



Factors exerting Pressure on Promotion of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) in Africa

The Encyclical Laudato Si of the Holy Father Pope Francis on the care for our common home is an eye opener for us to consider, not only the enormous environmental crisis that we are experiencing but also the moral and ecological crisis of our time. The Pope himself alludes to this fact in his Encyclical when he clearly points out that there is an “intimate relationship between the poor and the fragility of the planet” (LS 16). This obliges us that in all our works and ministries, we should strive to accompany those that are victimised, either in the countryside or cities, who lost their lives in exchange of satisfying the competition for well-being through the use of natural and human resources. This undertaking is precious though with challenges.

Standing on the continent of Africa, in particular, one is faced with many challenges in the promotion of Peace, Justice and care of creation. The culture of silence in many parts of Africa makes the work a bit harder as the information is hidden from being accessed by the public. Just recently, due to Covid-19 pandemic whereby people were encouraged to stay at home, there has been a rise in domestic violence in which many women have suffered the worst and, sadly, some of them have lost their lives while a good number of them have lost one or two of their precious body parts as well as property. Children have suffered sexual harassment and exploitation from their seniors in the homes and many are nursing the physical wounds

as well as the psychological pain. The stories of most of these victims pass in silence yet they leave indelible marks for the rest of their lives. Furthermore, arrogant and adamant politicians block the promotion of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation in Africa. For example, there have been cases of sponsored murder of albinos by politicians in Malawi for some time now. Unfortunately, nobody is willing to break the silence for fear of reprisals.

Poverty is another indisputable factor that hinders the promotion of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation in Africa. For instance, Uganda, like many other African Countries, recently experienced floods and the rise of water levels in rivers and lakes. The flooding of rivers and the rise of water levels in lakes is due to the encroachment in the catchment areas and many of the casualties or victims in these tragedies are the poor who live along the river banks and the lake shores as they struggle for their survival through fishing and farming. Our parish, for example, is among the many places that were affected by this natural tragedy. As Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) promoter, I visited several places and homes around the parish, seeing the damage caused by the floods to the people living nearby. I interacted with them and listened to their woes. In the course of visiting, I discovered that some places where these people are staying are not fit for human habitation due to their nature and topography. Since they have no alternative, they are forced to remain there. Every year, they have to struggle with floods and, subsequently, hunger since the production of food in such areas is very poor. As a result, the exploitation of natural resources like fish, trees, sand, and stones among others become the only and profitable way of survival.

Finally, Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated pressure on the natural resources in many parts of Africa including Uganda. Ever since the imposition of the lockdown in late March by the Ugandan Government, exploitation of natural resources was heightened as it was the only way of survival as many economic activities were suspended except building and construction. As a result, many places are left bare after all the trees were cut down for economic reasons and there has been an increase in illegal mining. Our combined effort is needed for us to succeed.

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