

JPIC supplement to Initial Formation - Inquiry
by Andrew Conradi, ofs (JPIC National Animator), 2016
Some ideas/points that could be included at the discretion of the formator

INITIAL FORMATION - INQUIRY

Chapter 8 “Scripture in OFS Life”

The Franciscan Journey (Updated version 2010) by Lester Bach, OFM Cap.

Note 1: *Understanding JPIC (UJPIC)* can be found here:

<http://www.franciscanvoicecanada.com/> Click on “Understanding JPIC” at the foot of the page. [It is best to get it from this source as it will post the amendments quickly after they are made so you will get the latest updated version]

1. From FJ p 83: “ These elements for reading and implementing Scripture support a faith-filled Franciscan spirit in “ Listening” to Scripture.”

From FJ p 84: “ *going from gospel to life and life to gospel*”

From UJPIC:

“3.1. First - The Bible

Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation are, above all, values; they are a spirituality. ...

3.1.2. Above all, JPIC values are values of the Kingdom of God. “The Kingdom of God is ... Justice, Peace and Joy in the Spirit.” (Rm 14:17). OFS Rule 14 informs us: “Secular Franciscans, together with all people of good will, are called to build a more fraternal and evangelical world so that the kingdom of God may be brought about more effectively.” The “Kingdom of God” could be described in contemporary terms as a just world order -- one with compassion, solidarity and the common good at its centre. As such, God Himself is involved in, and committed to, the task of making the world a place that is just and reconciled, providing a dignified life to all creatures. St Francis of Assisi was aware of God’s mission as Creator, Liberator and Redeemer. Pope Francis writes: “The Gospel is about the kingdom of God (cf. *Lk* 4:43); it is about loving God who reigns in our world. To the extent that He reigns within us, the life of society will be a setting for universal fraternity, justice, peace and dignity. Both Christian preaching and life, then, are meant to have an impact on society.” (2013, *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 180)

3.1.3. In Jesus Christ, God reveals His desire to recreate humanity and all creation (cf. Col 1, 15-20). In the mystery of the Incarnation, the minority of God shines forth, His condition as servant of humanity (cf. Phil 2, 6-8), His proximity to the poor and the little ones, His decision to be God-with-us. In

His programmatic discourse found in Luke's Gospel, Jesus presents Himself as the one who has been consecrated by the Spirit to bring glad tidings to the poor, to proclaim liberty to the oppressed and to captives, recovery of sight to the blind and to announce a year of favour from the Lord (cf. Lk 4,16-19). These are signs of the Kingdom. In fact, the mission of Jesus is centred in the proclamation of, and witness to, the Kingdom of God.

3.1.4. The core of the Good News proclaimed by Jesus is salvation as a gift of God. It is salvation from all oppression, especially from sin and evil. Kingdom and salvation are two keywords in the teaching of Jesus. He proclaims the Kingdom of God untiringly in His preaching, "a completely new teaching in a spirit of authority" (Mk 1:27), and through many signs. "And among these signs there is the one to which he attaches great importance: the humble and the poor are evangelized, become His disciples and gather together 'in His name' in the great community of those who believe in Him." (Paul VI, 1975, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, n.12)

3.1.5. Among the values of the Kingdom of God, justice and peace receive a central place. In the Beatitudes, the *Magna Carta* of the Kingdom of God, Jesus declares that those are blessed who hunger and thirst for justice; and for those who are persecuted for this reason, "theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven" (Mt 5, 6.10). Equally blessed are the "peacemakers; they shall be called children of God" (Mt 5, 9)."

3. From FJ p 85: " We realize that English translations may not capture every nuance of the original texts nor enable us to recognize all the cultural influences in the text." (see also the last paragraph on p 86).

Here is an example from the Beatitudes **from UJPIC**:

"3.1.5.a. The Beatitudes are a prescription for action; so wrote Elias Chacour, Melkite Catholic Archbishop Emeritus of All Galilee, in 2014. He uses his familiarity with Aramaic to bring fresh insights to the Beatitudes: " 'Blessed' is the translation of the word *makarioi*, used in the Greek New Testament. However, when I look back further to Jesus' Aramaic, I find that the original word was *ashray*, from the verb *yashar*. *Ashray* does not have this passive quality at all. Instead, it means 'to set yourself on the right way for the right goal; to turn around, repent; to become straight or righteous.' ... To me, this reflects Jesus' words and teachings much more accurately. I hear him saying, "Get your hands dirty to build a human society for human beings; otherwise, others will torture and murder the poor, the voiceless and

the powerless. Christianity is not passive but energetic, active, alive, going beyond despair.” (<http://www.cpt.org/resources/worship/services/be-attitudes>)

3.1.6. Jesus clearly indicates what is important in Christian life: “Seek first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness” (Mt 6, 33). He showed a hunger and thirst for justice and was persecuted because of it. He Himself is the source, the giver and the cause of peace. Francis echoed this: “Seek first the Kingdom of God and His justice.” (*Rule Herm.3*)

3.1.7. After the October 2008 Synod, Benedict XVI addressed the word of God and JPIC. He has this to say on the word of God and commitment to justice in society (2010, *Verbum domini*, nn. 100-103):

“God’s word inspires men and women to build relationships based on rectitude and justice, and testifies to the great value in God’s eyes of every effort to create a more just and more liveable world.[327] The word of God itself unambiguously denounces injustices and promotes solidarity and equality.[328] In the light of the Lord’s words, let us discern the “signs of the times” present in history, and not flee from a commitment to those who suffer and the victims of forms of selfishness. ... the Synod Fathers wished to say a special word to all those who take part in political and social life. Evangelization and the spread of God’s word ought to inspire their activity in the world, as they work for the true common good in respecting and promoting the dignity of every person. ... It is primarily the task of the lay faithful, formed in the school of the Gospel, to be directly involved in political and social activity. For this reason, the Synod recommends that they receive a suitable formation in the principles of the Church’s social teaching.[330]” (emphasis added)

3.1.8. This primer does not go into detail on the many references in the Bible applicable to JPIC. It is considered un-necessary because we read the Bible in the Divine Office every day. Neither is this the place to give a more detailed account of CST because the encyclicals and other documents are easily found and available on the internet. The FIT is a different matter, its retrieval and the renewed emphasis on it being fairly recent, and so considerably more space has been devoted to it in this primer.

Bible and Newspaper

3.1.9. Karl Barth (1886-1968) was a Swiss Reformed theologian whom Pope

Pius XII described as one of the most important theologians since St Thomas Aquinas. Although invited to Vatican II, ill health prevented Barth from attending but his influence was obviously felt as suggested by this title: *L'ombre de Karl Barth à Vatican II* (The Shadow of Karl Barth at Vatican II), by Gilles Routhier of l'Université Laval, Québec.

3.1.10. Although *secular* means concerned with the world and its affairs, the OFS are not completely of the world, rather they are in it, trying to make it holy in concrete ways and deriving joy from its beauty and its gifts. The OFS Rule n. 4 tells us to carefully read the gospel, “going from gospel to life and life to the gospel.” One way to do this is to carefully read the newspaper.

3.1.11. In a 31 May 1963 *Time* magazine interview, Karl Barth recalled advising young theologians in the 1920's “to take your Bible and take your newspaper, and read both. But interpret newspapers from your Bible.” This famous oft-quoted statement makes sense for Secular Franciscans who live in the world. Today we need to add a laptop to the newspaper and master the electronic media. One must be well aware of the perils of the internet. Awareness of authors' positions and discernment are essential. This use of newspapers/internet and bible fits well with the *see, judge, act* methodology of JPIC.

3.1.11.a. Let us not forget our own inspiration, which must come from the Holy Spirit within us all, for as Jean Vanier said: “There is that little compass within each of us where we know what is right, what is just, what is good, what is true.” (Jean Vanier, 2015). But sometimes we need awareness and education to *see, judge, act*.

3.1.11.b. Pope Francis, in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium* (EG, 24 November 2013), challenges us to go out of ourselves and to welcome the concrete reality: “the Gospel tells us constantly to run the risk of a face-to-face encounter with others, with their physical presence which challenges us with their pain and their pleas, with their joy which infects us in our close and continuous interaction” (EG, n. 88). In today's world we can virtually do this through the various media, not just newspapers; not that this is better than physical face-to-face encounters but in the absence of such encounters it is better than remaining unaware and unaffected.

We will consider *Lectio divina* when we look at **FJ** c 10.

Question: Do you see the Beatitudes as a prescription for action?