

Telling our good news: Paulo Ueti, Theological Adviser and Latin America Regional Director of The Anglican Alliance & **Budi Tjahjono** Advocacy Trainer for Franciscans International
Sunday 10th and Monday 11th September

Paulo- Sunday 10 Sept

Luke's community 24.13-35 – Text is probably from 2nd century Christian community and was not included in the original, but it is a catechetical text, encouraging the Christian community not to be drawn into the power struggles of the Roman Church and civic hierarchy. So it is a protest text.

Greeting – 'I see you' - it is way of saying I love you, in the sense of agape love.

Second part: How are you?

For 45 mins in groups of three, greet one another with 'I see you' and pause, then ask 'How are you?'

Paulo - After the small groups

The first thing that Jesus did in the Luke reading was to 'approach' – ie to move, to go towards the situation, to be present. 'How are you?'

Then stay for a while. May have to ask again, 'How are you?' We also need to shut up, to listen. When we ask, who holds knowledge, who does theology?

Matthew 18 – Jesus speaks to the leadership of the church because they are not behaving well. If someone will not be reconciled and /or listen, Jesus does not say, 'Exclude this person', he says 'treat them like a sinner or tax collector' – which is to be more welcoming, more hospitable, being there silently, not abandon them. This is living out the good news.

In Hebrew, there is no title of 'almighty' for God. It is a word from the imperial (ie Roman) world. We are Jesus' followers. Which Jesus? Jesus the 'friend', your equal (John's gospel) or Jesus as the King of Kings? (and other titles that are emperor's titles – all except 'son of Man' are titles that Jesus uses/is described by). Titles like 'prince of peace', Son of God, etc are titles of Emperor.

Paulo – Monday, 11 September

The Bible does not 'say' anything, and we need to remember also that we are always reading in translation – even the 'original' language is a translation.

Gospel of Mark – is in two parts, and the middle of the gospel is chapter 8 when Jesus goes up a mountain – before then, he is healing, changing peoples' lives, preaching and teaching. Chap 8 – Jesus asks, 'Who do people say that I am?' – Who do *you* think I am? Peter says 'You are the Messiah'. But what is the Messiah? What are his characteristics? Peter chose the right word, but did not have the right understanding. Jesus told them three times about what was going to happen – I am going to suffer/ be tortured/ etc three times, but he got no empathy from his closest friends, because the idea they had of a Messiah was different.

In Mark, at another time when Jesus says he will suffer, the disciples want to know who will be the privileged ones/ prime minister / the top dog. Not the servants. The disciples are not good models – they wanted to have power over, like the emperor.

The text of Luke ... on journey to Emmaus, says that Cleopas and his companion were not able to *recognise* the person with them as Jesus; they were looking for someone to

overthrow the system so that they (Jews) could be the oppressors/ the 'king'/ in authority. Jesus says to Cleopas, Why did you not understand? – why do you have no brain?/ are you brainless?

In Luke, 10 chapters out of 24 are about the journey. Luke 9.52-19 – all about methodology, how to be a disciple.

During Advent, we read Isaiah 1-39 – the prince of peace, the one who will take over the power to serve the people. The disciples were reading the bible, but were not actually listening to Jesus – they could not see Jesus. – hence Peter's denial, Judas's betrayal, the use of power. Disciples - why should we feed these people? Send them away, not our problem; Syro-phoenician woman who is calling out to Jesus to heal her daughter – the disciples say to send her away (same word as for 5,000).

Image is important ie what comes to mind when we hear a word. Francis/ Franciscans – what is our image, what is other people's image? What is our image of Jesus?

Isaiah – Messiah as son of David, but this is not actually the dominant image in the book of Isaiah. And David was a horrible person! – not a good image at all to be followed. Monarchy is portrayed in Old Testament as original sin – replace God by a person – eg Genesis 3.

Isaiah 40-66 – not about David and monarchy, and is a better image of Messiah - not someone who is rich, powerful, male...

Woman in the gospel – with the bleeding – she reached out and touched Jesus' robes. She was a powerful woman, as she had struggled for 12 years – but she did not give up. What was her process for healing? She stood up, she listened, she moved; she most likely had friends to help her to get to Jesus, she was not alone, she was in community: process of healing was by resilience, with a conspiring community. The 'good news' is a person, Jesus; but Jesus is a figure in dispute – ie how we understand Jesus: we have choices about how we understand him/ who we see.

The word 'crowd' is a problem in Mark – it is usually men, but it may be others.

Theology starts by sharing stories, by asking people, 'How are you?' and getting an honest answer. Jesus as suffering servant/ Messiah does not open the eyes of the disciples to recognise Jesus. Bible gives us capacity for being more resilient. But what opened the eyes of the disciples? – invitation, welcome, sharing at the table – sharing resources. The Christian word is 'sharing'; 'gift' is not about connection/relationship; sharing is about relationship, needing to talk together about how to use something.

We are part of the healing process. We embody Jesus, esp when 2 or 3 are together. How did Jesus get from being among friends (circle) serving and sharing bread and wine, to the powerful priest, robed and apart from the people, out of the circle – distant, rich, powerful, privileged, who only a few people can actually approach?

Deut. 23 – says that the camp needs to be clean because God will walk among you – he visits you, walks among you – he is *with* you. 12 tribes of Israel - only 11 had land, the Levites had the ark, and they visited the tribes with the ark, so God walked among them, not like other cultures where God was distant. But when Solomon builds the temple and the ark goes into the temple, it is hidden, so only one person (priest) can visit God, no one else has access to God.

John's gospel – Jesus says call me friends, not master/ king with disciples in a servant or slave relationship.

Gospel of John – written as a way of fighting against a church that was becoming more hierarchical, influenced by imperial (Roman) concepts.

John 2 – wedding at Cana – Mary is actually bossing Jesus and the servants (the *doulos*, ie the deacons) – so this is a church structure, and Mary is a bishop/ boss/episcopus/ overseer. She knew that the wine had run out and she was fixing what had gone wrong. She made a strategy, she involved others, she did not do it all herself – good model of episcopacy – cf Clement at Alexandria – imperial model of church community.

So the monasteries started appearing in the second century, portraying a different model of church, being community, not imperial; here, you do not have power. We are connected to you, but here we do things differently – we try to follow Jesus the suffering servant, not the king/ emperor. Can we understand hierarchy as a way of ministering, not of power over?

So in Luke at Emmaus – the disciples recognise Jesus, and then they get renewed energy – they were happy, and although it was evening, they ran back to Jerusalem to tell the other disciples the good news.

Paulo, later on Monday morning: wrap up

Jesus says we should be kind, *see one another*, sharing, listening, be people of hope and resurrection; acknowledge the suffering may be a part of our choices but not as a requirement to fulfil our mission – be careful about theology of suffering that is negative; suffering is not ok.

We need to be annoying, not always polite; make people embarrassed if they are not doing justice; be disruptive (may need to be careful about that); challenge systems of privilege; be passionate, possibly transgressive (because of love) – sometimes breaking the law is justice; be counter-cultural at times – some of the things in our culture need to be changed; be transformative; engage in dialogue; use imagination, re-imagine; diversity, plurality – we need to live with people we do not agree with.

We need to compromise sometimes, so we need to learn where we need to compromise; we need to be cynical, in a good sense. In the gospel, the woman who wanted her daughter healed, and Jesus said to her that it was not right to take the children's food and give it to the dogs. But she was an educated woman. She used a particular kind of teaching method and in effect said that she was not a dog, that was Jesus' way of looking at her, but she would still get the bread. So she got what she needed, and Jesus changed, too – he did not own the bread.

Be joyful, and graceful in terms of theology – Jesus' theology of grace, restoration; change our retributive theology,

Usual conversion process is: I repent and change and then God forgives me/ gives me gifts. Restorative theology says we are loved, and then because we are loved, we change.

Religious life is pivotal for theology.

Budi: Sunday 10 September

Franciscans International – living theology in the secular world. There is a challenge some times, not to moralize, or get involved with ethical issues. But FI at the UN still tells the good news of Jesus in the frame of international human rights law.

Budi worked in Philippines in 2018 –He met a lady called Ninny Mannel; she lives in a poor neighbourhood in Manila. Her oldest son, 21 yrs old, was about to go to Dubai to work, but 2

weeks before his departure he was shot by the security forces of the Philippines, accused of using drugs (which he did not do). This was because the President of Philippines, when he was elected, took the stance of a war on drugs. But over 30,000 people plus have been killed by security forces, not all connected with drugs as the policy has been used by people who the leaders of the community do not like – they can accuse people without come back. Also, the ‘war’ does not recognise that people use and trade drugs because of the poverty. Ninny Mannel came to the Franciscans and said, ‘I want justice for my son’. There were other families of victims of unjust killings, too.

Ramon lives in Mexico. He works at a centre in Mexico near border with Guatemala. Lots of people walk from Honduras and other parts of central America to try to get to the US – escape from poverty, organised crime, and unpredictable weather that means that their crops are failing. They face lots of dangers – rape, robbery, violence/ beating. Ramon set up a centre to provide water and food, and safety for women and children so that they can sleep in peace for a few weeks. FI asked to help there.

Mozambique – town in the north of the country, has many metal resources. Therefore conflict with Muslim para-military group and others competing for access to the mines. The local people are displaced by violence in order to make it easier for the mining companies to come in and exploit the resources. Tens of thousands of people are displaced in northern Mozambique. FI was called in to help. But FI is not a problem solver; they can be their voice at the UN. But at the UN, there is a sort of competition as to whose situation is the worst, and it is not easy to get other governments to notice the needs of people in Mozambique.

So FI challenged to respond to these situations, and yet not to provide false hope. What is their role? – How to tell the good news [of Jesus], and know that they are not the only ones to tell this.

Back to Ninny in Manila – she said that she was afraid to speak up, but she needed to bring this atrocity to the community. FI sat with her, and offered to help her to give testimony at the United Nations. FI’s work at the UN will not have impact if the victims do not speak. This led to discussion with Philippines authorities about the real life experience of people, not just ‘we take note of the report’, as the people want action; Ninny feels that her son’s death was not in vain. In the 30,000 deaths, there have been only 2 cases that had convictions.

With the new president, Marcos Junior – extra-judicial killings increased in number.

In Mexico, hundreds of people come every day and the capacity of the centre is limited (to about 100) but the work of FI has brought out the fact that in international law, the Mexican government has responsibility to provide safety for all people in Mexico. And in the countries the people on the move come from, it has highlighted the responsibilities of those governments to address the root problems of why they leave, especially organised crime and human rights violence, as people are often afraid to speak up when they are victims of crime. So FI provides training in speaking up for human rights defenders; and it addresses the spiritual needs of people. There is one place on the Mexico–Guatemala border where people say Mass together (ie at the same time) on both sides of the river that is the border. ‘People on the move’/ ‘caravan’ of people moving from one place to another along the way – at one point there were more than 10,000 people, mostly women with children, moving northwards towards Mexico/ United States.

In Mozambique – help businesses to get benefits to local people; FI has been working to get international recognition of legal responsibilities of businesses re human rights.

While the people who are the 'victims' of these situations understand that FI cannot solve their problems, the people feel that they are being listened to, and that they do have some tools to address the situation. They feel that they are not abandoned – the issue is kept alive, and keeps being worked at - solidarity. This is international advocacy work. FI also keeps accountability to the local community; it is a long term process.

At the UN, FI needs to find the diplomat who has a link with the issue that is raised – otherwise there is no interest/ concern/ way of changing the situation.

Mozambique – a RC sister from there will speak in Geneva next month, and start to raise awareness. This is long term work. Very few NGOs are interested in Mozambique.

Sri Lanka – looked like there might be a government that was better, but then the other family put back in power – Sinhalese Govt against Tamils; and Chinese investment – so FI felt that having made some steps forward, they have taken 6 steps backwards. So requires a lot of patience. Try to get people to work together.

Budi – Monday 11 September

– Franciscans International is about being community – we are *with* you; working with Franciscans, and sometimes on behalf of them, at the UN.

2011 in Solomon Islands – SSF and other religious orders, helped by FI, submitted a report to UN – the real conscience of the people. The high school near Hautambu was flooded and the cause was logging in the hills. So they worked together to look at the best kind of advocacy that would be helpful to the situation. Contacted their partners the Dominicans who are present in the Solomon Islands, so they and SSF worked together, on logging as the most important part of the problem.

Loggers are from other countries, and are male persons, so they employ young women to help in the house, and often there is also sexual exploitation that happens. Then when the loggers go, there is suddenly no support. When the logging companies employ local men to work for them, the men tend to buy alcohol and then domestic violence increases. So the problems around logging are not just to do with the clearance of the forest, and the bad effect that that also has on the rivers, and so on their crops and ability of villagers to build their houses. It is complex and at several levels.

The process of challenging this in the Solomons, via UN, was worked on by Zoom, using the work of the Dominicans and Franciscans. Follow up in October 2022, Budi and Christopher John and Dominicans with Worrick and Francis Ngofia, saw ships full of logs and talked with villagers affected by the problems. So FI trying to be accountable to the villagers – who also said, 'what next?'. It is a journey, and the needs staying power. Through the UN, SSF helps the government to understand its obligations and to implement them. Politically, Solomons is also worth keeping an eye on, as China is interested in it. Many small stores are owned by the Chinese. Behind the loggers is the Chinese government.

The next step in the process of preventing logging, will be to perform some dramas in the villages, to show them the possible outcomes of logging, as the loggers do not always tell the full truth about the effect of logging. So they will raise awareness of the dangers of logging, to people on other islands. Solomons is a case study for other countries.

FI – Franciscans' voice at the United Nations

Works with other groups, esp Dominicans, but also other Christian groups, and non-Christian, too – incl Anglican Communion, and WCC. UN is one of about 500 NGOs at the UN.

It will be historically important for FI to work under Blair's leadership as the President – that he is an Anglican and a lay person.

UN was founded in 1945 – a space where all the nations can meet together and talk together. FI has to work with other groups to achieve its goals.

Aims of UN: to safeguard world peace; ensuring compliance with international law; protecting of human rights; promoting international cooperation.

Declaration of Human Rights – 1948

Currently 193 member states – 2 states that are not members are Holy See and Palestine.

At the UN, it is one nation: one voice, so small countries feel they can be heard.

Unfortunately, some nations do not comply with UN decisions eg China in Philippines, not recognising international law re occupation of a couple of islands that should belong to Philippines.

Anglican Communion Forest - Christopher John

The 'Forest' is trying to map, over the world, what people are doing re forests – protection, reforestation etc. The maps will show what happens/ has happened to the forests/ trees over time. The brothers in Solomons are involved with the Forest; perhaps Hilfield could also get involved with it.