



## **An Overview of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Seminar**

**NAIROBI, Kenya** - The International Montfortian Scholasticate Community in Nairobi, Kenya has been privileged this year with the visitation of Rev. Fr. Steven Mukusa, SMM, who has been a missionary in Uganda for about four years and the Promoter of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) in Africa Anglophone Delegation.

During his visit, he also gave a seminar on JPIC to the community members. The seminar was held for 3 days from 8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> January, 2021. The community members were very happy with the input, since it was an opportunity for them to appreciate the efforts being made by our congregation in its attempt to continue reading the signs of the time, in the light of the Gospel.

On the first day of the seminar, Fr. Steven introduced us to the topic of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation. While tracing the foundations of this commission, he drew insights from the scripture, Vatican Council II documents, various encyclical letters and the Catholic social teaching in general. In addition, other than re-echoing our fundamental role to take care of our common home (Earth), Fr. Steven also considered the theme on preferential option for the poor. He elaborated on the methodology of SEE-JUDGE-ACT, to be employed while tackling issues on JPIC. He emphasized that we must always see situations with the eyes of Christ, judge with a compassionate heart and act in the strength of this relationship and in the Spirit of the Gospel.

Fr. Steven further gave an overview of the objectives of the commission on Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation and then expanded on the values of collaboration, communication, sharing and participation, in which the commission holds dear. He concluded the first day of the seminar by asking us to reflect on the kind of world that we would wish to leave behind for the next generations, while stressing on the primacy of intergenerational solidarity.

On the second day of the seminar, Fr. Steven introduced the members to the Spirituality of Interconnectedness or rather universal communion. In this encyclopedic topic, he made an overview and an informed commentary on *Laudato Si* and *Fratelli Tutti*, which are both encyclicals by his Holiness, Pope Francis.

On *Laudato Si*, he emphasized on the need to build an authentic relationship with nature, God and our fellow human beings. While a lot of harm has been done on planet earth, he showed the need for renewed hope, dialogue and action. He condemned the evil of greed in the human heart, corruption and forms of technology that claim mastery over nature, while disregarding authentic sustainability. He encouraged us to learn how to do small things in our own little ways at a community level, such as refraining from using plastics, continuously saving water, and planting more trees and flowers around our community.

On *Fratelli Tutti*, Fr. Steven expanded on practical aspects of human fraternity and social friendship. While citing Pope Francis in *Fratelli Tutti*, he showed how the encyclical focuses on communion with one another as brothers, sisters and friends, and how it is grounded on love that impels us towards universal communion.

He further made a comparative study of the two encyclicals and showed how they are related. He noted that Universal Communion is a key theological theme for understanding *Laudato Si* and *Fratelli Tutti*. He repeated that Universal Communion is the basis for integral ecology and the assertion that we are all interconnected. Thus, since God is communion, we human beings are created to be in communion with God, with one another and with creation. He concluded this section with the prayer to the creator in *Fratelli Tutti*, that is, "*May our hearts be open to all the people and nations of the earth. May we recognize the goodness and beauty that you have sown in each of us, and thus forge bonds of unity, common projects and shared dreams*".

In the last part of the seminar, Fr. Steven focused on the relationship between JPIC and the Religious Vows. While tracing the scriptural origin of vows, and citing the book of Micah, he showed clearly the need to integrate our vows with Justice Peace and Integrity of Creation. For him, Micah reminds us of a perennially valid divine obligation, that is, "*To act justly and to love tenderly and to walk humbly with your God*" (Micah 6, 8). He expanded this text by noting that; To act justly is Poverty, to love tenderly is Chastity, and to walk humbly with your God is Obedience. He concluded by showing how these vows can be lived by the Montfortians in the modern world especially in the promotion of social justice and integral ecology.

It was a great opportunity for the International Scholasticate Community to have this seminar. We are grateful to Fr. Steven and to the entire congregation. We now move with hope towards putting this knowledge into practice. We pray with Mary, mother of Pilgrim Humanity and with St. Louis-Marie de Montfort that we may be genuine agents and channels of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation, now and in the days to come.

*Bro. Alex Muhwezi, SMM*