

INTERCONNECTION

Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) Newsletter
Capuchin Franciscan Province of St. Joseph, USA



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LET JUSTICE FLOW



By Fred Cabras, OFM Cap.

Opening

On February 2nd- Feb 4th, 2019 I participated with 500 other faith leaders and community directors to discuss issues facing our church today at the [Catholic Social Ministry Gathering](#). Together with over 500 participants, we discussed issues surrounding: immigration, racism, mass incarceration, persons with disabilities and restorative justice. This three-day gathering was filled with keynote speakers such as Rev. Monsignor Raymond East, Tony Stiertz (COO of Catholic Charities), Justice Janine P. Geske and many more. The information, networking, and insights I gained could fill a library so what I would like to do in this issue is simply talk about some of the particular areas that we (as a province) and as fighters for Social Justice can do to get involved.

National Catholic Partnership on Disability (NCPD)

I was pleased to spend a good amount of time talking with Janice Benton, director of [NCPD](#). Our own Fr. Bob Malloy, OFM Capuchin has spent many years working alongside Janice and the many wonderful people at NCPD.



As a province and as people of justice we are being challenged to stand for, No, to stand with persons who live daily with a physical, mental or emotional challenge. Remember! Not all disabilities are seen; some lie within the person.

So as minister and partners of Justice, NCPD calls each of us to be mindful. Who is at the table? Who is not? Is our community welcoming to those who may have mobility issues? Do we create a safe place for those who have emotional challenges a place to feel welcome? Are our liturgies and other liturgical celebrations accessible to all persons of intellectual ability? These are the questions we need to ask ourselves. Are we truly living the gospel of hospitality, if our doors are not open to all?



Fred (third from left) at the Catholic Social Ministry Gathering, February 2-4, 2019 in Washington, DC

LET JUSTICE FLOW (CONTINUED)

Open Wide Our Hearts

We were blessed to have arrived at the CSMG conference just in time of the release of the [pastoral letter](#) from the USCCB on racism. A letter in which I read in completion on the flight to the conference and became a great source of fuel to prepare me for the enriching conversations. As conveyed so beautifully by the USCCB, racism is a life issue (pg. 30). The USCCB was very clear at the beginning of their letter when they articulated that, "Racist acts are sinful because they violate justice. They reveal a failure to acknowledge the human dignity of the persons offended, to recognize them as the neighbors Christ calls us to love (Mt 22:39) (Pg. 3)."



open wide our hearts

the enduring call to love *a pastoral letter against racism*

I am not speaking this to a group of people that do not already know this very fact, or to people who are unaware of the challenges faced by thousands of our brothers and sisters of color. What I am offering is a question, are we aware of our own inner racism? Microaggressions, stereotyping, attitudes and political influences all play a role in our inner racism. You are probably saying to yourself; I am not racist! I hate to say this, but we all are! Each of us carries in us thoughts, feeling and attitudes (some conscious and others unconscious) that react to persons of all colors, even white.

Most people believe that racism is simply those persons who stand on a corner in white robes burning crosses but racism has been and continues to be conditioned in our everyday life. Many persons are often unaware of the things that they are being conditioned. For example, have you ever noticed if carrying a bag on your left shoulder in an elevator and a younger African American male enters on the left side,

you move your bag immediately to the right side. You may be completely unaware that you are doing this or even why. It is because society and media have conditioned our brains to equate young African American men with robberies. So, our minds feed into the racism and continue the cycle. So, it is our turn to stop the cycle by becoming aware of it. Bringing it to the light. Have an honest conversation with yourself, with others and your communities. Are there things that I say or do that continues to feed the racial divide? Ask yourself the hard questions; is there a group of people that makes me uncomfortable? Do I use microaggressions such as, where are you from? No really what country? You are African

American, so you must love rap. You are Mexican, you must love spicy food. Often we don't realize what we are saying can come off as being both ignorant and racist. I know I struggle with this all the time, just ask any of my brothers of color

in the house but what I realize is that I can make a choice. I can choose to correct myself, apologize, or offer a safe place to really talk about issues of race with others. The USCCB is calling all of us to the genuine conversion of heart, courageous confrontation, and a call to action. Bishop Shelton J. Fabre said during one of our talks, "When we divide based on our race in our hearts or reality, it shatters the communion we share as images of God."

Each of us is being called to be more than, to meet each person we meet where they are and to welcome them to our table. We should truly feel welcomed in all our spaces, and those we enter should feel that they are at home. If this is not the case, then again, we must reflect personally and communally about who is not at the table? Who is not welcome to the feast? Who have we forgotten to invite? Because at the end of the day, we are all created in the image and likeness of God and so we must let justice flow to prove that.



Watch video for the 'Top 5 Lessons from the 2018 Pastoral Letter Against Racism (Catholic Mobilizing Network)

Excerpt from [CMN](#):

"As we all know so well, racial injustice plagues our society and is especially evident in our criminal justice system. Not only do restorative practices combat disproportionate incarceration of people of color, but restorative justice principles of living in right-relationship, inclusion of all those impacted, truth-telling, and repairing harm are critical to the work of racial healing in our country."



Photo: A dead Laysan albatross with its plastic garbage filled stomach

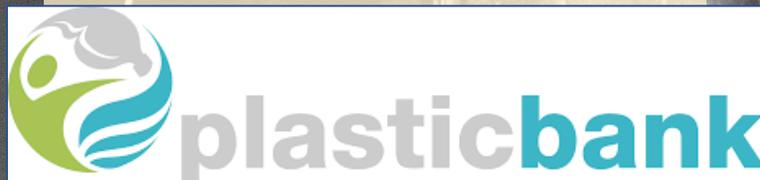
-Nat'l Oceanic Atmospheric Assoc. (NOAA) public domain, Wikimedia

What is Social Plastic? Learn about it from Plastic Bank

Excerpt from [plasticbank.com](#)

"It's our mission to stop Ocean Plastic by gathering a billion people together to monetize waste while improving lives. Plastic Bank is a root cause solution to prevent the flow of plastic into our oceans. In recent years, plastic pollution in our oceans has gained global attention."

Learn more about the movement by visiting them on [YouTube](#).



Capuchin Franciscan Province of St. Joseph, JPIC Commission
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