

***Living Faith Through Justice***  
**AEFJN 25th Anniversary Seminar**  
**15 November 2013**  
**Rome, Italy**

### **Opening Remarks**

Good morning, everyone, and welcome to this seminar: *Living Faith through Justice*. We are grateful that you have joined us for this event, which commemorates the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Africa Europe Faith and Justice Network (AEFJN).

Who of us—as individual, religious institute or congregation, as committed Christian—does not grapple with questions of how to live our faith in the 21<sup>st</sup> century ... how to be a faithful disciple?

As the “Year of Faith” draws to a close, we might wonder: What new understanding and commitment have we come to and will embrace? What is required of us, who are sent into the world today, to live the Gospel?

Words of the prophets of old may echo in our hearts. *You have been told what God requires of you, only this: to act justly, to love tenderly, to walk humbly with your God.* (cf. Micah 6:8) We may contemplate Jesus reading from the Prophet Isaiah in the synagogue in Nazareth. *The Spirit sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and release to prisoners...a year of favor.* (cf. Luke 4:18-19)

We value what the Synod of Bishops in 1971 confirmed: the profound, unbreakable bond between faith and justice and the demand of the Gospel for participation in the transformation of the world. (cf. *Justice in the World*, 6)

More recently, we hear the call of Pope Francis: *to ask for the grace to weep over our indifference, over the cruelty of our world, of our own hearts* (Pope Francis, Homily-Lampedusa, Italy, July 8, 2013); to counter “globalized indifference” with greater solidarity; and *to never tire of working for a more just world* (Pope Francis, World Youth Day, Rio, July 25, 2013). And from *Lumen Fidei*: *Faith sheds light on every human relationship because it is born of love and reflects God’s own love. Precisely because it is linked to love* (cf. *Gal*

5:6), *the light of faith is concretely placed at the service of justice, law and peace.* (*Lumen Fidei*, 50-51)

25 years ago, challenged by their faith and solidarity with those who struggle in poverty and suffer from injustice, institutes of men and women religious came together to form AEFJN. They believed that their collaborative efforts in advocacy would bring about transformation and promote more equity, sustainable development, and economic justice in the relations between the peoples and nations of Africa and Europe. Through AEFJN, with members serving on both continents, we continue to use our concern, our truth, and our voices to influence and shape more just policies and structures.

Yet, for all of us, the questions persist: What now? What is the ‘more’? What does our world—so much larger and more complex and interconnected—require of people of faith today? And how will we respond to the concerns that our faith cannot ignore?

This morning we are privileged to have with us: Fr. Orobator, our keynote speaker, and Sr. Nzenzili and Fr. Damian, our two responders. I have no doubt that they will inspire, challenge, and encourage us to be steadfast and courageous on the journey of *living faith through justice*.

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President of AEFJN