



JUSTICE, PEACE AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION



Newly Appointed JPIC Chair Carolyn Townes, OFS



Greetings of peace, my dear Franciscan Family!

I am honored and humbled to have been appointed your National Chair for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation. By the grace of God and through the intercession of our Blessed Mother Mary, we will continue the good work begun by our dear brother, Kent

Ferris, OFS. I want to thank Kent for his dedication, commitment and the work he began for the National Fraternity. I am pleased he will remain on the JPIC Commission helping to continue to move the efforts of justice, peace and the integrity of creation forward.

I am currently a member of Our Lady Queen of the Angels Emerging Community in Columbia, S.C. I am the Regional JPIC Animator for the Brothers and Sisters of Saint Francis Region, which encompasses North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama and Tennessee.

I came into the Roman Catholic Church in 1997, was professed in 2000, and have dedicated my life to animating and guiding others to be instruments of peace in the world. In August and September of 2001, my life took a major detour and I was plunged into the world of pain and grief. As I was unable to lead, it was the Holy Spirit who took the reins of my shattered life and recreated a life of healing service. As a spiritual life coach and grief counselor, I have journeyed with hundreds of women and men who have lost loved ones. I have also traveled that road as a workshop facilitator, class instructor, retreat director and mentor to hundreds more.

I was introduced to Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation in 2003, when I worked with the friars of Holy Name Province in New York City. I was involved in the Peace and Justice Apostolate as a Secular when I was asked by the pastor of St. Francis of Assisi Church in Manhattan to become the JPIC Animator.

I could integrate the work I was doing with the Seculars with the work of JPIC. It was a beautiful collaboration. Father Pastor explained the three legs of JPIC: education, advocacy and direct service. Since St. Francis Church had a good grounding with advocacy and direct service, education was the piece that was lacking. That would be my job – to educate. He said I would be JPIC *Animator*, not director. Then I asked, “*What is an animator?*”

I created my own description of animator – one who gives life to something. I would give life to the issues of peace and social justice, thus inciting others to take action on those issues. Education would be the way I would bring the issues to life for those who had little or no knowledge of social justice issues. Through my passion and enthusiasm, as well as my infectious laugh, I would animate and guide people to take inspired action on important social issues.

Fast forward to today, I am still passionate and enthusiastic about educating people, especially Seculars, about what it means to be bearers of peace. As we go from Gospel to life and life to Gospel, we must also go from *being* peace to *doing* peace. Our Lord Jesus embodied peace before he *did* peace. Our Seraphic Father Francis embodied peace before he *did* peace. Our Holy Father, Pope Francis embodies peace which guides him to *do* peace. This too is our call as Secular Franciscans – to embody peace, to be bearers of peace, as our Rule states. Then we can go out into the marketplaces and exercise that peace that comes from deep within us. Being bearers of peace begins with knowing who we are in Christ; that we all are sons and daughters of the Almighty King of Peace. It is who we are. We must live who we truly are.

I invite you all to join me on this exciting journey of being bearers of peace to doing amazing peace and justice work in the world. It is our time to be in the forefront in promoting peace and justice by the testimony of our lives and our loving and courageous initiatives. Let us begin again.

May the Lord give you peace.

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