Editorial: We wish you special blessings during these holy days of Advent, Christmas and Epiphany! Pope Francis highlights the significance of these days with the Apostolic Letter Admirabile Signum on the meaning and the importance of the nativity scene. “Each of us is called to bear glad tidings to all, testifying by our practical works of mercy to the joy of knowing Jesus and his love.” As we close 2019, we are filled with gratitude for the ways that we have collaborated and worked together to make our world more just, peaceful and respectful of the integrity of creation. With a heartfelt openness to what God may ask of us in 2020, we wish you a very blessed and spiritually enriching year in our journey together.

LINKS: Click underlined blue text to open a link or copy and paste the URL on your browser window.

LIFE THAT FLOWS FROM THE AMAZON SYNOD

“Freely you have received; freely give”. (Mt 10:8b)

The participation in the Amazon Synod was a kairos event—an impetus of hope, encouragement and reaffirmation of our commitment to the future of the Pan-Amazon Region. From the outset of the Synod, however, it was very clear that the reflections and realities brought up went beyond geographical boundaries and brought pertinent aspects to the universal Church.

I had the grace to listen to the many appeals brought to the Synod by the representatives of indigenous peoples, peasants, quilombolas, caboclos, settlers, riverside dwellers and urban dwellers. I found that everyone present in the Synod was committed to safeguard life, to serving the communities, to preserving the forests and listening to the cry of the people.
Pope Francis was very inspired to invite, in addition to the Synod Fathers, people from other countries, representatives of the Church in Europe, Africa and Asia, as well as auditors, experts, fraternal delegates from other churches and special guests. The presence of the indigenous people, many of them in their traditional dress, was very significant. One indigenous participant said: “Pope Francis, thanks to you, the feathers are in your house and we feel welcomed in your heart.” In that way, a diversity of cultures came together with the same goal: saving the Amazon and thus saving the planet. This reinforces the expression of a new Synod profile defined by the Apostolic Constitution Episcopalis Communio (Sept 18, 2018). Hence, Pope Francis emphasizes the need for the Synod to be less and less of bishops and “to become increasingly a privileged instrument of listening to the People of God”, also made up of “people who do not hold the episcopal office” (n.6).

I would like to highlight the participation of women in the Synod as a significant and engaged presence, questioning the current structures of society and the hierarchical Church.

“This is the first time a church synod has had so many women (36) actively and effectively participating. Our participation is still quite limited, but we are aware that we are paving the way for future generations. The presence of women at the Synod indicates that important changes are underway and we are actively participating in these processes. Women earned the right to speak and used it with great poetry, tenderness, rationality, objectivity and purposeful content.” (Marcia Oliveira, expert for the Amazon Synod).

“The contribution of women was the highlight of this synod. They are the ones who most participate in social ministries, who are resistant and do not change their position when they are against certain projects; they are concerned about the future and the next generations.” (Bishop Erwin Kräutler, Bishop Emeritus of Xingu).

The attitude of the “good shepherd who loves and gives his life for his sheep” was and is evident in the testimony of Pope Francis through his presence throughout the Synod, by his listening, welcoming, encouraging and making inspirational and wise interventions. His life is an expression of his words: “that the shepherd must have the smell of the sheep.” His cheerfulness and sense of humor are a constant inspiration and encouragement to us.

At one point, Pope Francis spoke of the need for “overflowing”, about “total and encompassing” solutions, not the use of simple “patches”. These are strong elements that challenge us to leave our comfort zone and to embrace the care for life, for our “Common Home”, in short, the care for creation.

What now? What will the continuity be like? The synod is a process! The journey continues!

In the context of Synodality, the Church has been advancing and innovating. Since the creation of the Synod in 1965, this is the first time that the post-Synod Council does not consist only of bishops. The Pope’s appointments include lay people, two women and one lay person—Sr. Laura Vicuñá Pereira Manso of the Congregation of the Franciscan Catechists (Brazil), Patricia Gualinga, indigenous leader of the Kichwa di Sarayaku community (Ecuador) and Delio Siticonatzi Camaiteri, member of the Ashaninka people (Peru). Here we have the participation and the contribution of indigenous people, women, consecrated religious, and laity. It is the “overflow” becoming true in the life and history of our Church.

From the synodal experience—before, during and after the Synod—I feel the personal appeal and for our Congregation to “move into deeper waters” in continuity of the synodal experience and to take concrete responsibility and care for the goods of creation.

The final document of the Synod of the Amazon says: “Ecumenical, interreligious dialogues must be taken up as an irrevocable way towards evangelization in the Amazon” 24 (cf. DAp 227). How can we grow in these dialogues as Congregations and as a Universal Church? The Amazonian Synod has implications for all people and countries. How can the Amazonian Synod help us be light to the problems in our own realities?

How can the Church help in caring for the Common Home and well-being in the face of development projects within the Amazon and other places, such as logging, the construction of hydroelectric dams, mining, and agribusiness, that endanger this present lifestyle?

Different activities are being held after the Synod—seminars, workshops, debates and other events and opportunities. These are meant to share the Synod and to seek enlightenment on ways to implement concrete actions, especially in the nine countries of the Pan-Amazon Region.

I move forward with hope, striving and believing that it is possible to do good, to love God in the neighbor and to take care of mother earth and its beauty.

As part of my personal commitment, responsibility, and coherence with the grace received to be part of the Synod, I am sharing my personal experience of the synod with different groups and striving to define achievable
goals along with all those on the same journey. The final document is enlightening for the practice of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC). Bishop Helder Camara said: “It is divine grace to start well. Greater grace is to persist in the right way. But the grace of all graces is to never give up.” —Contributor: Nonata de Aguiar Bezerra, SND, General Councilor with a focus on JPIC

**2019 AEFJN ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: AFRICAN-DRIVEN ADVOCACY**

On November 7, 2019, AEFJN held its Annual General Meeting at the Generalate of Missionaries of Africa. There were 22 men and women religious, representing 18 member congregations, who participated at the meeting. The president gave an update on the current executive committee membership.

Fr. Chika Onyejiuwa, CSSp, the Executive Secretary, gave us a pictorial view of the current global trends and what is happening in our world today. This situation impels us, he challenged, to move away from the ‘missionary logic era, the logic of ‘development aid’ to beginning to ask some hard questions—‘What is sustaining the unjust condition of Africa? Why have the poor no food, no land as blessed as Africa is with mineral resources? What are the root causes of the problems faced in Africa? This is the time for us all to focus more on the CAUSE of the problem in Africa, as opposed to the enormous energy put on the EFFECTS.

There are two things we need to keep in mind. First, the problem in Africa is not religious but economic. Secondly, the social change we desire must come from the grassroots because the corrupt African political elites are part of the problem. The fairer and more equitable economic policies/partnerships we wish to see exist between the North and the South, will only come about when Africans, at all levels, take on the responsibility themselves to create their own future.

The roadmap to achieving this goal lies in bringing both the Faith and non-Faith actors on the same platform to catalyze grassroots Social Movement building and action. AEFJN has already created a niche for herself as a bridge, bringing the actors together. In this way, the people themselves assume the responsibility to identify and name their common struggles/sufferings/demands they wish to make and, in a public action, act collectively to address them alongside with relevant policy makers. In the coming year, the Secretariat would further strengthen her position through the African antennae.

In April 2019, in Brussels, West African farmers were able to stand side by side with dairy farmers from the EU to discuss the terrible impact the dumping of European produce has had on them and on the food security of Africa. This EU and African dairy Producers meeting was organized by the Belgian platform of Civil Society on food (CCF) and AEFJN is in this platform. The end-result of this face-to-face and rather emotional meeting was a call for sustainable production in the North and the South to ensure the survival of important farming structures in Africa and a balanced agricultural and trade policy in the EU.

Another success story is ‘the Caravan West Africa’, organized by Church (AEFJN) and non-Church actors (a coalition of Social Movements and Civil Society), in November 2018. This activity brought people from all the countries of ECOWAS together, harnessed their energies and voices to speak directly with governments and traditional rulers about their common struggles and how some government policies/laws, negatively impact their lives on a daily basis and make some concrete policy demands from the policy makers. It is hoped that caravan would be scaled up in the future to include other regions of Africa.—Contributor: Cecilia Nya, SHCJ, Vice-President of AEFJN, SHCJ Leadership Team member, JPIC Liaison
THE CLAMOR OF THE POOR BEFORE POPULISM AND THE NEW DICTATORSHIPS

Our group of Spanish-Portuguese-Italian speaking JPIC Promoters met at the headquarters of the UISG on November 6 to reflect, share and continue growing in awareness in front of the cries of the poor in the context of the world in which we live. The group was invited to pray with the text of the Prophet Jeremiah 1, 1-10, combining it with the message of Pope Francis for World Migrant and Refugee Day, celebrated in September this year. The cry of migrants and refugees is a reality in our world. Thus, the JPIC promoters group communicated with the clamors and hopes of the poor, of our suffering sisters and brothers.

The words of Pope Francis: “The presence of migrants and refugees, as in general of vulnerable people, represents today an invitation to recover some essential dimensions of our Christian existence and our humanity, which are at risk of falling asleep with a lifestyle full of comfort.” His observation was a unique invitation for us to review our style and commitment to life. Following are the highlights of some points:

- The poor for the elites are always characterized as irrational and unthinking, so these elites seek to instrumentalize them through social media.
- The Power has a center that coordinates everything. Its definition can be characterized by the imposition of collectively binding decisions that, through the substantial agreement of the common good, are effective through the self-reproductive, poetic and referential system, attributing itself to its own interests through the policy that legitimizes it.
- The new policies are made by the media. Wars are no longer done with cannons, but through marketing. This same reproduces the politician with an image of a leader and an idealized program that translates a “well organized lie”.
- The popular movements that once occupied the streets are artificial movements that seem to be real and are controlled by the social media today.
- Lies, famous fake news in political campaigns, grow, influence and create a negative image by manipulating and preventing people from doing something else. The goal is to win at any price and prove possession of the reason.

Finally, Fr. Johannes said that today’s dictatorships are soft but appear more perfect. The poor are manipulated and the effects of xenophobic ideologies and polarization are growing rapidly.

The social and political situation presents us with many challenges, but this is the time of prophecy and audacity to put people’s lives and creation at the center of our plans, decisions and prayers. It is time to affirm that Jesus’ project synthesized in the words: I have come that they may have life and have it in abundance (Jn 10,10), are also ours, especially in the social context in which we live.---Contributor: Renária Bezerra, SDS, International Councilor with a focus for JPIC

A JOURNEY OF JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION: 50 YEARS AND BEYOND

Over 200 Jesuits from around the world gathered for a week of study, reflection and celebration of their work with Social Justice and Ecology. This was an exciting congress as they celebrated their faithfulness on the 50 year journey, discerned a roadmap to implement their social ministry, looked for ways to strengthen existing and new opportunities for collaborating and networking and to recommit to their social mission by finding way to spread and put into practice what was experienced on those days.

These days were filled with the inspirational and challenging work that the Jesuits have undertaken. The spirit of Fr. Pedro Arrupe was alive in their midst and was especially demonstrated in his work for the migrants and refugees.

The words of Pope Francis in their private meeting encouraged them in their efforts to reach the poor and marginalized in a personal way.

Sr. Sheila Kinsey, FCJM was part of a panel presentation along with Mauricio Lopez, Executive Secretary of REPAM (Pan Amazonian Ecclesia Network) and Tomás Insua, Executive Director, Global Catholic Climate Movement (GCCM). They spoke on Networking and Collaboration beyond the Society of Jesus. All three presenters suggested ways the Jesuits could become more involved in issues related to the integral ecology, and to listen to the “cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor”.

Father Johannes Ehrat, SJ, professor of the Faculty of Social Sciences of the Pontifical Gregorian University.
CATHOLIC PRISON PASTORAL CARE

The Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development (DPIHD) brought together persons involved in prison pastoral care from around the globe from November 7-8. Many disheartening stories were shared about conditions of overcrowding, inadequate food, lack of heat, and little opportunities for actual rehabilitation. On the other hand, heartening stories were shared by ministers who were persons of love and respect. In a few situations, the ministers lived within the walls of the prison, enabling more contact and conversation.

Some dioceses asked the deeper questions: Who is likely to be incarcerated and why? In their research they discovered that the prisons have become the asylums of the 21st century for persons experiencing homelessness, mental illness, abuse victims, trauma, drug and alcohol abuse. Dioceses in other countries described the magnitude of those who were immigrants and indigenous peoples.

From these findings, diocesan programs were developed for the improvement of communication and conflict management skills. The staff also continued to remain engaged with and supportive of the family member. This outreach happened before and after the prison release which helped to improve relationships with various family members. There was an improved access to family and individual support services with Catholic and external providers as well as the development of interactive online resources for families.

The sharing was intense but well received. There was a strong desire to stay in touch and to continue developing resources needed to address the many painful situations.

Pope’s message.

DEVELOPING A GLOBAL CATHOLIC SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAM

In November, Laura Noctor-King, Sustainability Program Director for the Global Catholic Climate Movement (GCCM), met with the JPIC Secretariat to discuss possible program initiatives to engage the religious congregations in sustainability efforts.

Laura is working in partnership with the Dicastery of Integral Human Development, institutional partners and expert technical partners on a program to empower both Catholic institutions and individuals to understand their impacts and make changes to tangibly reduce their environmental impacts.

The program will be centred around a new online platform designed for and with Catholic stakeholders to enable them to measure, manage and reduce their impacts and be recognised for their efforts. It will aim to serve the needs to different Catholic institutions and will offer distinct levels of engagement; a lighter touch approach for institutions at the start of their journey and a more intensive path for those already on their journey to becoming carbon neutral and beyond.

More information will be forthcoming for this exciting initiative for considering sustainability in the spirit of Laudato Si’. GCCM will be working closely with partners such as JPIC to ensure that the program is built with key stakeholder input. We welcome feedback. Please feel free to contact laura@catholicclimate-movement.global to get more involved.

Laura brings her expertise of having worked for almost 10 years as a corporate social responsibility director for an international hotel chain.

We look forward to being able to offer this program to our religious congregations for consideration and involvement. GCCM is our collaborator in the UISG Campaign, Sowing Hope for the Planet.
Forty-two participants gathered in Rome and several joined online for the JPIC Promoters Formation Workshop on New Wine and a Call to Holiness. This was an exciting learning experience with the sharing from so many backgrounds. Much energy and fruitful discussions characterized the interactions. Relevant areas were explored to help the participants to gain a deeper understanding of their role as a JPIC Promoters. The journey was about “a new thrust towards holiness…which is unthinkable without an impulse of renewed passion for the gospel at the service of the Kingdom.” (NWiNW, 10)

Determined to answer the question, “What is JPIC for them?” the attendees continued the journey by contemplating the message of *Laudato Si’* and the meaning of their vows for each of them in the context of JPIC. They encountered the challenge of formation in their religious congregations and the influence of the Synod of the Amazon on how the Church wishes to listen to their members and to engage others in nurturing the life of the Church.

Along the way, insights were received from the various collaborators of JPIC with regards to human-trafficking, the ministries in South Sudan and responses to the consequences of climate change. Other considerations included the working relationship with the Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Human Development, Africa, Europe Faith and Justice Network, SEDOS. Based on these organization’s experiences, the challenge was how to determine ways to work with their congregations and to explore possible areas that address local concerns using the methodology of SEE, JUDGE and ACT. Plans were developed to concretize their way forward. A mass celebrated the personal commitment of each religious “to renewed passion for the Gospel in the service of the Kingdom.” In the Spirit of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation, they were given sunflower seeds to plant as a symbol of their “commitment to keep sowing HOPE for the planet.”

On March 5 from 2:30 pm to 4:00 pm (Rome time) an online experience in English and Spanish will allow participants to have an opportunity to share with one another how they have been able to implement their plans. Access to the resources from this workshop and a copy of the group photo with IDs and for download are available on the JPIC website.

**CLAR CONNECTION**

After the presentation in UISG of the Religious of Latin America and the Caribbean (CLAR), its representatives met with some JPIC Promoters to discuss ways to carry forth the initiatives from the Amazonian Synod and the Casa Común. In the exchange, we realized that we share many of the same concerns as we listen to the cry of the Earth and the Poor. We decided that we would continue to stay in connection, to share what we are doing and to find ways to support the efforts of one another.

The opening prayer for the JPIC Formation Workshop was developed in part from the theological reflection of CLAR on the wine in the six wine jars at the Wedding Feast of Cana. Since we were both inspired by the importance of the Cana event for us to explore new ways for religious life, it was important to acknowledge this interconnection.

**HUMANITARIAN CARE**

Training course for faith-based organizations at Pontificia Universita Antonianum. Graduate will receive an *academic diploma* and 60 *credits*. Entire course is in English. For more information, call 0670373502 or e-mail hcfbo@antonianum.eu.
POPE FRANCIS INTENTIONS FOR DECEMBER

December—Universal: That every country determine to take the necessary measures to make the future of the very young, especially those who suffer, a priority. The video becomes available the first Friday of the month.

January—Evangelization: Promotion of World Peace. We pray that Christians, followers of other religions, and all people of goodwill may promote peace and justice in the world.

Advent resources.

INTERNATIONAL DAYS OF OBSERVANCE

18 December—International Migrants Day stresses the human rights and fundamental freedoms of migrants. Treating every migrant with dignity is one of fundamental requirements we face before anything else we attempt on migration. Migration is the great issue of our era, and a force for dignity because it allows people to choose to save themselves, letting them choose participation over isolation.

20 December—International Human Solidarity Day focuses on the need to work together to fight poverty. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda centers on people and the planet, underpinned by human rights, and supported by a global partnership determined to lift people out of poverty, hunger and disease.

1 January—World Day of Prayer for Peace. This year marks the 52nd World Day of Peace. Pope Francis released statement can be found in the link above when it is published.

6-12 January—National Migration Week 2020. “Promoting a Church and a World for All.”


27 January—International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust. The holocaust resulted in the destruction of nearly 2/3 of European Jews. The purpose of remembering this day is to prevent future tragedies.

Click here for a listing of the international days for the year.

JPIC PROMOTERS MEETINGS IN JANUARY

8 January—Spanish/Portuguese Reflection on the message of the Pope for the World Day of Peace: 9 am to 12 pm at UISG.

13 January—English JPIC Promoters CORE Meeting, 3 pm to 5 pm at the Fratelli.

14 January—Anti-Trafficking WG, 3 pm to 5 pm at the Fratelli.

15 January—English JPIC Promoters Meeting: Reflection on the message of the Pope for the World Day of Peace. Andreas Göpfert, MAfr will be the facilitator the reflection process, 9 am to 12 pm at UISG.

17 January—Webinar: UISG Campaign Sowing Hope for the Planet will develop the theme of sustainability. Fr. Joshtrum Kureethadam, Coordinator of the Sector “Ecology and Creation”, will be describing the plans being developed by the Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Human Development. The work of the GCCM will be shared and the current efforts of our religious communities will be featured. Time: 2:30 pm to 4 pm Rome time in all languages (EN, ES, FR, IT, and PT). More information will be forthcoming.

UPCOMING OPPORTUNITIES

February and March—JPIC and Digital Technology. Eight sessions, two hours each online. Only in English and Spanish. More information to come.

Thank you for your support of JPIC!