

## LET US SING! MUSIC AND JPIC

Patricia E. Grace, OFS  
JPIC Animator St. Francis Region

The People of God Sing. These words are a powerful reminder that music is so very much part of our worship of our Lord. We praise Him, give Him thanks, and call out to Him for His help. Throughout scripture, there are references to music. As early as the Exodus story, people sang to the Lord. The Psalms are songs in and of themselves, and St. Paul taught us:

“...and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns,  
And spiritual songs to God.” Col.3: 16

Music has also been an integral part of movements for social justice and peace. We are all familiar with the spiritual songs that comforted and guided the slaves through their striving for freedom. Then, during the Civil Rights movement of the 60's, we gathered throughout the country, peacefully marching, and singing “Woke Up This Morning with My Mind Set on Freedom.” And those who walked behind the casket of Dr. Martin Luther King, and I among them, sang “We Shall Overcome.” The Peace Movement brought us words of encouragement and vision, asking us to consider “how many times must the cannon balls fly before they are forever banned (Blowing in the Wind, Bob Dylan) and encouraging those who seek peace to “sing louder than the guns.” (Guess I Have to Do It While I'm Here, Phil Ochs).

Music holds a vision for us, animates a desire within us to serve that vision, expresses our shared values, invites us to act in accordance with those values and that vision. How privileged we are to have a long justice tradition within our Catholic Faith so succinctly and beautifully expressed in Catholic Social Teaching. How privileged we are to have composers, musicians, and worship leaders who get us to our knees to pray and then to our feet to act, aligning our rhythms to the beat of God's heart.

In our recent Spirituality and JPIC gathering on Prayer and JPIC (January 30, 2021), the music gave form and shape to the perimeters of our presentations. We began by listening to “Be Thou My Vision” (Audrey Assad) sending our prayers to our Loving Lord, seeking guidance, and imploring Him to be our Vision for JPIC. We invited the song by Brother Ruffino, OFM, “Sacred Creation” to conclude our reflection and prayers for creation, and his song awakened a truth that lies within us that all of creation is sacred. We ended our four-part gathering singing along with our Franciscan brothers as they sang “We Want to Follow Jesus Like Him” (Bruder Philipp). How blessed we are to have God's gift of music.

Let us join voices, sisters and brothers, and sing our vision to the world.

Peace and All Good, Patricia