Peacemaking in the Franciscan Tradition
Objectives

- To situate the conference theme, Leaders: Catalysts for Peace, within the Franciscan Tradition

- To use the writings and actions of Francis and Clare to demonstrate how they were Catalysts for Peace in their own historical context

- To explore the understanding of peacemaking beyond that of a strategy that one uses in certain circumstances

- To invite the reflection and integration of Franciscan Peacemaking into one’s ministry
Francis’ Early Life

Significant events which influenced his understanding of violence and peace:

- Prisoner of War
- Sickness (Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome, Malaria)
- Dream at Spoleto
- Kissing the Leper
- Hearing the voice of Christ from the San Damiano Cross: “Go repair my house…”
The Writings of St. Francis

The Testament

“The Lord revealed a greeting to me that we should say: ‘May the Lord give you peace.’” –23

Earlier Rule

“And into whatever house they enter, let them first say: Peace to this house.” --Chapter XIV

Admonition XV and XXVII

“The true peacemakers are those who preserve peace of mind and body for the love of our Lord Jesus Christ despite what they suffer in the world”... “where there is inner peace and meditation there is neither anxiousness or dissipation.”
The Writings of St. Francis

“The Canticle of the Creatures”

“Blessed are those who endure in peace”

“The Canticle of Exhortation for the Ladies of San Damiano” (1225)

“Those who are weighed down by sickness and the others who are wearied because of them, all of you: bear it in peace.”
“The Earlier Rule” and “The Later Rule”

To summarize these two rules we can say:

- The brothers were not to own any property.
- The brothers were not to exercise leadership and dominance over each other and over others.
- The brothers were to see themselves as nothing much except for the grace of God.
- The brothers were called to love of neighbor and love of enemy.
- They were called to see others – including Muslims – as part of God’s world.
- They were invited to see the whole created world – both the social world and the natural world – as reflecting the image of the incarnate Son of God.
Peace as a Way of Life and a Gift of Grace

“As you preach peace by word, so you should also possess peace, and superabundant peace in your hearts. Anger no one, nor vex anyone; but by your meekness urge others to be peaceful, meek and merciful. For we are called to heal the wounded, to succor the injured, and to bring back the erring to the ways of righteousness.”

--The Legend of the Three Companions
Francis Negotiating Peace

Boff: the wolf of Gubbio as a metaphor
- In Assisi: Bishop and Mayor
- In Arezzo
- In Perugia
- In Siena
- In Bologna
What Francis Did

1221: Sultan, Malik al-Kamil

- M.H. Crosby: Francis moved “from a violence-based approach to Islam, to a respectful way of dialoguing with it.”

His approach to creation and the environment

- W.J. Short: for Francis, all creatures reflected “the face of the beloved Son.” And all things “bear the traces of him [Christ].”
- Bonaventure: Francis saw a “universal reconciliation with each and everything” and “perceived a heavenly harmony in all things.”
St. Clare of Assisi

The Privilege of Poverty

Clare’s Rule

- The sisters brought together to consult
- The beauty and fragility of each person was to be embraced without distinction. The youngest, newest member had the same right to speak as had every other sister.
- Inclusive, respectful relationships based in mutuality is what was valued.

Clare repelled invaders both at San Damiano and in the city of Assisi by non-violence.
Franciscan Peacemaking

- Peacemaking is at the heart of the Gospel.
- I. Delio: Peacemaking involves the rejection of all forms of “dominion theology.”
  - Celano: “only a wounded body can bring about peace.”
  - L. Boff: the urge to dominate and to have power over others is present in all of us.
- Francis created a “fraternal” order; undermined the potential of the misuse of power inherent in all forms of hierarchy.
- Franciscan asceticism is inherently oriented towards peacemaking.
- A rejection for the “vice of detraction”
- The Franciscan way is a “disarmament of the heart.”
For Reflection

- How do you understand your role in leadership as being that of a peacemaker?
- How have you concretely been a peacemaker?
- What are some areas within your ministry where there is a lack of peace? Can you think of a way to bring peace to those situations?
- What encounters with other people in ministry have invited you to a deeper level of peacemaking?
- What are the attitudes, emotions, skills...you need for peacemaking in your ministry?
- What have you heard that will help you live and act differently in response to the invitation to be a peacemaker?

“I have done what is mine; may Christ teach you what is yours.” 2C 214