

My opening statement:

Good morning

I bring my experience of the past 15 years in the GSIJPO, committed to carrying out Justice and Peace as inspired by the lines in Article 6 of our Constitution "**Our commitment to reconciliation demands that we promote justice and peace in a world disturbed by sin and conflict.**" This is further elaborated in S 9.3 '**To help overcome the divisions and inequalities in which the majority of people live, we have a responsibility for developing in ourselves and in our society an international concern for justice.**' Implementation of these lines are integral to living the Gospel, and responding to the Social Teaching of the Church. Each successive Chapter Directive since 1973, has called us to reflect and act on our evolved understanding of justice and peace. This concern, at the global level is currently held in the GSIJPO on behalf of the Congregation and the CLT.

The backdrop within which we are seeking a spirit filled direction for the future is a world in crisis – the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, a looming economic downturn, the dominance of liberal economic approaches, the increasing number of climate disasters and conflicts, resulting in large movements of people across the globe. The rise of populism and autocratic governments pose a real threat to democracy, all of which have dire consequences for the dignity, equality and human rights of girls, women and children.

Ched Myers in **Binding the Strong Man**¹ comments – “Jesus is inviting common folk to join him in his struggle to overturn the existing order of power and privilege.”

Ched continues that the purpose of Jesus’ call to discipleship is not to take people out of a hostile world, promising them a better life in God’s heavenly kingdom. Instead, Jesus’s purpose is to change the world in such a way that it will cease to be the hostile place it is, so that God’s reign can be established on earth. Doing this requires that we make a preferential option for the poor, the dispossessed, the excluded and those who because of gender, sexual orientation, race or class have been rendered invisible in our society. This preferential option is wonderfully outlined for us in our 6 position papers, a work in progress since 2012, updated in

¹ Maryknoll, NY Orbis 1995

2018, with some regions working extensively on knowing the content and following up with related integrated activities in collaboration with GSIF.

Ched further continues, it will also require that we will courageously denounce the evils of our western culture and its arrogant project of globalization. This is the call to address the **socio-political realities of our world**. Our NGO status with the United Nations, Economic and Social Council is such a ministry using policy and human rights instruments to address the wrongs and advocate for changes in laws and policies that exclude. Key initiatives included significant input into the UN processes in preparation for the Sustainable Development Goals, and the global frameworks ensuring the rights of migrants and refugees. The GSIJPO engages in ongoing advocacy, promoting social protection, and ending human trafficking and prostitution.

Pope Francis in his two encyclicals, *Laudato Si* and *Fratelli Tutti* is doing just that, addressing the economic, socio-political realities that we are experiencing today. Pope Francis speaks of ‘Political charity, political love’ and says that working to include everyone, is not merely utopian. Our direct service ministries are indeed central to who we are as a congregation, but we cannot merely focus on the ministries to girls, women and children, we must also engage with an equally strong commitment to advocacy that seeks to change systems and structures that dehumanize.² Hence the ongoing need for additional resources, significant collaboration and consistency of approach within the two office of GSIF and GSIJPO.

In our chapter preparations, injustice within the Congregation emerged, and so we are invited to confront power, privilege and hierarchical structures within the Congregation itself – colonization, white privilege, divisions based on class, race, or tribe, historical injustices carried in Church laws and structures against women and peoples, e.g. indigenous peoples,³ that are not spoken about, or reconciled.

In living up to the Gospel mandate the congregation needs to confront allegiance to political elites, financial elites, and other ideologies that either exploit or exclude and deny the rights of girls, women and children and are contrary to the dignity and human rights of persons.

² Fratelli-Tutti Paragraphs 176 – 182

³ Doctrine of Discovery – see: <https://www.ncronline.org/news/opinion/ncr-today/indian-nations-ask-pope-francis-rescind-doctrine-discovery>

Every region, country, and unit has its own history and we as a Congregation hold a history that may have carried unintended injustices towards others. Today the congregation must address internal systems and structures that perpetuate injustices toward Members, Partners in Mission and Program Participants.

The ministry issues, as framed in our 6 position papers require a deepening of knowledge so as to be integrated into strategic plans, be concretized with specific commitment, and given local expression in local realities within direct service with concerted advocacy.

The GSIJPO Evaluation Report completed in December 2019 and the Report in the Chapter document pages 43 - 45 including Next Steps and Critical Questions are all indicators of the way forward. The evaluation report notes that the GSIJPO fulfills 'an essential role in the Congregations' internal and external commitment to social justice and continues to be relevant regardless of the challenges it faces.'⁴ More detailed attention is required to equipping the office for future and effective engagement.

I am fully open to how the revelation of this might be expressed and operationalized into the future. The vision and mission of the GSIJPO are well articulated but the strategies, collaboration with GSIF and resources towards improved and efficient engagement in policy, advocacy and training on all levels are lacking.

Focus question:

What is your opinion – does the GSIJPO fulfill an essential role in the Congregations' internal and external commitment to social justice despite current limitations?

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Winifred Doherty

⁴ Evaluation of the Good Shepherd International Justice and Peace Office (GSIJPO) Page 22
<https://winifredd.files.wordpress.com/2021/09/gsiipo-evaluation-report-final-.pdf>