



Rome, 25 March 2019  
Feast of the Annunciation of the Lord

Dear confrères in charge of Justice and Peace and Integrity of Creation of the Circumscriptions of Africa,

May the joy of the Gospel fill your hearts and may you share this joy with our brothers and sisters, especially with the poorest and most marginalised of them.

You are meeting in Juba, South Sudan, for the JPIC Assembly during which you will study, discuss and share your views on the “Catholic response to Justice and Peace issues in an ever changing Africa”. Your assembly will be held in South Sudan, a place dear to our Comboni memory but, at the same time, a territory devastated by a persistent civil war and wounded by crimes against human rights. With South Sudan we would also like to remember the Congo and the Central African Republic, where violence seems unstoppable and of where the poorest and the defenceless are the primary victims.

The Chapter of 2015 reminds us that “reconciliation, justice, peace and the integrity of creation (are) intrinsic elements of evangelisation” (no. 11). Indeed, reconciliation is, among the dimensions of our missionary ministry, one of the most important: finding paths of healing for the victims and perpetrators, committing ourselves to justice, establishing relationships based on trust become essential elements in our commitment to proclaiming the Gospel of justice, peace and mercy. The missionary proclamation of Jesus who, in the synagogue of Nazareth, echoes the words of the prophet Isaiah, is also our own: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me... to proclaim the year of grace of the Lord.” (Lk. 4:18-19).

The Chapter also emphasises that commitment to JPIC is a real ministry to which some confreres must devote themselves completely and professionally. A missionary presence among marginalised and frontier peoples must have personnel qualified in terms of methodology and know-how. (no. 45.2).

The year 2020 will be dedicated, in our Institute, to ministeriality. The General Council is thinking, with the General Secretariat of the Mission, of organising various events but also of preparing, with the Comboni Family, a Forum on Social Ministeriality. Such an idea, born in the World Social Forum in Salvador Bahia (Brazil) in 2018, arose from the need to develop common criteria and guidelines in the field of social ministry for the Comboni Family.

Let us also mention the encyclical *Laudato Si'* by Pope Francis whose ideas should guide our work of JPIC. The Pope proposes the idea of an integral ecology where “everything is closely interrelated, and today’s problems call for a vision capable of taking into account every aspect of the global crisis” (no. 137); the environmental, economic, social and cultural dimensions are intrinsically connected: “the intimate relationship between the poor and the fragility of the planet – writes the Pope – the conviction that everything in the world is intimately connected” (no. 16). Therefore, a work of justice and peace is not possible without a commitment to the protection of creation, just as it is unthinkable to work for the safeguard of creation without facing the many social and economic injustices, nourished by a mentality of profit and exclusion.

Finally, we would like to invite you to create networks of collaboration among ourselves, the local Church, Religious Institutes and civil society. You know that our Institute is part of the Africa-Europe Faith and Justice Network (AEFJN) - an organisation that promotes economic justice between the European Union and Sub-Saharan Africa with VIVAT, which supports human rights efforts through advocacy work at the United Nations. We would like JPIC representatives from African circumscriptions to work with these organisations through antennas, or groups that engage in JPIC already present in your countries, or by promoting their establishment. The work of JPIC becomes an instrument of change the more it is based on collaborative networks.

In concluding this letter, we would like to thank you for your work and commitment, which have often been carried out in difficult situations of insecurity and serious injustice. Many thanks on behalf of the Institute.

May the Lord of life and peace give you strength and courage in your missionary service.

Fraternally,

The General Secretariat of the Mission and the General Council