

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.

Cesar Chavez: A Commitment to Nonviolent Social Change by Mark Schroeder, OFM

Cesar Chavez: Catholic Social Teaching in the Fields by Carolyn Colburn, SFO

St Francis, the Sultan and the Quest for Peace by Jack Wintz, OFM

Walking the Talk by Larry Dunphy, OFM

Peace . . . A Call From Assisi by Pope Benedict XVI

Bl. John XXIII: Pope, Breach Mender, Secular Franciscan by Ray Hardwick, SFO

“ Our journey as
a Franciscan
is to search out
the darkness of our
hearts .”

Franklin Fong, OFM

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

How have you been silent about your faith life?
When will that light bulb come on for you?
What will it take to turn that light on?

ACTION:

Make a trip to some place where science and technology have been the dominant factor of the decision-making process in the care of an area of land. Allow the 'sense of place' to speak to you about what is good and not so good about what has happened there. Using your analytical skills of observation, what do you see with your mind? With your heart?

PRAYER:

Let us recall from our Franciscan tradition:
“**Most high glorious God, enlighten the darkness of my heart. Give me correct faith, certain hope, and perfect charity, sense and knowledge so I might always discern Your Holy and true will.**”

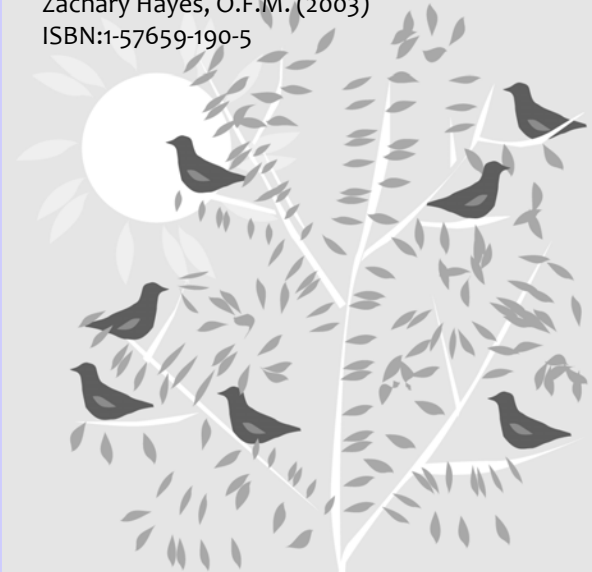
(Francis' Prayer Before the Crucifix)

Justice, Peace & the
Integrity of Creation

A Franciscan View of Creation

by Franklin Fong, OFM

An excerpt from a Chapter entitled: “A Franciscan View of Creation: a Response” in “Franciscans and Creation: What is Our Responsibility?” by John F. Haight, Gabriele Ühle, O.S.F., Dawn Nothwehr, O.S.F., Keith Warner, O.F.M., Franklin Fong, O.F.M., and Zachary Hayes, O.F.M. (2003)
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PROVINCE OF
SANTA BARBARA



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One of the most toxic parts of automobile batteries is the lead core. A common and profitable method for recycling this lead is literally to melt the lead and pour it into ingots for resale. On one of my trips to the San Diego area, one of the friars asked me to join him in a visit to an abandoned auto battery recycling facility in the maquiladoras of Tijuana, Mexico. Batteries had been trucked there from San Diego to be melted down and recycled. A few years earlier, a fire had destroyed the entire facility. Workers in the neighboring village were very concerned about their children playing in the burned-out facility. They put barbed wire around it and painted danger signs on a cinder block wall they built beyond the fence.

As we walked around the walled structure, we could peer into the recycling areas and see the huge cauldrons that had been used to melt the lead from the discarded batteries. We could also see that the lead salts were leeching through the cinder block wall and literally dissolving it. We came upon a trench that had been dug to assess soil quality. It was eight feet long, four feet wide and seven feet deep. About three feet below the surface of the soil, there was a foot-wide white band of chemicals seeping below the ground and running the entire length of the trench. The lead was clearly seeping underground.

My mind was racing along making mental notes about the kind of proposal I would like to submit to study this site for recommendations for remediation and cleanup. I thought perhaps one hundred thousand dollars a year for three years might cover the cost. I thought of making connections with the local university or college and their chemistry or biology department. It would be good to have a graduate student work on this project. Maybe someone in analytical chemistry would find this an interesting project. We could also connect with someone from the universities in San Diego. My mind was harking back to the days when I had done this for my job.

While I was looking into the trench, a worker with his lunch pail walked past us, heading down a trail. We saw that the trail led to a small town about a thousand feet below, winding down the side of the mountain where we were standing. As I looked at the rooftops and the layout of the town, I wondered what the local health workers were doing. Who was the community activist who knew this was happening and perhaps needed some inspiration to address this problem? Was there a public health nurse working on it. Were there any parents in those houses concerned that a strange chemical might be seeping into their valley? At the very base of the mountainside was a cornfield with stalks about two feet high.

A light bulb came on once again. The answer to this problem certainly involved some technology. But more important, the answer needed the joint efforts of the people to make it happen. The human relationships in this community would be as important as having the right technology and human support.

These were the moments when I realized that my roles as a Franciscan and as a scientist were not *incompatible but complimentary*. It became clear that life's problems are not always solved by more money or more technology. Life involved not only technology but the heart as well.

We need both lenses, both perspectives to see the depth of God's love in our world. One lens is of the technical aspects of life—matters of reasoning, of logic and facts and figures. Another lens is of the human relational aspects of life—matters of emotions, of family, of community, of legacy. Each lens has to be polished and used very carefully. It is possible to use just one lens at a time, but when we learn how to look through both lenses at once, we begin to see how God must see us.

And so, our journey as Franciscans is to search out our own ways through 'the darkness of our hearts'. As we learn how to do this for ourselves, we can then walk with others who share this journey of faith. In the common journey, we can reach out to each other and help each other as sometimes we stray from this path. And in the end, we give thanks to God for God's patience in being with us on this journey.