In light of the last elections

April and May have been elections months. Voting makes part of the ordinary practice of suffrage in a representative democracy. Elected candidacies immediately enjoy legitimacy on their origin, and even represent people that did not vote for them.

These candidacies face the challenge of reaching legitimacy to exert the represented functions, as well as to promote from their duties and competences, the common good and Human Rights.

As Pope Francis claimed in his Message for this year’s World Day of Peace: “Political office and political responsibility thus constantly challenge those called to the service of their country to make every effort to protect those who live there and to create the conditions for a worthy and just future. If exercised with basic respect for the life, freedom and dignity of persons, political life can indeed become an outstanding form of charity.”

We hope to congratulate at the end of the term each elected candidate for:

a) Their commitment for achieving a better and fairer world.
b) Being able to discuss about the pillars of respect and education with those who represent political parties, companies, labor unions and all social organizations included the religious ones.
c) Not marginalizing nor excluding anyone.
d) Its capacity to listen.
e) Answering to people’s hopes dedicated to justice.
f) Welcoming what builds and relates to the necessities of society as complex as the current ones.
g) Dedicating themselves with ardor to the construction of a society in which can flourish without any fear the human dignity, personal freedom – also the religious one – in which, within the absolute respect of the human personality, attitudes and personal resources can be developed.
h) Creating a better world, fighting against inhuman situations that afflict us such as hunger, poverty, unemployment, precariousness, inequality, injustice, lack of solidarity and the destruction of the environment.

It won’t be an easy journey. It requires great virtues: irreproachable professional awareness, a deep understanding of the concept of duty, a perfect intellectual and moral honesty, together with a constant perseverance and fidelity.

In this moment, we must remember the “Beatitudes of the Politician”, proposed by the Vietnamese Cardinal François-Xavier Nguyên Van Thuấn, former president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace: “Blessed be the politician with a lofty sense and deep understanding of his role. Blessed be the politician who personally exemplifies credibility. Blessed be the politician who works for the common good and not his or her own interest. Blessed be the politician who remains consistent. Blessed be the politician who works for unity. Blessed be the politician who works to accomplish radical change. Blessed be the politician who is capable of listening. Blessed be the politician who is without fear.”

We highlight three important areas that take part in our mission:

Social justice and respect of human rights: dignity and human life, unemployment, precariousness, world hunger, migrations, health and wellbeing, quality education, decent work, strong institutions, industry and innovation development, reduction of inequalities, gender equality and the fight against all types of discrimination, included the religious one.

The environment: terrestrial ecosystem life, underwater life, affordable and non-polluting energy, clear water and its sanitation, sustainable cities and communities, responsible production and consumption, action for climate.

Global peace, stopping arms exportations to war-torn and armed conflict areas.

The work in these areas does not only regard elected candidacies, but also all people and social organizations. Also, we, entities of the Church, are called to keep a strong commitment for justice.

« Authentic political life, grounded in law and in frank and fair relations between individuals, experiences renewal whenever we are convinced that every woman, man and generation brings the promise of new relational, intellectual, cultural and spiritual energies. » (World Day of Peace, 2019, 5).

In the month of April, during the celebration of our yearly journeys, we thought about Europe towards the common good and peace but keeping a firm view on the 26th of May. We are aware that the European project is the result of important efforts that were necessary to start a period of peace after the ruins and pain that left totalitarian regimes and war. Justice and Peace knows: « there is no other way than reinforcing links, collaboration and solidarity between the people of Europe, in a context of common human family, and on the horizon of the construction of a civilization of love. From our Christian being, we reaffirm the commitment to contribute to this great challenge, by trying the disseminate in the world and its wounds, the fresh water of the Gospel in order to bring hope and peace».

And this is how every person can bring its own stone for the construction of the common house. Our societies need art peace experts, committed with the wellbeing and happiness of the human family.

Fco. Javier Alonso Rodríguez
President, GCJP

# 48 FIFTH STAGE

2019

GLOBAL PEACE, STOPPING ARMS EXPORTATIONS TO WAR-TORN AND ARMED CONFLICT AREAS.

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Fco. Javier Alonso Rodríguez
President, GCJP
ENVIRONMENT AND ASYLUM

People that move due to environmental reasons are not officially recognized as refugees.

The World Environment Day was held on the 5th of June, and on the 20th of the same month the World Refugee Day took place. Both days are related, as we learned from the encyclical Laudato si’. Everything is connected as we also celebrated in the vigil prayer of “Connect yourself for Justice”.

Till now, the UN only recognizes the status of refugee to those that are forced to move for violent reasons, that flee armed conflicts or that are pursued for different matters.

There are nearly thirty million refugees in the world, and contrary to what is commonly assumed, rich countries are not the ones opening their doors to welcome them. According to Amnesty International, the world’s top 10 refugee host countries are: Turkey (3.5 million), Jordan (2.9 million), Lebanon, Pakistan and Uganda (1.4 million each of them). Germany, Bangladesh, Iran, Ethiopia and Sudan host – each of them – less than one million. It is also surprising to know the countries that host the most per 1,000 inhabitants. At the top, with a big difference from the rest of the countries, appears Lebanon (174 people), followed by Jordan, Turkey, Uganda, Chad, Sweden, South Sudan, Malta and Djibouti, this last one with 18 people.

According to ACCEM (Spanish Association Catholic Commission of Migration), Spain receives mostly asylum seekers from Venezuela, Colombia, Syria, Honduras and Salvador. This tendency could vary in 2019 due to the new flow of Nicaraguans asking to enter in our country as refugees. With the right of asylum, a special status is granted which entails a series of rights that guarantee security and life conditions in the welcoming country.

Unfortunately, despite the Holy See and other organizations and institutions’ insistence, people that move for environmental reasons are not officially recognized as refugees, a situation that continues to surprise since serious adverse climatic conditions such as extreme droughts, hurricanes, floods… also create violence. It is difficult to estimate the number of people displaced for this reason, since they do not have the official status recognized. It was estimated to be around 25 million last year, and it will continue to increase. If we do not fight effectively climate change and global warming, there will be more and more people fleeing their places of origin and forced to find a safer place for them and their families.

UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme) foresees there will be around 200 million displaced people due to environmental reasons for the year 2050. This data is no exaggeration: due to climate change, many islands (especially from the Pacific) will experience a rise of the seas and oceans’ level, leading to their partial or total coverage. This will push their inhabitants to flee towards other places. Most of the big cities in the world are located by the coast, and their population does not cease to grow. The rise of the sea level will hinder life there. The most vulnerable zones to rain will be the in the tropical area of South America, the center-occidental region of Africa, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Philippines, the Caribbean. These are also regions that lack resources to fight climate change.

Regarding water scarcity, countries around the Sahel, central Asia, South Africa, Madagascar, China, Mongolia, the Peruvian coast, the northern coast of Chile, northern Mexico, southwest of the USA… will suffer stronger and more frequent droughts than the currents ones. The Iberian Peninsula and more specifically the south and southeast of Spain will also be affected.

Each year wars, climate change and poverty cause millions of displaced people, which do not move voluntarily, but are forced under situations of physic, economic or environmental violence exerted against them. It is a complicated travel and when they reach their destination, most of the times, they encounter rejection and incomprehension. If we had a fraternal vision, feeling them as inhabitants of the common house, we would ensure their shelter both personally and institutionally.

For the year 2050, there will be around 200 million displaced people due to environmental reasons (UNEP)

Jesus himself teaches us (cf. Mt 9,35-36; 14,13-14; 15,32-37) to feel compassion, recognizing the sufferance of the other and acting to relieve, heal and save. Feeling compassion means giving space to tenderness, which often the current society asks us to repress. “Opening ourselves to others does not lead to impoverishment, but rather enrichment, because it enables us to be more human: to recognize ourselves as participants in a greater collectivity and to understand our life as a gift for others: to see as the goal not our own interests, but rather the good of humanity” (World Day of the Migrant and Refugee, 2019)

ISABEL CUBENCA ANAYA
Secretary-General, GCJP
An encounter under the motto “The common good and our common seas” took place in Copenhagen during the 3rd, 4th and 5th of May. It was organized by Justice and Peace of Europe with the collaboration of the Dicastery For Promoting Integral Human Development, Stella Maris (The Apostleship of the Sea) and the Global Catholic Climate Movement. On this occasion, Pope Francis sent a message read by Cardinal Turkson, in which he shared the hope of opening paths that, with solidarity and fraternal concern, looking to most vulnerable people, will help as support to coastal communities and to those whose lives have been affected due to unjust exploitation of the seas, criminal manipulation of maritime industries and the scourge of human trafficking. The Pope asks for a more interdisciplinary scope and for a dialogue that promotes effective answers to difficulties that appear with climate change and injustices that creates unsustainable development. Some issues were treated to the light of Laudato Si’ such as climate change, overexploitation of fishing grounds, human rights of the people working on vessels, seas’ pollution, the loss of biodiversity, reduction of living surfaces on the Pacific islands due to sea level rise...

It was also stressed the big potential that seas represent to produce renewable energy. They have proved great advances, which gives us hope in our idea of a world without fossil fuels.

During the Conference, it was highlighted the issue of plastic dumping into seas and oceans as well as chemical products, heavy metals, waste waters... All this seriously weakens aquatic ecosystems and hence threatens life within them. Coastal zones are of paramount importance, where most of sea creatures live and whose survival relies on the good environmental conditions of these areas. In order to avoid all this, it was pointed out the need to reach supranational agreements that reinforce international governance of seas and at the same time promote a blue sustainable economy.

The next COP summit will be held in Chile and has to be a turning point in taking better care of our seas and in the fight against climate change.

**The common good and our common seas**

Prioritize people to eliminate indecent job insecurity

With the celebration of May, the 1st, promotion bodies of the Spanish initiative “Church for a Decent Work” (known by its acronym ITD in Spanish) – Cáritas, Spanish Conference of Religious (CONFER), Working Fraternity of Catholic Action (HOAC), Justice and Peace, Catholic Student Youth (JEC) and Christian Working Youth (JOC) - have united their voices for the second consecutive year with the aim to “celebrate the creator sense of work” and call for the eradication of the “scourge of job insecurity that marks the current system of labor relations and that wounds the workers and their families’ rights.

The ITD called in all Spain for a tight schedule of activities and public mobilization requiring a decent work according to the dignity of all people. We are highly pleased for the eco that such act has reached, for its spread, for the number and quality of published articles and for the presence in the media, television, press and radio.

The manifest “By prioritizing people we eliminate indecent job insecurity”, elaborated in conjunction with this celebration dedicated to those who work and to St. Joseph the Worker, we remind ourselves that “decent work, which makes part of the Sustainable Development Goals, is an essential element for social justice and the cohesion of all humanity”.

Likewise, we denounced the severe consequences unleashed by job insecurity in “the youth plunged in a chronic poverty that preclude a life project”, in “the families whose basic needs are not ensured or covered such as dwelling, light, food, clothes or medicines” and in “elderly people that suffer a poor - quality old age due to unworthy pensions.”

In addition we stressed that “work is essential for people's lives because it helps build our humanity”, and for this reason the organizations demanded, to “those who represent us in politics -rulers and economic powers-, rights that are basic to the building of a society whose meaning and function serve the common good”. Underlining one subject pointed out by International Labor Organization in its centenary celebration, ITD organizations propose “a program focused on people and based on investment in the capacities of individuals, labor institutions and a decent and sustainable work.”
The National Congress of Lay people is already well under way and it will be held in Madrid from 14th to 16th February of 2020. Its motto is “God’s people go forth”. Its holding was approved at the Plenary Assembly of the Spanish Episcopal Conference (CEE) in April 2018, the Episcopal Commission of Secular Apostolate has assumed the full responsibility of its organization. The Congress insist on the presence and the prominence of the laity in today’s Church and will be structured in three steps: the first one being currently in progress. From the document questionnaire elaborated by the Commission, any lay person belonging to groups, communities, movements or individually, can work in the diocese of the three main Congress blocks for later bring their contributions to what will constitute the Congress work document. In a second step, we will attend to its celebration, thinking in groups about its four fundamental itineraries: first proclamation, accompaniment, formative processes and presence in public life. Moreover, the Encounter will relate to two transversal issues: synodality and discernment. Finally, in the third phase we will see revealed the specific proposals as well as main lines of action to foster and invigorate laity.

Connect yourself for justice

Encouraging lay actions

The Pious School of Terrassa hosted on June the 1st the Annual Gathering of the Catalan-Balearic Commissions of Justice and Peace. The two main topics of the meeting were frustration and hope in the political practice. Most of the society feels frustrated due to corruption, clientelism, the thirst for power, the fight of egos, constant confrontation, the politics of show, the feeling that specific problems are not solved nor listened, institutions’ bureaucratization and a great deficit of representativeness. It is true that we often tend to have excessive expectancy on politicians, waiting for them to solve issues that are instead individuals and/or affected collectives’ responsibility. From the Christian humanism, we put our hope on a type of politics to the service of the common good, inspired on four fundamental values: 1) the truth, essential for human relations to be authentic and respectful with the dignity of groups and people, 2) freedom, inherent to each people and individual’s dignity and singularity, 3) Justice, which recognizes “the other” as an individual with dignity and rights, and 4) love as a supreme and universal criteria of all social ethic, which assumes justice and presents people in a fraternal way, feeling their needs as ours.

Easter season started with a reflection meeting on April the 25th, in which eleven dioceses participated to share the lived experiences in Connect yourself for Justice, to strengthen networking and setting criteria for common decision-making. Another common diocesan action is the annual vigil, in which they invite to pray from the Amazonia as a mirror of humanity and starting to introduce October’s synod. On the occasion of the World Environment Day on June the 5th, the Campaign has published new material in which our daily habits are linked to poverty that is created in different places on earth. This time #ConectaMóvilPobreza (in English Connect Phone Poverty) reveals the dark side of our mobile phones, denouncing social and environmental abuses that are committed during the fabrication process as well as in our daily use of such devices. The fourth anniversary of Laudato si’ was celebrated on May the 25th, and the Pope encouraged the fight against climate change before it is too late. Yurimaguas (Peru)- the city of the Campaign’s cooperation project- was the 7.5 magnitude earthquake’s epicentre on May the 26th. Its Vicariate has offered channels of support for more than 900 affected people. They ask us to change at a local level for the defence of life, earth, and cultures.

ICAN: Campaña Don’t Bank on the Bomb

Between January 2017 and January 2019, 325 financial institutions from 28 countries invested 748 billion dollars in top 18 companies involved in the nuclear weapons industry. Only 10 institutions are accountable of more than 50% of such investments. Governmental contracts and investments in the private sector for nuclear weapons industries have increased since Trump assumed the presidency. This contrasts with the almost 100 financial institutions that divested in the production of nuclear weapons over the last year. Institutions such as ABP, KBS and Swedish pension funds are no longer on the list of investors. This is due to the expected entry into force of the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which renders illegal all activity linked to nuclear weapons, even investments. It also opposes to customers and shareholders towards such risky investments. There is an increasing interest to know where the money is really invested. Nowadays, it is estimated that almost 25% of all world’s wealth is invested in a socially responsible way.

www.icanw.org Summary briefing, June 2019

Spanish Commission for Justice and Peace

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General Commission for Justice and Peace

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