

JPIC as “Transforming Relationships”: An ongoing “frontier” for the Sacred Heart Family

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What does the future hold for a world deeply wounded by violence and division, ravaged by natural disasters, and confronted incessantly with poverty and injustice? Such a future engenders fear with its many effects and consequences. It is in this context that we are called to live Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation (JPIC), and to do this as a work of HOPE. Over the years we have expressed this commitment in different ways through the triple process of Compassion-Relationships-Transformation. The challenge now is for us to do this together as One Body (General Chapter 2016). How are we, as an international Society, as a Sacred Heart Family present in different countries and cultures, to live JPIC? How are we to globalize compassion and respond as educators? How are we to put technology at the service of building connections and sustaining communication? How are we to galvanize our *Cor Unum* and act together as one body? These are some of the questions that JPIC at the international level needs to address. Like Philippine Duchesne and her four companions who set sail on the Rebecca and braved the turbulent sea, how are we to sail together amidst the chaos of today towards a future of hope?

In her letter to Madeleine Sophie on the 4th of April in 1806, Philippine Duchesne wrote about her experience during her all-night Holy Thursday adoration:

O blessed night! ... All night long I was in the New World, and I was traveling in good company. First, I had gathered up as a precious jewel all the Blood of Jesus in the Garden, the Pretorium, and Calvary. I took possession of Him in the Blessed Sacrament and grasping Him tightly to my heart, I carried my treasure everywhere to pour it out with no fear of exhausting it..... In spite of being on my knees, the twelve hours of the night I passed very quickly with no fatigue.... And then I was alone with only Jesus.... Dear Mother, when I hear you say, Ecce ego mitto te [“Behold I send you”], I shall answer at once: Vadam [“I will go.”].... I shall try to make myself sad for the rest of Good Friday, but I do not feel like it, I am too full of hope.¹

While her expression may have been influenced by the language and imagery of the spirituality of her time, we can extract that singular movement in her of being intensely united with Jesus, and at the same time generously sharing inexhaustible love, always ready to go when called upon to respond. This is how we have come to know Philippine. Despite her flaws and limits, this “Woman-who-prays-always” was also so full of hope — “a woman who has struggled, built things, suffered, sometimes failed, always loved, and who continued to push boundaries.”²

¹ De Charry, J. (1988). *Saint Madeleine Sophie Barat, Saint Philippine Duchesne: Correspondence, First Part at Grenoble (1804-15)*. Translated by B. Hogg. Rome: Society of the Sacred Heart

² Mooney, C. (2017). *Lives that matter: Philippine Duchesne and solidarity across frontiers*. Presentation during the Sacred Heart Spirituality Forum, held in St. Louis, Missouri in July 2017.

This movement of drawing from the heart of Jesus the love that is poured out to others in love is expressed for us today by these words from paragraph 8 of our Constitutions:

*The pierced Heart of Jesus opens our being
to the depths of God and to the anguish of humankind.
Jesus draws us into His movement of adoration of the Father
and love for all, especially those who are poor.*³

Pursuing this inspiration, for the Holy Week Triduum during this bicentennial year, I posted on *rscjinternational* an invitation to pray with Philippine, and offered these questions:⁴

- How is the pierced Heart of Jesus touching our hearts, opening our being?
- What “sufferings and hopes of humanity” call us to prayer, invite us to cross “frontiers,” move us to commitment and action?

These also serve as our starting-point now as we reflect together in this Frontiers Conference on Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) and “how the Society of the Sacred Heart is going to the frontiers of our day.”

JPIC as “Transforming Relationships”: An ongoing “frontier” for the Sacred Heart Family

In a world deeply wounded by violence and division, ravaged by natural disasters, and confronted incessantly with poverty and injustice, our commitment to JPIC continues to be a pathway to “frontiers” in which we are called to concretely live our mission “to discover and reveal the love of the Heart of Jesus.” Through JPIC, we are invited to touch the anguish of humankind and of our wounded earth, to engage in transforming relationships, to be and act as One Body, and to witness to hope, as we sail forth together towards the future.

JPIC: Touching the anguish of humankind and of our wounded earth

There are many realities that confront our world today. As a starting-point, I will highlight two that are related in some way because both push peoples and the earth to “frontiers,” or perhaps the better word to use is “margins.” Unlike us, who are called and have the choice to go to the “frontiers,” there are peoples and earth itself who are forced into “frontiers,” pushed even beyond the margins, because of the displacement and destruction brought about by these two global realities: conflict and climate change.

³ Society of the Sacred Heart. (1982). *Constitutions of the Society of the Sacred Heart*. Rome: Society of the Sacred Heart.

⁴ RSCJINTERNATIONAL. (2018). *Holy week triduum with Philippine Duchesne*. <https://rscjinternational.org/news/holy-week-triduum-philippine-duchesne>

1. Our 21st-century world is marked by conflict, which has increased sharply since 2010,⁵ leading to deaths and forced displacement of peoples (both internally, or as migrants and refugees). Statistics from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) indicate that by the end of 2016, 65.6 million individuals were forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of conflict and violence.⁶ With displacement comes an escalation in poverty since “the poor are increasingly concentrated in countries affected by violence... and prolonged conflict keeps countries poor.”⁷ The United Nations (UN) and the World Bank (WB) foresee “that more than half of the people living in poverty will be found in countries affected by high levels of violence by 2030.”⁸
2. The same UN/WB study noted the “disproportionate impact of climate change on poor and vulnerable countries and communities.”⁹ Of crucial concern are the crises related to extreme weather events (particularly flood disasters), water scarcity, and food insecurity — all of which may be exacerbated by climate change.¹⁰ Moreover, just like conflict, climate change contributes to the displacement of peoples. In addition to reporting that there were 24.2 million new displacements brought on by natural disasters in 2016, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC) projects that “the impacts of climate change on the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events and environmental degradation will increase displacement risk further.”¹¹

If you find these data staggering, then you would be disturbed even more by the audio-visual images that are made available to us in the news and social media. In this Age of Information and Communications Technology, knowledge is truly at our fingertips, and the news come to us practically in real-time. I, for example, got to know these information by reading the cited online reports. When needed, I only have to google it, and photos and videos of these realities will be immediately available. Getting information about realities we need to be aware of is an important starting-point, and technology facilitates this significantly.

⁵ Marc, A. (2016). *Conflict and violence in the 21st century: Current trends as observed in empirical research and statistics*. World Bank Group: Fragility, Conflict and Violence. Presentation during the United Nations and World Bank Study on Development and Conflict Prevention, held in Oslo, Norway in October 2016.

⁶ UNHCR, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2017). *Global trends: Forced displacement in 2016*. Geneva: UNHCR. Accessed from <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/statistics/unhcr%20stats/5943e8a34/global-trends-forced-displacement-2016.html>

⁷ Marc, *Conflict and violence in the 21st century*.

⁸ United Nations; World Bank. (2018). *Pathways for peace: Inclusive approaches to preventing violent conflict*. Conference Edition. Washington, DC: World Bank. Accessed from <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/28337> License: CC BY 3.0 IGO.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ The 2018 UN/WB study, *Pathways for peace*, cites data from the National Intelligence Council (2017) and USAID (2014) to show the different effects of climate change.

¹¹ IDMC, Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (2017). *Global report on internal displacement (GRID)*. Accessed from <http://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2017/>

In light of JPIC, I then contend that the frontier that is put before us today is not that of knowing, but the frontier of caring. Let us ask ourselves:

- Do we care about the peoples displaced by conflict? Do we care about those who suffer from different forms of violence? Do we care about peoples affected by the destruction caused by extreme natural events? Do we care about our earth and its creatures as they (and we) suffer from the impact of climate change and environmental degradation?
- Do we care, or have we become numbed by the bombardment of images on the news and social media? Do we care, or are we overwhelmed by feelings of helplessness, paralyzed by fear, or occupied by important works related to our mission? Do we care, or have we inadvertently fallen into the trap of what Pope Francis calls the “globalization of indifference”?¹²
- Do we care, and allow the cry and anguish of earth and peoples to touch us? Do we care, and bring these to prayer, conversations, and ministries? Do we care, and take concrete steps to help the afflicted and to contribute to the rebuilding of their lives? Do we care, and analyze the situation in order to find ways and seek action to prevent or at least lessen the impact of these forms of suffering?

As the images on the screen show, and also from responses sent to us from the JPIC Reflection Process¹³, I further contend that YES, we the different members of the family of the Sacred Heart in different cultures and contexts in many parts of the world, do care, and we desire to care more.

JPIC: Engaging in Transforming Relationships

Our commitment to JPIC, which we clearly expressed in General Chapter 2008, is one way of expressing that we care:

We suffer the pain of our peoples. With them, and from this depth, we enter into the Open Heart of Christ, the wellspring that satisfies our thirst. From our contemplation of the Pierced Heart of Jesus in the heart of wounded humanity flows the desire to commit ourselves with greater passion and compassion to justice, peace and integrity of creation.¹⁴

¹²Pope Francis warns against the “globalization of indifference” in his 2015 Lenten message. He develops this more extensively in his encyclical *Laudato Si: On care for our common home* (May 2015).

¹³JPIC International Coordination Committee (2018). *Justice, peace and the integrity of creation: RSCJ international reflection process. Feast of St Philippine Duchesne 18 November 2017– Feast of St Madeleine Sophie Barat 25 May 2018*. Rome: Society of the Sacred Heart.

¹⁴ Society of the Sacred Heart. (2008). *General Chapter 2008: Justice, peace and the integrity of creation in solidarity with those who are most vulnerable*. Rome: Society of the Sacred Heart.

In 2012, RSCJ worldwide and with others who participated in the Society of the Sacred Heart’s *JPIC Spiritual Journey from Lent to Pentecost* articulated the three-fold, circular movement Compassion-Relationships-Transformation as the dynamic that best expresses our understanding of JPIC. The report of the *Esperanza Commission* (JPIC Ad Hoc Commission II) explains this movement as follows:

Entering into suffering and vulnerability, both our own and that of persons, groups, and communities with whom we live or work, has allowed us to touch the depths of our spirituality. Impelled by our charism and energized by the **compassion** that flows from the Heart of Jesus, we have found creative ways by which to respond to the cries of humanity and of the earth.

Wherever we are sent and whatever we do, whether in ministry or in community, in prayer or in interaction with others, **relationship** is our way of being and proceeding. Done with care and sensitivity, in dialogue and reciprocity, and nurtured by fidelity and mutual challenge, it is in relationship that we walk with persons, groups, and communities, and carry out our [service] of education and promote JPIC.

All our JPIC efforts, in whatever form they may be expressed, are geared toward **transformation**. We harness our energies and resources in view of transforming persons and social structures, and of effecting changes that would further justice, peace, and integrity of creation. At the same time, we acknowledge that in participating in this work of transformation, we, too, are challenged and transformed. Our attitudes and behaviors, our choices and our lifestyle, and the quality of our relating both in community and in ministry, with ourselves, with nature, and with God, are transformed as we engage fully in this transformative mission.

Through the [experiences and] reflections shared by our Sisters from the different Provinces, District, and Areas, and some members of the Sacred Heart Family, a JPIC framework emerges:

For the Society of the Sacred Heart, commitment to JPIC....
flows from COMPASSION....
is lived through RELATIONSHIP....
and is directed toward TRANSFORMATION.¹⁵

In 2015, the JPIC International Coordination Committee further elaborated on this framework and offered the concept of “Transforming Relationships” as a perspective in our work

¹⁵ JPIC Ad Hoc Commission II (Fagot, C.M., Luz, C.J. Prats, M. & Smith, S). (2012). *Report of the “Esperanza Commission.”* Rome: Society of the Sacred Heart.

After each of these three elements, I will show five photos from different regions of the Society, photos published in rscjinternational from 2014 onwards, that will give us an idea of some of the “frontiers” where we can find the family of the Sacred Heart.

of JPIC. More specifically, in terms of our three-fold dynamic of compassion-relationships-transformation, “Transforming Relationships” means:¹⁶

- Compassion: bringing an attitude of hope to a broken world through the various means available to us in our different contexts — a hope for transformation of individuals and of structures that inflict suffering on the vulnerable and endanger all life on earth
- Relationship: engaging in the work of education in its different forms; offering analytical and spiritual depth to the way persons participate in God’s mission; searching for and creating new models of relationships
- Transformation: exerting all our efforts and taking initiatives to effect change in persons and structures, but at the same time acknowledging that transformation is the work of the Spirit

From the perspective of Transforming Relationships, the work of JPIC entails “seeing the world through the perspective of God’s compassion, engaging in education and prayerful reflection, and acting from a deep place of love.”¹⁷ Given this understanding, all the more can we say then that JPIC, practiced as Transforming Relationships, is one of our concrete ways of going to the “frontier of caring.”

The images that I showed you as I was quoting from the report of the *Esperanza Commission* and JPIC International’s Communications No. 3 do not cover the wide gamut of engagements of RSCJ and our collaborators in mission. They nonetheless give us a glimpse of how JPIC as Transforming Relationships is being lived in places where we are. These images show us that we do care; and they remind us that we desire to care more.

JPIC: Being and acting as “One Body”

One of the four calls of the 2016 General Chapter is “to be and to act as One Body.”¹⁸ For JPIC, the specific intention is for us “to be One Body which loves, practices and gives witness to justice, peace and integrity of creation at all levels of our life and mission.”¹⁹ Connecting this to the “frontier of caring,” we ask ourselves: In our wounded world, how are we called, as One Body, to care more for suffering humanity and anguished creation?

¹⁶ International JPIC Coordination Committee (Corry, A., Lumbreras, M., Luz, C.J., Meier, C., Najjuka, S., Sanchez, R., Smith, S). (2015). *Communication #3*. Ref. No. 15/179. Rome: Society of the Sacred Heart.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Society of the Sacred Heart. (2016). *General Chapter 2016: Four calls to which we are committed*. Rome: Society of the Sacred Heart.

¹⁹ Society of the Sacred Heart. (2016). *General Chapter 2016 Recommendations: Justice, peace and integrity of creation (JPIC)*. Rome: Society of the Sacred Heart.

To this end, from 18th November 2017, feast of Philippine Duchesne, to 25th May 2018, feast of Madeleine Sophie, the Society of the Sacred Heart worldwide went through a “global conversation on our commitment to justice, peace and the integrity of creation (JPIC), as a preparatory process for the international JPIC meeting... [which] is a direct outcome of the 2016 General Chapter where provinces identified JPIC as one of their most significant emerging calls.”²⁰ I hope that each and all of you participated in some way in this JPIC reflection process.

The international JPIC meeting which will be held in the Philippines in November 2018 “is a key moment in the life of the Society [and] it is hoped that we will have an outcome that clearly identifies the place of JPIC in our congregation.”²¹ The challenge put before us is how to continue this work of JPIC, and to do this together as One Body.

Being one of the participants in the upcoming international JPIC meeting, I feel grateful because we will be bringing to this gathering elements from our collective experience as Society of the Sacred Heart. Together we can then build on these and create new models for the future. From my vantage point, these elements include the following:

1. *JPIC as Transforming Relationships, with its circular dynamic of Compassion-Relationship-Transformation.* How can we live this dynamic at the international level so that we can respond in concrete ways, no matter how small, to global realities like conflict and climate change, and contribute to the “globalization of compassion”²² through relationships that lead to transformation according to the values of the Gospel?
2. *Communication.* Although the Society of the Sacred Heart is yet to organize “a system of internal and external communications at international level that will facilitate our journey as one body towards the future,”²³ some communication platforms are now in place, like *rscjinternational* and the websites of some provinces. How can we then put this technology at the service of building connections and sustaining communication for JPIC?
3. *Cor Unum.* We have a deep value for *Cor Unum*, our motto which is inscribed on our profession crosses. How can we galvanize our *Cor Unum* and act together as One Body in matters that touch justice, peace, and integrity of creation?

²⁰ Dawson, B. (2017). *Letter for the feast of Rose Philippine Duchesne*. Prot. No: 17/113. Rome: Society of the Sacred Heart.

²¹ International JPIC Coordination Committee (Corry, A., Lumbreras, M., Luz, Najjuka, S., Sanchez, R., Smith, S). (2017). *Communication #7*. Ref. 17/36. Rome: Society of the Sacred Heart.

²² I use “globalization of compassion” as a response to Pope Francis’ call to go against the “globalization of indifference.” Googling the concept, however, I found two significant citations of on Google. The first comes from works of Elissa Tivona: 1) *Globalization of compassion: Women in the foreground of cultures of peace* (2008); and, 2) *Globalization of compassion: Women’s narratives as model for peace journalism* (2012). The second is from 2014 Nobel laureate Kailash Satyarthi who calls for “the globalization of compassion” and considers education as one instrument for this “mission of compassion and humanity.”

²³ From the mandate of the International Communication Team. In *Communication from the General Council No. 33* (February, 2018). Rome: Society of the Sacred Heart.

Together we will discern and discover how we, as an international Society, as a Sacred Heart Family present in different countries and cultures, are to live JPIC and to witness to hope.

JPIC: Witnessing to hope

Whether in our local contexts or at the international level, within regions or across provinces, witnessing to HOPE is the work of JPIC. Hope undergirds our different efforts in Transforming Relationships. Like Philippine who, in her adoration-experience, was pouring out her treasure “with no fear of exhausting it,” we believe that JPIC as Transforming Relationships flows from an inexhaustible Source. We are able to do what we do, because we do it out of and with the love that flows from the Heart of Jesus.

Owing to her Holy Thursday experience, Philippine wrote that she cannot feel the sadness of Good Friday because she was “too full of hope.” Like her, despite the bleakness of the situation, we believe in the possibility of a better future; and together, and in collaboration with others, we offer what we can and cooperate in the transforming work of the Spirit.

In 1988, the year of Philippine’s canonization, Helen McLaughlin’s letter for the feast of the Sacred Heart spoke precisely about witnessing to hope:

Today, the world needs women, witnesses of hope; women possessed by the Spirit, contemplative and unselfish women able to live, in poverty, the power and love of the Spirit....

Philippine Duchesne, ‘the Woman Who Prays Always,’ that strong, simple, austere, practical woman, on fire with love for Christ and for his sisters and brothers, witnessed well to hope.... Her courage was that of an evangelical woman, inspired with a passion to proclaim the Gospel, who lived in faith the élan of a hope without limits....

Philippine is still teaching us to witness to hope.... She teaches us to draw the vital élan of our apostolic life from deep, prolonged prayer and from the onward call of the future.²⁴

Written thirty years ago, these lines continue to speak to us, especially at this time when members of our congregation are getting older and fewer, and the anguish of humanity and of earth does not seem to abate.

JPIC: Sailing together towards the future

This Frontiers Conference invited us to reflect on “how the Society of the Sacred Heart is going to the frontiers today.” From the perspective of JPIC as Transforming Relationships, the

²⁴ McLaughlin, H. (1988). *Feast of the Sacred Heart: Hope*. Rome: Society of the Sacred Heart.

“frontier” is where we are called to respond in compassion through relationships that lead to transformation of persons (including, and firstly, ourselves) and structures that are against life and the values of the Gospel.

This “frontier of caring” is in the HEART — the Heart of God and the little piece of the heartbeat of God that is revealed to us in the depth of our hearts. Drawing inspiration, courage, and energy from prayer, like Philippine did, we go! Transforming and being transformed, we witness to hope and trust in the work of the Spirit in a wounded world that clamors for justice and peace, in an anguished earth that cries for care.

Together we sail towards the future, accepting the invitation to care more, “to be the leaven for the bread of our future, to not be afraid of the fire, to be a tender of the flame, to risk the possibility of being burned from time to time.”²⁵ May Philippine bless and guide our efforts, so that we will not lose hope. May her contemplative spirit and apostolic zeal guide us as we discern and discover how we are to be and to act as One Body in this caring and transforming work of JPIC.

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Questions for reflection / conversation:

In your concrete context, how are you living JPIC as “Transforming Relationships”? Which of the three elements (Compassion-Relationship-Transformation) is most developed in your practice? Which do you find most challenging?

How can we, as Family of the Sacred Heart, care more and witness to hope as One Body in our world today?

²⁵ Dawson, B. (2016). *Closing conference of the General Chapter 2016*. Rome: Society of the Sacred Heart.