

Missionaries of Africa



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**Background:**

The promotion of Justice and Peace and the Integrity of Creation is indeed part and parcel of our missionary charism. Here in Nigeria, particularly, in the dioceses of Ibadan and Oshogbo where the Missionaries of Africa work has always been a priority for them in their missionary apostolate. However, in the past the promotion of Justice and Peace and the Integrity of Creation has been done more at an individual level than in an organised way at Sector level since there was no proper co-ordination or facilitation.

In the Sector meeting of January 19<sup>th</sup> 2010, James Ngahy was asked to facilitate and co-ordinate the promotion of Justice and Peace and the Integrity of Creation among the Missionaries of Africa in Nigeria. He was also requested to be a link person with dioceses and some organisations which are involved in promoting Justice and Peace.

**What is at hand:**

**1. Sector Level:**

Since January 2010 I have been trying to search or find out the best ways of promoting Justice and Peace and the Integrity of Creation. So far there is nothing concretely organised at a Sector level. However, in the near future we intend to have some seminars/workshops which will try to evaluate our involvement in promoting Justice and Peace and the Integrity of Creation and how we can improve it.

**2. Parish Level:**

In the two parishes where the Missionaries of Africa work, we realise that much have been going on in this respect, but may be it has not been pronounced clearly in our community meetings, sector meetings or in the Provincial Council meetings.

In our parishes – both Oshogbo and Agbowo – there are some organisations (societies) which are very much involved in promoting Justice and Peace at grass-root level. These are such as:

**2. 1. St. Vincent de Paul Society** which is directly involved in helping the poor, the marginalised, the rejected and the needy.

**2. 1. 1. Sacred Heart Parish, Oshogbo:** St. Vincent de Paul has taken the responsibility of accommodating some people who are rejected by their families for different reasons. The Society does also provide material needs to the sick, the abandoned old people and the needy.

**2. 1. 2. St. Thomas Parish, Ibadan:** St. Vincent de Paul is involved in taking care of sick people, hospital visitation, and for almost three months now the members have been taking care of an orphan, young man, whose parents were parishioners of St. Thomas Parish.

**2. 2. Justice, Development and Peace Commission groups (JDPC)** which are involved in promoting human rights, identify unjust structures which encourage tribalism in the parishes and take corrective measures.

**2. 2. 1. In St. Thomas Parish:** Members of JDPC are actively engaged in Credit Union (Cooperative Society) which assists and encourages her members to have some savings instead of borrowing money from the local money lenders who demand extra-ordinary profit on return.

JDPC group of St. Thomas is also mobilising and training some of her members, particularly, the widowers and widows, on small scale enterprises such as rearing of snails as an income generating project. This is done under the help and supervision of JDPC of the Archdiocese of Ibadan.

### **3. Areas of my involvement (James Ngahy):**

**3. 1. Civil Peace Service:** I am working with JDPC of the Archdiocese of Ibadan in the department of Civil Peace Service – supporting Local Capacities for Peace. This involves Peace Journalism (partly teaching in the University of Ibadan); Peace Education in Secondary Schools (of which we had a two-day seminar for teachers - 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of April 2010); Inter-religious Co-operation and Dialogue (of which I am preparing a paper to be presented in Maiduguri State in May 2010 based on the religious violence which is quite problematic in Northern Nigeria).

**3. 2. JDPC Parish Level:** I am also involved in following up JDPC groups in the parishes of the Archdiocese of Ibadan. So far, I have been able to follow up what is going on in St. Thomas Parish under JDPC. Soon, JDPC office will organize a seminar at a deanery level in order to get the priests in-charge involved or interested in matters of JDPC, hence, encourage their parishioners to work harder on justice and peace issues or launch those groups in their parishes.

**3. 3. In the Formation House:** In March (8<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup>) I had a seminar with our candidates, introducing them on the importance of the promotion of Justice and Peace and Integrity of Creation in our Society. This, of course, makes part and parcel of our formation

program; they too, as candidates of the Missionaries of Africa, are to get involved in the whole process of promoting Justice and Peace from where they are now.

**3. 4. St. Thomas Parish:** Since March, I have been attending meetings of JDPC group in St. Thomas parish. I try to encourage them and also participate in some of their activities whenever it is possible. Moreover, I try to be a link person between them and JDPC of the Archdiocese of Ibadan.

**3. 5. Publications:** In order to reach out to the public, I do also publish some articles of interest in some of the local news papers. Of recent, I have been trying to look at the issue of religious violence since it is something that many people experience in Nigeria today.

**3. 6. Immigration:** It is difficult to get residence permit and re-entry visa in/for Nigeria. This too has been put under Justice and Peace office.

**Conclusion:**

These are the few things that are happening here in our Sector concerning JPIC. Of course, we are still a long way to go but we take one thing at a go. Religious/Apostolic Congregations have their own association of Justice and Peace. We have not been able to attend their meetings. It is one of the tasks before us to make sure that we too become part of them so that we are not left behind since they are a number of issues expounded in those meetings which concern us as an apostolic society working in Nigeria.

“If an elephant has his foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality. If you are neutral in situation of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor!”

*Bishop Desmond Tutu.*

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