more insights we receive into the Gospel that we preach (cf. SRL 24.1). It challenges us to re-evaluate our own lifestyle and to work with them against oppressive structures. **(Maynooth: Introduction to 3.3 – 3.5)**
- We draw inspiration from each other, especially from the courageous faith of confreres who live and work in difficult situations, sometimes in conflict and war, putting their very lives at risk ... **(Maynooth: Introduction to 3.8 – 3.15)**)

Special Groups / Categories

- Confreres working in the countries of the North are urged to give active support to the cause of refugees and migrants who are seeking entry into their countries. (**Maynooth 2.21**)
- Over the next six years, a practical concern for refugees will be an important part of Spiritan mission. (**Maynooth 2.20**)
- Over the next six years, we will also pay special attention to the role of women in the Church and in society. (**Maynooth 2.22**)
- The fact that we now have women members of our Spiritan family makes us more aware of our duty to work for the recognition of the dignity and rights of women wherever we are, both in society and in the Church. We will help them to discern their own unique participation in the mission of the Church (Cf. 2.22). (**Maynooth 5.7**)

Special Tasks

- We consider the following to be especially important tasks for our times: ...
work with refugees, with immigrants and with those who are on the margins of society. (**SRL 18.1**)
- Each circumscription will draw up a programme for Justice and Peace. (**Maynooth 2.17**)
- We will take part in different information networks and look for ways of influencing national and international political decisions (refugees, arms trade, problem of world debt, ecology...). (**Maynooth 2.18**)
- Each Spiritan will look for opportunities for action within his grasp (homilies, catechises, training of lay people, Justice and Peace groups) in order to become the voice of the voiceless (the homeless, landless, unemployed, victims of ethnic strife and corruption...). (**Maynooth 2.19**)
- Reconciliation and conflict resolution will be given a special place in the life and work of Spiritans. (**Maynooth 2.23**)
- It (the General Council) will make a study of the possibility of a Spiritan centre in Africa to co-ordinate our work for refugees in that continent. (**Maynooth 2.38**)

- The members of the Chapter noted that an awareness of Justice and Peace issues has greatly increased in the Congregation but much remains to be done in clarifying the type of action to be undertaken. It is not just a question of denouncing abuses, but also of wise action and encouraging what is good. (**Maynooth: Introduction to 2.17 – 2.24**)
- We take as our own the points that the Church is currently stressing in mission: ...
 - mission as service and liberation;
 - mission as dialogue, ... (**SRL 13.1**)

Structural Causes of Injustice; Analysis and Interpretation of Situations

- In order to contribute effectively to promoting justice, we make every effort to analyse situations, to lay bare the relationship of individual cases to structural causes. (**SRL 14.1**)
- To achieve a better communion with the people, each circumscription and community will commit itself to a serious effort to analyse and interpret the situations within which it is living. (**Maynooth 2.1**)
- We will make a point of making young people aware of the problems of poverty and unjust structures in their society and the world at large. (**Maynooth 2.13**)
- We pay attention to prophetic voices and we encourage them, through a process of discernment, to develop new apostolic initiatives. (**SRL 14.2**)

JPIC Animation and the Local Church

- So that the Christian witness may become integrated in the culture, reach people from within and become a force for liberation in their contemporary history, we strive in every way we can for a fruitful coming together of local cultural and religious traditions with the gospel of Christ. (**SRL 16.1**)
- In local Churches the following are our principal activities: ...
 - awakening an understanding of the universal mission, of justice, and of kinship between peoples. (**SRL 18**)

- Our role in the local Churches where we are working is to make them more aware of the universal mission, of justice and fraternity amongst peoples. (**Maynooth: Introduction to 2.10**)
- If the need arises and after discerning together and with the local Ordinary, we will not hesitate to be a prophetic voice in the local Church. (**Maynooth 5.4**)



3. Solidarity (external and internal) is an important part of our JPIC commitment:

External

- ... We participate in solidarity with their (the people we work with) joys and sorrows. (**SRL 16.2**)
- In solidarity with the life of the people, our community takes an interest in their traditions and seeks to promote justice and peace in social, economic, political and religious life. (**SRL 30.1**)
- The work already achieved in creating and stabilising relationships of solidarity and justice between north and south should be courageously continued. (**Itaici 33.1**)
- As Spiritans we have other reasons why we should share: our vow of poverty and our concern for Justice and Peace for the sake of Evangelisation... (**Itaici 35.1**)
- In the name of solidarity with the poorest who are our priority (SRL 70), we commit ourselves to a radical sharing, because of a genuine concern for honesty and justice.
We are called to a practical solidarity with the people among whom we live, especially those who are most poor, vulnerable and excluded from society. (**Maynooth 2.2**)
- ... Our poverty is a form of weakness that we have deliberately chosen. ...This in turn brings us closer to the poor, the

disfavoured, the uprooted and gives us greater solidarity with them. ...

The most urgent call that the Capitulants welcome and want to carry away with them is the invitation to a poorer and more moderate life-style in the midst of the poor whom we wish to serve. ...**(Maynooth: Introduction to 6.1 – 6.5)**

Internal

- Financial solidarity is also essential for us; it is one of the most important ways of expressing our concern for further justice and fraternity within our missionary family. Genuine solidarity implies a transparency in the management of the resources which are put at our disposal ... **(Maynooth: Introduction to 6.1 – 6.5)**
- ... The Rule (SRL) asks that we should not just share our “surplus” but also that which we need. We will consider solidarity not just when we have provided for everything else, but while we are actually engaged in drawing up our budget. **(Maynooth: Introduction to 6.6 – 6.9)**
- What is needed from the Groups, and more and more from the Districts, is solidarity without domination. This solidarity should be built on confidence and generosity, but be well organised, stimulated and guided by the General Council. **(Maynooth 7.2.1)**
- We see so many of our brothers committed in situations of trauma, war, exile and looking for special care and support from the Council. We ask the Council for specific encouragement to all in the area of justice and peace. **(Itaici 33.2.1)**
- Out of concern for solidarity and justice, all circumscriptions will make their “voluntary contribution” to Cor Unum every year. **(Itaici 35.4)**
- We recommend [such] region-wide support wherever confreres are involved in situations of war, major disaster, defence of human rights and refugee work. **(Itaici 39.2)**
- Each circumscription is asked to examine its current areas of solidarity and to enlarge its spheres of collaboration. **(Maynooth 2.7)**

- The Chapter felt that there is an unacceptable disparity in the standard of living between various Spiritan groups. Some communities and circumscriptions have more than they need, while others have only the barest necessities of life. Despite many examples of great generosity and unselfishness, there is still a need for greater sharing and support. (**Maynooth: Introduction to 4.24 – 4.26**)



4. Community and its JPIC witness value:

- Whatever may be the work we are engaged in as priests or as brothers, we aim to bear witness to a kingdom of justice and peace, by living together in community, in genuine charity, in mutual forbearance, pardoning, sharing, ever hospitable and free from prejudice. (**SRL 24**)
- We who come from different cultures, continents and nations, and who have different outlooks, are brought together by the Spirit of Pentecost into one larger community, the Congregation. Cultural diversity is welcomed as a positive factor. Our unity bears witness to reconciliation in Christ. (**SRL 37**)
- Our dwellings, our reception of guests, and our style of living are simple and modest. This simplicity brings us closer to people who are poor, homeless or disadvantaged, and increases our solidarity with them. It facilitates our working along-side them to improve their circumstances in the world. We work with them too to change unjust social structures which victimise them. (**SRL 71**)
- Conflict, racism and the cult of the individual are all too prevalent in the world of today. By coming together from so many different places and cultures, we are saying to our brothers and sisters that the unity of the human race is not just an

impossible dream. In this way, our community life is an integral part of our mission and a powerful witness of the Gospel. (**Maynooth: Introduction to 4.16 – 4.18**)



5. JPIC and formation:

- As regards the curriculum (during formation), emphasis was placed on anthropology, sociology, language study (SRL 141.2) and other human sciences which allow a new reading of our reality. ... In a sense, justice issues would also pervade all of theology just as they are everywhere present in mission. Enriched by fresh insights, we would finally come to discernment – the reliable guide and spur to action. (**Itaicí 36.2.4**)
- We will put greater emphasis on the training of some confreres as specialists in education, especially for the service of the poor. (**Maynooth 2.16**)
- We will encourage the training of personnel to act for Justice and Peace. (**Maynooth 2.24**)
- This new style of mission, with its three specific aspects (first evangelisation, education, justice and peace), has consequences for the initial training of young people who will have to meet the challenges involved. (**Maynooth: Introduction to 2.25 – 2.32**)
- Those in charge of training will pay special attention to the following areas:
 - Training for Justice and Peace. ... (**Maynooth 2.30**)
- This proximity (to the poor) will be more easily achieved if formation is modelled on a type of apprenticeship where students remain very close to the lived reality of the people, especially the poor. (**Maynooth 3.4**)
- We will develop collaboration between Spiritan institutes and institutes in which we participate, especially in the areas of

training, justice and peace and missionary awareness. The role of the General Administration will be important in extending this type of co-operation. (**Maynooth 5.12**)



6. JPIC and our finances / material goods:

- In every budget a sum of money shall be set aside for the poor; it will be a symbol of our solidarity with them. (**SRL 71.1**)
- ... Our attitude towards material goods must be looked at in the light of the disparity between the north and the south. (**Itaicí 33.2.1**)

