

FINAL SESSION – Notes from the presentations

INITIAL SUMMARY FROM SESSION 3:

- **MAKING AN IMPACT** through our distinctiveness (on church and world)
- **GOING DEEPER IN PRAYER** and discipleship, on going formation and development of our distinctive spirituality
- **JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION** (JPIC) including ecumenical and inter faith
- **GROWING THE THIRD ORDER** in depth, engagement and number, with a particular desire to relate to and attract the young
- **STRUCTURE** – no big desire for change, but a emphasis on simplicity and simplification - that structure must always be at the service of our mission

Through the day there has been real **ENERGY TO DRIVE** all this – recovering our distinctiveness, our prophetic edge,

MAKING AN IMPACT

1 Distinctive being

- a. Being visible – wearing the profession cross, etc
- b. Living simply and letting our lives speak, including the choices we make about food, money, clothes
- c. Distinctive symbols are important but always secondary
- d. Support for this to be found in mutual accountability in local groups – but also in chapter articles about distinctive living and distinctive being
- e. Suggest also an Assisi booklet on distinctive living

2 Distinctive action: - 2 more areas of our charism

- a. Love, making Christ known and being joyful
- b. Local action – including working with other groups like Citizens UK
- c. It is important to connect up local action – what one individual or group is doing – with others across the local group, area, province
- d. Chapter has a role in this connecting up and also in speaking out eg about major issues such as the scandal of foodbanks, etc

3 Communication of both action and being

- a. Three key audiences – US as members of the Third Order; the churches; and the public square
- b. For the church it is about the visibility of the order locally and nationally
- c. The public square stuff needs distinctive material in order to communicate our vision. Chapter has an important role here.
- d. How we communicate is important and we do need to develop our capacity in social media (whilst recognising how quickly things move on in these technologies)
- e. Chapter to instigate a communications review across the three areas (us, church, public square) and thus help the order speak with one voice individually, locally, nationally, and as a province – ie a coherent voice within the order based on a holistic approach to communications.

GOING DEEPER IN PRAYER

- 1 **How do we define Franciscan Spirituality:** it is not like the Benedictine tradition with universal Rule and there are not well known distinctive exercises as in the Ignatian tradition. We have more freedom and our rules evolve. That's a good thing, but there is therefore a need for more signposts to resources that can help us.
- 2 **Spiritual Directors:** it is clear that our spiritual directors do not need to be Franciscans and being a spiritual director should mean that they pay attention to the directee's spiritual tradition and pattern.
- 3 **Communication:** we lack guidance and direction. Information needs to be better circulated about resources, courses, initiatives, etc
- 4 **How do we find and train directors?** We shouldn't be afraid to change, but it is easy to feel discouraged. Local groups can be places of encouragement and formation. And let's note the importance of places like Hilfield helping us to connect with what Franciscan Spirituality actually looks like. We need to live out our spirituality.

JPIC

- 1 JPIC is a big theme for Franciscans so it is important that that information is properly networked and that areas have both enthusiastic reps and good material.
- 2 Prayer and discussion leads to practical action – that's the process that needs to stand at the heart of our distinctive approach to JPIC.
- 3 We need to share better what we are doing personally or in groups.
- 4 There is a big conversation about our dialogue with Islam – we need to communicate about who is doing this and where it is happening.
- 5 For us as Franciscans there is a fundamental principle of accepting the faith of others as they are, like Francis with the Sultan. At the heart of this is love for others and the good they bring to the world, regardless of their faith or culture – indeed letting down our barriers and delighting in difference. Francis as a fool for God puts himself in the way of the Sultan – that's what we need to do – but with openness and in a non judgemental way. A key biblical text here is Jesus and the Syrophenician woman.
- 6 There are obstacles in ecumenism inside and outside SSF. We need to address these on exactly the same pattern, creating space where people can encounter one another across boundaries without pain.
- 7 Our big question is: what was the original Franciscan charism and how do we get back to that? Charism inevitably requires structure in order to sustain and deliver it, but inevitably the structure can then obscure the original charism. That is in part the history of the Franciscan tradition. The Gospel and Francis' response to the gospel are fundamental to our Franciscan living

GROWING THE THIRD ORDER

- 1 Growth is not an end in itself but is the outcome of authentic Franciscan living. Our aim is to develop the Franciscan movement rather than grow and organisation. It is therefore important to let many different seeds flourish and grow without controlling too much, whilst recognising the need / responsibility to nurture with accountability.
- 2 There are interesting examples of Tertiaries gathering other people around them who are not themselves tertiaries or explicitly Franciscans but who are living the Franciscan life. There is an important sense in which our Franciscan roots and Franciscan charism can be a gift to others beyond organisational boundaries. As part of this, the third order could / should clearly have a role alongside the new developments in new monasticism and fresh expressions – these contextually relevant contemporary communities should be natural territory for us.

Part of the movements we see around us are experiments in living in community. Experiments such as the Community of St Anselm and other gap year opportunities suggest both things that we may want to nurture as following on from this and a model for patterns of living that might indeed be nurtured in / by the Third Order. We must see how we can embrace and nurture all of this in our own context.

- 3 Special interest groups are also part of this agenda, giving us focus and sharpening our mission. These could be better managed across area boundaries to involve more people, and better use of technology could address the complexity of people's working lives and tertiaries in geographical or physical isolation.
- 4 We recognise that it is important for us to learn how to listen to young people and embracing their energy for social justice and creation care. A range of strategies certainly – going to where young people already are, often completely outside organisational structures but with passion to eg serve in the Calais jungle. We need to be where they are fulfilling our Franciscan mission, arising from Francis' own ridiculous sacrifice.
- 5 As part of being a gift to other contexts and networks (and indeed building a dialogue across communities) we could open source our resources much more as an order, helping others understand and use our principles, our guidelines on rule of life – inspiring people's lived well beyond the Third Order.
- 6 There is a recognition of the need for both diversity and freedom, though questions too about what the limits are to this. Are there different patterns and ways into the Third Order and different ways of being a Tertiary? Are there complimentary patterns of temporary commitment and obedience that could be offered?
- 7 Resourcing: certainly it is important to continue to develop the website, use social media fully and share videos. Is there actually a need for a paid member of staff with the energy and time required to oversee all this and take it forward.

STRUCTURE

- 1 Human relationships are the heart of Third Order and the small group is where these are nurtured. It offers a way of pastoral care and encouragement. Our relationships with one another are central – we are called together and are enriched by one another.
- 2 How do we build up community?
 - Clear and simple communication
 - Simple role descriptions that can be interpreted locally
 - Proper hand over in office holders
 - Sharing good practice with one another including officers meeting together
 - Rejoicing in our humanity and laughing at our anxiety
 - Developing our web presence and resources
 - Above all remembering that we are all deeply loved and that we are called to love and forgive one another.

ENERGY TO DRIVE

- 1 Energy is needed to drive the order forward, and this needs to be sustainable. It therefore needs a structure to sustain it, whilst keeping an eye on mission all the time. We suggest that it is necessary and important to commission an individual or a small task group to take this whole agenda forward whilst also taking responsibility for ourselves contributing positively to local small group and to the area.
- 2 Community really helps to generate energy. We have loved being together like this here in Swanwick and that may be an important clue. Prayer days that energise us, perhaps crossing area boundaries. The York Provincial Chapters may not be realistic but provincial gatherings that are well led and well resourced are powerful and important. More meals, less meetings! Special interest groups that cross our area boundaries could also be a helpful contribution.
- 3 Central resources including an intranet, dropbox or moodle could be useful and the little booklets people can take with them have proved very useful resources. It would be great to have these again.

Footnote:

- Intranet =” a local or restricted communications network, especially a private network”
- Dropbox = “one of a number of shared storage systems using the world-wide web”. Similar are “cloud storage”, “Google Drive”, and others.
- Moodle = “Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment.”