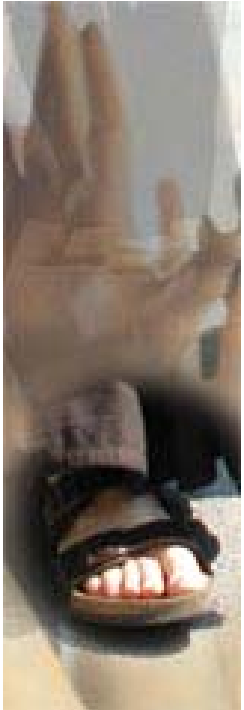


JPIC Reflections

This brochure is one of a series on various themes in justice, peace and the integrity of Creation. You may read them on our website: www.sbfranciscans.org.



You are invited to download them as well from this website and to use them as a way to quickly bring a Franciscan perspective to your discussion group, prayer group or social justice dialogue.

We only ask that you would credit the authors of these brochures as you use this material.

“So we humans and all creatures are equal children of God.”

Larry Dunphy, OFM

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

How would you express your love or concern for a brother or sister?

Is there another way you could demonstrate your love and care for your sibling?

How might you apologize for some wrong you might have done to a sibling?

ACTION:

Can you do something which shows your gratitude for your siblings in the created world?

PRAYER:

Loving God, of peace and justice, be with us as we work and pray towards changing the hearts of all who use violence as a way of showing our love and concern for our siblings, Water, Air, Plants and Animals, in the created world.

Justice, Peace & the
Integrity of Creation

Walking The Talk

Reflections of
Larry Dunphy, OFM

June, 2007

As brother or sister, how do we face the myriad issues confronting us in the natural world around us?



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Walking The Talk

by Larry Dunphy, OFM

Our Franciscan traditions make some special contributions to the foundations of Social Justice. Neither St. Francis nor our principal philosophers and theologians, Bl. John Duns Scotus and St. Bonaventure, spoke or wrote explicitly on the topic. It was not a topic of that day. However, Francis's life and writings lay a foundation for an understanding of reality which has profound applications in Social Justice and Integrity of Creation (JPIC). The philosophy and theology of Scotus and Bonaventure were shaped by their following of Francis, and, in turn, contribute to the roots of a Franciscan view of Social Justice

Shortly after his conversion, St. Francis moved out of his former way of life and took up residence with the lepers. In his Testament he writes: "I left the world." He left behind a world of privilege and hierarchy to live in a Christ-like way as a servant of the rejects of society. For him lepers were brothers and sisters. The full understanding of Francis's intent in using the words: **"Brother"** or **"Sister"** lays the grounds for their application to Social Justice analysis of reality.

Francis called his followers "Friars" or brothers. He lived with them, not as superior, but as brother. He meant that they should be brothers not just among themselves, like some kind of exclusive club, but rather brother was to be their relationship to all men and women.

"Brother" was not meant to be a title, but rather, a description of relationship that was a reality. Friars are to be truly brothers, and a sign and a model of all human and creaturely relationships because the one Father/Mother God is the origin of all these relationships. We all are equal siblings under God; none of us has any greater privilege or worth. All are to share equally of the family inheritance.

Francis did not seek to possess creation but rather he saw it as belonging to God and as a book from which one could read about God. He treated it with great reverence. He picked up a lowly worm from the road lest it get stepped upon. His great understanding of creation and its relation to us is expressed in the "Canticle of Creation," which he wrote shortly before his death. The Canticle, I believe, also provides us with the foundation for a Franciscan approach to JPIC.

In the Canticle he speaks of "Brother Sun," "Sister Moon," "Brother Wind," and "Sister Water." For us as Franciscans, this is not poetical language, but a description of real relationships that exist between us humans and all of creation. So we humans and all creatures are equal children of God. Creatures share in the same worth and dignity and deserve the same respect.

I think that a basic Franciscan contribution to the grounds out of which we come to an understanding of Social Justice is this insight of all people and all creatures being brothers or sisters. We all share in the same fundamental being which God has created. We are all made of the same stuff. A true understanding of these relationships shows us why we must be in just relationships with all other creatures. If we can grasp this, we are well on our way to seeing the reasons why we come to our JPIC teachings.

Larry Dunphy, OFM is a Franciscan Friar of the Province of St Barbara. He has lived and worked throughout the West Coast, and has served in the Order's Africa Project. He currently ministers in the Diocese of Sacramento.