

## CHAPTER 1

# ECONOMIC POLICIES AND THE CHRISTIAN ANSWER

### 1. CHALLENGES OF THE ECONOMIC SYSTEM AND ALTERNATIVES

All over the world the gap between rich and poor is increasing because of the prevailing economic system and policies that aim to benefit the few. Globalization has both winners and losers, and the financial crisis has exacerbated this divide. An understanding of the economic system that produces this injustice is vital for those working for greater equity.

#### **1.1. Capitalism**

Capitalism is an economic and social system that has paved the way for industrialisation by encouraging private ownership and personal initiative. Its aim is to make profits and accumulate wealth by the production of goods and services, not to satisfy people's needs. Only those able to afford the goods and services have their material needs fulfilled.

The means of production and distribution of goods and services (land, factories, technology, transport, communication, energy, etc.) are owned by a small minority of people and sold for a profit. Most people sell their work in return for a wage or salary. Through the action of workers, living and working conditions have often improved.

In Europe after World War II, a new social system allowed more of the benefits and profits to go to the workers. This allowed many people to come out of poverty. However, today's neoliberal ideology and the current crises are reducing those benefits through policy 'flexibilities' and 'austerity measures' that are destroying the social conditions the workers had fought so hard for.

#### **1.2. Economic Liberalism**

Capitalism gave birth to the Economic liberalism that believes in free markets where the means of production and distribution (services) are under private ownership and not state control or cooperative ownership. They also oppose private monopoly. People can make their own choices with their money as long as it does not infringe on the liberty of others. Prices are determined in open competition by supply (the quantity supplied by producers) and demand (the quantity demanded by consumers).

The rich have the economic power to shape the current system to their advantage. They have created international organizations to govern and reinforce this system. Today's trade rules and financial/economic systems are imposed by a minority of rich countries on all the others. Poor countries are obliged to accept the rules even when they are to their disadvantage. This is increasing the gap between rich and poor. The poor have greater difficulty in meeting their basic needs while the rich in the 'consumer societies' have more than they need.

#### **1.3. Neoliberalism**

Neo-liberalism has been imposed all over the world in the last two or three decades by powerful international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the various Development Banks. In 1989, the 'Washington Consensus' marked a general shift towards free market and investments policies that would allow the expansion of 'free market forces' where the profit motive drives the economy to 'efficient' outcomes as if by an invisible hand. To allow free trade between states and enterprises all over the world, countries had to reform their trade policy and lower their taxes and all import barriers. 'Free market' means no customs taxes and no import barriers, no subsidies for production, no intervention from the state to protect its population or industry. Free trade has been the 'open visa' for globalization.

Neoliberalism emphasizes the efficiency of private enterprise and seeks to maximize the role of the private sector in determining the political and economic priorities of the world. Huge international companies (transnational corporations [TNCs]) which have their base in one country but are present all around the world, are taking advantage of places where work is cheaper and where there are no social and environmental rules - or at least they are not obliged to comply with them.

As profit and benefits are the driving force, enterprises often do not take into account the consequences of production and distribution for workers, the population in general and the environment. Human and socio-economic rights are not respected. This leads to poverty, other suffering and the consumption of natural resources at a rhythm that does not allow the planet to recover.

Multinational corporations (MNCs) or multinational enterprises (MNE) manage production or deliver services in more than one country. In Africa, they not only exploit the resources of countries (mines, oil, forests, agricultural production), but even the people through bad working conditions and very low salaries. They also destroy the environment (mining and industrial waste, cutting down forests, excessive use of water, industrial agriculture, destruction of landscape). MNCs can have a powerful influence on local economies and even on the world economy.

The result of neoliberalism can be seen all over the world. The rich grow richer and the poor grow poorer. Production is oriented to the world market and not to fulfilling the needs of the people. You can find products from all over the world everywhere. Often these products are cheaper than those produced locally! Natural resources are over-exploited without thought to protecting them for the future generations.

While a few enterprises and people own most of the world's wealth, millions of people are unable to cover their essential needs, are hungry, sick and on the edge of survival.

#### **1.4. Globalization**

Globalization is the process of integration of economic, political and cultural systems across the whole world as people from different societies interact. It is driven by international trade and investment and the new communication technologies, migration and the movement of goods have played their part, too.

Neoliberalists are powerful advocates of globalization as it enables them to go anywhere in the world to maximise their profits. Companies search all over the world for places where raw materials are cheaper and can be exploited to the company's own advantage. They also go where workers are paid less and where trade unions are banned.

#### **1.5. The financial crisis**

Promoters of neoliberalism pushed for years to eliminate state intervention, but when the crisis arrived they asked for state aid to replenish their coffers (banks)! They 'privatize profits and socialize losses.' This means that speculators and other opportunists take the profits while society, via the government, pays for their losses.

#### **1.6. Consequences for Africa**

International organizations and rich countries impose regulations and legislation that are disadvantageous for Africa. Some of them are 'conditionalities' linked to donations, aid and loans and imposed by international organizations (such as the IMF, the World Bank and its subsidiaries) and rich countries. Their first concern is that the recipient country pays the interest on the debt (debt service).

Most African countries have signed or are on the way to signing multilateral agreements in international organizations (WTO trade investment and services agreements); and bilateral agreements with other countries/regions (EPAs, etc.). Most of them impose conditions that mean the country's economy and policies have to be geared to neoliberalism. These policies cause poverty and unemployment. The huge number of jobless youth is a 'time bomb' that can create revolts and conflicts and encourage terrorism.

Many African countries have abundant natural resources (minerals, oil, land, water, forest, agricultural products) that are exploited by multinational enterprises. The price of the resources is fixed on the international markets. African countries cannot influence the prices, even when they are the main producers of the resource. The contracts signed between African countries and international corporations to exploit the natural resources benefit the enterprises and a few national leaders, but to the disadvantage of the local population. Resources such as oil, petrol and diamonds have even caused wars.

Many governments in Africa depend on company investments to feed the national budget. But often the way natural resources are exploited has a negative impact on labour conditions (low wages, hazardous environment and unstable contracts), on health (dangerous products, pollution of water, soil and air) and on traditional production methods and the environment.

Rich countries are more concerned about the economic rewards for their companies than about the social and environmental conditions of the African population. The aid and donor programs to fight poverty have had little impact. Poverty is increasing because, with many international policies, the priority is economic benefit for the donor and the submission of African countries. The over-exploitation of natural resources for profit without caring for the future is a principal cause of climate change. Many African countries are already experiencing this in the form of cyclones, floods and drought - with their negative consequences for agriculture.

### **1.7. Perspectives for the future**

Globalization and neoliberalism have done a lot of damage. All the current world crises have been shown to be interlinked and behind them lies a crisis of the capitalist and neoliberal systems. However, the beneficiaries of the system do not accept this and just want to make it function 'better.'

Meanwhile, all around the world, people are seeing the situation worsening and are organising themselves for action. They are also reflecting on how to make the current system more just, and even proposing alternatives to the current system as well as a fairer sharing of the earth's resources, so that all may live better. But, to be well motivated and organised for action, it is necessary to understand what is happening and let others know. Together, we can do so much more than if we work alone.

Those who believe that a better world is possible and are prepared to search for alternatives – on a small or a large scale - encourage others to do the same.

Their vision for the future is based in four fundamental areas:

- 1- SOLIDARITY AND RESPECT towards nature and all human beings. An economy at the service of the life of all people. Renewable and responsible use of natural resources.
- 2- GLOBAL COMMON GOODS, prioritising the non-economic use of resources and services essential for life. This implies respect for life beyond economic profit.
- 3- DEMOCRACY AND EQUALITY in the organization of society and in all human relations (including the economy) and institutions. The person, in the image of God-Trinity who is *relationship*, is at the centre.
- 4- INTERCULTURALITY AND SOCIAL ETHICS. Respect for every culture, religion, philosophy that helps people to fulfil their human potential. Spirituality and relationship with the transcendent.

This vision could orientate all the action that aims for a new, fairer society that enjoys economic justice.

### **1.8. Alter-globalisation: a response to this unjust system**

Alter-globalisation (other world) is a social movement that supports global cooperation and interaction and opposes the negative effects of economic globalization. Its aim is to confront and combat neoliberalism by proposing a new society with the participation of all cultures and religions, where creation will be respected and the necessary resources shared, not traded. The respect of human and socio-economic rights, economic justice, labour and environmental and climate protection are part of this non-violent program. The movement works for justice and supports human activity on a global scale. It believes that the current neoliberal system creates wide gaps and much suffering and needs to be replaced. In other words, the whole management of the world has to be reviewed.

The first alter-globalisation demonstration was in Seattle (USA) in 1999 to oppose the Free Trade laws the WTO was imposing on the whole world. The World Social Forum (WSF), an annual meeting of civil society organizations and its slogan "Another World is Possible" express the vision of this alternative movement. They defend the right of access to the common goods (earth, water, health care, education, etc) and respect for the environment. Right round the globe, there are individuals and groups committed to creating a fairer world.

This movement is young and the alternatives are still very local and little known. Those who now enjoy power are not interested in the growth of this movement. They use the media to stop the news of the changes and alternatives from reaching a wider public while at the same time sowing fear among the poor to prevent them from claiming their rights.

## **2. THE NEOLIBERAL SYSTEM AND AEFJN ISSUES**

Neoliberalism and current international trade law favour the liberalization of Trade and Services and the privatisation of public services. Trade agreements oblige countries to liberalize their market and investments. This is bad for Africa as locally produced goods will have to compete with imported, cheaply produced goods.

### **2.1. Consequences of liberalization and privatisation**

Liberalization of agricultural products has led to the impoverishment of farmers as they are unable to compete with foreign subsidized agricultural products. This is the case in many West African countries where the imported Thai rice is cheaper, even if of lower quality, than the local rice. Tomatoes and onions rot on the fields because imported tinned tomatoes are cheaper. The liberalisation of textiles has put an end to cotton production in many East African countries.

Trade liberalisation obliges the country to reduce its import tariffs (customs duties), thus reducing an important source of government revenue. The results are public spending cuts that put at risk much needed funds for health, education and infrastructures.

The liberalisation of services (from clean water to electricity, banking, education and health) means that foreign companies must be treated the same as local companies and that governments cannot control the sector any longer. The public sector will have to compete with the private sector.

The liberalization of investments favours the access of foreign companies to raw materials (forests, minerals, oil, and fisheries) without the target country being able to protect its own resources or to impose conditions e.g. the reinvestment of part of the profits, employment of local staff, dedication of part of the profits to social projects. It allows investors and transnational companies to repatriate all their profits which greatly damages national economies.

Liberalization of investments also leads to 'land grabbing' in Africa with terrible consequences for small farmers who lose their livelihood as their main resources, land and water, are diverted.

Adjustment programs, loan and aid conditionalities and trade agreements often impose the privatisation of sectors such as health and education. This increases inequity of access by favouring those who can afford to pay. The higher the participation of the private sector in primary health, the more poor people are excluded from treatment and care.

The privatisation of health and education services has dire consequences for the majority of Africans who have to pay for these services. Privatisation also encourages the loss of professional personnel from the public to the private sector, thus weakening, for example, the national health system. And finally the strengthening of Intellectual Property Rules prevents Africans from obtaining cheap and good generic medicines and stops farmers from exchanging their local seeds.

Deregulation prevents African countries from protecting their agriculture, their young industry and services (banks, insurance, communications, etc) and so has a negative impact on the nation's economy and on the livelihood of the population. African governments are obliged to open up government procurement contracts (public tendering) to foreign companies.

The EU Trade policy is completely neoliberal and favours the establishment of European companies in Africa, even to the detriment of African business and economies. Moreover free trade and mainly free investments favour the transfer of arms which can help start, develop and maintain conflicts.

## **3. ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION AND ITS SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES**

The depletion of natural resources and the loss of healthy and productive ecosystems due to human intervention in nature is one of today's key problems. As it has great social consequences, such as loss of habitats and natural resources, environmental degradation is a form of violence.

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, launched in 2005 by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) discovered that 60% of the worldwide ecosystems were not managed sustainably and their life-sustaining functions – climate regulation, oxygen

production, provision of clean water, fertile soil and regenerative fish stocks – were endangered.<sup>1</sup>

### **3.1. Consequences of environmental degradation**

Greenhouse gas emissions produce an increase in temperature. Since 1900, the average global temperature increase is approximately 0.76° C. A general increase in temperature of 2° C. means a decrease in precipitation in the arid regions of Africa and South America of up to 30%. The general trends have already changed significantly: whereas in Africa the average rainfall over the past 30 years has fallen by a quarter, the middle latitudes have witnessed an increase in extreme precipitation events.

Another important social aspect of global warming is the melting of glaciers and arctic ice. For populations dependent on melt water – an estimated 1.2 billion people – reduced water supplies and extended dry periods will endanger the long-term viability of their habitat. Ice loss has been detected in glaciers in Africa, Asia and Europe.

Increasing temperatures also cause rising sea levels, endangering particularly the inhabitants of coastal areas (currently more than 60 per cent of the world population) due to flooding and storm surges. The global mean sea level rose during the 20<sup>th</sup> century by 17 centimetres and is projected to rise by 2100 to 59 cm, but there will be significant regional variations.

Global warming also has social impacts on global food production. Studies say that the sub-tropical and arid regions of Africa and Asia may have to face considerable yield losses: a general temperature increase of 2°C means a 5% shrinking of global cereal production.

The accelerated loss rates of *biodiversity* are another major concern. Human intervention in ecosystems worldwide is increasingly restricting many ecosystem services that are important for human activities and well-being. Firstly, ecosystems have productive functions as they provide the essentials for human life and survival, e.g. oxygen, food, energy and biochemical substances for medicine. Secondly, ecosystems perform *protective* services by regulating climate, air quality, greenhouse gases and heat absorption. Forests, for example, curb the natural greenhouse effect by storing carbon. Thirdly, ecosystems also fulfil a socio-economic function which includes not only the wellbeing gained by employment and trade, but also the cultural and spiritual value of ecosystems and their importance for recreation, religion, culture and education.

The conversion of forests into agricultural land is also a key driver for the global losses of freshwater ecosystems: approximately 25-40% of the world's wetlands have been drained for this purpose. The stock of mangrove areas – salt-water tolerant forests, which are among the most productive ecosystems of the world – fell by over one third between 1990 and 2000 as a result of land use change and other forms of degradation. The long-term result is accelerated species extinction. The current developments of the world's natural environment are alarming: annually, an estimated 13 million hectares of forest are lost at world level.

All these factors: the world's growing population and incompatible management practices such as intensive agriculture, overgrazing, pollutants and pesticides have caused a significant decline in the quality of arable land. Between 1972 and 1996, 30% of the grain-growing regions of the world were victims of land degradation. Today, an estimated 500 million people are affected by desertification and other forms of severe soil erosion.

In a similar way, the habitats of the open ocean are suffering losses: Significant causes of this are the oil industry, ocean dumping of toxic sediments, oil tanker accidents and the fishing industry. In various regions of the world, fish stocks have declined by 90% due to industrial processing and intensive fishing methods. A quarter of the world's fishing areas are considered to be overfished and this will have serious impacts on the future food supply<sup>2</sup>.

Important factors behind this environmental degradation are population growth, the continuous economic growth, agricultural pricing and international demand for agrofuels, minerals, timber and other natural products. The main factor, however, is the current style of development linked to a 'super-exploitation of the earth resources' and 'super-production' that fosters consumerism and a 'throw-away' culture that require industrial agriculture and intensive exploitation of raw materials.

If ecosystems disappear, if fertile land and water basins are destroyed, if fish stocks and food sources are exhausted and territories become uninhabitable, then our right to life is in danger, too. So protecting the environment is also protecting human life, since the real danger of environmental degradation is its impact on our living conditions and social systems.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. <http://www.millenniumassessment.org>.

<sup>2</sup> DURAIAPPAH Anantha Kumar/NAEEM Shahid (ed.), *Ecosystems and Human Well-being: Biodiversity Synthesis*. A report of the Millenium Ecosystems Assessment. Washington 2005, p. 8.

## 4. THE CHRISTIAN COMMITMENT TO TRANSFORM SOCIETY

### 4.1. *Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation, a Basic Dimension of Evangelization*

The promotion of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) is not just a task, but springs up from following Jesus of Nazareth who gave his life so that all may have life and have it to the full. The work for justice must spring from an internal fire and conviction that the promotion of JPIC is part of our christian commitment and a basic dimension of evangelization (Synod of Bishops 1971 and Synod of African Bishops 1995).

The spirituality of Justice and Peace lived daily is the fuel that will allow us to grow in this commitment despite difficulties and failures. JPIC's commitment must be grounded in a faith and spirituality that are rooted in the Bible and in the Church's Social Teaching and backed by a theological vision.

### 4.2. *The project of God for the World*

#### 4.2.1 God Listens to the Cry of his People

All through the Bible, we see how God listens to the cry of people who are victimized by powerful and unjust structures (structural sin). For God 'listening' means 'acting' and 'sending' someone to liberate them from the situation causing the suffering. God cares for the victims. In the Bible, God is concerned for the socio-economic and political well-being of His people. In the book of Exodus Ch.3, the dialogue of God with Moses expresses well the God's concern for all human suffering.

"I have observed the misery of my people in Egypt, and I have heard their cry because of their overseers... I know in fact their sufferings... I have come down to free them from the hand of the Egyptians and to make them come out of this country to a country where milk and honey flows.... Now that the cry of the Israelites has reached me and I have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians torment them. Now go! I am sending you to Pharaoh. Bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt..." [Exodus 3:7-12].

The passage shows the way God acts and how He is asking us to act today. God *comes close ... hears ... sees ... is touched by the suffering ... looks at the cause of the suffering*, and takes action to change the situation, to bring them out of Egypt. Moses is sent to do God's task. This is not easy for him. He has to go back to Pharaoh (the political power of the time) from whom he had fled some years before. He does not feel up to the task and must have been afraid of meeting the Pharaoh and the people who had refused him as leader. Nevertheless, trusting in God's promise "I will be with you" he accepts the mission entrusted to him. From then on, God's people became Moses' people too.

#### 4.2.2. The New Testament and the New Covenant

The way Jesus presents his own mission also shows this concern for the people:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." [Lk 4: 18-21]

The centre of Jesus' message is the Kingdom of God. Jesus institutes a new structure for the People of God: mutual service. Jesus asks his disciples to create a new egalitarian society in the spirit of 'service' and "love one another as I have loved you."

Paul develops the New Testament model of community, establishing alternative messianic cells. These communities feature unity and reconciliation, as we read in Galatians 3: 26-28, "there is no more Jew or Greek, slave or freeman." They are communities based on *love* (Love is...). Paul suggests these faith and love-governed communities should be spread throughout the nations until the fulfilment when all will become "all to all." The early christian communities live this way (Acts 2: 42-47; 4: 32-35).

Different peoples living together in harmony, the desire for a just society (and not just for the Chosen People) and the removal of the slave economy and patriarchy are part of God's promised alternative for the world. Even the whole of creation is seen to be longing for that liberation, that chance to join the messianic community.

### 4.2.3. The Church that Follows Christ

The Church has the same mission as Jesus: to promote the Kingdom of God, the “shalom,” just relationships with God, with people, with nature, and the well-being of God’s people in all spheres of life. Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) is the road on which Christians are called to live and act in their daily life. The Church has often been at the service of the poor. In recent decades the tendency to work for the transformation of the world structures has been growing. This includes influencing decision-makers and it is all about creating a fairer world.

In the cry of Jesus on the cross *“My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?”* (Mark 15:34), we recognize the cry of the poor and the oppressed. This cry challenges Christians and leads them to strive for a world in which all people can live their lives to the full because Jesus *“came that they may have life and have it in abundance”* (John 10:10).

Today we know that all beings are inter-dependent, linked by the common stream of life. Humanity is the steward of creation and responsible for the life of all beings on earth, starting with human beings. The question to Cain *“Where is your brother?”* (Genesis 4:6) is addressed to each one of us. We are our brothers’ and sisters’ keepers. We cannot “pass on the other side” but must act like the Samaritan in Luke 10,32.

The Church has to be involved in all spheres of human society, not only to offer moral and spiritual guidelines in confronting social, economic, political, cultural and international problems, but even more by accompanying and being part of the whole process towards greater justice, peace and care for creation - the only way of making ‘life for all’ a reality.

### 4.3. The Mission of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation

The mission of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) is directed towards the justice and “shalom” (just relationships leading to peace) of God’s Kingdom. To build a future of “justice” in the Biblical sense, a culture of peace and care for the integrity of creation, we need to dialogue with other cultures and religions and allow ourselves be influenced by them.

Many Christians and Church leaders around the world, in the past and today, have committed their lives to the service of JPIC. Many religious congregations have chosen it as a priority and named religious dedicated to this ministry. Inspired by their vision of the coming of the God’s Kingdom, they have created networks to raise awareness about injustice and to work for the transformation of the world.

To discern where the Spirit is directing us to live our mission as christians, we need to look at both:

- o The project of God for the world (based on the Bible, the tradition of the Church, the Social Teaching of the Church, the charism of our congregation, the vision of the world God wants to build with us,...
- o The reality of today’s world and of the context where we live and work.

This ‘double vision’ should shape our commitment.

When we compare the reality of our world with God’s plan for the world, the establishment of His Kingdom, our response can only be a commitment to work for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation, that is, for the transformation of society.

The ministry of Justice and Peace is a basic dimension of the evangelizing mission of the Church, as it is mentioned in “The Church in Africa” Apostolic Exhortation 1995 (African Synod). It is a way of bringing “Good News” to our world, of bringing hope and life to situations of despair and death. To live our mission as christians faithfully, we need to answer the needs of the world and deepen our involvement in building solidarity and peace.

To live the mission of JPIC means to live a love of God and of others that includes the whole of creation. Out of love God has created a material universe in which he has taken human flesh and risen from the dead. God has been embodied in creation. In Jesus, God and matter come together. As the Orthodox Church proclaims, the realization and ‘deification’ of the human being is linked to performance and ‘deification’ of the material universe. This is the christian spirit and understanding of the “integrity of creation.”

The bishops at the first African Synod in 1994 mentioned that without this promotion of justice there is no complete evangelization. *“It is part of the missionary task and of the prophetic role of the Church to denounce and oppose (or: fight against) everything that humiliates and destroys human beings and that is evil and unjust.... The Church must be on the side of the people who are oppressed and marginalised.... She must be the voice of those who do not have a voice”* (Ecclesia in Africa, 106-107).

The formation of JPIC groups and the awareness of Christians of the God who wants to liberate the whole of society should be part of catechesis and all formation programs for religious life and priesthood.

We need to prepare Christians and Christian leaders for this mission and commitment. They need to see and become aware of the injustices in our world, to analyse and discern what favours and what destroys life. They then need to be able to raise people's awareness and take action to transform structures of death into life-giving ones so that "all may have life in abundance." We need a spirituality that fosters the commitment to transform the world.

The Word of God continues to challenge us today to ask: "What have I/you done to our brothers and sisters?" For Christians who are committed to JPIC, this is a response to God's call. They have opened their heart to the distress and suffering of the people around. The calling to a new evangelization cannot be conceived without a renewal of the ways of promoting justice, peace and the integrity of creation. We know they are ultimately a gift from God, but God asks us human beings to establish favourable conditions for the advent of the Kingdom.

#### **4.4. The Situation of the World Today, a Challenge to the Church**

Today, society has the capacity to eliminate poverty and hunger from the Earth, yet millions of people still live in poverty and die from it. Poverty is the greatest challenge for the Church today. It strikes about 60% of the population in Africa. Millions do not have the basic necessities for a dignified life. Famine, poor health care and lack of education are their "daily bread." As Christians, we have to deal with it not only through charitable works but by identifying the root causes of poverty, finding remedies and changing the conditions that favoured it in the first place. Globalization has increased poverty. Eradicating this disease calls for drastic treatment! This is the work of the JPIC groups.

The Church as a visible community in the world is expected to promote the justice of the Kingdom in a visible way. Personal witness is essential but beyond this witness of the Church as a whole is also needed. Africa's situation is a call and challenge for Christians and all men and women of good will.

The calling of the Church for the third millennium to a new evangelization cannot be conceived without a renewal of the ways of promoting justice, peace and integrity of creation. We have to create the necessary conditions in order to implement this promotion of justice. We know they are ultimately, a gift from God, but God asks us (all human beings) to establish favourable conditions for the coming of the Kingdom.

##### **4.4.1. Two Complementary Commitments for Justice and Peace**

People will be called to commit themselves to JPIC in different ways at different times. There seem to be two principal and complementary ways:

1. **Solidarity.** Living and working with the poor, the excluded, the victims and the vulnerable, sharing their life conditions, their suffering and their experience of injustice. Deepening and sharing this experience, celebrating it (liturgy) and exploring its meaning (theological reflection) help us to live a spirituality of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation.
2. **Transformation.** Creating awareness and working with the poor to eliminate the causes of the injustices and *so transform society*. This is the JPIC commitment. It is a personal, community and congregational commitment that aims to bring about a world where justice and peace reign and where creation is valued...

This requires a serious commitment from our congregation or province... We need to put the resources of the congregation (people, time, money,...) at the service of this ministry. The people appointed need to have the right giftedness and be free of other commitments so that they can dedicate themselves totally to this work. Good internal 'networks' are a great advantage.

##### **4.4.2. Religious and Awareness on the Situations of Injustice**

As missionaries, we are often touched by the suffering of the people around us, by their hard living conditions and the many injustices they experience. We are often ready to do something to alleviate their suffering, but most of the time we do not cure the "sickness" as we fail to find the root cause. We have to discover the link between the suffering of the people and the economic, political and social systems that produce this suffering: the lack of food, health care, education, etc.

As religious, we need to be aware of how much direct contact and exposure we have with the daily lives of people, especially the



poor. We need to get close to the situations of oppression and suffering if we are to be aware of the situations of injustice. Do we have enough 'Gospel sense' to be able to recognise injustice even when it is disguised by legality?

The very commitment of congregations to JPIC and the sight of brothers and sisters dedicated to this work will encourage young religious to follow this path. They need to feel the strong support of the community and congregation for this ministry.

To help bring about a new and just society where all can have their basic needs satisfied and participate in the decision making of their community, we need to prepare religious to 'see' the suffering, create awareness in others, analyse the situation and live a spirituality that fosters a commitment to transform the world... and be able to plan action and share responsibilities.

#### **4.4.3. The Work for JPIC a call from God**

Most Christians who have made a true option for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) have done so as an answer to God's call. They have opened their heart to the distress and suffering of the people surrounding them.

The Word of God continues to challenge us today. It asks us continually: "What have you done to your brothers and sisters?" The Word of God is also a source of consolation as we are sure that "God hears the cry of the poor" (Ex: 3: 1-15)

As Christians and as leaders at the service of the people of God, we need to have our eyes well open, to be alert, to know what is happening and to be aware of the causes of the problems and their consequences... We are responsible for our world. God has no other hands but ours and those of the many who are striving to transform the world for the sake of the values of the Kingdom.

#### **4.4.4. Personal Commitment to JPIC**

The first requirements to work for JPIC are personal commitment and a desire to transform unjust situations into life-giving ones and restore the integrity of God's creation. My commitment will depend on my being in touch with and sensitive to what is going on around me. Part of working for JPIC is to act as a kind of conscience for the people of God. We all need to be shocked from time to time into an honest realisation of our own situation.

JPIC is not about issues but about people and the injustices they experience in their daily struggles; it is about recognising God in these struggles and in their efforts to overcome them. For Christians, authentic action for transformation is based on the Gospel. To live fully this commitment, we need a Spirituality of justice peace and integrity of creation, an orientation that animates one's whole life, one's encounter with God, with others and with the cosmos – and one's actions.

This ministry goes beyond preoccupation with *charity* and *development* and involves structures, policies, national and international relations, human rights, issues of economic justice, and more. As Christians working to build a better world in the globalization era, we need to network, to be *connected* and to collaborate with all those working towards similar ends. This will also help us to get support and make better use of our resources.

We are called to collaborate with other churches, religions, movements and organizations working to promote human dignity and holistic development, in order to make the Kingdom of God more visible in the world. This collaboration is already a witness in itself.

### **4.5. Some Difficulties we Could Find on the Way**

Today we are part of a very complex and often conflict-ridden society, where the option for the poor and marginalized is neither popular nor sought after by the majority. Living a project that is focused on the poor, the excluded and the victims can be demanding as it will be often filled with emotion and fatigue. In practical terms, action for Justice and Peace means the living out of the project of compassion and mercy. Yet many before us have journeyed along this path. To work for JPIC will require us to struggle to change practices until human rights and responsibilities are accepted as the norm.

In the work of Justice and Peace, we need simultaneously to challenge the status quo and, even more, to propose alternatives that are in keeping with the Gospel. It is easier to denounce than announce. Unless we propose alternatives, we will have no credibility.

#### **4.5.1. Spirituality of Justice Peace and Integrity of Creation**

Spirituality integrates all dimensions of life: social, cultural, spiritual, ethical, historical, etc. The call to live the mission of JPIC

involves living our love of God and of others in the context of the whole of creation.

Out of love God has created a material universe, in which he has taken flesh and become human and where he has overcome death. God has been embodied in creation. In Jesus, God and matter come together. As the Orthodox Church proclaims, the realization and 'deification' of the human being are linked to the 'deification' of the material universe. This is the Christian spirit regarding the "integrity of creation."

Our mission lived as a commitment to JPIC is our way of following God's call to live the Gospel. In creation all beings are interrelated and interdependent. Living the communion with God, others, nature and the cosmos as followers of Jesus will mean that our attitude will be "the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2: 5-11). Living his 'kenose' for us means:

- o Living the ENCOUNTER with the other in a spirit of openness and welcome.
- o Living the INTERDEPENDENCE by being responsible for each other, for creation and for the life of future generations. The suffering of other affects me.
- o Living in SOLIDARITY with all (those who are close, far away, indifferent, enemies...).
- o Searching for the COMMON GOOD before the individual good, because both are inseparable.
- o Striving so that ALL may LIVE in dignity.
- o Having FAITH in the GOD OF LIFE. Jesus came to bring "life in abundance." With him we work to bring forth the Kingdom of God on earth.

Living this spirituality we will be able to overcome the difficulties and to have the courage to propose alternatives. However modest, fragile and incomplete our actions may seem, this is our Christian calling.