

**Message of the Fifth Franciscan Solidarity Seminar
January 2009, Belém, Pará, Brazilian Amazon.**

What is the motivation that drives our life?

We are writing from Belém, Pará, in the Brazilian Amazon, where we have come to participate in the fifth Franciscan Solidarity Seminar and the World Social Forum. We come from four continents and 15 countries, and have met from January 17th to February 1st. We have come to pray together, to share our countries' experiences and to reflect on our Franciscan way of life. Belém is the host city for this year's World Social Forum. We would like to share some of our thoughts with you on this process.

What is the motivation that drives our gospel life in the face of the enormous problems of the world? We have come to understand that the network that has made this Seminar possible is a basic and powerful relational tool for us. It will allow us to move beyond isolation and paralysis and become active agents of the profound changes that are demanded by the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.

The current prevailing economic system (neoliberal capitalism) is facing a profound structural crisis. We are experiencing a crisis of civilization which is expressing itself in the economic and financial crisis, in the environmental crisis, in the food crisis and in the energy crisis. These crises can lead to the disappearance of the human species.

We are strengthened by the new paradigms that are appearing in the world, especially in Latin America. They are signs of hope which nourish our presence and commitment in favor of the poor, in defense of life, of peace, and of environmental justice.

This moment of crisis is also a moment of grace:

- popular governments have been elected in various countries of Latin America.
- new forms of economic integration are being developed based on solidarity and equity.
- ancestral peoples, both indigenous and African, are strongly organizing themselves and offer a cosmivision that provides civilizing alternatives for understanding the world; they teach that we are not the center of the universe but part of it.
- there is a growing global movement that advocates that another world is possible.

These moments of grace assure us that alternatives are being developed, that they are viable and sustainable, and that many of them count on the presence of Franciscans.

We are celebrating the living memory of the 50th anniversary of the convocation of the Second Vatican Council by John XXIII, with his proposal for a church of the poor and for a project of solidarity. We recall this convocation in the context of the Eighth Centenary of the Franciscan movement. We commit ourselves with greater strength and conviction to its spirit of change and renewal.

We are convinced more than ever that the Franciscan charism, lived in a prophetic manner, is a special gift of God for this moment in time. We see that in many places of the world, this spirituality is joining with other forces of life as a clear sign that something new is being born. This sign of the times convokes us to a stronger, more creative and more tenacious way of networking that will bring us together and be translated into common action, based on the needs and challenges manifested on the local, regional, national and global levels.

We are neither saviors nor the sole protagonists of these changes. We are rather called to promote alliances other with movements, organizations, churches, religions and social sectors to place our strength at the service of God's plan which is already at work among us. (Lk. 11:20)

“See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?” (Is. 43:19)

“Let everyone rise up, let no one stay behind” (Popol Vuh, sacred book of the Maya people)

Peace and all good!