

## **Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation: Best Practices for Provincials<sup>1</sup>**

### **1) Lead by Example: Encounter**

As Jesus and more recently Pope Francis has demonstrated, find opportunities to maintain meaningful contact with communities and people who are suffering from injustice and oppression. Share the experience with the province which can be a catalyst for province members to pursue similar opportunities in their respective contexts, which can then be discussed in annual 1-1 meetings with province members.

### **2) Articulate a vision that roots Justice and Peace in the charism**

As a provincial, it is an important opportunity to pray and reflect on the signs of the times, the charism of one's religious institute, and how justice and peace ministry is rooted in that charism. We recommend doing this personally as well as with others both in and connected to the religious institute. By getting input and shared reflection, by-in to the justice and peace vision becomes more sustainable.

You can present this in various ways, e.g. e-letter, website, presentation, retreat, etc. One example of this is the [Advancing Justice Vision of the Marianist](#). This document helped guide the foundation and formation of their first national Peace & Justice office about 10 years ago, and it continues to guide their initiatives today. The Marianists are currently in the beginning process of revising it with anticipated input from every individual Brother for its revision. For instance, they plan to add a lot more in terms of integrity of creation and "Laudato Si," among other changes.

### **3) Convene a group that cares about the mission**

It is invaluable to identify a group of religious and perhaps connected lay persons to work on the vision development, but also on the implementation stage. Such persons should include some with deep knowledge about the charism, some with deep knowledge about justice and peace issues today, some with passion and energy, and some with good connections to the broader community for coalition building.

The hope is that this group, perhaps with additional people, will be an ongoing body to advise, help vision, and actualize justice and peace priorities. This ongoing advisory board might be made up of brothers, priests, sisters, and lay people. They should develop a work plan based on

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<sup>1</sup> See document online with links: <https://cmsm.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Best-JP-Practices-for-Provincials1.pdf> (under the Justice and Peace/best practices tab)

the vision established. They should meet about once a month or so and communicate as needed in between. If you are able to hire someone as the JPIC director, that is even better.

*Sample Documents:*

[JPIC Job Description](#) (Jesuits)

[JPIC Manual](#)- example guide for JPIC's (Columbans)

[Leadership Council Guidelines](#) for JPIC Policies and Actions (Columbans)

#### 4) Provide regular resources

Demonstrate a regular sharing of JP resources to solidify attention and commitment to these issues. Share the JP Alert from CMSM with all the members of your community, ministries, and lay associates. Also, invite such persons to subscribe to the JP Alert. Our website also has pages on particular JP issues that have associated resources for persons or groups that might be working on such issues. We also have some best practices for JPIC ministry on our webpage.

Identify a person in your religious institute to sort through additional relevant JP resources to share with your institute and partners via email, social media, newsletters, etc. It's important for a regular communication, such as the institute's newsletter to have a JPIC section. But don't let this substitute for your personal regular direct sharing of resources and reflections to lend credibility to these issues.

Encourage your ministries to provide JP resources in parishes, schools, etc.

#### 5) Greening your Institution

Develop policies and habits to enable your various institutions to grow in environmental stewardship. Some effective examples include: not using styrofoam or plastic water bottles; create community gardens on your land; doing an energy audit; increasingly drawing on solar, wind or geothermal energy sources;<sup>2</sup> serve increasingly less or no meat; purchase products from companies ranked high for environmental justice; take less flights<sup>3</sup> and use public transportation more, such as buses and trains; invest in companies that rank high for environmental justice and divest from companies that rank low.

See the [CMSM resolution](#) on Cherish All of Creation for more tips.

[Environmental Education Plan for Sustainable Development](#) (Christian Brothers)

<sup>2</sup> Interfaith Power and Light or Arcadia are a couple options.

<sup>3</sup> For flights you do take, develop a carbon off-set policy: [http://cmsm.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/2015Columban\\_Carbon\\_Policy-1.pdf](http://cmsm.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/2015Columban_Carbon_Policy-1.pdf); Also use these sites:

<http://www.renewablechoice.com/reduce-your-flight-impact.html>; <http://www.climatecare.org/home.aspx>;

<http://www.climatefriendly.com/Personal/Calculators/AirTravel/>

## 6) Discussing difficult issues

It is important to create an environment and set of habits in your institute of discussing difficult issues, especially around justice and peace, rather than avoiding conflict. There are many ways to do this. Some suggestions include:

- a) Have a weekly or bi-weekly forum time on a justice and peace issue, which provides ample space for discussion and multiple views on the topic. Identify a facilitator.
- b) Prayer themes and intentions could include praying for those that disagree with us, for the skill of compassionate listening, and for the courage to engage difficult issues.
- c) Provide workshops or skill-building sessions on the skills of discussing difficult issues. For example, learn the practice of "[nonviolent communication](#)."
- d) [Resource for dialogue](#): Catholic nonviolent communication on controversial issues and courageous intersectional conversations

## 7) Give something concrete to respond to

As a leader it is wise to form your community, but often that may include providing one concrete thing you ask them to do for justice and peace. It may be a direct advocacy alert on a particular issue for them to call/email their congressional representative or the U.S. President. It may be one educational resource you want them to read, study, and pray with. It may be one community meeting or advocacy conference on justice and peace you want them to attend. It may be one personal habit to do more of or less of, such as more gardening or less meat eating. Use these suggested specific concrete actions to build up a pattern or habit of engagement that cultivates social transformation. Ongoing action alerts and resources can be found at our website: [www.cmsm.org](http://www.cmsm.org).

## 8) Link advocacy to direct service

Many religious institutes have multiple direct service programs, which are all really important. Yet it is crucial to enable members and other ministers to understand the link between advocacy and direct service. Very often there are unjust structural issues at play in the needs encountered in our direct service work. For example, sometimes immigrants face an unjust immigration system that makes them wait 10-20 years to legally enter the country. Sometimes people living on the streets don't have access to safe shelter, adequate nutrition, or health care.

Provide resources, reflection sessions and deep encounter with those in need in order to help understand the vital role of advocacy to change unjust structures. Invite those in need to participate in advocacy efforts. Link your community to the local, state, and federal organizations which track and mobilize advocacy opportunities. CMSM, LCWR, Maryknoll Office of Global Concerns, Columban Center for Advocacy, Jesuit Conference, Franciscan Action Network, Sisters of Mercy, and many other Catholic organizations do this at the federal level. There are state Catholic conferences, interfaith initiatives, and other local advocacy organizations to connect with. Encourage your youth groups and schools to attend a national advocacy conference.

[Faith in Action](#): Faith-Based Community Organizing- Local Chapters

[Ignatian Family Teach-In](#): National advocacy conference with large numbers of youth and young adults attending through school program.

## 9) Community Organizer Training: Build coalitions and Think Movements

Effective and sustainable social transformation occurs when we participate in coalitions and think longer-term with movements. As a leader, you can encourage your members to do these things in their justice and peace work. You can encourage and provide the resources for members to get community organizer training. Such training can also help members learn how to identify the key sources of power and pillars of support, which justice and peace action often need to transform in order to create social change. You can participate as a prayer leader or speaker at public coalition events, sign on to coalition statements, or join coalition advocacy sessions with policymakers. Joining ecumenical and interfaith coalitions are particularly effective.

[Faith in Action](#): Faith-Based Community Organizing Training

## 10) Collaborate with other Religious Provincials and the Union of Superior Generals

As Catholic religious leaders, you have a great opportunity to amplify justice and peace ministry by collaborating with other religious provincials within your charism and with other charisms. Collaboration within your charism could entail JPIC's from different provinces around the world having a communication stream via email or periodic conference calls, etc. Such collaboration can lead to more fruitful use of personnel and resources. Often there are also similar justice and peace issues between religious institutes, which can be amplified with wise collaboration. This is especially true at the local level. For example, collaboration could entail shared events, shared resources, shared JP committees, gathering and coordinating regional JPIC initiatives, etc.

In general, some provincials have made the analogy with how formation programs tended to be done separately with the intention to preserve the individual charism. Yet, when formation collaboration occurred, such as with the Catholic Theological Union, the discovery was that charism's were strengthened by such interaction.

You might also consider setting up a representative at the United Nations as another way to collaborate within your charism and with other charisms. There are many such religious representatives at the United Nations. For example, [VIVAT International](#) is a collaboration of religious Non-Governmental Organization's at the UN.

Another rich resource for collaboration is the [Justice and Peace Commission](#) of the Union of Superior Generals- International Union of Superior Generals in Rome, Italy. They have a regular e-letter, working groups on various issues, conferences, and access to other leaders in the Catholic institution. A related resource in Rome is the [Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace](#), which is now merging into the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development

## 11) Socially Responsible Investment and Purchasing

One of the most significant ways our institutions impact justice and peace is through how we spend or divest our money. This includes not only the companies we purchase from but especially the companies we invest in or divest from. To speak out for immigrants, people in poverty, care for the environment, nonviolence and peacemaking, the unborn, better income equality, racial justice, end of torture, etc., while at the same time we purchase from or invest in companies that perpetuate the opposite is counter-productive. We have an opportunity to grow in integrity and help a lot of people as well as our earth, if we take our purchasing and investments seriously.

CMSM Justice and Peace Committee: [Investment Guidelines](#)  
[Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility](#): shareholder advocacy  
[Better World Shopper](#): purchasing guidelines  
[Green America](#): purchasing and investment

## 12) Provide Discernment, Retreats, and Lectionary links to Justice and Peace

As a leader, it is vital to provide opportunities for deep discernment and contemplation for faithful justice and peace ministry. This is a personal need and a community need. You can help provide discernment resources and retreat opportunities. You can provide encouragement and resources for your members to participate in such retreats. In your regular liturgies and prayer together, include themes of justice and peace, particularly in *preaching*.

[CMSM prayer and liturgy resources](#)

## 13) Making public statements and taking corporate positions

As a religious institute with credibility and leadership responsibility, it is quite valuable to make public statements on justice and peace issues. These provide an opportunity to enhance discernment, provide direction for your members, and offer solidarity to those in need. When possible, public statements can express leadership or institutional positions. Developing a clear process for such statements is recommended. Due to the urgency of some issues, it is important to have a quick way to develop, sign off, and get out your statements to members, partner organizations, and the media. Developing a media list is helpful for such statements.

Try to avoid making public statements “just to say something.” Instead, focus on what your charism may illuminate about the situation, what is being left out or underdeveloped, and what would boldly draw others to the transforming love of Christ.

You can draw on [CMSM statements](#) as examples or CMSM [Justice and Peace alerts](#). See other national Catholic advocacy organizations under #7 above for sample statements. You are also welcome to request access to the CMSM media list to supplement any local media contacts.

**Latest CMSM Resolution:** “[Gospel Nonviolence: The Way of the Church](#)” (2017)

#### **14) Smooth transition between provincials so JPIC ministry continues**

Key to sustainability is having a clear method of handing over relevant JPIC material and practice to the next provincial and council. Relevant JPIC documents that have been created from the religious institute should be organized and handed over. Key practices regarding JPIC that you've learned should be identified and shared, such as this best practices document. Key partners who you've worked with in this area should also be identified and shared. Most importantly, is to give your personal encouragement to the next leadership for attending to and enhancing JPIC ministry as key to the mission of Christ.

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