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In July, a group of about 40 members of the global Carmelite family gathered for the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) Congress held this year in Fatima, Portugal. These caring Carmelites spent the week studying, reflecting, praying and planning around various concerns related to justice, peace and ecology. A particular focus was on Pope Francis' Encyclical,

Laudato Si'.

Laudato Si' was published two years ago and though it has been referred to as the Pope's statement on climate change, it is, in fact, a wide-ranging letter to the faithful and to all people of good will regarding not only the climate, but on the environment broadly and on social concerns related to consumerism, social inequality, and our responsibility for each other and the planet.



2017 Carmelite JPIC Congress Participants

As Francis tells us, we are called "to hear the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth." It is in that spirit that we gathered in Fatima to discern how best we can hear and respond to those cries.

At the Congress we heard of the fine work of members of the Carmelite family that is already being done in places like Zimbabwe and Spain and countries around the world. These efforts include working with victims of human trafficking, educating others on the threats posed by the changing climate and what we need to do, and working to build bridges of understanding between cultures and classes with a goal to eradicate poverty and to promote equitable and sustainable development. Certainly the Carmelite NGO, an international organization that represents the Carmelite Family at the UN, is an illustration of the on-going commitment of the Carmelites to foster social, economic and environmental justice in the world.

We further discussed what more each of us can do to care for our common home, which includes caring for each other and for our planet, God's Creation. The JPIC Congress participants, in our final message, issued this call: "We...recommend to Carmelite Family leaders - Superior Generals, Provincials and local superiors - to support the creation of viable JPIC structures from local community levels to work hand in hand with the international JPIC commission. These organs will help spearhead local responses to the many social justice issues calling for involvement and commitment."



We invite all of you, our readers, supporters and friends, to join in the vital expression of our faith, which is the work for justice and peace.

To learn more, we invite you to regularly check the Carmelite NGO website: www.carmelitengo.org. Also, please take a look at our Facebook page and "like" us: www.facebook.org/TheCarmeliteNGO. Among other things on the Facebook page you will find the full text of the final statement of the Carmelite JPIC Congress.