

ROMERO'S LEGACY 2
Faith in the City: Poverty, Politics, and Peacebuilding

Foreword by *Robert T. McDermott*

Edited by
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The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy

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FOREWORD

A VISION FOR AN URBAN PARISH: DANGEROUS MEMORY, HOPEFUL FUTURE, SERVANT CHURCH

ROBERT T. McDERMOTT

In 2001, I gave a presentation to a small group of staff and supporters at the Romero Center. I spoke about my Maryknoll-sponsored trip to Central America and the ideas it provoked for pastoral work in Camden. I was deeply moved by Archbishop Romero's story, his servant-leadership, his life and his death. His tragic execution at the altar is an image that stays with me. His blood, shed for his people, is mixed with the blood of Christ. That is part of the "dangerous memory" of Romero, but is also the eucharistic call to a hopeful future.

That presentation led to discussions about an annual lecture sponsored by Romero Center Ministries. The idea caught on and the Romero Lecture series was born. Through the years, the lectures have challenged us to focus, from a faith perspective, on the problems in our city, our country, and our church, and to seek new solutions. I tend to be an optimist, as I think all faithful Christians are called to be. However, in recent years—world wide—anxiety, even despair, seems to have grown abundantly, while hope has fallen on hard times. Even our faith perspective has been dulled by scandal within the Church.¹

ANXIETY, HOPE AND THE SUFFERING POOR

By no means do I want to give the impression that all change, all modern life is negative; too many good people are out there trying; too many good things are happening. Nonetheless, over the past thirty years, we have witnessed profound changes in our society, some very recent and detrimental: a dramatic increase in income and wealth inequality, the virtual control of regulatory policy by big business, the suppression of unions and organized labor, the continued growth and power of a national-security state, massive incarceration of poor African-American and Latino men, the Trayvon Martin tragedy, thousands of desperate children at our border, big money's growing control of our electoral politics, and the gutting of the Voter Rights Act. The city of Camden, one of America's poorest, is probably a prime example of collateral damage from these national and global trends. Most importantly, the poor are forgotten and the middle class stagnated. The "great chasm" between Lazarus and the

rich man in Luke 16, with its lament and warning, should give pause to all of us.

The linkage of the global and the local was made clear by the visit of the consciousness-raising national campaign “Nuns on the Bus” to St. Joseph’s in Camden.² That big bus in our school yard further opened our community and called us to deep reflection. How could we, in a wealthy, educated country, have failed so miserably on a jobs bill, immigration reform, gun control, outlawing—or at least limiting—drone attacks, cutting food programs for our poorest children, extending unemployment benefits for victims of economic depression, and climate change? I realize these problems are not simple, and solutions are complicated and often costly. However, in large measure, the poor suffer because of our political failure—our structural sins. What has happened to us as a people? Where do we stand as followers of Jesus of Nazareth?

In spite of the negative litany I have just run off, there are signs of hope. I remain an optimist. For example, we need to give the Affordable Health Care Act the chance and time to succeed; it needs to succeed. The recent debates about income and wealth inequality have, at least, provided space for discussion about the need to raise the minimum wage and perhaps even to start talking about a “living wage.” It is, indeed, a mockery of Gospel values, and Catholic Social Teaching to think that a person can work full time in the richest country in the world and still not be able to support herself, much less, feed a family. Today, more than 46 million people in America live below the official poverty line.³ Nonetheless, there are still signs of hope. Proponents of immigration reform are still hard at work and are not giving up. And, I, for one, refuse to give in or give up on finding a way to reduce gun violence. Too many young, innocent children and young people are dying from our raging epidemic of gun disease.

We, as church, need to pull out all stops to overcome the crippling ideological divisions that rule our politics, and at times, even our church. A just wage, immigration reform, affordable housing, gun control, and school nutrition programs are not just political and economic issues; they are moral demands. The people of Camden are the victims of these social-structural sins. We must find the way to transcend partisanship, put issue over party, and solve problems.

For me, personally, my 30 years as pastor of St. Joseph’s Pro-Cathedral have opened my eyes and heart to the glory of God found in the poor and the not-so-poor, in the givers and receivers, in the young and the old, and in the various cultures found in East Camden. Camden gets a great deal of bad press, some deserved, but I see and feel much love in this struggling community and many reasons for hope. There are many dedicated workers for renewal—in the political sector, in the public sector, in the private sector, in local NGOs, and in religious congregations.

I am moved profoundly by the friendship and love I can feel from parishioners at St. Joe's and the surrounding community, and the love and care they show to one another. The poor and the not-so-poor help one another and care for one another. I see every day the commitment of the staff at the Romero Center, and I am energized by the exposure and reflection possibilities they provide to high school and college students from the area, and across the country. I am heartened by the hard work and steady structural and economic impact of St. Joseph's Carpenter Society as it reaches for its one thousandth new or rehabilitated affordable housing unit. I am proud of the inauguration and growth of Joseph's House for the homeless and of the positive contributions of the Pro-Cathedral School, our Child Development Center; and the transformative role played by our "Lifting Up Camden's Youth Program." These parish components ignite the Catholic sacramental imagination and call us all to "action on behalf of justice."

These signs of hope are, for me, sacramental - eucharistic signs. The parish church is a sign to the wider community. We are a community of faith that lives out Christ's "paschal mystery." Amidst East Camden's woes over the years, the ministries mentioned above have helped the community, in a modest way, no doubt, to face problems, rekindle faith and hope, and often even to transform death-filled events to life-giving gestures. Juan Luis Segundo illustrates the social justice role of the liturgy and sacraments, a role too often overlooked: "...the sacrament is dialogic. It prepares the Christian community to speak its liberative word in the history of mankind. Obviously enough each generation of human beings faces different problems. But our faith tells us that they share a common denominator: a death and a resurrection, a death for a resurrection."⁴ This is what we reenact every Sunday—the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. We share his body and blood and that sharing calls us to listen, serve, and commit to the poor, and to a more hopeful future. This is what keeps us going at St. Joseph's.

This is why I see and feel hope. This is why I believe this age of anxiety, filibuster, and denial can be beaten back by faith, hope, and hard work. Let me be more specific and present three images, with corresponding models, which embody, for me, that faith and hope. These, I think, are signs of a church built on the core of Jesus' message: the gratuitous love of God for all and the Spirit's guidance in working toward a reign of justice and peace—the truly "common good." These are the reasons behind my sacramental sense of hope.

MEMORY AND FUTURE: IMAGES AND MODELS OF HOPE

The first image is that of St. Paul's "kenosis." These anxious and difficult times call us to a "kenotic" theology. "[Jesus]...Who though he

was in the form of God did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself...coming in human likeness...he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even to death on the cross” (Phil 2:6-8). How about that as an antidote to partisanship and a call to be less concerned about institutional status and self or class protection? The image of emptying ourselves has the perfect model in Jesus, the Christ. It is the image that today’s church is called to imitate. This “kenosis” has always been a challenge for me in my ministry. In light of Pope Francis’ call for us to become “a poor church for the poor,” I find myself reflecting again and again on the meaning of “kenosis” in my ministry. To learn to serve, I first had to empty myself, let down my guard, and listen to the people in my community—most of them, very poor. I often say, “I had to die to self. I had to meet people where they were; if they made you rice and beans, then you ate rice and beans...and I hate beans.”⁵

The second image that comes to mind is the “dangerous memory” of Archbishop Romero. He did not claim a lock on the truth. He took risks. He listened, brought people in, learned from them, even the poorest of the poor. His “dangerous memory” of Christ’s passion, death and resurrection was a eucharistic memory of suffering. However, it was that memory that gave birth to his servant-leadership and to hope in the future facilitated by a servant-sacrament church.

What is the defining memory—or, better, the defining remembrance that shaped Oscar Romero’s faith? It is the *memoria passionis et resurrectionis Jesu Christi*. Note how this *memoria* manifests a eucharistic logic. We celebrate the sacrament of salvation in response to Jesus who said, “Do this in remembrance of me.” This remembrance is far from passive. The words “do this” imply action. Memory as remembrance lives and gives life. It acts and brings forth hope. It loves and the future is born. *Do this in remembrance of me.*⁶

This is what Pope Francis means when he tells us: “The believer is essentially ‘one who remembers.’”⁷

The third image that leads me to hope in the future is the image of church that seems to be emerging from Pope Francis. I have been enlivened and filled with joy at his clarion call for a church for, with, and of the poor. *The Joy of the Gospel*, as well as earlier statements, has helped to change the whole narrative surrounding the Catholic Church. His image of the church as a “field hospital” in a combat zone should have warned us. However, the message of *The Joy of the Gospel* goes even further. “I prefer a church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a church which is unhealthy from being confined

and from clinging to its own security” (No. 49). And further on he adds, “The dignity of the human person and the common good rank higher than the comfort of those who refuse to renounce their privileges” (No. 218).

I readily admit I am not accustomed to a Pope speaking like Francis does; at times his words bring me to deep, prayerful reflection; at other times, I find myself laughing out loud! An example of the former would be: “How can it be that it is not a news item when an elderly homeless person dies of exposure, but it is news when the stock market loses two points.” One of my outbursts of laughter came when our holy father let it be known that he wanted shepherds who smelled like the sheep! Both the reflection and the laughter are healthy stimulants for a parish in this urban, postmodern world.

This idea of church, emerging from Pope Francis’ servant-leadership, is a church not so wrapped up in itself, not so self-centered. The idea comes out of the ecclesiology of Vatican II and has begun to awaken a new sense of hope in our Church. The image of a church in work clothes, relating to the world and preaching faith and hope in Jesus’ promise of salvation for all is like a breath of fresh air. We have been moved by a leader and a holy father who asks for *our* blessing and even *our input*, and this in a papal, worldwide computer survey no less! We have been challenged by a holy father who, when asked by reporters about our gay brothers and sisters, responds flatly, “Who am I to Judge?”

I have been moved, personally, by this son of immigrants, raised in a metropolitan, cosmopolitan, secularizing culture, who has had to face difficult times, make tough vocational decisions, admit serious mistakes, and describes himself simply as a “sinner.”

This portends a new image and a new future for the church. However, in many ways Francis is only leading us back to the “dangerous memory” of the Gospel and church tradition. Over 40 years ago in a memorable phrase, the church taught: “Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel.”⁸ This notion and the documents of Vatican II, especially “The Church in the Modern World,” have been guiding lights through my years of ministry. Pope Francis brings sacrament and service together for me, as did Archbishop Romero. Both men realized the need for conversion, personal and social, and put emphasis on the option for the poor and the need to fight “structural sin.” Both, personally, faced difficult and dangerous conversion moments, both opted for a church of the people, especially the poor.

Bishop McElroy of San Francisco has neatly summarized the implications of Pope Francis’ teaching on the preferential option for the poor and structural sin for the American church:

Both the substance and methodology of Pope Francis' teachings on the rights of the poor have enormous implications for the culture and politics of the United States and for the church in this country. These teachings demand transformation of the existing Catholic political conversation in our nation, a transformation reflecting three themes: prioritizing the issue of poverty, focusing not only on intrinsic evils but also on structural sin, and acting with prudence when applying Catholic moral principles to specific legal enactments.⁹

CONCLUDING REMARKS

These models and the images they embody have emboldened us at St. Joseph's as we attempt to plan for the future. This transformative vision of parish is further fleshed out in the Introduction to this volume and in the lectures that follow. While we are aware that no one vision or image is ever final, and, indeed must remain open to constant reassessment and reading the "signs of the times," Romero's dangerous memory and Pope Francis' hopeful future intersect, and give us direction. Indeed, in their visions of Church, their "legacies" come together. This intersection illustrates what Pope Francis means when he says, quoting Pope Benedict, that the option for the poor arises from faith in Christ and is "implicit in the Christological faith in the God who became poor for us, so as to enrich us with his poverty. This is why I want a Church which is poor and for the poor" (no.198). This intersection gives rise to the kind of servant-sacrament church we envision at St. Joseph's. I use the term "servant-sacrament church;" Gutierrez, a former Romero lecturer, has recently used the more descriptive term, "accompaniment."¹⁰ Pope Francis uses the same term, "The church will have to initiate everyone—priests, religious, and laity—into this "art of accompaniment," which teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other (cf. Ex 3:5)"(no.169). That is our task in East Camden; we want to be a church, a parish that shares the life of its people and walks with them. Our social justice education, our school, our affordable housing efforts and our youth outreach are not add-ons. They are what we celebrate in our liturgies. They are how we try to live out Jesus' paschal mystery in East Camden.

We want a parish that opens itself to all people and calls them to Gospel values and a "justfaith" that helps them to be open and caring for the "other," whether in the neighborhood, across the city, or across the globe. Our people live everyday with "dangerous memories" but they also hold out hope for a new future. Memory and hope come together in their "kenosis." They give up everything for a better future for their

community, for their kids. We respect that and want a parish community that worships, prays, learns and serves together to help build that future.

In spite of problems and real suffering in Camden, we dare to dream. The great Dutch theologian Edward Schillebeeckx illustrates how a community lives out the intersection of dangerous memory and hopeful future. “What we dream alone remains a dream, but what we dream with others can become a reality.”¹¹ Alone we are powerless, but together, united in a catholic community committed to the dream of justice and peace, we gain great strength.

Let me interject here a note of thanks to the caring faith-filled parishioners of St. Joseph’s, to the sisters and priests, who have served the parish community over the years, and perhaps, most importantly, to next generation of lay leaders who so generously give their time and their family time to serving our community. They inspire me with their gifts of commitment, talent and expertise in providing leadership at the Romero Center, the Carpenter Society, Joseph’s House, the Joseph Fund, LUCY, our youth program, and our school and day care center.

Finally, I welcome the reader to this second volume of Camden’s Romero Lectures. The lectures collected here give deeper meaning to our dream and offer a journey to conversion, justice, mercy, and hope. They embody both the “dangerous memory” of that great “Saint Romero of the poor” as well as Pope Francis’ and our hopes for the future of the Church, St. Joseph’s, and Camden. We dream and the legacy continues.

END NOTES

¹ For a good description of this mindset see, Albert Nolan, *Hope in an Age of Despair* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2009).

² Sister Simone Campbell, *A Nun on the Bus: How All of Us Can Create Hope, Change and Community*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2014).

³ www.povertyusa.org See also, Bernard Evans, *Lazarus at the Table: Catholics and Social Justice*, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2006).

⁴ Juan Luis Segundo, S.J. *The Sacraments Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1974), p. 68. See also, *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1994), p. 353, no. 1397.

⁵ Michael Giansiracusa, *the Suffering Servant of Camden, NJ: A Journey in 21st Century Urban Ministry* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2014), p. 64. This small volume is a beautiful and moving pastoral theology account of ministry in Camden.

⁶ Kevin F. Burke, “The Future of the Church in the Memory of Romero,” *Archbishop Romero: Martyr and Prophet for the New Millennium*, Rev. Robert Pelton, C.S.C., editor (Scranton: Univ. of Scranton Press), p. 13. The terms “dangerous memory” and “*memoria*

passionis” are taken from the work of German theologian Johann Baptist Metz.

⁷ Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel* (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2013), no. 13. See paragraph numbers in parenthesis in text; see also, Meghan J. Clark, “The Dignity of the Vulnerable,” [“Joy to the World; Responses to ‘Evangelii Gaudium’”] *America*, 210, no. 1, January 6-13, 2014, p. 20, and Antonio Spadaro, S.J., “A Big Heart Open to God: The Exclusive Interview with Pope Francis,” *America* 209, no. 8, September 30, 2013, pp. 15-42.

⁸ “Justice in the World,” Synod of Bishops (Washington, DC: US Catholic Conference, 1972), p. 34.

⁹ Robert W. McElroy, “A Church for the Poor,” *America* 209, no.11, p. 14.

¹⁰ Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel*, no.198. See Gustavo Gutierrez, “The Option for the Poor Arises from Faith in Christ,” *Theological Studies* 70, no. 2 (2009), pp. 317-326. Gutierrez quotes Pope Benedict XVI at the Aparecida meeting, May 13, 2007. See also, Michael Griffin and Jennie Weiss Block. eds., *In the Company of the Poor: Conversations with Dr. Paul Farmer and Fr. Gustavo Gutierrez* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2013). The notion of servant-sacrament church goes back to Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church* (Garden City: Doubleday, Image Books, 1987), but is relevant in contemporary ecclesiology. For traces of this approach, see for example: Richard McBrien, *The Church: The Evolution of Catholicism* (New York: Harper One, 2008); and Charles E. Curran, *The Social Mission of the U.S. Church: A Theological Perspective* (Washington,DC: Georgetown Univ. Press, 2011). See also, Katarina Schuth, “Open to All: The Emerging Ecclesiology of Pope Francis,” *America*, 210 no.9 March 17, 2014, pp.13-16.

¹¹ Quoted in Ronald Rolheiser, *The Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), p. 138.

PREFACE

Romero Center Ministries, an urban retreat and social justice education program of St. Joseph's Pro-Cathedral in Camden, New Jersey, draws its inspiration from the life and service of Archbishop Oscar Romero. His vision of the intimate relationship of church to society, his compassion for the poor, and his eucharistic commitment to Jesus' call to service and justice are the driving motivations of the Center.

Each year, the Center commemorates Romero's life and death with a day of workshops, vibrant discussion, and local visits—involving students, teachers, community organizers, activists, priests, ministers, sisters, moms, dads and kids. The hope is to open minds and hearts to the suffering, alienation, and otherness that seem to grow unabated in our society. The day is culminated with the Romero Lecture, hosted by Rutgers University, Camden. For fourteen years, audiences have been inspired, challenged, and cajoled by distinguished scholars, activists, pastors and poets. The lectures have touched the open wounds of our country and our church: peace and war; the deep and growing gap between rich and poor; capital punishment; gender, racial and ethnic prejudice; immigration; and the economy. The lectures held from 2001 to 2007 were published in a first volume, *Romero's Legacy: The Call to Peace and Justice*, edited by Pilar Hogan Closkey and John P. Hogan (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007). This second volume contains the lectures from 2009-2014.

The one lacuna in the series is the eighth lecture, "Faith and Politics: How Does Our Faith Inform Us as We Prepare for the November Elections?" This 2008 lecture was a panel made up of Sr. Marge Clark, Network, Sr. Katherine Feely, Center of Concern, Joseph Fleming, Camden Churches Organized for People (CCOP) and PICO, Fr. Kenneth Hallahan, St. Joan of Arc Parish and LaSalle University, and Jeffrey Odell Korgen, National Pastoral Center. Each brought a provocative perspective to the highly charged issues in the then upcoming presidential election and examined them under the light of Catholic Social Thought. Unfortunately, neither tape nor text of the presentations is available, and the panel format precluded reconstruction.

There are too many people to thank by name for making the Romero Lecture the event it has become. However, some mention should be made of a few. First, we express the gratitude of the community to Patrick Cashio, the director of Romero Center Ministries, and his staff, as well as past directors, who have worked so hard in this effort. Second, a special note of gratitude is expressed to the members of the Lecture Planning Committees, who, over the years, have toiled over the many details involved in event planning and implementation—a huge task.

Thank you also to Msgr. Bob McDermott for his Foreword to this volume and for being the inspiration for all that happens at St. Joe's. Also, it is with sadness that we mention the passing of Larry DiPaul, a former director of the Romero Center and a major supporter and organizer of the Romero Lectures. He was a model for all of us and lived out his favorite biblical theme, "This is what God asks of you, only this... To act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8).

We note our gratitude to the editors of: Gospel Light/Regal Books; *Salt of the Earth*/Franciscan Media; *Network/Connection*; *St. Anthony Messenger*/Franciscan Media; and, *Doubletake* (no longer printed). Full reprint permissions are cited in the text. Finally, we express thanks to Maura Donohue for her expert editorial assistance, and to Prof. George F. McLean, President, and Dr. Hu Yeping, Executive Director, of the Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, of Washington, DC for their support in bringing this volume to publication.

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INTRODUCTION

FAITH IN THE CITY: JOY AND BELIEF IN THE MIDST OF STRUGGLE

PILAR HOGAN CLOSKEY and KEVIN MORAN

INTRODUCTION

The sub-title of this introduction comes from two sources: the first is Pope Francis' moving and joy-filled challenge in *Joy of the Gospel*.¹ His call for a church of and for the poor gives meaning and direction to the struggles of the working poor, and to those who walk and work with them in our city, Camden, New Jersey. Pope Francis begins his exhortation: "The joy of the gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus" (no. 1). "Whenever our interior life becomes caught up in its own interests and concerns, there is no longer room for others, no place for the poor" (no.2). He later takes up the special challenge urban centers present to the gospel and in beautiful biblical images he responds in a surprisingly positive way. "The new Jerusalem, the holy city (cf. Rev 21; 2-4), is the goal toward which all of humanity is moving. It is curious that God's revelation tells us that the fullness of humanity and of history is realized in a city. We need to look at our cities with a contemplative gaze, a gaze of faith which sees God dwelling in their homes, in their streets and squares" (no.71).

The second source for our choice of words is rock star Jon Bon Jovi, an ardent and generous supporter of St. Joseph's and Camden. During a visit to our recently opened homeless shelter, Joseph House, the singer wrote in the guest log, "Thanks for believin!" Indeed, belief, challenge, and joy are all part of the ongoing struggle. Those sentiments sum up much about St. Joes and East Camden. Belief in Camden. Belief in the people of Camden. Belief in the work at St. Joseph's. Belief in the revitalization of Camden's neighborhoods. Every day we work with residents of Camden who believe in their own future and the future of their city.

The inspiration for parish commitment and approach is the vision of Fr. Bob McDermott. He simply couldn't let his old neighborhood down. His whole vocation to the priesthood is wrapped up with his long accompaniment of friends and neighbors in East Camden.² For many years, Fr. Bob, as his Foreword to this volume indicates, has been inspired, maybe better, haunted by the "memory of Oscar Romero," the "memory of suffering." Nevertheless, that memory is not a sad, passive,

fatalistic one but rather a joyful, active reliving of Jesus' paschal mystery, a lifelong exchange of suffering and death for new vibrant life. Thus, no problem was too big or too tough for Fr. Bob. Like Romero, he was not afraid to let the community show the way. "The poor tell us what the world is and what service the church can offer the world. The poor tell us what the *polis*—the city—is and what it means for the church to live in the world."³ He also shared Archbishop Romero's view that communities should organize themselves, accept responsibility, and, fight for their rights, in a nonviolent way. Thus began the collaboration of St. Joseph's parish ministries with Camden Churches Organized for People (CCOP) and Concerned Black Clergy (CBC). The church's call for faith-based community organizing emphasizing solidarity with the poor was the key. The challenge to the Church was made clear by Pope John Paul II and the U.S. Bishops:

Positive signs in the contemporary world are the growing awareness of solidarity of the poor among themselves, their efforts to support one another, and their public demonstrations on the social scene which, without recourse to violence, present their own needs and rights in the face of the inefficiency or corruption of public authorities. By virtue of her own evangelical duty, the Church feels called to take her stand beside the poor, to discern the justice of their requests, and to help satisfy them, without losing sight of ... of the common good.⁴

The "cries of those who are poor" in our society demand new and renewed commitment to systemic social change through organizing, community outreach, legislative networks, racial reconciliation, social policy development, coalition-building, and public and private sector partnerships for economic development.⁵

Another source of inspiration for efforts at St. Joe's is the principles culled from Catholic Social Teaching (CST). Seven themes have been articulated by the U.S. Bishops and provide a shorthand reference for approaches used by the ministries at St. Joseph's. The basic concepts include: 1) life and dignity of every person; 2) importance of family, community, subsidiarity and participation; 3) solidarity, compassion and identification with the "other;" 4) rights and responsibilities of all; 5) option for and with the poor and vulnerable; 6) dignity of work and the right of workers to organize; 7) care for God's creation and environment. These principles are translated for application and woven through all we do in our various ministries.⁶ We work toward fostering both autonomy

and solidarity. We try to support personal human dignity, while, at the same time, promoting participation, strengthening interdependence and community, and revitalizing neighborhoods. As Pope Francis reminds us, it is the right mix of subsidiarity and solidarity that leads to the Common Good and “integral human development” (no.240).

Nonetheless, what consistently emerges is the determined faith and spirit of Camden’s people, longtime residents and new arrivals, often motivated and led by the city’s religious congregations. This core, even in the worst of times, does not give up on the dignity of the person or the search for community. For many years that vision and hope were framed by the words of the Jewish prophet, Habakkuk and became a kind of ‘urban mantra’:

Write down the vision clearly upon the tablets, so that one can read it readily. For the vision still has its time, it presses on to fulfillment, and will not disappoint; if it delays, wait for it, it will surely come, it will not be late (Hb 2:2).

In spite of disappointment and delays and with joy and belief in the midst of struggle –the people still wait.

BACKGROUND-CAMDEN

Camden, NJ, the city of poet Walt Whitman and heavy weight champion Jersey Joe Walcott, was once a proud, thriving working class city, but since the early 1970s, when major companies started moving out, and the shipping industry slumped, Camden slumped too. It is often said that Camden is the poorest city in the country and located in the richest state. Camden’s population is around 78,000, a population that has been cut in half in the last 40 years. The population is almost equally African-American, 48 percent, and Latino, 47 percent. There are smaller communities of Whites, Haitians and Vietnamese. The largest contingent of new immigrants is Mexican. The city has been devastated by relentless cycles of poverty, unemployment, crime, a failing school system and inadequate city services.

For many years, families in the city managed to survive with one supermarket, no movie theaters, and hundreds of street-corner drug markets. For many in Camden, that survival is a daily struggle. Yet families fight to raise their children, to educate them, and to provide all they can in order for them to live happy, productive lives. Statistics are daunting and show a city in great need.

- 50% of residents earn less than \$25,000 per year.
- 66% of households are led by a single person

- 25% of properties are estimated to be vacant
- homeownership is lower than 50%
- official unemployment rate is 18%; functional rate, is over 30%
- crime rate is one of the highest in the U.S. –1000 assaults; 80 rapes; 50 murders each year

The children of Camden are the most vulnerable. The vicious cycles of poverty, crime and drugs, joblessness, and abandoned buildings have put their futures at risk. In spite of the dismal stats, hope does not die in Camden. Camden's faithful are not giving up. That sense of hope is evident in the kids in our school, the teenagers in our youth group, moms and dads seeking home ownership through the Carpenter Society, and the reaction of Romero Center participants, who return from the "urban plunge" on fire to put their faith into action. Michael Giansiracusa, captures well the story behind the "Murder Capital" headlines and beyond the grim statistics. "The world of St. Joseph's is an exciting one despite the reputation and reality of Camden. These are stories of success, not failure; of opportunity, not abandonment; of hope, not despair."⁷

MINISTRIES AT ST. JOSEPH'S, EAST CAMDEN

St. Joseph's Carpenter Society

The Carpenter Society, established in 1985, converts abandoned buildings into affordable homes, develops land and builds new homes in newly renovated neighborhoods, supports community development, and is changing the landscape of East Camden. Through the Campbell Soup Homeowner's Academy, prospective owners learn the financial, maintenance, taxes, and neighborhood skills necessary to be long term responsible homeowners and community leaders.

St. Joseph's Carpenter Society, is a faith and community-based initiative but is separately incorporated and affiliated with Neighbor Works America, a federally-sponsored community development support agency working with city, state, and federal agencies, private developers, and non-profit and church organizations. The Carpenter Society has recently launched a resident-driven neighborhood plan—'My East Camden: Many Voices, One Vision/Muchas Voces, Una Vision. Over the years, over 950 affordable, renovated or new homes have been sold or rented to neighborhood families. It is significant that over 90 percent of all Carpenter Society homes sold are still owned by original buyers or their families. Moreover, even with the recent real estate crisis, the foreclosure rate is only three percent. Larger projects, such as Baldwin's Run and Carpenter's Square have contributed significantly to revitalizing East Camden's neighborhoods.

Joseph's House

The recent increase in the number of homeless women, men and families in Camden called for a new outreach. Joseph's House of Camden was formed as a subsidiary of the Carpenter Society and provides an overnight refuge with a warm meal and a place to rest. It also links people in need to social services and works toward providing permanent housing to the homeless. About 75 people are served each night and connections to social services are provided year-round. Renovation of new quarters for Joseph House has recently been completed.

St. Joseph's Pro-Cathedral School

Our school is part of the Camden Partnership Schools and currently has 270 students. The school provides a nurturing and empowering education for boys and girls from kindergarten through eight grade. St. Joseph's School enjoys a strong, positive reputation in the city with ninety-five percent of its graduates going on to finish high school.

St. Joseph Child Development Center

The Child Development Center is a chartered nursery for three and four year old children. The Center provides affordable day-care for 75 students and is open from 7:30 AM to 5:30PM, Monday through Friday. In a loving and supportive environment, children learn basic social skills, as well as fundamentals in language, reading, and math.

Lifting up Camden's Youth Program (LUCY)

It became very clear that there were very few constructive social opportunities for Camden's teenagers. The negative influence of drugs, violence, and crime seemed overwhelming. Kids had nowhere to safely "hangout." This led St. Joe's to open the doors of the parish as a safe meeting place for a small group of teens each week. That small group quickly grew and the parish developed a youth outreach program that now provides community social services and educational support to over 250 teens per month.

The program, open after school, evenings and weekends, provides a safe place to meet, gain life skills, increase self-confidence, get academic help, and social and spiritual direction. Through neighborhood social projects participants also learn the importance of service and giving back to their community.

Romero Center Ministries

In a very real sense, the Romero Center was born of Camden's poverty. Bob McDermott knew early on that Camden was America's poorest city but he also knew that while the city had great needs, it also provided great opportunity. He wanted Camden to be a place where young people from across the country could learn and grow. A second reason for the establishment of the Romero Center was the changing nature of the American Catholic community. While Catholic roots are usually found in cities, our economic wings have moved us outward and upward. Nationwide, we have become a suburban, middle class church. The Romero Center, inspired by the vision and approach of Oscar Romero, began with the intention of bringing young people to Camden to experience conversion and commitment. We want young people to see and experience firsthand the work of the church with the poor. We want adults to understand their role in bringing about a societal commitment to end poverty, inequality, and discrimination in our world.

Thus, the Romero Center is an urban retreat and social justice education program that seeks to ignite the spark of passion in youth and young adults. The ministry provides service and reflection opportunities for high school and college students from around the country. More than 15,000 students have come to the Center to learn about systemic poverty, to grow in awareness, and to reflect on how they might use their talents to help build a better world. One recent participant sums up the center's impact:

My summer at the Romero Center changed me in ways I never could have foreseen. I fell in love with Camden and her people and vowed to return when I am better prepared to serve and affect positive change. I returned to Notre Dame after my time at the Romero Center and added a Poverty Studies minor with hopes of going to graduate school for Social Work or Public Policy. The Romero Center is a unique ministry in that it brings young people from the suburbs and people from Camden together and lights a fire within them so that they may share their experiences and passion everywhere they go"(Dani Gies, Univ. of Notre Dame, Class of 2014).

This student's reflections are multiplied many times over in the responses of the more than 1400 students and young adults who pass through the center's door each year. As students spend time in the city of Camden, with young kids, and moms and dads, they get a taste of poverty. The staff at the center help them reflect on and process what they have

seen and heard. After “see-judge-act” sessions and prayerful discussion, their reactions are, sometimes analytical, often profound, and always surprising! Conversion and commitment become something very real. Listening to the young unpacking a day with Camden’s people often echo John Kavanaugh’s words in *Faces of Poverty, Faces of Christ*:

There is a poverty which is not blessed/ It is a curse.../It can crush the spirit.../Christ came not to bless this poverty, but to change it.../Finally, so much would he want this dehumanizing poverty changed, he revealed that our response to such degradation would be the very condition of our entry into his reign.../So much did he want the sufferings of these poor attended to that he took upon himself their skin and bones/ and told us we would be attending to him.⁸

Pope Francis describes something similar when he talks about encountering and walking with the “other.” “Better yet, it means learning to find Jesus in the faces of others, in their voices, in their pleas” (no.91).

A final component of the Romero Center’s ministries is the annual Romero Lecture. These lectures challenge us to constantly think through and pray through all that we do—not only at the Romero Center, but in all of the ministries at St. Joseph’s. To the lectures we now turn.

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

The annual Romero lecture and the day of prayer, reflection, and workshops that lead up to the lecture have become an integral part of the Romero Center and all of the ministries of St. Joseph’s as well as most of the faith congregations in Camden. It is a head and heart-clearing time to be challenged and reflect on what we, as faith communities, are doing. With the inspiration of Romero’s kenotic imitation of Jesus, we are called to a humble, honest, open engagement with the world around us—the world of Camden. These lectures, however, are also reminders of how we fit into the bigger picture. They keep us from turning in on ourselves. They provide inspiration for what we do, but also call us beyond what we do. They put Camden and its struggle in a broader, national and global context. The lectures provoke deep and often troubling questions; questions not unlike those raised by Archbishop Romero and Pope Francis. Is it possible for the American church to honestly confront the structural sins of poverty, inequality and racism and make real a preferential option for the poor? Are we willing to push back at our consumer society? Are we, as a people, willing to demand that our political leaders transcend ideology and work to solve problems? Are we,

as faith communities, willing to bring together sacrament and substance and work toward the reign of justice Jesus initiated?

Chapter 1, "The Challenge of God's Call to Live Justly," by Tony Campolo presents the backdrop for all of the chapters that follow. Campolo constructs the foundation for a biblical approach to justice and politics. He puts right up front Jesus' announcement of the Kingdom, and in interpreting Isaiah, describes what it will be like. "On that day, mothers will not worry that they have lovingly raised their children into their teenage years only to have them blown away by vicious street gangs or dissipated by drugs." He emphasizes the need for communities and not just individuals to stand up to "principalities and powers." He chides both conservatives and liberals to put issue over party, true authority over power, and knowledge over ignorance. "Blind patriotism is not a virtue." We must take on the "hot issues" but intelligently and biblically.

In Chapter 2, Bryan N. Massingale, discusses "The Hidden Faces of Racism: Catholics Should Stand Firm on Affirmative Action." In a personal, moving and crystal-clear account the author brought to light the relatively weak stance the Catholic Church has historically taken on combatting America's 'original-structural' sin,—racism. Unfortunately neither text nor recording of Father Massingale's lecture is available. Therefore, we have reprinted an earlier article by him that corresponds to the focus of his 2010 lecture. Here he presents an affirmative action agenda for the church with clear, practical and theological reasons why individual Catholics as well as the institutional church should "stand firm" in support of affirmative action legislation and regulations. The relevance and the challenge raised in this article from some years ago is, all the more heightened today by the recent U.S Supreme Court decision upholding Michigan's ban on affirmative action.

Chapter 3, "Images of Justice: Present among Us – Remembering Monsignor," by Carolyn Forché, provides a riveting, poetic diary-like account of her friendship with Archbishop Romero. Between 1978 and 1980 the author made several long trips to El Salvador, with the intention of translating Salvadoran poets but, quickly, found herself deeply involved as a witness against repression. She came to know Romero and became an intimate witness, not only to the repression but also to his saintly and courageous commitment to Christ and the poor of his country. Her flashbacks follow Romero through reflections on most of the major events of his period as Archbishop of San Salvador. She states, "A young, lapsed-Catholic poet, I observed the proceedings [investigations into the repression] at the remove of one who finds herself assimilating unprecedented horror, while encountering living faith for the first time." At her last meeting with Romero, he pleaded with her to leave the country for her own safety. A short time later, he was murdered.

In Chapter 4, “Politics and the Pews: Your Faith, Your Vote and the 2012 Election” Stephen F. Schneck calls people of faith to respond to what he describes as “the crisis that threatens the American public square.” Some of the symptoms of the crisis include; poverty and economic inequality; a broken immigration system; hyper-individualism; racism; and abortion. The author provides a cogent political and theological argument for a Catholic response to this deadening national crisis. That response is rooted in St. Paul’s Body of Christ theology and the notion of the “Common Good,” the central component of Catholic Social Teaching. “The crisis of American public life begs a resolution in the Catholic idea of the common good. We are called to share it and bear witness to its truth.”

Chapter 5, “Justice or Just Us: World Changing Expressions of Faith,” by Jack Jezreel opens with the question: why is Catholic Social Teaching still often described as the church’s “best kept secret”? In spite of many fine examples of parish and diocesan social commitment, too often Catholics are unaware of the mine of teaching in our social tradition. Too many know little or nothing of the great witness of love, charity and justice of Oscar Romero, Mother Theresa, Dorothy Day, George Higgins or Cesar Chavez, much less, Jesus of Nazareth, Damian of Molokai, Francis of Assisi or Vincent de Paul. To help remedy this situation, the author explores a number of themes, values and commitments that emerge when the mission of social justice is taken seriously by individuals or parishes. He tells us that if we enter the reality of Mother Theresa or Oscar Romero, “we enter into the experience of “caring, with a capital “C”—I mean an inclusive caring, moving from ‘just us’ to ‘justice,’ that embraces the needs of all”... especially the most vulnerable. This new vocabulary of faith includes: commitment to the poor; voluntary displacement; simplicity; nonviolence; and martyrdom. These are sign posts on the journey of life, love and justice.

In Chapter 6, Maryann Cusimano Love discusses, “Make Us Instruments of Peace: Peacebuilding in the 21st century.” The author highlights the role of the victims of war, people of faith and especially, women in building a lasting peace. Building on Catholic social teachings she describes the characteristics of a just and lasting peace as: participation, reconciliation, right relationships, restoration, and sustainability. Based on her experiences with the Catholic Peacebuilding Network, Catholic Relief Services and Jesuit Refugee Services, she illustrates these characteristics through stories about peacebuilders from around the world. With her profiles in courage – usually women, and often Catholic sisters, Cusimano Love shows us that we are all called to be peacebuilders and that peace is about more than war; it is about equality, women’s rights, stolen childhoods, rape, human trafficking, and

competition for resources. In the end, it is about imagining and making incarnate that reign of justice and peace Jesus initiated.

Finally, we have added two appendices. Appendix A, “The Ongoing Legacy of Oscar Romero,” by Peter Feuerherd, presents the author’s reflections on his visit to San Salvador for the 30th Anniversary of Romero’s death. He provides a graphic account of the Archbishop’s appeal to the young and the overall renewal of interest in his prophetic vision for contemporary Christians. The “Romero revival” discussed here (2010), as well as the call for canonization, has been greatly enhanced by recent remarks of Pope Francis. This account makes clear that the legacy lives on. Appendix B, “The Call to Fix Structural Causes of Economic Injustice Now,” by Sr. Simone Campbell, sums up much of the recent discussions around poverty and inequality and the message of Pope Francis in *Joy of the Gospel*. For Francis, “Inequality is the root of social ills.” The author tells us that the Pope “urges us to dismantle the system that shifts money to the top and exploits workers who create the wealth.” She makes practical suggestions, especially concerning U.S. tax structures, as to how this might be done.

CONCLUSION

In many ways a vision of church and parish is reflected in the writings collected here. They are like building blocks or pieces of a complicated puzzle but when linked together, they show us new ways. They call us down new roads like Archbishop Romero and Pope Francis have done. Francis seems almost to be pleading with Catholics when he says, “Let us try to be a church that finds new roads, that is able to step outside itself.” In a small way, that is what we attempt to do at St. Joseph’s. We know the struggle is far from over. But we are emboldened in our efforts by the candor of our new Pope when he tells us, “We have to state, without mincing words, that there is an inseparable bond between our faith and the poor. May we never abandon them” (no. 48). That kind of spirit emerges in the chapters that follow. That same Spirit keeps joy and belief in the struggle.

ENDNOTES

¹ Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel* (Boston: Pauline Books, 2013, (references in parenthesis throughout text refer to paragraph numbers in *JG*).

² See Michael Giansiracusa, *The Suffering Servant of Camden, NJ: A Journey in 21st Century Urban Ministry* (Bloomington, IN: Author House, 2014).

³ Oscar Romero, *A Martyr's Message: Six Homilies of Archbishop Oscar Romero* (Kansas City: Celebration Books, 1981), p. 82.

⁴ Pope John Paul II, *On Social Concerns*, 1987, no. 39.

⁵ U.S. Bishops, *In All things Charity*, 1999, p.32. For some of the recent negative developments in church supported community organizing see: *Be Not afraid? Guilt by Association, Catholic McCarthyism and Growing Threats to the U.S. Bishops' anti-Poverty Mission*, by John Gehring, *A Faith in Public Life* report, available online, June, 2013 and Richard L. Wood, Brad Fulton, Christine Doby, "Getting Organized: Catholics and Community Activism," *Commonweal*, vol. 140, no.18, (November 15, 2013), 12-16.

⁶ For a clear summary of these principles see, Marvin L. Krier Mich, *The Challenge and Spirituality of Catholic Social Teaching*, rev. ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011). See also, Meghan J. Clark, *The Vision of Catholic Social Thought: The Virtue of Solidarity and the Praxis of Human Rights*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014).

⁷ Giansiracusa, p.x. For background on Camden and for the next section on the various ministries at St. Joseph's, we have made ample use of the booklet: "The Joseph Fund: Transforming Camden, Transforming Lives."

⁸ John Kavanaugh and Mev Puleo, *Faces of Poverty, Faces of Christ* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), p. 23.

FURTHER STUDY

Closkey, Pilar Hogan, "More than a House: Home and Hospitality in Camden," *Building Community in a Mobile/Global Age: Migration and Hospitality*, John P. Hogan, Vensus A. George, Corazon T. Toralba, eds. (Washington, DC: CRVP, 2013), pp. 207-216.

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Giansiracusa, Michael, *The Suffering Servant Of Camden, NJ: A Journey in 21st Century Urban Ministry* (Bloomington, IN: Author House, 2014).

Gillette, Howard, Jr., *Camden after the Fall: Decline and Renewal in a Post-Industrial City* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2005).

Hogan, John P., "Taking a City off the Cross: Camden Churches Organized for People," *Credible Signs of Christ Alive: Case Studies from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003), pp. 45-63.

My East Camden; Many Voices, One vision/ Muchas Voces, Una Vision, St. Joseph's Carpenter Society, For the Carpenter Society, go to: www.sjcscamden.org.

The Joseph Fund: Transforming Camden, Transforming Lives, see: www.josephfundcamden.org/.

St. Joseph's Pro-Cathedral, see: www.sjprocathedral.org.

Romero Center Ministries, go to: www.romero-center.org.

Wood, Richard, *Faith in Action: Religion, Race, and Democratic Organizing in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

CHAPTER 1

THE CHALLENGE OF GOD'S CALL TO LIVE JUSTLY

TONY CAMPOLO*

INTRODUCTION: "RED LETTER CHRISTIANS"

It is, indeed, an honor and a pleasure to be here for the Romero Center celebration of the life of Archbishop Oscar Romero, that humble saint of the poor. As many of you might be aware, I know and feel myself part of Camden. Our program, Urban Promise, led by Bruce Main and his dedicated staff, has long toiled against the dire consequences of poverty, loss of jobs, lack of affordable housing, crime and drugs, that have plagued this city. We have worked side-by-side with the various ministries of St. Joseph's Pro-Cathedral and remain in awe of the seemingly indomitable spirit of Camden's people.

Given the general contemporary meanings and connotations ascribed to the word "Evangelical," a group of us who are speakers and authors and who share an evangelical theology got together and confessed that we have a hard time applying the label to ourselves anymore. This group included Brian McLaren, a leader in the emerging church movement; Richard Rohr, the well-known Catholic writer and speaker; Cheryl Sanders, a prominent African-American pastor; Noel Castellanos, a strong voice in the Latino community; and Jim Wallis and Duane Shank, two key leaders of the Sojourners Community and the Call to Renewal movement. We struggled to come up with a new name to define ourselves.

As you can well imagine, we had a hard time. We did not want to call ourselves "progressive Evangelicals," because that might imply a value judgment on those who do not share our views. We batted around several possible names, and then, in the midst of our discussions, the name "Red Letter Christians" was proposed.

Actually, the name was first used by a secular Jewish country-western disc jockey in Nashville, Tennessee. During a radio interview with Jim Wallis, the DJ tried to nail down Jim's particular breed of Christianity and finally said, "So you're one of those Red Letter

* [Rev. Campolo's lecture was presented on April, 17, 2009. The lecture was based on his book, *Red Letter Christians: A Citizen's Guide to Faith and Politics*. (Ventura, CA: Gospel Light/Regal Books, 2008). We are most grateful to the publisher and to Rev. Campolo for their gracious agreement to republish pp.1; 31-44; and 222-224. Used by permission.]

Christians—you know—who's really into those verses in the New Testament that are in red letters." Jim answered, "That's right!" And with that, he spoke for all of us. By calling ourselves Red Letter Christians, we are alluding to those old versions of the Bible wherein the words of Jesus are printed in red. I know from experience, that many of you, and most of those working for Camden, those who refuse to give up on the people are, whatever your denomination,—Red Letter Christians." Let me turn now to tonight's task—finding and applying the biblical roots of justice.

A BIBLICAL APPROACH TO POLITICS

Jesus would have gone over well in our modern media age, when complicated political messages are reduced to sound bites. If a reporter had asked Jesus to spell out His platform in a brief and easy-to-understand sentence, Jesus would have said, "I have come to declare that the Kingdom of God is at hand!"

In each of the synoptic Gospels, we read that this is the proclamation Jesus made to initiate His ministry (see Matt 4:17; Mark 1:15; Luke 4:43). Nearly all of His parables were about this Kingdom. When He taught His disciples to pray, He taught them to ask the Father for this new social order to come "on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). And at the end of His ministry, just prior to His ascension to the Father, He wanted to be sure His followers would not lose sight of the mission's essence, so He again taught them things concerning the Kingdom.

First-century Jews, to whom Jesus initially addressed His message of the Kingdom, had a firm grasp on what He was talking about. For centuries, they'd had prophets who defined for them in very concrete ways what the Kingdom would be like. As a case in point, Isaiah prophesied:

No more shall there be in it
 an infant that lives but a few days,
 or an old person who does not live out a lifetime;
 for one who dies at a hundred years will be considered a youth,
 and one who falls short of a hundred will be considered accursed.
 They shall build houses and inhabit them;
 they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit.
 They shall not build and another inhabit;
 they shall not plant and another eat;
 for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be,
 and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands.
 They shall not labor in vain,
 or bear children for calamity;
 for they shall be offspring blessed by the Lord
 and their descendants as well.

Before they call I will answer,
while they are yet speaking I will hear.
The wolf and the lamb shall feed together,
the lion shall eat straw like the ox;
but the serpent its food shall be dust!
They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain,
says the Lord (Isa. 65:20-25).

The Jews knew that it was not about some "pie in the sky by and by" escape from the bad old world. Instead, the Kingdom was to be a new kind of society, wherein the effects of poverty and physical suffering would be no more.

A day will come when starvation and diseases will no longer take the lives of infants (v. 20).

On that day, mothers will not worry that they have lovingly raised their children into their teenage years only to have them blown away by vicious street gangs or dissipated by drugs (v. 23).

When the Kingdom of our Lord comes in its fullness, old people will live out long lives without having to choose between buying food and purchasing overpriced prescription drugs (v. 20).

The millions of people who are made into homeless refugees because of wars, and those right here in the U.S. who find themselves without roofs over their heads, will cheer in God's coming Kingdom, because houses will be built for everyone (w. 21-22).

Those desperate would-be immigrants who sneak across our borders hoping to find work will hear the deliriously joyful announcement that God has planned a new socio-economic order, wherein everyone who wants to work will have a job (v. 21).

And for environmentalists concerned about what we are doing to planet Earth, here is the assurance that a time will come when people will not "hurt or destroy" the earth anymore (v. 25).

Red Letter Christians believe that Jesus Christ has already initiated this new Kingdom. Jesus told the people of His day that God was keeping His promises, and that there were signs of the coming Kingdom if they only had eyes to see. The Good News is that in Him, what Isaiah prophesied is even now breaking loose in history. The Kingdom of God is *transformed people living in a transformed society*, and when we preach this message to people in our day, we are preaching the gospel, the Good News. This hope for God's Kingdom on earth has been, since Christ, in the process of being actualized.

In present day Christendom, there has been a tendency to forget that both the salvation of individuals and the transformation of society are Kingdom non-negotiables. There are some Christians who act as though all that's needed to bring God's Kingdom is the transformation of

individuals through traditional evangelism. Those who hold this point of view believe that if enough people are personally converted by coming into relationships with the living Christ, there will be no need to engage in social action programs or to get politically involved. After all, they reason, won't a godly society naturally emerge if enough individuals are converted into Spirit-filled Christians? Won't godly people create a godly world? Isn't personal evangelism enough to facilitate Kingdom-building?

There is much truth in the belief that "sacred" people produce a more just society. After all, it is through such transformed people, whom the Bible calls "the Church," that God is presently at work in the world, changing it into the world He wills for it to be. The Church, says Scripture, is the chosen means through which God will change the world. In Ephesians 1:21-23, we read:

Far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

God has chosen to use the Church to usher in the fullness of His presence in history, and the primary way through which the Church changes the world is by commissioning its members to serve in each and every social institution ("principalities and powers," see Eph. 3:10; 6:12) and, like leaven (see Matt. 13:33) and salt (see Matt. 5:13), to permeate these institutions with Kingdom values. Being in all the world, living out the love of God, working for justice whenever opportunities arise, and talking about how God is impacting their lives are the activities that make ordinary Christians into effective change agents, and together living the fullness of the presence of God.

One of the main reasons I became a Christian was that I was told I would be joining an army that was doing battle with evil forces, powers that were all too evident and often in control of the world around me. I was told that I would be joining with other Christians and participating with God in revolutionizing society. Such a calling whetted my appetite to do something heroic with my life! But once recruited, I was told that my assignment in the army was to be a recruiting sergeant whose duty was to recruit other recruiting sergeants who, in turn, would recruit other recruiters ... and so on! It wasn't long before I had the sense that this "army" I had joined was not much more than a battalion of recruiters who were recruited to recruit recruiters, *ad infinitum*. I was led to believe that this was the only responsibility of Christians.

I couldn't help but ask an obvious question: *Where are the soldiers who are doing battle with the "principalities and powers" of this age? Where are the ones who, according to Ephesians 3:10, are supposed to bring all "rulers and authorities" into subjection to God's will?*

Some Christians choose to think that when the apostle Paul used the phrase "principalities and powers," he was referring only to demonic spirits. For those who hold to this belief, "spiritual warfare" consists in praying against these demons and resisting their evil powers in Christ's name. But biblical scholars point out that this phrase has a much broader meaning. Experts in biblical language, such as Dutch theologian Hendrik Berkhof, explain that "principalities and powers" in Paul's writings refer to any forces that transcend us and have significant influences on what we think and do. Consequently, while including demonic entities, these scholars contend that "principalities and powers" also refer to such suprahuman institutions and influences as the media, government, the educational system and the economic structures of society.¹

If Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, was passing down a mandate to the Church, somewhere along the line there must be Christians who will engage the "principalities and powers" of our societal system to make something of God's justice evident within them. And that is where politics come in. It is by getting involved in political processes that Christians exercise one significant method of transforming society-so that within it, justice can roll down (see Amos 5:24).

There are three choices we must make if we are to have a biblical approach to political involvement.

ISSUES OVER PARTY

I believe that Red Letter Christians should take their places as members in *all and any* political parties, both nationally and locally, that are both democratic and egalitarian. Their presence will act as the "leaven," permeating those political parties so that they increasingly promote the kind of justice and social well-being that actualizes the prophet Isaiah's vision of the Kingdom of God.

As Christians get involved in party politics, however, they must avoid the tendency to define *any* party as "the God party." Some Christians come close to believing that the principles of political conservatism are the will of God, and that any who hold to liberal political ideas are misled at best, and evil at worst. On the other hand, there are Christians, especially in academia, who act like condescending elitists who believe conservatives are unsophisticated bumpkins unacquainted with "what's really going on."

In reality, conservatives and liberals need each other: Conservatives maintain many lines that should never be crossed, while liberals destroy many lines that should never have existed.

Let history show that conservatives have held the line against those who would allow pornography and sexually destructive forms of behavior to pervade the nation. They have been the countervailing influence that

has preserved the best of our free enterprise system against dangerous socialist tendencies, and they are the ones who have worked hard to ensure that non-sectarian religion remains a significant ingredient in public discourse.

But before conservatives get too proud about being the flying buttresses that have kept the great American traditions from collapsing, they should consider that liberals led the campaign to give women the right to vote, and were also the primary advocates for civil rights legislation. Liberals were the ones who challenged long-established racial and gender lines that had made many Americans into second-class citizens. Sadly, condemnations of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Nelson Mandela were far too common among conservative Evangelical leaders who, to their credit, think otherwise today.

On some issues, Red Letter Christians are conservative and on others we are liberal. Neither end of the political spectrum has a corner on the will of God.

AUTHORITY OVER POWER

One of the great philosophers of history, Arnold J. Toynbee, once said, "Those whom the gods would destroy, they first make drunk with power." As Christians take up membership in our various political parties, we must be careful, lest we be seduced into playing power games within these organizations. We must take care as we get involved in politics, lest we fall victim to power's destructiveness. There is a great temptation to play power games and organize into a voting bloc, or even perhaps to create our own separate political party. In gaining political power to put "our own people" into office, it would be all too easy to impose what we are convinced is God's will on the rest of society. This deceptively simple plan for creating God's Kingdom on earth is attractive, but ultimately counter-productive. Such power plays can do nothing but expose the arrogance that leads us to suggest that our views on issues and our solutions to society's problems are divinely inspired—that we speak for God.

Instead of using power to mold public policies, we should endeavor to speak with authority to those in power. The sociologist Max Weber gave classic definitions that differentiate *power* from *authority*. In *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, Weber explains that *power* entails the ability to coerce or to impose your will on others. Conversely, *authority* is having the legitimate right in the eyes of others to expect that proposals will be embraced and followed. If you are followed because others have no choice, you have power. If you are followed because others believe you have a legitimate claim to their allegiance, you have authority.²

One example of this brand of authority was mentioned [by] abolitionist William Wilberforce, who often quoted from Scripture when he addressed the British Parliament on the topic of its slave trade. Over the span of 20 years, he spoke with biblical *authority*- and in the end it was this authority that overcame the vested economic interests and deep-seated prejudices of many of his fellow parliamentarians to finally end the trade in slaves throughout the British Empire.

It is important to stress that for Christians, authority comes from sacrificing to meet the needs of others. As the ultimate case in point, Jesus speaks as "one having authority" (Matt. 7:29). He does not coerce us into yielding to His will. Instead, we come to an awareness that He has a legitimate claim to our allegiance through His sacrifices for us-specially His sacrifice on the cross. The apostle Paul makes clear in Philippians 2:5-8 that Jesus rejected power as His means for changing the world into His Father's Kingdom:

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,
who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,
but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death-
even death on a cross.

Jesus' sacrifice on Calvary earned Him authority-Scripture goes on to say that because of this authority, every knee ought to bow before Him, yielding complete obedience (see Phil. 2:9-11). That Jesus abandoned the use of power in bringing salvation to the world should come as no surprise in light of the temptations He resisted. After Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness, Satan came to Him and tried to convince Him to use power to gain a following, first by turning stones into bread for the hungry (see Matt. 4:3). Then Satan tempted Jesus to amaze the masses by jumping from one of the high towers of the Temple on Mt. Zion and floating safely to the ground (see Matt. 4:5-6). Finally, Satan tried to seduce Jesus by offering his own power to establish His Kingdom on earth-but Jesus refused to take over the world by coercing humanity to do His will (see Matt. 4:8-9). In each case, Jesus rebuked Satan by using the *authority* of Scripture. Instead of using power, Jesus chose to establish His Kingdom through sacrificial love. Through the cross, Jesus would draw all men and women unto Himself (see Joho, 12:32), because *authority is earned*

through sacrifice. When we consider Calvary, we realize that we are not our own—we have been bought with a price (see 1 Cor. 6:20). The sacrifice Jesus made for us on the cross deserves our souls, our lives, our all!³

As an example of how loving sacrifice earns authority, I can point to the authority my mother had over me. When she spoke, I listened and obeyed. She did not have the power to make me obey—I was bigger and stronger than she was. Instead, I obeyed her because I felt that I owed her my respect and obedience, in light of all the loving sacrifices she had made on my behalf over the years. She spoke with authority!

I once heard Mother Teresa speak at a National Prayer Breakfast, which was attended by the U.S. president, the vice president and a host of other world leaders. She said things that many of those present did not want to hear, but everyone listened to her with great respect. She spoke strongly against abortion, even though those at the head table with her were overtly pro-choice. She spoke with authority, authority that had been earned through her sacrifices for the dying poor on the streets of Calcutta.

On another occasion, Mother Teresa spoke to a graduating class at Harvard University. Again she said things about sexual morality and the sacredness of life that ran counter to the beliefs of most in the audience. And again, the audience listened with respect—because she spoke with authority. I surmise that if push came to shove, most Catholics would more likely have listened to Mother Teresa, who gained authority through her sacrifices, than to the Pope—regardless of all the power he wields as the head of the Vatican State.

I contend that Christians will only have authority if they first serve the needs of others in sacrificial ways, especially the poor and oppressed. When those who hold power witness how Christians live out love—meeting the needs of others and binding up the wounds of those who have been left hurting on society's waysides—Christians will earn the authority to speak. When Christians sacrificially give of their time and resources to run soup kitchens for the hungry and provide shelters for the homeless, they gain the right to be heard. When they tutor poor children and care for those with AIDS, they expand their mandate to call for change. But before they speak, Christians must demonstrate God's love through sacrificial ministries. Sacrifice gives them the ability to be taken seriously by those who seem to be in control of political machines.

Several years ago while in the Dominican Republic, I spent a day following around a young doctor named Elias Santana. This special and wonderful doctor had all the credentials necessary to establish a lucrative medical practice for himself in the United States. Instead, Elias chose to live out a life of sacrifice for the poor people of his own country. He spent some time each week earning big fees by providing medical services to the rich who lived in Santo Domingo; then he took that money and spent it on medicine, which he offered for free to the poor. Sometimes Elias

even flew to nearby Puerto Rico to perform surgery in order to secure more funds for his work in the impoverished barrios surrounding Santo Domingo.

I followed Elias one day as he made his rounds to the various clinics he and his friends had set up in the worst slums of the city. At the end of that day, when his medical work was done, he climbed on to the top of the pickup truck that served as his mobile pharmacy. Then from his perch on the truck, he called the people of the barrio to gather around so that he could preach the gospel to them.

Standing on the edge of the gathered crowd was a young man I recognized. His name was Juan Perez. Juan was an atheist leader of the Young Communist Association at the Autonomía University of the Dominican Republic and a prominent member of the powerful Socialist Party.

I made my way over to Juan and asked in an almost mocking manner: "Do you realize what he is doing, Juan? He's preaching the gospel! The people are listening. Do you think he's going to win some converts today?"

Juan's answer was memorable. With an edge to his voice that conveyed both an air of resignation and great admiration, he responded, "What can I say? Elias Santana has earned the right to be heard!"

When Elias spoke, he spoke with authority, authority that was established through his sacrificial service to the needy of Santo Domingo. Following the example of Jesus, his sacrifices on behalf of the poor demanded that he be taken seriously, even by those critical of Christianity, even by a member of a very leftist political party.

In these examples, we recognize some ways in which Christians can speak truth to power without playing power games. From the likes of Mother Teresa and Elias Santana, we learn that as we enter party politics, we must carry with us a track record of service and sacrifice on behalf of "the least of those" who are in need; then when we speak, we will speak as ones who have authority. Through sacrificial service we will be taken seriously and given fair consideration-and we may even be able to sway those who disagree with us.

I'm sure there will be those who can point out the flaws and shortcomings of this approach to exercising leadership in politics, who say that what I'm advocating is naive and unrealistic. My critics will say that in the real world of politics, it is power-with all of its coercive potential-that is workable and necessary. And I must admit that there is, in what is often called "servant leadership," something of power games in even the most noble effort to exercise authority. The truth is that we are seldom free from power plays, regardless how hard we try.

Nevertheless, in Jesus we have one who embodied the ultimate expression of authority and who perfectly modeled servant leadership;

unquestionably, He is the "ideal type" toward which we should aspire. Those who doubt the efficacy of authority over power should take note that the Christ who rejected power in favor of sacrificial love will ultimately triumph over the principalities and powers of the political world. That passage from the second chapter of Philippians cited earlier goes on to say:

Therefore God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name,
so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father (w. 9-11).

His lordship was created through sacrificial love, and by following His example we too can gain authority. Only through our sacrifice, as we seek to meet the needs of others, will we have the authority to challenge the "principalities and powers" that are the rulers of our age.

KNOWLEDGE OVER IGNORANCE

There is one more important requirement for effective Christian political involvement that needs noting: We must be an informed constituency. Democracy requires an informed voting public, and Christians must pay special attention to this requirement.

To gain the authority to speak and then not have the knowledge to speak in a credible manner is to be rendered foolish. We are told in Scripture that our work is approved by God when we correctly handle knowledge and truth (see 2 Tim. 2:15). We are required to have a reason for the hope that lies within us (see 1 Pet. 3:15).

Blind patriotism is not a virtue. Christians, to the best of our abilities, must work hard to understand the various perspectives on the "hot" issues of the day, and be able to reflect on these issues intelligently and biblically. As we think through issues, we must be willing to rise above party allegiances and develop our political positions in accord with what we believe to be the will of God.

I am still amazed at how often Christians simply adhere to positions dictated by preachers from the pulpits of their churches or fall in line with what they hear on Christian radio and religious television shows. Each Christian must work out his or her own "salvation" on political issues (see Phil 2:12), listening to what is said on all sides and then making personal decisions. The last thing in the world I want for anyone is that he or she

uncritically follow what I say as if my views on political issues are the final word on what Christians should think. What I hope is that the political statements that follow will stimulate thinking and-ideally-demonstrate how just one Christian endeavors to use a biblically based theology to inform his political thinking.

I do not propose that my perspectives should be considered definitively Christian, nor that differing views outlined by other thinking Christians should be ignored. None of us are above making errors in our political thinking, and I have been most certainly proven wrong on various issues. When I consider the ways in which my own opinions have changed over the years, I am well aware that neither I nor anyone else has the final word on how Christians should vote on the crucial issues that confront us at election time. At best, I hope to challenge you to develop your own perspectives, and to encourage you to use biblically based critiques to examine the pros and cons of contemporary political debates.

With all my emphasis on individuals working out their personal positions on the pressing issues that are hot at election time, I do not want for any Red Letter Christian to ignore how the Church can help. As each of us works out what he or she believes, there should be a willingness to share conclusions with fellow believers. Christ, working through us, can provide checks and balances that keep us from making serious mistakes. The critiques we receive from those who love us in Christ, even if they do not cause us to back off from positions we have taken on certain issues, will sharpen our thinking and, in accordance with Scripture, help us to work out our reasons for the hope that is in us (see 1 Pet. 3:15).

GOD'S KINGDOM AND THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

There are political issues that merit attention but cannot be explored here with the care and depth they deserve. For instance, the question of whether or not the government should sponsor-or even allow-stem cell research is becoming more and more prominent in political discussions. Some Christians forcefully argue that the human embryo should be treated as a sacred creation of God, worthy of spiritual dignity. Others claim that it is wrong to waste embryos that will be destroyed anyway, when they might be used to cure illnesses such as Parkinson's and Alzheimer's disease, or to restore para- and quadriplegics to the full use of their bodies. Because the political landscape changes so rapidly, this may become a dominant issue in upcoming elections while Christian ethicists argue the pros and cons.

On the other hand, some of the issues have become *passe*. Hopefully, the ways I have reflected on politics from my personal understanding of Scripture will encourage you to develop your own Christian perspective on the pressing political issues of the day.

Red Letter Christians are likely to have differences of opinion with other deeply committed Christians-and even with each other. In the give-and-take between Christians with differing political priorities, there have to be some ground rules if we are to live as citizens of God's Kingdom even as we seek to expand it. While I have been challenged by my students to rethink my positions on social issues, I have, in turn, challenged them to consider carefully how they engage those with differing points of view.

First, I tell them, we must avoid name-calling or demonizing those who disagree with us. There is something terribly wrong when Christians with liberal political ideas call those on the Religious Right "fascists," and something equally wrong when the retort of political conservatives is to call those who lean Left "communists." Such name-calling is condemned by Jesus Himself (see Matt. 5:22).

Second, when taking a stand on a political issue, we must entertain the possibility that we might be wrong. Looking back over the years, I can recall many instances when I was so sure of myself on a certain issue, only to eventually realize I was very, very wide of the mark. Authentic dialogue on political issues cannot take place unless those on each side entertain the possibility that there may be truth in the opposing point of view. If we don't approach dialogue with this kind of humility, we only end up shouting at each other until we run out of energy, passion and time.

I know two women who were on opposite sides of the abortion issue. One worked with Planned Parenthood, a pro-choice organization, and the other worked with a Roman Catholic crisis pregnancy center. But instead of calling each other names, they were humble enough to talk to and learn from each other. The pro-choice woman came to a deeper appreciation of the sacredness of all life, and the pro-life woman came to an understanding of how economic factors often drive women to seek abortions, and how pregnancies resulting from rape or incest were viewed by her pro-choice friend.

Third, we must try to find common ground-or, as my friend Jim Wallis says, "higher ground." In spite of our differences, there are many concerns Christians hold in common. Many Red Letter Christians have joined Wallis's Call to Renewal movement, which brings together Christians from across the political spectrum to work together to "Make Poverty History!" Call to Renewal is an example of the good that can be accomplished when Christians walk forward together on higher ground.

Most Christians will affirm that politics are far too serious to be left in the hands of politicians. We should be agreed that God holds all of us responsible for making decisions that determine our national and global destiny. In the end, we will all be judged by our answers to two questions: What have you decided about Me and the way of salvation I have provided? and What have you done to allow My Kingdom to come on earth, even as it is in heaven?

Only where God's Kingdom has come to earth can there be justice for the poor and oppressed-for any of us.

Thank you for your "Red Letter" efforts at bringing traces of that kingdom to Camden.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What, according to Dr. Campolo, is the core of Jesus' mission? Discuss the implications, for today's Christians of that mission. What might it mean for individual Christians and for church institutions that Jesus was not talking about "pie in the sky by and by"?

2. Do you see/know any people in your neighborhood/parish/congregation who are "transformed" and "transforming society" as Dr. Campolo describes. What are they like? What inspires them?

3. How should we listen to preachers or radio/TV religious personalities? What does it mean to be faithful and critical?

ENDNOTES

1. Hendrik Berkhof, *Christ and the Powers* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1977), pp. 18-26.

2. Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, translated by A.M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons (New York: The Free Press, 1965), p. 152.

3. Isaac Watts, "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" (1707), music by Lowell Mason (1824).

FURTHER STUDY

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CHAPTER 2

THE HIDDEN FACES OF RACISM: CATHOLICS SHOULD STAND FIRM ON AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

*BRYAN N. MASSINGALE**

In order to get a minority, they picked someone who was less qualified than me." Tales of poorly qualified persons of color being advanced or preferred over better qualified whites express the worst fears of whites and occasion the deepest resentments of people of color in the current politically charged public debate on affirmative action.

For whites, affirmative action at its worst is a fundamental negation of deeply held values and beliefs such as basic fairness—"just reward for ability and hard work"—self-reliance, and an individual's own responsibility to make something of him- or herself. From this perspective, affirmative action connotes the granting of unfair advantage and the belief that people of color are "getting something for nothing," that is, are being rewarded without personal effort and initiative.

To blacks, however, the sentiment that affirmative action is opening the floodgates to legions of unqualified minorities is merely a flimsy rationalization justifying the pervasive presumption that most of "them" are not, and could not be, as qualified as whites. For many African Americans and other people of color, white anxiety over affirmative action is yet another sign of the endemic refusal on the part of the dominant society to admit that racial prejudice stifles the progress of even the most qualified of black persons.

Little wonder, then, that affirmative action is one of the most volatile, delicate, and emotionally charged issues in the minefield of American race relations. Writing in 1958, the U.S. Catholic bishops declared, "The heart of the race question is moral and religious." Yet the current public discourse over affirmative action is all too often marked by political expediency, the exploitation of racial fears, and polarizing rhetoric. These racial resentments and suspicions can overwhelm the

* [Fr. Massingale presented the Romero lecture in March, 2010. Unfortunately, no tape/dvd or text is available from that lecture. We are, therefore, republishing an earlier article by him. Reprinted with permission from September/October 1996 issue of *Salt of the Earth*. Published by Claretian Publications, 205 West Monroe Street, Chicago, IL 60606, 312-236-7782, www.claretianpubs.org.]

voice of faith. I'd like to allow this voice of faith and its message of challenge and hope to shed some light on this contentious debate.

Let me state at the outset that I do not write as a neutral observer. I bring several biases to the discussion of affirmative action. I am a Christian who believes that faith in Jesus demands a special sensitivity to and concern for the poor and marginalized.

I also write as an African American who has benefited from affirmative action. Without the benefit of a scholarship targeted for black students, I would have been unable to attend a prestigious Catholic university and earn my degree with highest distinction. I make a point of saying "with highest distinction" to be upfront about my profound disagreement with the opinion that affirmative action necessarily results in a lowering of quality or a denial of merit.

Finally, I cast this discussion principally in terms of the African American perspective for two reasons. It is the experience with which I am most familiar; and the granting of affirmative action to black people arouses a passion and fury which other forms of affirmative action—in particular those that benefit white women—do not.

WHAT IS "AFFIRMATIVE ACTION"?

Affirmative action is a catchphrase for various measures that propose to address and rectify the pervasive, systematic discrimination experienced by people of color and women through facilitating, encouraging, or, rarely, compelling their inclusion in the mainstream of society.

Such measures have included aggressive recruitment and targeted advertising practices, remedial-education and job-training programs, vigilant enforcement of nondiscrimination laws and policies, flexible hiring goals and promotion timetables, and—in extremely rare instances of entrenched discrimination and the failure of voluntary measures—mandatory hiring or promotion quotas.

Hence in the official language of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, affirmative action "encompasses any measure, beyond simple termination of a discriminatory practice, that permits the consideration of race, national origin, sex, or disability, along with other criteria, and which is adopted to provide opportunities to a class of qualified individuals who have either historically or actually been denied those opportunities and/or to prevent the recurrence of discrimination in the future."

Affirmative-action measures and efforts originated in the 1960s and flourished in the early 1970s in response to the insistence of civil-rights activists and the prodding of the government that employers, schools, and other public entities take proactive steps, beyond merely

terminating discriminatory behaviors, to increase the presence and participation of African Americans and other racial minorities.

But why, many wonder, is affirmative action necessary? Why isn't simple nondiscrimination enough? Why couldn't the government simply have said, "Stop discriminating," enforced it, and be done with it? Noted constitutional scholar Mary Frances Berry writes: "Those calling for an end to affirmative action...ignore one fundamental fact: The reason we need affirmative action is because we've had so much negative action throughout American history."

It is shocking to realize that it has only been within the last generation that our country has changed its official policy of second-class citizenship for African Americans. Prior to 1965, racial exclusion from political participation and employment, education, housing, and health-care opportunities was not simply the norm, it was public policy. Especially—though not exclusively—in the South, unequal treatment between blacks and whites was mandated in the most ordinary circumstances of life such as eating meals in a restaurant, visiting a public park, traveling on a bus, or choosing a place to live.

Racism—racial discrimination and segregation—was *de jure* ("by the law"), which means that it existed with the approval, cooperation, mandate, or acquiescence of government officials and agencies.

To put this another way: prior to 30 years ago, racial minorities had little or no legal recourse if, when desiring to attend a theater or nightclub, be buried in the cemetery of their choice, or stay at a hotel or buy a house they could afford, a white person refused them entry or service. Thus the personal prejudices of individuals were reinforced, and even enforced, by the government of our country.

Fortunately, this official second-class status for African Americans came to an end with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. But the belief that people of color, and black Americans in particular, are full and equal human beings rests upon a still shallow legal foundation.

Perhaps a visual picture will help to make this point. Suppose one constructed a vertical time line, one foot in length, representing the history of our nation since 1619 (the arrival of the first Africans to North America). The last 30 years, the period since the end of legalized racism, would be only one inch deep. Hence, the consensus that people of color should be full and equal participants in the life of our country is a very thin one indeed; the idea and practices of racial inferiority are much more deeply rooted in our national psyche.

The conclusion is clear: even with the end of official discrimination and exclusion, the effects of this negative racial legacy will continue in the absence of positive action to counter them. Simple declarations of

nondiscrimination and race-neutral or so-called color-blind approaches are not sufficient to overturn centuries-old practices and beliefs.

The need for affirmative action rests upon the realistic appraisal that, given the deep-seated racism of American culture, racial minorities will continue to be hindered or excluded in the absence of concerted, conscious, and deliberate efforts to incorporate them into the American mainstream.

One cannot understand affirmative action except in light of its relationship to the social evil of racism (later broadened to include other forms of social exclusion such as gender discrimination). Affirmative action is inseparably linked to the existence of racial prejudice and discrimination, for it is a tool for rectifying past and present racial inequities. The true issue at the heart of the current discussions of affirmative action is not—or ought not to be—affirmative action by itself but the continuing existence of racism (and gender discrimination) as an obstacle to full participation in society.

In summary, affirmative action has a twofold purpose: 1) to compensate for the enduring legacy and effects of our history of de jure segregation; and 2) to minimize the occurrence of present and future discrimination, toward the goal of creating a racially inclusive society.

RACISM IS NOT A THING OF THE PAST

"But why dwell on the past?" some will ask. "Isn't this all past history? Surely we have made enormous progress in race relations! Even if there was a time when affirmative action might have been useful and even necessary, that time is now past. Affirmative action is no longer needed, and to continue these practices is unfair." Thus goes one of the major objections to affirmative action: if it is inseparably linked to the evil of racism, and if racism is no longer a major problem or issue, then affirmative action no longer has any justification or moral merit.

My response is that declarations of racism's demise are premature or naive at best—and at worst, willfully ignorant and cynically dishonest.

In 1990, the University of Chicago's National Opinion Research Center conducted an ambitious national survey of the country's racial attitudes. Given that on such surveys people tend to understate their racial bias, the results are disturbing: 62 percent of whites believed that blacks were lazier than whites; 51 percent thought blacks were less patriotic than whites; 53 percent stated that blacks were less intelligent; 56 percent claimed blacks were more prone to violent behaviors.

Indeed, on every measure of merit and virtue, blacks were deemed to be inferior to whites by a majority of white respondents. Moreover, other surveys indicate that the younger generation (Americans under the

age of 30) may be more racially prejudiced than their parents and grandparents.

Despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, a majority of white Americans are in a state of denial over the continuing existence of racism. The extent of this willful ignorance or avoidance concerning racism has been brought home to me during the course on faith and racial justice that I teach to undergraduate college students.

Each semester that I have taught the course, the white students will speak painfully of the estrangement they begin to feel from their families and friends: how their parents forbid them to discuss what they are learning in the course at home; how their white roommates become uncomfortable when black classmates are invited to the dorm to continue a class discussion; how their friendships have become strained and even broken because they dared to differ with their friends because of what they have learned and come to believe through their study.

At the course's conclusion, one of my students wrote: "The most painful thing about this course is that I have lost my innocence concerning my family and friends. I knew that they might be a little prejudiced. But I'm shocked at the extent to which they are willing to ostracize me in order to keep their prejudices unchallenged." I suspect that many people remain in denial because the personal costs of acknowledging the existence of racism are too high.

Notwithstanding the undeniable progress of the last 30 years, racial prejudice and discrimination remain deeply entrenched and strongly operative in the personal attitudes, group behaviors, and institutional processes of this country. Because black skin is still seen as a liability in America, proactive measures like affirmative action are still necessary if there is to be any hope of overcoming the stigma, the presumption of inferiority, which too many whites still ascribe to African American people.

REVERSE DISCRIMINATION?

"But what of those who are incompetent? Why should they be granted access over better qualified whites? Why should hardworking whites be pushed aside in favor of second-rate affirmative action folks?"

The widespread sentiment that affirmative action policies make white people the victims of "reverse discrimination" is the most emotionally potent indictment in the current debate surrounding this issue. This accusation, too, needs to be exposed to the light of reality. By every objective measure and study, instances of unfair reverse discrimination are real—but extremely rare.

Only 3.6 percent of the discrimination cases brought to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights were filed by white men alleging that they

were victims of reverse discrimination, versus the over 96 percent filed by women and racial minorities. Further investigation uncovers that of those complaints deemed to have merit and validity, only 2 percent are claims filed by white men wronged by reverse discrimination.

What can one conclude from this? First, allegations of reverse discrimination are either grossly underreported to public authorities or, more likely, they are greatly exaggerated. Second, it is undeniable that complaints of reverse discrimination have some validity. Third, the phenomenon of reverse discrimination is minuscule in comparison with the pervasive discrimination encountered by women and racial minorities. Fourth, even with the existence of affirmative action, women and people of color encounter enduring obstacles to equal treatment in hiring and promotion.

In light of all this, it is difficult to avoid concluding that the anxiety, anger, and resentment fostered by horror stories of reverse discrimination are being skillfully manipulated for the political benefit of a few; but we all pay the price of increased racial polarization and estrangement. The correct approach should not be to scrap affirmative action but rather to refine its application so that "reverse discrimination"—as well as racial and gender exclusion—is minimized.

WHAT WOULD JESUS DO?

Thus far I have remained at the level of the sociological and the political. This was necessary so that our reflection would be grounded in concrete reality. But what of our faith? As stated at the outset, at stake in any discussion of and struggle for justice are moral and religious convictions. Indeed, the core issue in the controversy over affirmative action, as with any justice issue, is our integrity as followers of Jesus.

Let us then mine the riches of ethical wisdom inherent in the Christian tradition of social reflection and discover its message of challenge and hope amidst the controversies and confusions of the moment.

A central conviction of the followers of Jesus is that every human being, of whatever race, gender, class, nationality, or other distinction, is fundamentally equal in dignity with every other human being. Each is a creature of God, made in God's image.

It follows, then, that any attitude or practice that would deny or compromise this fundamental human equality cannot be acceptable to those who profess faith in Jesus. The Second Vatican Council rejected all forms of discrimination based on race and gender by declaring: "With respect to the fundamental rights of human persons, every type of discrimination, whether social or cultural, whether based on sex, race,

color, social condition, language, or religion, is to be overcome and eradicated as contrary to God's intent."

Yet the U.S. bishops, in their 1979 pastoral letter on racism "Brothers and Sisters to Us," note that an "unresolved racism permeates our society's structures and resides in the hearts of many among the majority." It is in this context that the bishops endorse the concept of affirmative action as a means of addressing the "long-standing imbalances in minority representation" which stem from this "unresolved racism" in American society. They went on to urge every diocese and religious institution to adopt an affirmative-action plan.

In 1986, the U.S. bishops again addressed affirmative action, this time in their pastoral letter "Economic Justice for All." Central to their argument is the idea that human dignity can only be realized in community. Therefore all persons must have the right and opportunity to participate in the life of their society. Thus all forms of marginalization or exclusion from social, political, and economic life are rejected as immoral, for such practices compromise the fundamental dignity of persons.

The bishops observe, however, that "patterns of exclusion," whereby entire social groups are made marginal, continue to plague our society. They declare that overcoming these patterns of exclusion is "a most basic demand of justice" and conclude: "Where the effects of past discrimination persist, society has the obligation to take positive steps to overcome the legacy of injustice. Judiciously administered affirmative-action programs in education and employment can be important expressions of the drive for solidarity and participation that is at the heart of true justice."

Beginning, then, from a core conviction regarding the equal dignity of all human persons and a condemnation of all discrimination based on race and gender, the Catholic ethical tradition embraces the use of affirmative action as a concrete means of overcoming entrenched social practices which result from racial and gender bias. Thus in our ethical tradition, one sees the constant link between the sin of racism and the moral endorsement of affirmative action.

As a professor of moral theology, I have a strong appreciation for Catholic social teaching. It can help highlight the ethical dimensions of political issues that are all too easily ignored. But in my experience as a preacher and teacher, I find that church documents are rarely viewed as inspiring and compelling. They lack a quality essential to inspiration—namely, that of committed witness.

Thus followers of Jesus will draw their challenge and hope not only from the official teaching of our tradition but also from the witness of Jesus himself.

Needless to say, affirmative action was hardly a burning issue during Jesus' life. Yet features of his ministry have profound implications for our task today. In his practice of table fellowship, Jesus ate meals with all manner of folk, in particular with those who were socially despised, publicly ostracized, and morally suspect.

Further, Jesus sought out and embraced the lost and rejected; he told stories where the main characters are commanded to search the back roads and to bring the uninvited to the banquet table. And it is beyond dispute that Jesus had women among his followers—a practice that was a source of scandal.

Thus time and again we find Jesus, in the name of a God of all-embracing love, engaging in controversial practices that challenge and expand the boundaries which define the limits of belonging. Jesus' concrete witness is a lasting challenge to those who call themselves his followers to also actively embrace those who are despised and outcast. Jesus' resurrection also grounds our hope that the evil of human exclusion and intolerance, despite its stubborn tenacity, is not ultimately victorious.

AN AFFIRMATIVE-ACTION AGENDA FOR THE CHURCH

What, then, are we to do? What should be the affirmative-action agenda for the church, the body of believers inspired by the words and deeds of Jesus? How are we to make his witness real amid the contentious and at times distorted affirmative-action debate? Without any pretense of being exhaustive, the following actions seem essential:

1. Keep the focus where it belongs. Despite all the rhetoric to the contrary, affirmative action is not the problem. The problem is the continuing existence of racism, sexism, and other forms of human denigration and exclusion. As long as the presumption of racial inferiority persists, some kind of proactive countermeasures will also be necessary. The most moral way, then, to eliminate affirmative action is to eliminate the need for it by working to eradicate racism and sexism.

2. Combat denial. As developed at length above, many do not believe that racism is still a significant social evil. In the face of this pervasive denial, Christians can do at least two things. The first is to educate themselves, through reading and dialogue with people of color, in the reality of racism. The second is to take a stand by enlightening the unaware and challenging the dishonest.

3. Respect the concerns of the fearful and anxious. Economic uncertainty exacerbates racial tensions. When these tensions are deliberately manipulated by some politicians for short-term electoral gain, the results can be tragic. The church, through its ministries of preaching and teaching, can respond to racial fear with gentleness and firmness. Often when I speak on racial justice, I pause at some point to acknowledge

the tensions present in the room, gently assuring that it's okay to be afraid and angry—and firmly stating that it's not okay to let one's fear and anger blind one to reality and the pursuit of justice.

4. Be a model for society. Those who would teach justice must be perceived as being just themselves. Therefore, the Church's own corporate life must show a commitment to the principles of affirmative action. Does the diocese, school, or parish have an affirmative-action plan? Who is responsible for overseeing and implementing it? Is the diocese's/parish's/school's commitment to affirmative action readily apparent in the composition of its staff and leaders? The point here is simple and profound: one leads best by doing. If the church shows a lack of commitment to affirmative action in its corporate life, then its words will ring hollow and appear hypocritical.

5. Be a beacon of hope. Perhaps the most important contribution the church can make to the struggle for justice is instilling and sustaining a sense of hope. Whenever I talk to audiences about racism and affirmative action, the most common emotions, besides anger and fear, are weariness and despair: "We've been at this so long, we've tried everything, and nothing seems to work." And thus a sense of resignation and powerlessness sets in, which leads to capitulation to the status quo.

I understand these feelings. I, too, struggle to keep alive a sense of hope that will sustain working for justice in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds. But when I find myself discouraged, I remind myself of three things:

First, we haven't been at this all that long. It's only been in the last 30 years that as a nation we've seriously undertaken the cause of inclusion. Racism isn't new; what is new is the attempt, halfhearted as it may sometimes be, at being fair.

Second, racism is of human making. It is neither inevitable nor inexorable. Human beings created it; human beings maintain it; therefore, human beings can eliminate it.

Finally, I remind myself that in working for racial justice, I—and many others before, with, and after me—am doing the work of God. And when one does the work of God, ultimately one cannot fail, for while human beings can hinder and delay its arrival, they cannot definitively block the coming of the reign of God.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do you know anyone, yourself, a friend, a family member, who has been passed over because of an affirmative action decision? If so, what was the response to that action? Do you think this type of affirmative action is good for our society? Why? Why not? Who gains from affirmative action?

2. Discuss what Fr. Massingale means by “our negative racial legacy.” Why does the church teach that the heart of the race question is “moral and religious?” In light of the U.S. Supreme Court’s recent decision (June 2014) putting severe constraints on Affirmative Action, what stance should the Catholic Church and other churches take?

3. Talk about Fr. Massingale’s five point affirmative action agenda for the church. What might your parish/congregation/social concerns committee do to help implement that agenda?

FURTHER STUDY

“Black and Catholic: On Race, Faith and Freedom,” *America*, 211 (July 7-14, 2014). An up-to-date popular but profound treatment of race, with articles and reviews by Vincent D. Rougeau, M. Shawn Copeland, Christopher Pramuk, Cora Marie Billings, Bryan N. Massingale, Diana L. Hayes, C. Vanessa White, and others.

Cassidy, Laurie M., and Mikulich, Alex, eds., *Interrupting White Privilege: Catholic Theologians Break the Silence* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007).

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Nothwehr, Dawn M., *That They May Be One: Catholic Social Teaching on Racism, Tribalism, and Xenophobia* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008).

O’Connell, Maureen H., *If These Walls Could Talk: Community Muralism and the Beauty of Justice*, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, Press, 2012).

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USCCB, *We Walk by Faith and Not by Sight: The Church’s Response to Racism in the Years Following Brothers and Sisters to Us: A Research Report Commemorating the 25th Anniversary of Brothers and Sisters to Us* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2004). www.usccb.org/saac

CHAPTER 3

IMAGES OF JUSTICE, PRESENT AMONG US: REMEMBERING MONSIGNOR

CAROLYN FORCHÉ*

It is a great honor to be invited to speak here at The Romero Center, and on the anniversary of Archbishop Oscar Romero's death. This is also the Feast of Assumption, and the 100th anniversary of the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire. With us in our prayers tonight are the people of Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Bahrain, Yemen and Gaza, and also the people of Japan, those lost in the earthquake and those who volunteered to stay behind and attempt to repair or mitigate the damage at Fukushima. There has been another earthquake in Myanmar, so we must pray for Myanmar too.

I'd like to begin with a quote by the poet Bertolt Brecht: "There are those who struggle for a day and they are good. There are those who struggle for a year and they are better. There are those who struggle for many years and they are better still. But there are those who struggle for an entire lifetime and they are indispensable." Bertolt Brecht also wrote a motto: "In the dark times, will there also be singing? Yes, there will be singing. About the dark times."

We are here to reflect upon the life of one who was indispensable, and also to sing about the dark times.

When I was twenty-seven years old, I was invited to El Salvador by the nephew of the poet Claribel Alegria, whose work I had been translating. El Salvador was not yet at war, but war was coming, and Leonel Gomez was desperate for people to come to his country to learn about the situation and also to bear witness to the horror Salvadorans were already experiencing. Two priests, he told me, had recently been murdered; nuns had been expelled from the country; campesinos had been tortured, disappeared, and murdered; students, teachers, labor leaders and activists had also been disappeared, tortured, murdered and held in secret detention. This was the time of the Death Squads. But also the time of a great renewal of faith, the years of the Christian base communities, and a time when an unfinished cathedral became a beacon and sanctuary of moral courage and spiritual light, where a shepherd would become a martyr and a saint. This is that time of which I will speak tonight, and I pray that I might convey something of how it was to be alive then, when

*[Portions of this lecture were published in *Doubletake* (Summer 1996) (no longer printed).]

Monsignor was also alive. I will begin, however, much later, after the twelve years of war have ended, when I returned to El Salvador for the first time.

I awaken every two hours during the night on my pallet in the mud hut, a rooster's eye fixed on mine in the pitch dark. He crows, alerting the dogs, whose barking ricochets among the cocoa palms until the darkness is filled with the strains of "the symphony of Santa Marta"—burros, sows, piglets, wild birds—in a village high in the mountains of Cabañas without lights or running water, five hours and forty-five minutes from Washington, DC., by plane, and then another three or four by truck depending on the roads, the rains.

Santa Marta shares its poverty with every other village in El Salvador, along with the ghosts and shallow graves of the war, so that it's possible to walk through a field and fill a sack with bones. It has a cinder-block school built by the Swedes, and a clinic with no physician, where the armless blind boy in the hammock was taken the day a land mine exploded. In the morning, the women beat their clothes on a wet *pilas*, hang them in blue veils of cook-smoke, eat their palm-sized tortillas, their lump of beans. They bathe at the common spigot, deftly soaping and rinsing themselves beneath their clothes. The water is clear, icy, contaminated.

There is tuberculosis here, and dysentery, illiteracy, malnutrition, paraplegia, and also patience, camaraderie, and uncommon courage. The people fled the war in a *guinda*, an evacuation, babies on their backs single file through the jungle, in silence and mortal fear, leaving behind them the first Santa Marta, gutted and burned. They lived for several years in a refugee camp in Honduras together, until as one they decided to return home without the permission of anyone but themselves. The second Santa Marta was built on this ground, with the houses clustered for security, and it was here, in this resurrected village, that the war actually began to end. So it is fitting that this village has what no other can claim: a holy thing, given to them by Catholic sisters in San Salvador, a frayed swatch from the vestment of Archbishop Oscar Romero, washed with the blood he gave for them, the blood he hoped would seed their liberation.

It has been seventeen years since I first travelled to El Salvador, before the war, while the country was still at peace; the silence of misery endured: fifteen years and six days since he was shot, on March 24th, 1980, while saying Mass in the chapel of Divine Providence Hospital for the terminally ill poor before a tiny cluster of the sick and their caretakers. Monsignor had been celebrating the Mass alone, in his Lenten vestments. "This Eucharist... is just an act of faith," he said in his homily. "May this body immolated and this blood sacrificed for humans nourish us also, so that we may give our body and blood to suffering and to pain—like Christ, not for self, but to bring about justice and peace for our people. Let us join

together, then, in faith and hope at this moment of prayer for Doña Sarita and ourselves.” He returned to the altar, facing the open doorway of the chapel, looked out at his tiny congregation, then down at the unconsecrated hosts and the cup of wine.

For three years Oscar Romero y Gadámez had served as Archbishop of San Salvador. If we are to find his predecessor among martyred Christians, we must turn to another bishop, Ignatius Theophorus of the metropolitan see of Antioch in Syria, immolated in the Flavian amphitheater in 107 A.D. Little of Ignatius’s life is known, and nothing of the charges resulting in his persecution, but like Monsignor Romero, he is revered for his strength of character, his pastoral letters, and his transformation of the Christian view of martyrdom. “I am God’s wheat ground fine by the lions’ teeth to become the purest bread for Christ,” Ignatius wrote, turning from the pain of death toward an inexorable, Eucharistic, and salvific destiny, the apotheosis of a holy life, unambiguous and spiritually complete.

“I have frequently been with death.” Monsignor Romero said near the end of his life. “I should mention to you that I do not believe in death, but in resurrection. If they kill me, I will live on in the Salvadoran people.” Nineteen centuries earlier, Ignatius had pronounced that the martyr is “no more to be found in himself.”

Oscar Romero was born in the remote village of Ciudad Barrios, on August 13, 1917, to Santos Romero and his wife, Guadalupe de Jesús Gadámez. He spent his adolescence with the Claretians, then attended the major seminary in San Miguel, and finally studied with the Jesuits at the national seminary in San Salvador. In 1937, he began six years of work at the Gregorian University in Rome, where he was ordained and awarded a degree in theology. Italy was at war, and the young Romero lived in extreme poverty under Mussolini’s dictatorship. It was there, perhaps, that he was first drawn to the conservative Opus Dei, a prelature of the Catholic Church dedicated to personal sanctity.

When he returned to El Salvador, he served his own community as one of the few rural priests administering to the spiritual needs of the most poor. Devoutly dedicated, he is remembered for his openness, compassion and strict discipline. The priesthood, for him, was not a business founded to extract a comfortable life from the needy: upon his elevation to bishop in 1967, he imposed the same discipline upon his working priests. After three years, he became Auxiliary Bishop of San Salvador, and was later assigned to the impoverished diocese of Santiago de Maria, his home diocese, where, it is believed, his soul embarked on the path towards sanctity.

In the aftermath of a martyr’s death, mythologizing begins in earnest, a narrative constructed of apocryphal stories and documentable facts conforming to the metanarrative: whether the martyr’s origins are

humble or privileged, there must be a decisive turn, an awakening or conversion, temporally fixed and irrevocably decisive. For Monsignor Romero, this epiphanic moment was said to be the murder of his close friend, the Jesuit father Rutilio Grande, near the village of El Paisnal. The priest was riding through the cane fields, along with an elderly man and a teenage boy, when security forces machine-gunned them on March 12, 1977. The first among the country's clerics to be murdered, Father Grande had, a month earlier, denounced the expulsion of a missionary priest: "It was a matter of being or not being faithful to the mission of Jesus here and now. And for being faithful there would be reprisals, calumnies, blows, torture, kidnappings, bombs, and, if one was an outsider, expulsion. But there always remained the fundamental question: it is dangerous to be a Christian in our milieu... precisely because the world that surrounds us is founded radically on an established disorder before which the mere proclamation of the Gospel is subversive... In Christianity one has to be ready to give one's life in the service of securing a just order, in saving the majority and in helping defend the values of the Gospel."

Within the Church, these values were in some dispute. The Second Vatican Council's restoration of popular biblical study, together with its approval of liturgical worship in local languages, authorized the often illiterate and impoverished laity to study scripture on their own, eroding the concept of religious, and ultimately secular, hierarchies. In Latin America, the historically conservative and defensive institutional church, long allied with oligarchic economic elites, addressed the precepts of Vatican II in a conference of bishops held at Medellin, Colombia, in 1968. While these convocations marked apparent doctrinal shifts, it would be a mistake to view them as causal: they were, rather, responding to the growing demand among ordinary Catholics for a living faith, founded on praxis in the modern world. This spiritual renewal coalesced in "liberation theology," in which, according to Daniel Levine, an authority on lay voices in Catholicism, "the very enterprise of doing theology moves from a deductive and axiomatic logic to become an interpretive discipline, shaped and limited by the context in which it evolves and by the interests and experiences of the Christian community itself. As a practical matter, these interests and experiences are the way they are because of historical realities of exploitation, injustice and oppression."

In Latin America, the members of this renewed, "popular" church formed Christian "base communities," studying scripture by candlelight, celebrating masses anywhere possible, often in the open on makeshift altars. For them, the kingdom of God and the world of man coexist, one emerging from the other. Poverty and misery are distinguished: the one a condition of simplicity and renunciation, the other of humanly imposed suffering. Social injustice and the exploitation of labor are condemned. Nuns and priests commit themselves to "a preferential option for the

poor,” living in solidarity with them and sharing their fate. This church views historical change as the salutary and inevitable work of God in the world, advocating action to promote justice, critiquing society, and interpreting faith through the experience of the most oppressed. They activate scripture: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim the release of the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:18-19). In this church, the poor have compassion for the poor.

Monsignor Romero hurried to the Jesuit house in Aguilares on the news of Father Grande’s death. Only weeks before, Romero had been appointed Archbishop of San Salvador, the most powerful office in the Salvadoran church hierarchy. The priests of the emergent church viewed his elevation with dismay: as a candidate acceptable to the country’s wealthy elite, he had apparently been charged to suppress the young activists, discipline their ranks, and restore their mission to feudal pastoral ministry. The archbishop who arrived that night, however, was deeply troubled, and determined to respond to the murder. After concelebrating the memorial mass with more than a dozen others, he asked the priests and nuns to remain with him, and together they talked into the morning, the new archbishop soliciting the counsel of those who had worked closely with the dead priest and his parish of laborers, and who were vulnerable themselves. The three corpses had been laid on simple wooden tables in the church, covered with white sheets. It was said that Romero kept vigil over the remains of Father Grande for several hours.

By this time, more than three hundred *campesinos* had been killed in El Salvador, among them catechists and labor organizers who were dragged from their cardboard and scrap-lumber *champas* in the night, from the fields, the roads, from Bible studies and their mud-brick chapels, tortured with machetes and coals, their eyes gouged, their limbs hacked away, their entrails pulled from them, and then left in the field or at the doorstep of one who might be next. Others were “disappeared,” made to vanish, and a new word entered the language: *desparecido*, one who *might* be dead, but could be suffering in secret detention.

The smallest and most populous country in Central America, El Salvador had been under military dictatorship for almost fifty years. Two hundred families owned 60 percent of the arable land and controlled 75 percent of export earnings; they lived aristocratically, protected behind high walls and on massive estates, with houses in Miami, Houston, and Switzerland. Among the poor, half were unemployed, and more than 90 percent earned less than one hundred dollars a year. Agricultural unions were forbidden by law. Eighty percent of the population had no running water, electricity, or sanitary services. The chief cause of death was

amebic dysentery. One out of four children died before the age of five; the average life expectancy was forty-six years.

The murder of Father Grande was viewed as Monsignor Romero's moment of truth, his "Saul on the road to Damascus" conversion; in the myth, he arises from his mournful vigil transformed. The activist priests who feared his archepiscopal discipline interpreted his resolve in the succeeding months as evidence of conversion, "that passage that never ends...which is the unceasing demand to kill in oneself all that is sin and make live, with ever growing power, all that is life, renewal, holiness and justice," as Romero wrote in his first pastoral letter. "It is a great joy to me," he continued, "to emphasize this sense of service in a letter whose purpose is to introduce to you a pastor who wants to live out, and as closely as possible, to share in, the feelings of the Good Shepherd, who 'came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life.' (Matthew 20:28)" A year earlier, as Bishop of Santiago de Maria, Romero had criticized "rationalistic, revolutionary, hate-filled christologies," according to Jon Sobrino's memoir. Was this the reversal it seemed? The activist priests thought so, and embraced him as their spiritual guide; others also thought so, and would soon condemn him to death.

We drive through the stench of rotting coffee husks, past pit fires and roadwork, toward the church of San Antonio del Monte, one of the oldest in the country, starkly white against the pewter-clouded afternoon. The verandas give onto a courtyard dripping with wisteria, where chickens forage and the new cistern sits full but inaccessible because of a power outage. I have not seen Father Guerra in seventeen years. There is a high, pulsing hum in the trees, which has been there since my arrival, mysterious and pervasive, linking me to the past, years of horror and immeasurable love. It is the song of the cicadas.

In the high-ceilinged rectory kitchen, we share a meal of lemonade, white cheese, and beans in the near dark. Father Guerra comes in, silvered from his years, but essentially the same: quiet, intense, wearing a white *guyabera*, his hands clasped in sincere joy that we've come, but asking us to make ourselves at home while he frees a few moments from his busy ministry.

"They captured him," my friend whispers, "and beat him almost to death."

It is Semana Santa, Holy Week. In an hour, the people will carry Christ, shouldering the cross on a litter through the streets, lighted by fluorescent tubes powered by a portable generator, followed by an unlit Madonna, borne by omen. Seventeen years ago, the litters were candlelit and accompanied by plainsong. Now the music issues from a cassette player. Still, the people are dressed in Lenten violet robes and positioned in medieval tableaux. A man is squatting before the Christ, gesticulating and asking the statue to acknowledge the beautiful flowers, the elaborate

preparations he made for this moment: it is a conversation, but we hear only his side.

“Well,” Father Guerra asks, when we meet him later on the blacked-out terrace, “did you see the procession?”

“You were captured...”

He smiled and offers us Coca-Colas and a flashlight, then enthuses over what has been accomplished in his poor parish: the orphanage, the school, the soybeans sandbagged against the walls of the vestibule, enough to feed the children for a year, and the church itself: rebuilt after the earthquake, of cement blocks this time, but in the old colonial style.

A candle gutters in the mild breeze and goes out. I ask about Monsignor Romero.

“He was always with us.”

“Always?”

“Monsignor’s process began in Santiago de Maria, before Father Grande was killed, with the people of that diocese, or before, but I think he was greatly affected by Santiago, where he openly defended the poor.”

Romero’s “conversion” to liberation theology was a gradual process of interrogating the new thought, measuring it against traditional teachings, testing its theological soundness, and warning his priests that the apprehension of God in history must be commended in a language of compassion rather than combative fervor: “There is a Spanish saying, *Love must be paid with love*. And that is the purpose of my pastoral message: to repay the debt of love. I have no other reason to be here.” For Romero, the realization of the kingdom of God on earth was something more than the spiritual template of a secular ideology. “The church does not exist for itself,” the Monsignor wrote in his first pastoral letter. “It’s *raison-d’être* is the same as that of Jesus: service to God to save the world.”

He called for the schools to recess for three days of reflection, and announced a single memorial mass for Father Grande to be celebrated in the cathedral on Sunday: the wealthy protested that this mass would deprive them of their opportunity to fulfill their Sunday obligation, as they seemed unwilling to drive to the cathedral and join the congregation of the poor. The papal nuncio questioned the “canonical” correctness of the decision, and others in the institutional hierarchy warned that such a gathering would be dangerously provocative. Cardinal Casariego of Guatemala intimated that Father Grande’s death was his own fault.

One hundred thousand people attended the mass, the largest in Salvadoran history, filling the dark interior of the still unfinished edifice, and spilling onto the plaza and side streets to stand in the sun, singing, praying, and listening to Monsignor’s voice over the loudspeaker; others in the countryside heard him by radio. From then on, he would celebrate

mass before a spray of microphones, transmitting his voice to the streets, to radios in the *campos* and around the world.

On May 1, 1977, Jesuit Father Jorge Sarsanedas, a Panamanian, was arrested. Before his deportation, Romero visited him, and was asked by the commander of the Guardia Nacional to sign a statement affirming the Father Sarsanedas had not been harmed. The priest had been blindfolded, beaten, and fed almost nothing: Monsignor refused to sign, then followed the Guardia car to the airport to see the priest safely out of the country. Repeatedly, bombs went off in the archdiocese print shop. A second priest, Father Alfonso Navarro, was murdered in the capital on May 11, along with a fourteen-year-old parishioner. Navarro died in the hospital, pardoning his killers. Meanwhile forty nuns were deported, and *campesinos* continued to die.

Government troops attacked Father Grande's town, Aguilares, on May 17 in a violent attempt at mass eviction. At least fifty townspeople were murdered, among them one attempting to ring the church bell, and hundreds disappeared. Houses were torn apart and the three remaining Jesuits were deported. A visiting priest was arrested and beaten. Monsignor Romero went himself to Aguilares, but, barred from entry, asked the chaplain of the Guardia to go in his place. Security forces arrested and held the chaplain prisoner while they shot open the tabernacle and ground the hosts into the floor.

The church is persecuted, Monsignor Romero said later that year, because "it denounces sin. It says to the rich: do not sin by misusing your money. It says to the powerful: do not misuse your political influence. Do not misuse your weaponry. Do not misuse your power. It says to the sinful torturers: do not torture. You are sinning. You are doing wrong. You are establishing the reign of hell on earth."

The security forces, comprised of the National Guard, the National Police, the treasury police, the air force, army, and a small navy, were all under brutal commands, but the army controlled the government and its highest offices. The institutional culture of the military fostered participation in graft and corruption so extensive and lucrative that the highest-ranking officers from the most powerful military cliques (called *tandas*) amassed millions and fiercely protected the hegemony they began to share with the landed rich.

Paramilitary groups, although officially disbanded, terrorized the countryside, and "death squads," composed of the military and civilians closely linked to them, financed by wealthy families, began clandestine operations, targeting union organizers, teachers, human rights activists, and members of the growing "popular organizations," as well as nuns and priests. The *desaprecidos* grew by the thousands: corpses of the unidentified dead filled the morgues, and were recovered from ditches, fields, and the long, pristinely beautiful coastal beaches. *Campesinos*

stopped fishing the lakes, not wishing to eat the fish that had fed so abundantly on human remains.

Between 1978 and 1980, I made several long trips to the country, initially to translate Salvadorean poets, whose work bore poignant witness to repression, at times so explicitly that it was difficult to distinguish the literal from figurative truth. The brutality of the security forces, uniformed and clandestine, intensified during my initial visit, which corresponded to the first human rights investigation in El Salvador. A young lapsed-Catholic poet, I observed the proceedings at the remove of one who finds herself assimilating unprecedented horror, while encountering living faith for the first time. When the investigators left, I remained and asked my Salvadoran friends what would happen to the *campesinos* who had commended their dignified, tearful testimonies to the tape recorders, the priests and nuns who had so courageously provided meticulous documentation of repression.

“Most of them will die,” my friend said.

“But they must be protected!”

“Yes, they *should* receive protection—but from whom?”

Over the next months, I traveled throughout the country, compiling a report on the growing repression, replete with pseudonyms and detailed atrocities, which I sent to Amnesty International’s secretariat. A few weeks later, I received a reply, couriered from the United States, asking me to continue providing information, particularly regarding the possible fates of the disappeared.

For this work, it became necessary to learn to compare a child’s photograph with the face of a mutilated corpse, control my emetic reflex, search without prospect of recovery, impart hope without hoping. In this, I was continually accompanied by Salvadorans, who guided me with patience through the labyrinthine military security state, permitting me to discover for myself my own embassy’s complicities. They were with me when I feared more for myself than for others, when I wanted respite or the comforts of home. Within months, I could no longer regard my fate as other than inextricably linked with their own.

During the next two years, every peaceful demonstration and protest march was fired upon, even when the marchers numbered two hundred thousand, as on January 22, 1980, when it seemed that all of El Salvador converged on the capital in jubilant defiance, unfurling the bright red and yellow banners of the growing popular organizations. They sang, chanted, linked arms, and marched inexorably toward an attack that left twenty dead. A coup d’état by younger officers on October 15, 1979, had replaced the old military guard with a succession of three military-civilian juntas, each more repressive than the last.

In the countryside, the mass killings of Salvadoran *campesinos* continued. We encountered villages so newly abandoned that the little

corn cribs near the mud huts still smoldered, and their *champas* had become smoking mounds of ash, burnt enamel cookware, melted plastic washbasins. The fields around these villages had been torched, and where hours ago there had been children, women bearing water jugs, and men bent over their work, there was no one. Flies clouded the carcasses of horses and goats. Only a few hours from the pillage, in the makeshift refugee camps, I knelt beside women whose breasts had been slit open with machetes and with children newly orphaned. There were very few men.

In the city, the death squads pulled victims into paneled trucks and Jeep Cherokees and slit their throats. Years later, a young soldier active in the death squads told me about the people he had taken into dark-windowed vehicles, “with no hope. The person is tied up, their hands tied...to see their expressions as their face is covered with a mask...to see their chests and arms and hands and feet tremble! The memory comes back to me.” He had been intrigued, he said, at the way the blood from a slit throat makes a soft bubbling sound. Sometimes the victims were shot and left on the sidewalk for buzzards and schoolchildren to find in the morning. A throng of children was often the sign of a corpse. For the targeted union leaders, priests, nuns, human rights workers, teachers, and organizers, the nights were often long and sleepless, as the hyper vigilant listened for cars or footsteps, any unusual sound, and dreaded the telephone, which, in the early hours of the morning, could only bring death threats or terrible news. We tried to maintain our spirits and humor, and there were moments of levity, as when the screaming woman beyond my window turned out in the light of day to be a parrot.

Having suspended construction work on the cathedral in order to give money to the poor, Monsignor said mass there on Sundays, or else in the Sacred Heart Basilica, but always for crowds standing shoulder to shoulder in the vaulted concrete carapace, spilling onto the steps and into the cathedral square. Long columns of sunlight passed from the louvered towers to the cement floor, where children gathered at the communion rail with coffins, windows cut into the lids, to reveal the faces of the dead. Monsignor called the roll of those murdered by security forces during the previous week, to which the congregation responded “*Presenté!*” as school children would answer a teacher, “Here!” The dead were present among us. Journalists crowded the sanctuary in the final months, holding aloft their cameras and microphones, which had also been arrayed in metal bouquets on the altar, at times nearly hiding the face of the mild, bespectacled archbishop, who with each passing week, seemed at once more tranquil and more resolute.

In his homily on the Sunday before he was killed, Monsignor Romero addressed the Salvadoran military: “Brothers, you are from our same *pueblo*, you kill our brother *campesinos*; and before an order to kill

given by a man you ought to reflect on the law of God which says: do not kill. No soldier is obliged to obey an order that is contrary to the will of God. Nobody has to fulfill an immoral law. Now it is time that you recover your consciences and that you first obey your conscience rather than an order to sin. The Church, defender of the rights of God, of the law of God, of the human dignity of the person, cannot remain shut up before such an abomination. We want the government to take seriously that reforms achieved with so much blood serve no one. In the name of God, then, and in the name of this suffering *pueblo*, whose cries rise to the heavens, every day more clamoring, I beg, I ask, I order you in the name of God: stop the repression.”

The last time I saw him alive, we talked in the Hospital of Divine Providence, where he lived in a tiny *casita* (having from the beginning refused the grand house offered him in the wealthy suburb of Colonia Escalón). He arrived alone, walking under the fire-trees and bougainvillea in his white cassock. It was 5 P.M. on March 14, 1980, the hour when the little parrots flock over the city so punctually that people set their watches by the passing. We sat at a table at one end of a community room, drinking water, with the fan turning back and forth, and Monsignor tapping lightly on the Bible he always carried. A Venezuelan journalist was there, and when he began asking questions I turned on my little cassette recorder, and preserved what may have been Monsignor’s last words for the foreign press.

When asked whether peaceful means for finding a solution to the conflict had been exhausted, Monsignor replied. “No. For if that were true, we would already be in the midst of a full civil war.”

The sisters of Divine Providence hurried in and out, carrying brief messages, bringing fresh water, and remaining at hand should Monsignor need anything. The journalist wanted a *story* from the archbishop, something new, controversial, and “newsworthy,” so he pressed Romero about his relationship with the popular organizations, which now had military wings.

“My relation with the organizations is one of a shepherd, a pastor with his people, knowing that a people has the right to organize itself and to defend its right to organization. And I also feel perfectly free to denounce those organizations when they abuse the power, and turn in the direction of unnecessary violence. This is my role as pastor: to animate the just and the good, and to denounce that which is not good.”

A wind rose in the palms, and the fan was unobtrusively silenced by one of the sisters. It was almost dark, but the lights in the room were not turned on. The sisters didn’t want Monsignor to become tired: they wanted him to join them in the little convent kitchen for supper, and allow him a few hours of peace. The journalist, however, wanted Monsignor to

clarify precisely his position with regard to the popular organizations, now that the people were beginning to take up arms.

“The true political process must always proceed from the people, and the organizations are the *voices* of the people. They’re not the only voices. When I use the word ‘organization,’ I mean the critical sense of the people...The church is the halo of God at the service of the people, and therefore its role is not political...Our task is not to say to the popular organizations ‘This is good’ or ‘This is bad,’ but rather to support the *right* of popular organization. That’s what I am responsible for...I have to maintain a position of autonomy and freedom, and if that is what some would call vacillation, that is the law of my ministry...My reason for being is the word of God, the illumination of God, and to be a pastor who tries to provide direction. I believe that this is the greatest service that I can provide to my people. I know already that many times this hasn’t sit well with the *Bloque*,” he said, referring to one of the popular organizations, “or with the government, neither with the rich, nor with the others. That really isn’t of great importance to me because I’m not seeking popularity. The reason for being is to find oneself in the light and the word of revelation.

It was late, but as always during the past three years, Monsignor didn’t seem tired—pensive, yes, and perhaps a bit wary of this ambitious young reporter, but not tired. His interlocutor continued to press him about his political views.

“As I have told you, I do not have a political role in El Salvador, but rather a pastoral one. As a pastor, it is my duty to construct this church, my community, the Church. That is what I am responsible for. And this church, as a people, illuminated by God, has a mission, too, among the people in general.”

Don’t the wealthy also consider themselves a part of this church?

“The documents of *Puebla*,” he replied, naming the conference of bishops held at Puebla in 1979, “are very clear and determined in saying that a society which calls itself Christian but does not practice a ‘preferential option for the poor’ is in a certain way a traitor to the Gospel. A true Christian cannot be a protagonist in social injustice...There is much talk about the dangers of communism as a possibility, but they do not notice the reality in which they are living, the reality of capitalism, which has also done great evil.”

As delicately as he could, the journalist raised the issue of Romero’s own safety.

“I have a great confidence in the protection of God,” he said to us, “One does not need to feel fearful. We hear from Jesus Christ that one should not tempt God, but my pastoral duty obliges me to go out and be with the people, and I would not be a good pastor if I were hiding myself and giving testimonies of fear. I believe that if death encounters us in the

path of our duty, that then is the moment in which we die in the way that God wills.”

Monsignor Romero had received numerous death threats. According to the Sisters of Divine Providence, two plots had been discovered and blocked: one to involve him in a fatal car accident, another to poison him at a formal dinner. Just a few days before, a bomb containing seventy sticks of dynamite failed to detonate in the basilica where he was saying Mass. Yet he eschewed protection, preferring to drive himself around the capital unaccompanied, and once offered himself in exchange for the disappeared.

After the journalist left, we went to the convent kitchen, and as the sisters hurried the food to the table, they joked with him, this mild-mannered bishop whom they had attended for three years. Over platters of *frijoles*, *platanos*, cheese and fruit, Monsignor asked me about something that had happened to me the previous week. I’d been talking to a friend, a young Christian Democrat, who had made a decision to defect from the party, no longer believing it moral to remain providing a “mask” for the military government. As it happened, we lost track of time, and at midnight I asked my friend to drive me home.

“But it’s past curfew...”

The government had declared a state of siege, and only the security forces were permitted on the streets.

“I could call.”

“There’s no telephone.”

“Then I’ll have to try to go back. If I don’t come home, they’ll think I’ve disappeared and they’ll look for me. That would be dangerous.”

So we got into the car, and drove forward out of the compound almost past the gate, when we saw a taxi parked so as to block the street, and over its roof, three hooded men crouched with machine guns aimed at our windshield. My friend threw the car into reverse, then floored the accelerator before slamming to a stop behind the wall. He told me to get out and run back to the house, where he arrived moments later, pale and out of breath.

“Death squad...”

“Why didn’t they come after us?”

“They think we have security guards.”

“Do we?”

He shook his head. “They think we have weapons. They never want to risk being killed themselves.”

“Do we? Have weapons?”

“No.”

He went into the bathroom and flushed the toilet, then cursed as the toilet began to overflow. “Help me – get some towels.”

So we spent the next minutes sopping up the toilet water and wringing it into the sink, until he found the spigot, and I thought to myself—this is how I am going to spend the last moments of my life: cleaning up after a toilet.

The nuns saw the humor in this.

“We can’t go out tonight. We’ll have to wait here and go in the morning. Maybe they’ll come, maybe they won’t.”

I tried to sleep, but every hour or so a cashew nut dropped from its tree to the corrugated lamina roof, skipping down the lamina like machine-gun fire.

Romero listened to my story, and said: “You must return to the United States, and speak about the conditions in El Salvador. You must help the North Americans to understand...”

“I plan to go home soon.”

“You must go home now.”

“And you, Monsignor? Your name is first on the death list. Why don’t you leave? *Please*.” I said.

“My place is with the people. And your place, now, is with yours.”

I had never contemplated the idea of having “a people,” and it’s with some regret that I recall having spent my last hour with him pleading my case to remain in the country a little while longer, and that I so misjudged the depth of his commitment that I would suggest exile, but that is what happened, and time will not alter this. During his hours with the journalist, and later at supper, I noticed a luminosity about him that I had not seen issue from anyone else. *He is holy*, I thought, *he is already a saint*.

A week and a half later, on the morning of his death, he refused breakfast, and seemed to the sisters inconsolably sad. One of the younger nuns looked him in the eyes and said, “Don’t worry, Monsignor. Nothing is going to happen to you before your time. Nothing!”

“You’re right, nothing will happen before my time.” Then he asked to see his confessor, and later, a friend took him to the sea for a walk along the beach. They wanted to raise his spirits, they said, and he always loved the sea.

“In the newspaper that day, there had been an announcement that Monsignor would say Mass at 6 P.M. in the chapel of Divine Providence, to mark the anniversary of a death,” Sister Ana Maria told me, “and we found this a bit strange, that an announcement would appear publicly providing details of Monsignor’s whereabouts, and having seen this, someone called to ask him not to go ahead with it. Of course, he never took this kind of advice.”

After fifteen years, I found myself sitting again in the little terrace of the hospital, beside the well-tended roses, as the hymns of the late afternoon Mass filled the courtyard.

“He wanted to live here with the poor who are sick,” the nun said quietly, “This was the oasis where he rested. He trusted our work here. We knew him before he was archbishop. He used to come from Santiago de Maria to celebrate Mass on the first day of every month, as today, the Mass and the holy hours. That’s how we met him, and that’s how he began to build trust in us, and that’s why he came to live here.”

“Was he ever afraid?”

“If he was, he didn’t show it. But he said that sometimes his legs trembled, in certain situations. When the guerrillas took the Rosario church, the National Guard was outraged and called Monsignor Romero at midnight, saying that they had killed the guerrillas. It wasn’t true. The guerrillas had lighted candles in the church for their friends who had died. Monsignor went to the church alone, because the National Guard refused to allow anyone else to accompany him. Two or three trucks filled with National Guard were at the church. Imagine what he felt. They took him inside, and told him to tell the guerrillas to give up. They were moving their weapons, as if they were going to attack him. His legs were trembling. It was human and logical that he would feel fear. But he said, ‘Even though I was afraid, I could keep my serenity.’ He went from body to body and realized that while they had been detained, they were not dead.”

“Sister, were you there at his last Mass?” She nodded and removed her eyeglasses, rubbing them against her habit.

“There was a little cloth on the altar, and he looked down on the little cloth. They took advantage of this moment. That is when they shot him.”

“Did you hear the shot?”

“It seemed to me like a bomb had gone off. I don’t know if it was the kind of ammunition, or if it was near to the microphone, but it sounded like a bomb. In this moment, Monsignor clutched the altar cloth and pulled it toward him. The cup of hosts fell down. They weren’t consecrated. They were dispersed on the altar. In this moment, he fell. Backward. My reaction was very aggressive. I felt no fear. Everyone went to the other side and threw themselves to the ground because they were afraid. I didn’t feel fear. I went because I wanted to help him. I saw the hemorrhaging, the blood from the nose, the ears and the mouth, and there was nothing I could do. I looked outside to see if I could see the assassin, but he had time to leave, because everyone was so panicked about what had happened.”

“Was Monsignor still alive?”

“He was alive for a few minutes. We all knew, and we were all waiting—but we never thought it would be during a Mass. This was the most sublime moment. He was with God. He was celebrating the Mass. He was performing a sublime act, doing his work until the last moment,

finishing his life, as he had lived it: authentically, wholly, a saintly bishop.”

By now the afternoon Mass had ended, and the sisters rose, cicadas still humming in the trees, the sky roiling with clouds so close to the rainy season. I went into the empty chapel, whose front doors were flung open as they had been when the red Volkswagen had pulled to the curb and the shooter had either leaned from the driver’s window, as some suspect, or left the car to stand in the panel of light and fire that exploding round into Monsignor Romero’s sternum, shattering the bone and flooding his chest cavity with blood, after the Word, and before the Offertory. I paced the polished aisle and stood where the killer had stood, facing the altar, not twenty feet away. Monsignor had looked out at his congregation and then down at the hosts waiting to be transubstantiated to the body of Christ. It is possible then, that he saw the man who had come to take his life. Standing where he stood, I was overcome by a desire to know his identity.

The nun turned the key in the lock of the little *casita* and left me alone there, in his room among his things. His bloodied surplice stands in his narrow closet, now behind glass, along with the blue oxford-cloth shirt with its small bullet hole. In the cabinets are his worldly goods: a wristwatch, cuff links, a briefcase, his driver’s license, his chalice, bishop’s staff, miter, the vestments he wore, the books he studied, his breviary, and the complete papal encyclicals. The desk where he often worked into the night has been left as it was, with its IBM electric typewriter, cassette recorder, and bronze *pietà*. A crucifix was on his pillow, and a visitor had left a tiny origami crane on his bedside table. There is a book for visitors to sign, and it is filled with names from all over the world. The room has become at once a shrine and a museum, and the nuns maintain a small bouquet of fresh flowers beside his bed. It is a peaceful place, but the spirit of Monsignor has not remained in it. His spirit is with his people.

On Sunday I drove to the cathedral, without realizing that it had been boarded up for two years, behind fencing and concertina wire, undergoing what some believe will be an interminable renovation. The building is so obscured now that I had difficulty finding it in the maze of the old city, but when I asked people for directions, saying I wished to attend Mass, they patiently told me what turns to take, and not one divulged that there had been no Masses for a long time. The body of Romero is interred here, and visited now only by rock doves. The cathedral square is nearly empty, as is its fountain, but some of the vendors are still there selling paschal candles and holy cards. For the funeral Mass on Sunday, March 30, 1980, an altar was set up outside the cathedral’s front doors, and tens of thousands of mourners crowded the steps and the plaza. My husband remembers that he was standing on the walk when a bomb went off and shooting began, and the crowd rushed

towards the cathedral for shelter. He began to lift as many people as he could over the iron gate—locked to keep the crowd off the cathedral’s front steps—until it was no longer possible. “When it was over,” he said, “the steps and the square were deserted, but covered with abandoned shoes.”

I have spent many hours sorting through reports of the decade-long “investigation” of the murder, and have talked to former death squad members, both in prison and out, hoping for information that would clarify, finally, what happened. What many believe is that a former National Police detective, Edgar Pérez Linares, probably pulled the trigger. He was himself later assassinated. Hector Antonio Regalado, a dentist known as “Dr. Death,” who still lives freely in El Salvador and once organized a Boy Scout troop of Santiago de Maria into a death squad, was also allegedly involved, and many people believe *him* to have been the gunman. Captain Alvaro Saravia, an associate of the notorious former major Roberto D’Aubuisson, was said to have given the order. The driver of the vehicle, by his own admission, was Antonio Amado Garay, now living in Miami “surrounded by lawyers.”

“The man who pulled the trigger is in the States,” I was told in March by a Salvadoran who has spent fifteen years investigating the murder, through contacts in the military and on the right. “The official story says that the driver didn’t shoot Monsignor Romero,” he alleged. “The truth is that the driver *was* the shooter. There was just somebody else in the car.”

For years D’Aubuisson was said to have been responsible.

“D’Aubuisson was very useful,” he continued. “*What was the role of the high command of the army?* D’Aubuisson did it. *What was the role of the American Embassy?* D’Aubuisson did it. The man or men in the car have been in the States for years. But that’s not important because *D’Aubuisson did it.*”

He dismisses as meaningless the myths surrounding the murder: the legendary secret meeting at which straws were drawn, the months of elaborate planning, even the necessity of procuring a large sum of money—the net of complicity was cast wide, the money a guarantor not of a successful operation but of a widely dispersed culpability that is now said to taint President Calderón Sol himself.

Monsignor Romero was assassinated not because he defended the church, but because he defended the poor, and, as the only institutional voice denouncing the repression in morally unimpeachable terms, was in a position to possibly one day succeed in his appeal to the United States. That the landowners feared this, and wanted him dead, is not in dispute; that military-civilian death squads would oblige was never in question; but that nothing of such magnitude could occur in El Salvador in those days without the tacit approval of the highest military command and at

least without the *opposition* of the United States has never had to be openly acknowledged because *D'Aubuisson did it*.

This country named for the Savior of the world, its cities and villages for saints, endured twelve years of civil war following Monsignor Romero's death. More than seventy-five thousand people died, most of them civilians. Excluding funding for Central Intelligence operations, the United State provided \$4.5 billion in combined military and economic aid to the Salvadoran government. On January 16, 1992, a peace accord was signed between the government and the combined oppositional forces of Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front, better known as the FMLN.

Monsignor Romero was called "the voice of the voiceless." But it seems a misrepresentation; the four million poor whom he defended weren't lacking in ability to articulate their condition; the Archbishop was, rather, the spokesman for those to whom no one would listen. As a martyr, he partook of the eighth sacrament, accepting the ultimate sacrifice. But *martyr* does not connote in the original Greek the acceptance of death—*martus* means "witness," one who testifies with his very being, body and soul, and this he accomplished as an ordinary man, intractable and patient in his defense of the truth.

In one of his homilies he said, "If they manage to carry out their threats, I shall be offering my blood for the redemption and resurrection of El Salvador...May my blood be the seed of liberty, and a sign of the hope that will soon become a reality...May my death, if it is accepted by God, be for the liberation of my people, and as a witness of hope in what is to come."

The people of Santa Marta suffered the war, in flight and in exile, and now live in a village raised from the dead, whose greatest treasure is a tiny piece of cloth worn by their murdered brother in God. But if you ask them about Monsignor Romero now, they will tell you that he isn't dead but is living among them, and they will sit you down and give you the last of their tortillas and beans and a place to sleep, where you will be able to listen all night to their symphony.

May all of you here tonight at the Romero Center be blessed and strengthened in your work.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss: what do you think Archbishop Romero meant when he said, "I don't believe in death but in resurrection." What impact does that kind of thinking have on the way one lives?

2. Discuss the qualities that made Romero such a dedicated pastor and leader. How might his model of leadership help us in the United States?

3. Do you think a devout Catholic Christian like Romero went through a conversion? Do we all need some form of conversion experience?

FURTHER STUDY

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CHAPTER 4

POLITICS AND THE PEWS: YOUR FAITH, YOUR VOTE, AND THE 2012 ELECTIONS

STEPHEN F. SCHNECK

INTRODUCTION

Tomorrow is the 32nd anniversary of Archbishop Romero's death – his martyrdom. A champion of justice, of peace, a champion of the poor and oppressed. Assassinated by a right wing death squad while saying Mass at a hospital chapel in San Salvador. According to eyewitness accounts, he had just consecrated the body and blood of Jesus when the assassin killed him – literally while the holy chalice was still elevated.

I ask that we now take a minute for silent prayer. Let us ask this holy martyr to intercede for us and to lend us some measure of his prophetic justice.

I'm so very humbled to be speaking on this occasion. I feel utterly unworthy to stand here in Archbishop Romero's name. I'm a professor of politics and I'm an activist who tries to bring the full fabric of the moral and social teachings of the Catholic faith into engagement in American political life and governance.

CRISIS AND THE CALL TO RESPOND

I believe that our generation of Catholics is uniquely called to do this because of the crisis that threatens the American public square. Yes, you heard me correctly. I think we are genuinely called to step up and engage our faith in public life at this hour. There is a crisis in American politics and governance that imperils so much of what our political community and our civilization should be. As Catholics, we have the resources in our Church's teachings and in our faith to address this crisis. We must recognize the moral imperative to do so. We must as Catholic citizens transcend the failures and divisions of the contemporary public square and bring the social justice, the solidarity, and the understanding of the common good that are at the heart of our teachings and traditions: Bring these to answer the crisis of American public life.

We need not look far to see the symptoms of this crisis. Think, my friends, about the devastation of poverty in America. Twenty-two percent of American children live in poverty today. The number of poor in America is at an historic high since World War II and it is still rising. And

where are our political leaders? Neither political party says a word about the poor. Where are America's churches, synagogues, and temples? Where are the prayers at Mass, the post card campaigns, the rosaries on the sidewalks? Our food banks can't keep up. Our poorest families are fraying. Our social services are stretched beyond breaking and our politicians propose budgets that slash aid to the poorest among us. Our president, in this election year, only has guts to talk of the middle class.

Think too about the tragedy of our immigration system where our businesses slyly entice millions of undocumented workers into America to wash our cars, cut our grass, serve our food, care for our children and our elderly but then allow them no path to citizenship. Our Christian politicians can only promise to build walls and electric fences. Twenty-five million undocumented workers in America, and our leaders cannot even pass the Dream Act for educating their children.

Think on the resurgence of racism in America in the last four years. Think of the code words of political candidates when they talk about welfare, food stamps, birth certificates and much more. Like all of us, I am utterly in tears about the horrible killing of Trayvon Martin in Sanford, Florida. Let us pray for him and his family and all the unnamed victims of racial injustice.

But racism takes many forms—we see it in our housing patterns, in our unemployment rates, in our household incomes, in the quality of our schools, in the opportunities offered to our children. We might think on many other symptoms of the crisis in American public life as well. It is a long list. Environmental degradation, the withering away of the middle class, the widening gap between the 1% and the 99%, the shocking tragedy of so many without healthcare and much more. But I can't neglect the most obvious symptom of this crisis—the ongoing assault on the most vulnerable Americans: unborn children. A million of our unborn children are disposed of each year in abortion, an unfolding horror that year after year and generation after generation gnaws at the very fabric of our civilization. It's breathtaking in its evil.

Abortion, however is a symptom; environmental degradation is a symptom. So is racism. So is the way we treat the immigrant. Our soaring poverty rate is a symptom. These are all symptoms of the crisis in American public life.

For years, as a professor, I've told a story, a story about my uncle. My dear uncle purchased an isolated farm in rural Iowa. Over several years, the farm has become a fortress, with armored walls and a stockpile of Doomsday preparation. My uncle lives life as if fully sure that some catastrophe was impending that would scrape away the thin veneer of civilization such that ravenous refugees from Omaha or Minneapolis would stream toward his farm, and take all he had worked so hard to build. Imagining this as an individual dog-eat-dog, survival-of-the-fittest

encounter, my uncle lives each day preparing to be well-armed so to defend himself from the desperate and the needy.

Friends, that's the crisis. We Americans think that way—increasingly. We think increasingly that what matters is me. That others are enemies—competitors—whose lives compete with my life. Whose needs are viewed as parasitic. In public life Americans increasingly see only a dog-eat-dog, law of the jungle, social Darwinist competition.

The so-called Tea Party is one embodiment of this crisis. Anti-immigrant, anti-poor, anti-common good, keep your hands off my property, keep your government off my back and out of my pocket. If you can't pull yourself up by your own bootstraps, then there's no place for you. Ayn Rand and libertarianism are similar embodiments of this crisis. Rand preaches the virtue of selfishness, the spurning of benevolence, the reproach of the weak, the hatred of the needy. Libertarianism is all about my private liberty—my freedom to do what I want when I want it, where responsibilities toward others and the community are spurned as do-gooder chains on my private, selfish liberty.

On the liberal side this emphasis on personal liberty, on the rights of the self is even more obvious. I should be free to pursue whatever lifestyle I please. There's no morality that trumps my private liberty. Assisted suicide—if that's my choice then I should be free to do it. Abortion—it's my body to do with as I please. I, as an individual, determine my private morality.

Evidence of the impact of this crisis is everywhere. Some interesting numbers:

- PTA—down 51% since 1964
- Church attendance—down 48% since the 1950's
- Volunteers with Boy Scouts—down 22% since 1970's
- Percentage of youth who know three neighbors—down 45%
- Most people can be trusted—59% in 1960; 28% today

The hyper-individualism of Americans is decaying the life of our communities. It erodes our neighborhoods, our churches, our families—it's undercutting our sense of belonging and purpose.

As a student of politics though, I see this especially as a crisis of American public life. It's utterly corroding our politics and governance. It does much to explain the vitriol in Washington; the ideological hatred making governing impossible; the collapse of American faith in its basic institutions of government. I fear we're all in for a very ugly election year. Sadly, I think we're also seeing this infect even our own religious institutions in America with increasing emphasis on the individual, on

self-interest, on competition, even on private liberty, evident in everything from contemporary theology to Mass attendance.

So—the crisis at the center of American public life is a crisis of selfishness and individuality—a crisis in an understanding of human life that increasingly sees only the “I” and not the “we”—one that defines our neighbor as an Other and that objectifies the other at best as a thing to be used for my purposes or at worst as a threat to my private right, my liberties, my self-interest and self-determination.

This is what’s behind our insensitivity to poverty and racism, what’s behind our treatment of the immigrant, what’s behind the collapse of trust in American institutions and what’s behind the mean and corrosive politics of our day. This, in many ways, is what is behind seeing our own unborn children as objects, as threats to our freedom, as obstacles to our self-realization.

A CATHOLIC RESPONSE

What can be done? Where can we turn? What might be the trick to awaken in contemporary America an understanding of ourselves as a *we* instead of as a *me*? Awaken our sense of common purpose? Enable us to see others not as objects to use or enemies to defeat or as competitors for our future.

At the very core of Catholic Social Teaching (CST) there is an answer—the “common good.” In one sense or another, all the rest of the Catholic social teachings flow from it:

- preferential option for the poor
- stewardship of the environment
- universal destination of all goods
- subsidiarity
- and even the teaching of the dignity of the human person

All these teachings hang on one core understanding, and that core understanding is the reality of the common good. Given the crisis in American public life, the Church in America is called to reawaken this ancient ideal of the common good and to bear witness to its truth.

The starting point to understand this reality is the mystical body of Christ outlined by St. Paul and the sharing and loving community of the early Church as described in the Acts of the Apostles. We are not isolated individuals, we are parts of one body—our liberties and our rights cannot be seen as dividing us but as uniting us in light of the good of the whole body. We need to rekindle a corporate understanding of our personhood.

This ancient teaching reminds us that we are not alone—we cannot fend for ourselves—we are not orphans—and others are never aliens or enemies to be objectified and opposed. Even the property we hold is not ours to do with as we please but something we hold in trust for the good of all, for future generations, for the good of our mutual salvation. The ideal of the common good reminds us that we are all part of something more important than our private passions and various self-interests. And so it can rescue America!

Democracy fails when the perception of the common good is lost. Unless citizens can rise above self-interests and discipline private passion to pursue the common good, then, like a centrifuge, the politics of a democracy drives us further and further apart—stalemate, chaos, anarchy.

CONCLUSION

My friends, it's past time for Catholics to bring this rich teaching of their faith out of the closet and work to share its important truth for American public life. We need to preach it from our pulpits. We need to teach it in our schools. We need to press it into service to heal the sharpening divisions in our own Catholic institutions. We need to reawaken an ethic of sharing and service in our own ranks. We need to ground our moral claims not on the sand of private rights nor even on the authority of the magisterium but on the truth that we are all ultimately part of the mystical body of Christ and are called together—as a “we” and not 5 billion “me’s”—toward salvation. We need to see the poor, the immigrant, the other, and unborn children not as objectified things or threats but with us as parts of a common whole. Indeed, somehow, we need to convince my uncle!

The crisis of American public life begs a resolution in the Catholic idea of the common good. We are called to share it and bear witness to its truth.

I am confident that the holy patron of social justice in the Americas, Archbishop Oscar Romero, will intercede on behalf of this mission.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the crisis in American public and political life Dr. Schneck describes. How do you and your neighbors/fellow parishioners understand that crisis? Do you know people like Dr. Schneck's uncle? Can you talk to them? How do you get a conversation going about important questions without causing friction?

2. How might you get fellow parishioners or neighbors to think about, talk about, and act on the notion of the “common good”? Does the common good effect the way you vote? Should it? Why do you think the

common good is at the core of Catholic Social Teaching? Why is the concept controversial?

3. Discuss how your parish might respond to Dr. Schneck's challenge about working toward the common good? How might the notion be moved to policy and action?

FURTHER STUDY

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McElroy, Robert W., "Political Vocations: Partisanship, Conscience and the Common Good," *America*, 210 (June 9-16, 2014), 27-29.

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Schneck, Stephen, "The Common Good: Policy Prescriptions for 2008," *Origins*, November 29, 2007.

Ulrich, Tom, *Parish Social Ministry: Strategies for Success*, (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2001).

For the application of CST and Common Good thinking to Public Policy, see, Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good—online: www.catholicsinalliance.org go to; 'Common Good Forum.'

CHAPTER 5

JUSTICE OR JUST US: WORLD CHANGING EXPRESSIONS OF FAITH

JACK JEZREEL

INTRODUCTION

For many years now, I have been wrestling with and been aggravated by the notion that Catholic Social Teaching continues to be described as “Our Best Kept Secret.” I don’t know if this phrase is literally true but what it speaks to is that for many, many U.S. Catholics—maybe most—the language of Catholic social teaching is mostly unfamiliar. So, while I think it is true that most adult Catholics could probably tell you what the seven sacraments are, it is unlikely that many could tell you the meaning of solidarity, for example, or what its relevance to faith is. And, to the extent that Catholic social teaching is unfamiliar, it is little surprise that its practical expression—Catholic social mission—is largely underdeveloped in most parishes. I say “underdeveloped” instead of “undeveloped” simply because I see good hearted things happening in many parishes in spite of the fact that people are unfamiliar with the formal documents called social encyclicals, or the themes of CST like solidarity or care for creation, or even many of the heroes of social mission, including Oscar Romero, Dorothy Day, Monsignor George Higgins, Cesar Chavez, or even St. Vincent de Paul. The work suffers from a lack of support, expertise, sophistication and access to the best resources. One example of the practical consequences is that even an organization like Catholic Relief Services, which does some of the most remarkable work on the planet, suffers from the fact that only about a fifth of the American Catholic population has any idea about what Catholic Relief Services is or does.

The reality is that most parishes do not have staff dedicated to social mission, do not have budgets to support social mission, do not engage their young people in social mission, and then craft formation programs and liturgies and homilies that—no surprise here—limp in the absence of a robust reckoning with faith’s social implications and some of its most important challenges and spiritual insights.

In your presence, however, I want to do something which I almost never get to do and that is to explore some of themes, values and commitments that typically are prompted or highlighted only when social mission is engaged. In other words, when we do take social mission

seriously—like you do, here in Camden—what are some of the touchstones of our Christian faith that then become bright lights—compelling and obviously relevant to our lives. This is tricky business. I will take a moment to explain why.

Let me employ the memory of Mother Teresa of Calcutta. Mother Teresa, as all of you know, was widely admired for her commitment to those who were poor. Not just poor, but desperately poor. And not just desperately poor, but desperately poor and dying. She was not running a back-to-work program. She was not helping people get an education. There would be no success stories—just compassion for those who were in the most vulnerable, most tragic, most destitute of places. And her work, her life, her ministry is compelling. Even those who disagreed with some of her stances and methods were nevertheless intrigued and sometimes changed by her spirit and presence.

With that said, here is my sense of how a lot of people relate to the Mother Teresa story. If you can imagine Mother Teresa now standing in front of the room, I picture most of us looking admiringly at her, applauding—clapping our hands—meanwhile looking out of the corner of our eye for the exit, backing up slowly toward the exit so as not to be too noticeable, all the while applauding. We admire her, but we want no part of her.

This image is only one version of the reality of faith that we call mystery. The mystery of faith. Mystery here—derived from the Greek word *mysterion*, which comes from a root word that means to shut or to close. And, of course, the idea that is conveyed by mystery is that there are some things that can't be known, unless... I repeat, some things that can't be known, unless... In other words, part of what mystery speaks to is that there is a world discoverable, but only if you pass through *metanoia*, another Greek word that speaks to transformation, revelation, change. My point here is that some things just don't make sense unless there is some kind of moment of insight, some kind of new sight or rebirth. Being "born again" speaks to this world that opens up when we "have the eye-opening or heart-softening experience." I don't mean this to sound like having the secret handshake or an elitist knowledge; it just means that some experiences yield maturity. In the Christian tradition, we call these experiences "grace."

So, back to Mother Teresa. Let's imagine, again, that Teresa is standing in the middle of the room, doing what she does, and we'll imagine a circle around her. The circle is a kind of boundary—inside the circle are those who have somehow made their way to her. Inside the circle are people like Dorothy Day and Oscar Romero and Damien of Molokai. Outside the circle are the applauders or the disengaged. From outside of the circle—from the perspective of the world, the world of upward mobility and cruise ships and prudent financial planning and

relevance and the good life—Mother Teresa makes no sense. Francis of Assisi makes no sense. Oscar Romero makes no sense. In fact, Jesus makes no sense. From outside of the circle, Mother Teresa is, as Paul describes it, a “stumbling block and folly.” “Folly” is a strong word. “Who would want to do that?” asks those outside the circle. Who would want to believe in that? That is not appetizing, that is not worth my life, or at least not much of it. And would I be wrong to suggest that we all know something of this experience?

But, what comes next is the most remarkable thing. You see, if somehow we cross the boundary, and enter into the reality of Teresa and Oscar and Damian, enter into the experience of caring, with a capital “C”—I mean an inclusive caring, moving from “just us” to “justice,” that embraces the needs of all, especially those who are in the most vulnerable places—if somehow we can cross the boundary, engage in the Mystery of faith and love, then what opens up—piece by piece, step by step, insight by insight—is a whole new world, a whole new vocabulary, a whole new set of touchstones for life’s living. Inside the circle, once a person has passed from the world on the outside to the world on the inside, if you will, everything changes. And once people make it across that boundary the first time or the second time, they do not want to go back to the old ways. Inside the circle, there is something called abundant life, and it is nearly the antithesis of what is described as the good life, which is the preoccupation outside of the circle.

I remember an interview with Mother Teresa that was published in a secular journal about seven or eight years before her death. The interviewer, clearly not a person who fully understood Teresa, asked some amusingly awkward questions. One of my favorites went something like this, as I remember it: “Mother Teresa, you’ve been doing this for a good many years and certainly no one would begrudge your deciding to retire. Have you considered perhaps just taking it easy and moving to a cabin in Vermont with a lake and a nice view and a boat.” And Teresa apparently looked at her with some measure of forgiveness and a chuckle, and replied, “My young friend, why would I trade what fills me up for fool’s gold?” Teresa’s response is the response of almost everyone I know who makes their way to the way of Christ’s compassion. They do not go back. They do not long for the former way. The old wineskins will not hold the new wine, the new wine of compassion.

So, what I want to emphasize and repeat is that the trek of discipleship from the old ways to the new ways, from outside of the boundary, across the boundary and into the circle and into the exercise and practice of love means that we enter into a new world with a new vocabulary, new dreams, new signposts, a new ethic.

NEW VOCABULARY OF FAITH

What I would like to explore with you this evening, then, is essentially part of the new vocabulary that comes with this transformation. And what this means is that if you've come into the world of Mother Teresa and Oscar Romero, this vocabulary is interesting and motivating and inspiring. If you haven't come into the world of Mother Teresa and Oscar Romero, this vocabulary will seem uninteresting, perhaps threatening, maybe even stupid. One of the difficulties that churches of all kinds face is the awkward reality that while everyone inside the church building might be saying "Jesus words," not everyone has made the spiritual journey invited by Jesus. So, for example, we get people who, inspired by their faith and supported by the Bishops' statements, want to see immigration reform; why?—well because of the holy spirit of compassion, because they care about the lives of those who have fled their homes in other countries in the name of feeding their children. And you have others sitting in the same church, voicing the same responses at Mass, who see the immigrant as a threat, as a law-breaker, and their primary position about immigration is that "those people" should be sent back where they came from, without any care or consideration about what their lives, or the lives of their children might look like "where they came from." The Good News is not necessarily good news if you're pre-*metanoia*, even if you go to church. It's justice vs. just us.

So, what I want to do this evening is one part exploration and one part evangelization. What is it about the concepts that orbit around the notion of love or compassion that invite us into a deeper faith and a richer experience of life? I think this is the promise of the Gospel—a deeper faith and a richer experience of our lives—our individual lives and the life of the world.

I have chosen five expressions of a life-giving faith that I believe flow out of the experience of *metanoia*, transformation. And the *metanoia* or transformation that I am focusing on is the transformation that is linked to the embrace of love as the touchstone of life. This, it seems to me, is the critical choice of faith in Christ. In other words, we all believe that love is worthy, but the path of discipleship invites us to live as if love were the most important thing in all choices of life. These five expressions of faith, then, are five stars in the constellation called the practice of love, the practice of discipleship, the practice of faith, the practice of justice, away from "just us." These are not the only five, by any means, but they're an important five.

Commitment to the Poor

I would like to start with what I consider to be something of a

foundational commitment of Christian discipleship that is anchored in the Gospels, Catholic social teaching, and the lives of the saints. It is a kind of baseline for Christian discipleship, and at the same time it is widely neglected. The first expression of a truly life-giving faith that I'd like to speak to is the commitment to those who are poor and vulnerable.

We who call ourselves “disciples,” “Catholics,” “Christians,” who make our way to an inclusive love, will, by the logic of love’s tug toward human need, find ourselves drawn into friendship and relationship with those who are at risk in the world. Catholic social teaching describes this, in part, as the “option for the poor and vulnerable” and as “solidarity.” As love’s embrace expands beyond the familiar, it is freed, unchained if you will, from the constrictive container of who is familiar and who is handsome and who is likeable to something larger and more powerful and more holy. But there are challenges.

It is my experience of doing parish ministry and social ministry for the last almost thirty-five years, that the single biggest obstacle to the church’s mission and the spiritual journey is the fact of the segregation of the poor/the oppressed/the exploited/the neglected/the stranger from the comfortable/the secure/the well-fed. The result is a divide that deceives the comfortable and secure into thinking that all is well and persuades the poor that there is no hope. The long term result is death—dead bodies and dead dreams by starvation, drive-by shootings, desperation and war and dead souls and dead hearts by the bullets called self-preoccupation and over-satiation. Together they create what looks like real hell. We who follow Jesus, who love all people—rich and poor—can bridge this hellish divide. This is where we go.

Let me speak for a moment to those of you, like me, who come from communities that are somewhat comfortable or even affluent. And I want to be very specific, very practical. I want to suggest that each one of us sitting (or standing) in the room today, regardless of what else we do, must stay connected in some kind of face-to-face way with the persons and the places at risk. You see, the single biggest obstacle to the authentic Christian journey is the disabling of authentic compassion; many people—and many people of faith—do not really, actively care about each other. When I say those words, it sounds harsh, it sounds like an opinion, but it is not meant as an indictment, but just as a kind of dispassionate observation. So many of us do not really care about each other’s lives. And we do not care, I think, not because we are malicious or unfeeling or mean, but because we simply do not see each other. And we do not see each other because we are literally out of each other’s eyeshot. Our lives, our cities, are all crafted like subtle little apartheid: most of the rich people live with rich people, most of the middle-class people live with middle-class people, and the poor live with the poor in the places that are left and left behind. And so we do not care, perhaps we cannot care, about

what we do not see, about what we do not know. A few years ago I was in Greenville, South Carolina, listening to a group of Just Faith graduates who had participated during the program in a poverty tour of their own city. Some mentioned with distress and sadness and guilt and even shock that they had lived in Greenville all of their lives and never knew—had never seen—how desperately poor parts of their own city were. And, this is important, having seen those places, having been invited to pray at those places, having considered those places through the lens of faith and inclusive love, some of them, many of them, most of them were obviously changed. And the change was: now they cared. And their care now drives them into the first steps of active engagement.

Fr. Greg Boyle, a Jesuit priest who works with gangs in Los Angeles, perhaps one of the most faithful and holy people I have ever been in the presence of, makes this observation, “There will be no peace without justice,” quoting the words of Pope Paul VI. “But there will be no justice... without kinship.” We will not know what needs to be done in this world without seeing the world through the lens of those who see it from the bottom. There will be no justice without kinship. There will be no peace without kinship. Perhaps this is why so many of our greatest saints and peacemakers choose to be among those who suffer impoverishment. The reign of God is critically relational. We must be connected in real life, in real time. Richard Rohr, speaking to a group of middle class Catholics, said, “We discover God in the eyes of those who are poor.” And we who have grown up being trained to do everything possible to avoid poverty discover, paradoxically, that when we break through to compassion, the world is much different than we thought. And we discover that we have a capacity—a holy capacity—to love bigger than we might have dreamed. Spiritually, the experience of being drawn into a care and love for those in harm’s way is to experience a kind of transcendence of self—I move beyond the shackles of self-preoccupation and self-image and cultural norms into a deeper and more powerful current of life. This is the stuff of the holy. We can speak—albeit hesitantly—of tasting a communion with God.

And one of the geniuses of the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, which has received way more than its legitimate share of criticism, is that when you link people—rich and poor—you can get a lot done. Faith-based community organizing is effective exactly because it gathers rich and poor together and treats everyone with equal dignity and gives them the tools to make important changes that actually address the root causes of poverty. It is ennobling for those who are rich and it is ennobling for those who are poor.

To conclude this first section—and to begin the walk of faith—our lives—the life of the Church—must be linked integrally with the experience of those on the bottom. Only when the world is right for them

will the world be right. As long as poverty is, so will violence be. This means on a practical level that our list of faith's expressions must begin with a commitment to connect ourselves with those at the margins. And we must hold each other accountable. If any one of us in the room does not know well someone who is experiencing what it means to be poor, cannot tell stories of conversation and interaction with someone who experiences poverty, we are missing out on an important part of the way of Jesus.

Voluntary Displacement

The second commitment I'd like to speak to is very closely connected with the first. I will describe this second expression of faith as voluntary displacement. In Mark 14, sitting in the home of a leper, Jesus says to his disciples, "The poor you will always have with you." It is clear that part of what Jesus meant here is that the undeniable frailty of the human reality would always mean that some of us will know periodic times of unforeseen hardship, bad weather, accidents, scarcity, bad politics or bad economies or whatever, and that God requires of us that we respond to each other's need, in first person care. It's hard to argue with that. But now let me repeat this English version of the text with a different emphasis: "The poor you will always have with you." Is it possible, sitting in the home of a leper, in a disposable neighborhood, that what Jesus also meant here is that his disciples were to understand that their place, their *default locus*, is with those who are in harm's way. That is, those who would dare follow Jesus will necessarily and deliberately plop themselves into the places where life is just hard, to share in the life of the community, to speak a word of hope, to be helpful, and to aspire toward a community of shared love and shared resources.

I am thinking here, probably because I can't escape my own Catholic Worker past, of Dorothy Day. But I am also thinking of Greg Boyle. And Clarence Jordan. And Mother Teresa. And Damien of Molokai. And Oscar Romero. And Jean Vanier. And Mickey McGrath. Is there a basic Christian instruction here? To be my disciple, Jesus' life seems to suggest, you must plop yourself where those who struggle are. Notice that I am using the technical theological term, "plop," so as to be a little ambiguous. But in the case of Dorothy Day, Greg Boyle, Clarence Jordan, Mother Teresa, Damien of Molokai, and Jean Vanier, it is not ambiguous: they physically relocated, as in made their residence with. As in "pitched their tents." Like "Jesus dwelt among us." Following Jesus means that we will spend our time where he spent his time.

Our faith tradition seems to inspire a reckoning with the possibility of Spirit-driven relocation. I mean, to be perfectly clear, our faith tradition, our scripture tradition, our moral tradition, and the witness of

holy people throughout Christian history at least suggests the logic that some of us who find ourselves in comfortable places, after we have made our way into the circle of compassion, will want to make our homes, make our livings, make or re-make our lives, in the neighborhoods where our sisters and brothers who are poor and vulnerable are. And, the flip side of this is we are simultaneously encouraged to avoid plopping ourselves, locating ourselves, in the places that are out of sight of those who struggle. That's the warning we get in the story of Lazarus and the rich man. The Christian history books include a long list of people who have made such a choice to relocate themselves to vulnerable places, war-torn places, poverty-stricken places. Any list of saints includes an inordinate number of people who chose unlikely mailing addresses and lived their lives in the communities of those who see life from the bottom up. We know this tug, don't we? And we celebrate the lives of people like Dorothy Day and Jean Vanier and Greg Boyle and Oscar Romero, not as idiosyncratic kooks or extremists but as faithful people simply doing what their faith asks of them.

This intentional migration of people from comfortable places to places of crisis constitutes some of the most critical witnesses we have as a faith tradition. Consider the work of Maryknoll, for example. I am just amazed and tickled that some young man from the Baltimore suburbs would join the Maryknoll Society as a priest, be asked to go to a poor village in Tanzania, never question the assignment, spend forty years there, and, upon retirement, only talk about how much he loved it and wished he could go back. We know the stories of young college grads who commit to Jesuit Volunteer Corps for a year or two working with people who are impoverished or at-risk and who spend the rest of their lives trying to respond to an experience that is profound and life-changing. Many of us gathered here know the phrase "ruined for life."

Of course, I understand not everyone is called or is able to relocate full-time; some of us will do our relocation after work, with St. Vincent de Paul home visits, some of us will do this on our vacation time with mission trips, but some of us will want to do this full-time, if given the suggestion and the chance. I would like to propose that we insert the language of faith-based relocation into the lexicon of normal parish life. That what it means to be part of a parish is that some of us are called to relocate to the places out of sight. I would like parishes to ask all of their members to commit at least one week of vacation time to the spiritual practice of relocation each year, just like some of us take a weekly retreat each year. Relocation means that we will make relationships in places that struggle. And those experiences, those relationships will change us and they will change our community. And they will make for new insights and partnerships that, then, can change a piece of the world.

Simplicity

The third expression of a life-giving faith that perhaps is the greatest challenge to many of us in the room this evening is that we are invited to learn a new lifestyle, a simpler lifestyle. To live more with less. We tend to think of simplicity as getting rid of things, but more fundamentally, simplicity is, simply, the opposite of duplicity. As love gradually becomes the single touchstone of our lives, other distractions in our life steadily lose their effect. So, as we become more spiritually mature, we simply lose interest in whatever distracts us, including the inclination to collect, grab, hoard, and consume. Love is the driver of simplicity.

Simplicity is freedom from unnecessary desire, from distracting desire. It is clarity about what we really need from what we merely want. It is freedom from merciless consumption. It is the ability to live happily with few attachments. The image of St. Francis in a worn, patched-up robe is not the picture of woeful self-denial but rather a man too happy to care about what he was wearing.

I am reminded of the story about the contented fisherman; some of you are probably familiar with the story: The rich businessman from the North was horrified to find the Southern fisherman lying lazily beside his boat enjoying the sunshine. “What aren’t you out fishing?” asked the businessman. “Because I have caught enough fish for the day,” said the fisherman. “Well, there are many hours left in the day—why don’t you catch some more?” “What would I do with it?” asked the fisherman. “You could earn more money. And then you could have a motor fixed to your boat and go into deeper waters and catch even more fish. And then you would make enough to buy nylon nets. These would bring you more fish and more money. Soon you would have enough money to own two boats, maybe even a fleet of boats. Then you would be a rich man like me.” “What would I do then?” “Then you could really enjoy life.” The fisherman responded, “What do you think I am doing right now?”

So simplicity, paradoxically, can offer us a richer life. But simplicity in the 21st century is also driven by crisis. The call to a simpler lifestyle for those of us who live in a rich country is partially prompted by the observation that the world is in peril because parts of the world are literally sucking the life out of the other parts, like the Death Eater characters out of a Harry Potter novel. The history of exploitation is the history of slavery, poverty and war. North American lifestyles require the plunder of the earth, require the cheap labor of other places, require the poverty of others. Our lifestyles require wars where there is oil—there is no other way to put it. For us to live as we live in this country, we need to dominate others so that they cannot use the limited resources that we want.

Anybody here this evening who has spent even a short time in a poor country will know that what I am saying is true.

My brothers and sisters, we need to learn a very different way of living. As Wendell Berry, Kentucky poet, author and farmer, puts it, “We must learn to live poorer than we do.” If the American lifestyle requires, on average, four times its share of resources, it is not enough to snip around the edges of our consumerism. We must learn how to reduce by three-quarters what we consume. That’s the math of fairness, however daunting it may be. Authentic love will not allow us to continue to ask the rest of the world to continue to put itself at the physical mercy of our conveniences. We will, I think, have to recover the language of sacrifice from our religious heritage. We cannot continue to draw from the booty of exploitation. Again, our faith communities need to hold us accountable. We need to encourage each other to live in smaller homes, to buy less, to need less. We need to say to each other that we do not need to dress fashionably or expensively to enjoy each other’s company. In fact, we need to affirm each other when we dress in obviously outdated, worn or unfashionable clothes. I notice, by way of affirmation, that there are a lot of these clothes in the room this evening. We’ll call them “vintage,” for positive effect.

Simplicity just means a less distracted, more focused and richer spiritual journey that is inspired by the hope that everyone might have enough.

Nonviolence

The fourth expression of a life-giving faith is a commitment to nonviolence. The commitment to a wide embrace of love, from “just us” to “justice”, will yield—as surely as any serious consideration of Jesus’ life and message will reveal—that God does not smile upon violence. Love is not violent. Period. This will impact not only how we think about war and politics, but how we understand parenting, capital punishment, abortion, and even how to have a conversation or how to disagree.

Regarding war, while the Church may recognize that in this complicated world some forms of violence seem, sadly, to be necessary, the presumption is that the threat and use of violence will always be a last, last, last, pathetically inadequate and reluctant resort. If, to protect the innocent in Kenya, for example, it appears necessary to use force, it should be done with tremendous restraint and a heavy heart. There should be no glorification of violence, no fascination with guns, no ready acceptance of drones. At some enlightened point in time—just like this generation looked back and wondered how our great grandparents and even our bishops could have said okay to slavery in this country—the

future generations will ask us why we thought it was ever acceptable to send our 18-year old sons and daughters of God to kill

someone else's 18-year old sons and daughters of God who live in another place, and whose reasons for killing each other are mostly unknown to them.

One understated and overlooked benefit of a commitment to a nonviolent, peacemaking love is that the lens of peacemaking gives us a capacity for discernment, a critical kind of discernment. The presumption against violence frees us to see what the world so often wants to hide its eyes from. Violence is awful. Violence is ugly. Violence is the saddest of human acts. As Pope John Paul II stated, "War is a defeat for humanity." And the extent that any human institution relies on and promotes violence is the extent to which it must be eyed suspiciously by the church. Again, the point is discernment. Where is life honored? Where is it betrayed? Where is love practiced? Where is it abandoned? It is so very difficult to lead people into a willing critique of their politics, their country, their allegiances, without some awareness of how violence is so often the handmaid of greed and power. Patriotism, when it moves beyond love of one's homeland, can be a blinding, destructive force.

Perhaps that is why nonviolence is so difficult for people in our country to consider. When we have so much, and so much to protect, violence becomes more and more necessary. On the other hand, when our things become few, when we genuinely care for all people here and across oceans, when we practice love of the stranger, when we know our tradition and have prayed well, the presumption of nonviolence becomes an obvious and necessary spiritual movement. It becomes all too clear that those who have relied on violence only know a regret that is very hard to heal. The preponderance of suicides—22 each day—and psychological trauma of war veterans reminds us that the victims and victors of war both suffer. In war and at war, everyone suffers. Our DNA is not suited for each other's destruction.

This means that the prayer of the Church, the teaching of the Church, the practice of the Church must always bend in the direction of nonviolent action, more specifically nonviolent, loving action. We are nonviolent, not because we simply eschew violence; rather, we are nonviolent because we are people who love like Jesus. When our lives are active and occupied in the name of doing good, there is little space for violence, for doing harm. Every Catholic institution—from Catholic kindergartens to Catholic universities to the Knights of Columbus—should have robust, practical expressions of how to live in this world nonviolently.

Martyrdom

And this takes us to our fifth and final expression of faith, and that is martyrdom, which is why it is the final one. Unlike the previous expressions of faith, I am not going to comment on how to practice martyrdom, only explore its significance for us. Martyrdom has more to say about how we live rather than how we die.

During the Easter Vigil we are reminded in Paul's Letter to the Romans that we are baptized into Christ's death, a profoundly rich image with many layers of meaning. But whatever layer of meaning you draw from, the idea that we discover life by entering into death has profound significance for us. It is, fundamentally, to be baptized into a love that eclipses, defeats and make irrelevant fear. Fear is the opposite of love. We often think that hate is the opposite of love, but not so. The thing that stops us from loving is fear. Fear of loss, fear of death, fear of rejection—fear!

To be baptized into Christ's death is to recognize—in some grace-filled moment—that life is a journey that is only made real by love. And love involves some risk. Love, expressed as a care for the poor, could cost us something. Love, expressed as relocating ourselves into difficult and dangerous places, could cost us something. Love, expressed as nonviolence or resistance, could cost us something. Love necessarily costs us something or it is probably not love. Eva Cassidy, the great vocalist who died at a very young age, sang these words, “the only love you find on Easy Street is a dream.” It's not real.

The word “martyr” comes from the Greek word *martyria* which means witness. In effect, the greatest witness to faith and love is the woman or man who is so committed to the life of love and faith that they cannot entertain doing anything else, even if death might be a consequence of their choice. Oscar Romero, the de facto patron saint of Central America, spoke these words in one of his homilies:

Those who, in the biblical sense, would save their lives—that is, those who want to get along, who don't want commitments, who don't want to get into problems, who want to stay outside of a situation that demands the involvement of all of us—they will lose their lives. What a terrible thing to have lived quite comfortably, with no suffering, not getting involved in problems, quite tranquil, quite settled, with good connections politically, economically, socially—lacking nothing, having everything. To what good? They will lose their lives.

And he added two weeks before his death these words, again in a homily:

Those who surrender to the service of the poor through love of Christ will live like the grains of wheat that die. It only apparently dies. If it were not to die, it would remain a solitary grain. The harvest comes because of the grain that dies. We know that every effort to improve

society, when society is so full of injustice and sin, is an effort that God blesses; that God wants; that God demands of us. I am bound, as a pastor, by divine command to give my life for those whom I love, and that is all Salvadorans, even those who are going to kill me.

Martyrdom reminds us that some things are worth living for and dying for, and some things are not. When we enter into the embrace of Christ's death, and let go of ours, we paradoxically discover that life is just a whole lot more meaningful.

CONCLUDING IMAGE

I would like to close with an image, a prayer if you will, that links us with our crescendo celebration as a Catholic community.

When the Body of Christ—which is all of us—has spent its week breaking itself open and giving itself as food to a very hungry world,

When the Body of Christ—which is all of us—has spent its week pouring itself out and giving itself as drink to all those who thirst,

Then gathers on a Sunday,

And in the breaking of the bread and the sharing of a cup we recognize God's presence, again. And that names us as a Catholic people.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think Catholic Social Teaching still remains the Church's "best kept secret?" Discuss ways in which your parish or congregation group might be able to change that and learn about and apply the principles of CST?

2. Discuss each of the themes in the author's "new vocabulary of faith": commitment; voluntary displacement; simplicity; nonviolence; and martyrdom. Examine carefully his examples. How might the themes and examples be adapted to your life and lived out in your community?

3. Look up and learn about the faith-based social justice education program Jack Jezreel founded called JustFaith. Consider getting a JustFaith program started at your church. For JustFaith, look online at: www.justfaith.org.

FURTHER STUDY

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Krier Mich, Marvin L., *The Challenge and Spirituality of Catholic Social Teaching*, rev. ed. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2011).

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CHAPTER 6

MAKE US INSTRUMENTS OF PEACE: PEACEBUILDING IN THE 21ST CENTURY

MARYANN CUSIMANO LOVE

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for inviting me to be here today to deliver the Romero lecture on the topic of "Make Us Instruments of Peace: Peacebuilding in the 21st Century." I want to thank the Romero center for your tremendous work in "personal, communal and societal transformation." You continue the vision of Oscar Romero, of "seeing the face of Christ in all the people that we meet, particularly in the poor and marginalized," and in educating not just our minds, but also educating our hearts. In looking at Oscar Romero's last homily, as we commemorate the anniversary of his martyrdom this week, many of the themes he covered in his last homily will be themes I'll be discussing today. In Romero's last homily he talked about the importance of human dignity and liberation. He talked about the advancement of women, and the negative effects of a culture of machismo, a culture that did not treat women as equal partners. He talked about the need for the church to be open to change, the need for all people to build peace and to stop the killing, particularly, of course, in his own El Salvador. Those themes continue to be very relevant today, and are themes I'll be exploring with you as we talk about peacebuilding in the 21st century this evening.

I have been asked to talk about my work in building peace around the world through the Catholic Peacebuilding Network, the research that I've done tracking the work of faith-based peacebuilders, and how from that I've developed a theory of Just Peace. Starting wars is easy; preventing wars, ending wars, and building sustainable peace is harder, and requires a long term commitment, and a set of norms and policy tools that is only now emerging. In looking at what peacebuilders around the world are doing to build peace at the individual, community, as well as a national and international levels, I've come up with criteria for Just Peace. How are faith-based peacebuilders around the world envisioning that intersection of justice and peace? How are they practically working to build it in their own neighborhoods, in their own communities, and in some of the hottest conflict zones around the world? The ethics of starting wars, conducting wars, and limiting wars, of the Just War Tradition, are well understood and deeply institutionalized in key governmental,

intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). This is changing. Today Just Peace norms are emerging, and are being institutionalized in key NGO, IGO, and government organizations. Faith-based peacebuilders are leading the way in creating norms and practices of Just Peace, moving beyond limiting war to building just peace. Let me enumerate the five main themes up front; the criteria of Just Peace are participation, right relationships, reconciliation, restoration, and sustainability. ¹

CRITERIA FOR A JUST PEACE

The first criteria is participation, participation, participation. Peacebuilding requires participation of all those affected by conflict, particularly participation of those who have been most victimized by conflict. That means beginning with the last and the least, as Catholic Social Teaching instructs us, especially including the participation of women and youth. You are not going to get a sustainable, long lasting peace, if you don't expand participation in the peacebuilding process to include women, youth, and people of faith, if you don't expand participation beyond simply a peace among the armed combatants, the negative peace of a cessation of violence. The next criteria is reconciliation, something that faith-based actors are uniquely positioned to pursue, something we'll talk more about later. The next criteria is right relationship, looking at peace building as relationship building. Building right relationships is not primarily a task for state-based actors. In rebuilding right relationships we're looking at the next criteria, restoration, including concepts and practices of restorative justice, of human restoration, not just material restoration of roads and bridges, not just rebuilding the physical infrastructure that was damaged in a war, but restoration of the human person, restoration of the human infrastructure, and the social capital. That's the work of trauma healing, of social/psychological counseling, but it's also the spiritual work of soul repair, both for soldiers and returning veterans as well as for victims of conflict. The final Just Peace criteria is sustainability. All of this is done with a much longer timeline than is often pursued by government actors, who often go from hotspot to hotspot, crisis to crisis, not really taking that longer timeline view of sustainability. This is another area in which religious actors can make a real contribution, because these are people who live in the war-torn country, who live in the communities of conflict. They're not going anywhere. They didn't parachute in. They have a mission to minister and accompany people in need, and therefore they're going to have a much longer timeline, a much more long term view of peacebuilding. Those are the criteria of Just Peace. To illustrate how these work in practice, I thought I'd tell you some stories of how people are

living out those criteria to build peace in conflict zones around the world, and the ways in which they are making contributions that often governments of countries are not doing, in areas of peacebuilding that governments of countries are not pursuing.

BACKBONE OF A JUST PEACE: PEOPLE OF FAITH AND WOMEN

First. Let's start with the good news, the global trends of war and peace. Our media cover conflict and war, things that go boom, but they really don't cover peace, so you may be surprised to learn that peace is breaking out around the world, in whatever way you measure it. The number of major armed conflicts has decreased by more than half over the past twenty years, as the guns have gone silent from the Balkans to Burundi. The number of wars, the places and geography of war, and the number of people killed in war have all dramatically decreased, even while the total world population increases. There are more people on our planet than ever before, and more of them in more parts of the globe live in peace. Great power wars used to be very common in the 1600s, 1700s, 1800s, and 1900s, yet we have not had a great power war since the Second World War. That's a real change from the type of international relations patterns that we had in previous centuries. Major armed conflicts have decreased dramatically, and are mostly civil wars, in which over 1000 people die in a year (that's the definition used in social science for major armed conflict). Major armed conflicts have declined by nearly 80% in the last two decades since the end of the Cold War. When empires end, it creates a spike in conflict and civil wars. We saw that after the Second World War during the European decolonization period, with wars of colonial secession and independence, and similarly we saw a spike in major conflicts after the end of the Soviet Empire.

In contrast, now we're seeing historic lows in the numbers of major armed conflicts. Correspondingly, deaths from war are down dramatically, in terms of the numbers of people killed by war, but also as a percentage of the larger population. We now have 7 billion people on the planet, so given the rise in population we would expect historically to see larger numbers of people killed by war, but the opposite is happening, those numbers are down dramatically. Again, these trend-lines are intertwined. Great Power conflict, with industrialized militaries facing off against one another, creates the greatest casualties. The 20th century was the bloodiest century in human history, showing the horrific killing that can be undertaken in industrial age. Today, without great power wars, and with civil wars declining, correspondingly the levels of killing are declining too, and that's very good news.

Because peace is breaking out, you may now be wondering if this is going to be a very short lecture; perhaps our work is done here. But, there is much more to the story. Of course, conflict and challenges remain. While those historic trend lines are positive, they don't help you if you're living in Syria, in Sudan, in Afghanistan, in Iraq, in Israel or Palestine, if you're living in the areas of the world in which major armed conflict remains. Unfortunately, people are still dying and fleeing from war in the world, and it's still a very pressing problem if you're living in those areas of conflict.

Also, while we have seen peace breaking out that does not necessarily mean that the peace will be durable. Peace agreements break down almost 50 percent of the time. That has been the tragic story in the Congo, where we've seen a number of peace accords signed by the neighboring countries, by the various non-state actors who are parties to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and after a peace agreement is signed by the warring parties, another group will break away and continue the violence, there will be a lack of implementation of the agreement, and so cycles of violence will continue. There's good news in the Congo; a peace accord was brokered with another of the non-state actors at the end of last year. We hope that the peace accord will be viable, and be durable.

Similarly, in the Philippines, where there has been a long running conflict in the southern area of the Philippines, another peace accord was signed early this year. Now the questions are whether that accord will be approved by the parliament, whether it will be accepted by the population, whether it will be enforced by the parties who had been engaged in the conflict. Stay tuned; that remains to be seen, and we remain hopeful. Likewise, in Colombia, where parties are currently engaged in peace talks, it is a very hopeful time.

Getting these peace accords signed is only step one. Afterwards, making peace sustainable, is the hard work of building peace. The long term work of building peace on the ground is critical, to make that piece of paper real to people in areas of conflict. Sometimes people mistakenly conflate the work of peacebuilding to only the period of negotiations leading up to a peace accord. But peacebuilding occurs throughout all parts of the conflict cycle: prior to conflict breaking out, peacebuilding aims to prevent the onset of violence. Peacebuilding is the work done while violence is hot, to try to contain and limit the violence and mediate among parties to set the table for peace. And peacebuilding is the work that's done after a peace accord is signed, to try to make that peace real and sustainable, and to prevent a further outbreak of a cycle of violence.

So there is good news, peace is breaking out, but challenges remain to keep the guns silent, to make the emerging peace sustainable and durable. Who can help build peace around the world? The short answer is

all of us. Peacebuilding is not the work of governments acting alone. This is the work of individuals at the community level and individuals and communities working in solidarity across international borders. There are two categories of people who have assets for peacebuilding but have traditionally been excluded: women and people of faith. These are majorities around the world who have not been included in official peace processes. Demographically, religion is resurgent around the world at precisely the time that states are challenged. Eighty five percent of people around the world describe themselves as religious, as people of faith, people who believe in God, or in a transcendent being, and who practice a faith tradition. So 85 percent of people around the world are religious and we know that women are also the majority around the world, and women are more religious than men by any measure or study. Religion is resurgent, but it is not gender neutral. Women are more religious than men by any metric, any study, any religion, any region, and any historical period over the more than seventy years of studies. Whether the benchmark of religion is belief in God, belief in a Supreme Being, belief in the transcendent, membership in a faith community, attendance at religious services, personal religious practices, raising children within a faith community, keeping religious traditions alive in families—whatever the study, whatever the benchmark, women are more religious than men. Yet these two majority groups, women and faith-based actors, are too often overlooked in peacebuilding. These majority groups are currently underappreciated in the work they're doing to build peace around the world, and underutilized as partners of official peace processes, so I'll be highlighting what some of these faith-based actors and women are doing to build peace around the world. However, before turning to that, allow me to step back and do a short overview on our tradition on peace and war.

CHRISTIAN/CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING ON PEACE AND WAR

In tracing our Catholic and Christian traditions on the morality of war and peace, and of how our ethics can guide us in building peace, of course, we start with the 10 Commandments, with the Abrahamic tradition of "Thou shalt not kill." It's pretty simple, pretty direct. Early Christians were practitioners of nonviolence, directly following the example of Jesus and the way he lived his life. In confronting the Jewish and Roman authorities of his time, Jesus did not use violence, not even in self-defense when they captured him, tortured him, and killed him. The response of Jesus and his disciples was not to take up arms and launch the Galilean Liberation Front, but they engaged in dialogue and nonviolent resistance. Initially, Christians espoused nonviolence. After Constantine converted to

Christianity, making Christianity the religion of the Roman Empire, Catholic teaching expanded to include the Just War Tradition. This provided a way to limit violence and diverge from the *realpolitik's* allowance of unlimited war in pursuit of any political purpose. Just War Tradition instead seeks to limit war. Over the centuries we had these two traditions of nonviolence and just war, both working to stop and limit violence.

Yet from the beginning, Just Peace tradition has been "hiding in plain sight." From Jesus Christ to the present, our tradition has always held that Christians must work to build a positive peace. Catholic teaching on war and peace may begin with "Thou Shalt not kill," but it doesn't end there; it continues with Jesus, the Prince of Peace, "Peace I leave with you my friends." "Be at peace with one another," "Blessed are the peacemakers," and "a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace." Limiting war is not the same as building peace, and Christians are charged to build peace in our communities and the world. In the sermon on the mount Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers." While it is true that Jesus worked in Galilee without killing anyone, that is a radically incomplete account of his ministry. Jesus brought life and healing, reconciliation, restoration, right relationship with God and one another, wherever he went. He reached out to the marginalized and invited them to participate in building a different kind of peace, a positive peace, not merely a tense, negative peace based on dominance, arms, or a temporary cessation of violence. In Matthew 10, Jesus commands his followers to "Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, drive out demons." Is there anything on that list that is not part of the modern Catholic peacebuilding tool kit? Is there anything in the Beatitudes (Matthew 5), or in the Great Commissioning (Matthew 28), that are not part of building Just Peace?

Catholic teaching has always understood peace in positive terms. In the words of Pope John Paul II: "Peace is not just the absence of war...Like a cathedral, peace must be constructed patiently and with unshakable faith." The U.S. Catholic Bishops, in "The Challenge of Peace," elaborated on the Catholic positive view of peace. "Peace is the fruit of order. Order in human society must be shaped on the basis of respect for the transcendence of God and the unique dignity of each person, understood in terms of freedom, justice, truth and love. *"Peacemaking is not an optional commitment. It is a requirement of our faith. To avoid war in our day we must be intent on building peace in an increasingly interdependent world."*

The Second World War was a scandal for Christians, producing 50 million dead in a war primarily among Christians, with widespread violations of the Just War Tradition. The Catholic Church took a hard look at its teaching on war and peace, placing a greater emphasis on

peacebuilding. Catholic institutions such as Pax Christi, Catholic Relief Services, and Caritas Internationalis were created, often by women, to build reconciliation and just peace after WWII.

Saint Pope John XXIII rescued Jews from the Holocaust and worked behind the scenes to end the Cuban Missile crisis peacefully. These experiences led him to write "*Pacem in Terris*," emphasizing that peace must be built on justice, in service of the "common good." The Common Good is so important that our new saint invokes the term forty-six times in fifty-nine pages – as many times as "God" and nearly as many times as "Christ." *Pacem in Terris* laid out the Church's commitment to build peace in the modern world. *Pacem in Terris* notes that all of us have responsibilities to bring peace and that peace has to be based on justice and the protection and promotion of human rights. In 1963, this was a revolutionary document. Saint John took aim at all the -isms of the times: communism, fascism, racism, colonialism, corporatism, the excesses of capitalism, without ever saying these words. He challenged all these governing and institutional forms for insufficient attention to the protection of human rights, of God given human life and dignity. In April, 1963, Martin Luther King was imprisoned in a jail in

Birmingham, Alabama, for speaking out and advocating non-violent protest of racist US policies which denied African Americans their constitutional rights and their human rights. In 1963, four little girls were murdered when a bomb exploded in their church while they were having Sunday School lessons in the 16th Street Baptist church in Birmingham, AL. The Ku Klux Klan member who murdered them went free in 1963, charged only a fine of \$100 for illegally possessing dynamite, not for the murder of the four girls. In 1963, Nelson Mandela was in prison in South Africa for the charges of encouraging workers' strikes in protest of Apartheid, and leaving the country without permission. In 1963, Fr. Walter Ciszek (Chishek) was finishing his time in a Soviet Gulag for the "crime" of practicing his Catholic faith. In 1963, large parts of the world were still under the yoke of colonialism, such as Kenya, Tanzania, Botswana, and Mozambique. In 1963, fascist regimes and military dictatorships repressed human rights from Syria to Spain, where it was illegal for a woman to open a bank account. States in all forms and all parts of the globe were abusing human rights, when Saint John XXIII challenged all of us to build a sustainable, long lasting peace based on protection of human life, rights, and dignity.

Pacem in Terris was more than pretty Latin words written on fancy paper. It helped put the institutional muscle of the vast array of Catholic institutions on a Just Peace trajectory. Vatican II created the organizational structures to build Just Peace, such as the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, and the corresponding Peace and Justice commissions throughout the world at the National Bishops Conference,

Diocesan, and Parish levels. The genocide in Rwanda was a wake-up call, sharpening the Church's attention to Just Peace. How could CRS and Caritas Internationalis have been involved in development work in Rwanda for 20 years and have missed the Just Peace lens? After the Rwandan genocide, CRS and Caritas Internationalis wrote handbooks for Peacebuilding, trained their personnel, and refocused their programs to look at international issues through a Just Peace lens, moving beyond limiting war to building just peace.

Pope Francis has continued this trajectory in his Exhortation, *The Joy of the Gospel*. Pope Francis has a peace plan, describing the need for inclusive dialogue as paths to peace. The exhortation got a lot of attention, and Pope Francis has been getting a lot of press. He is Time Magazine's "man of the year." He is Forbes magazine's "Leader of the Year," which is pretty amazing, given his critique of global capitalism. The exhortation got a lot of attention, calling us to not be sourpuss Christians, and talking about how to live our faith in love and joy, and have the works of mercy be our calling card. But what was lost in the press coverage was Pope Francis' Peace Plan. In the second to last chapter of the document there are about 40 sections that lay out Francis's peace plan (217-258), and in case you didn't make it to the end of that document, here it is in a nutshell. We all must be peacebuilders. We have to work to build a more just social order, peace has to be based on justice and the mechanism, the tools to build peace are "dialogue dialogue, dialogue," as he put it. Pope Francis says "peacebuilding is people building." It takes time, we must make the word of God incarnate and put it into practice, perform works of justice and charity to make peace real to everyone, even people who are considered enemies or heretics. Every person has a contribution to make in building peace, because the Holy Spirit is not limited and is not silenced, and does not only work through the church or through people like ourselves. Pope Francis has profound and practical things to say about building peace that really mark him as a son of the second Vatican Council, bringing *Pacem in Terris* forward to the world today. He embraces all people of good will and from other religious traditions, who similarly have been working to build just peace.

STORIES OF PEACEBUILDING: CONGO (DRC), COLOMBIA, PHILIPPINES, PALESTINE

What do these Just Peace criteria of participation, reconciliation, right relationship restoration and sustainability, mean in practice? What real, transformative difference can it make to approach peace in this way, versus approaching it the way that unfortunately too many of our governments approach peacebuilding, as a much more narrow and military, government-based approach? I have had the great honor of being

able to walk the path, and talk with and share the stories of some very inspirational, courageous, heroic people who are working at the front lines in war zones around the world, at great personal risk, to build peace in very practical and creative ways.

For example, in the DRC, where a host of militias operate and which a senior United Nations official has described as the rape capital of the world², Sr. Marie-Bernard Alima has worked for nearly two decades to promote women and peace. Congo has been a war zone for decades. This spring is the 20th anniversary of the genocide in Rwanda. Congo was collateral damage of the Rwandan genocide. When refugees fled the violence in Rwanda, genocide perpetrators also fled across the border and continued the conflict in the Congo. Congo did not have a very strong government, so various state and paramilitary non-state actors were able to come in across the borders, and they rampaged and pillaged the countryside, and engaged in some very brutal and barbarous forms of violence, including using rape as a tool of war against girls as young as five, and grandmothers as old as 80, violating these girls and women with tree limbs and branches and machetes. To use the term rape is really too euphemistic a word to discuss the violence that was perpetrated, the war crimes perpetrated on civilians in the Congo. Sister Marie-Bernard Alima works to stop the violence, to assist refugees and internally displaced persons, to assist victims of the conflict, to provide aid and medical services, social services, psychological counseling, trauma healing to the victims of violence, the types of services you would expect faith-based actors to do. But Sister Marie-Bernard saw something more in these women victimized by rape, who found themselves not only victimized by the rapists, terrorized by the various armed men roaming the Congo, but also subsequently shunned by their families and communities. After being raped, instead of receiving support from their families and communities in their time of need, they were often shunned, because they were infected by their rapists with disease, infected with HIV/ AIDS or other sexually transmitted diseases. They were shunned because they were impregnated and they were seen as carrying the children of the enemy. They were shunned because of the shame and embarrassment the fathers, the sons, the husbands felt, their shame that they had not been able to protect their women and their families from this violence, and the cultural taboo of rape brought shame to the families of the women, seeing the rape victims brought back bad, traumatic memories.

So it was imperative that the church step in to provide not only immediate emergency medical and counseling services, but also education and job training, because obviously without education and jobs, these women would not be able to raise their children and have a means of subsistence, particularly as they were cut off from the usual networks of social and economic support from their families and communities. But

Sister Marie-Bernard saw something more in these women. She saw in these women, the future leaders of the DRC. Who was more committed to build peace in the Congo than these women? This war has literally been fought over the territory of their bodies. Who better than these women, who understand this violence at the most intimate level, who will be more committed champions of peace? To make sure the peace accords stick, to make sure these cycles of violence in the Congo end, here and now, who would be more committed to that? These women are not throw away persons; they are not marginalized people. They are not problems for society to confront. They are not objects of charity. They are leaders. They are agents for building peace.

Sister Marie Bernard teaches these women skills in leadership, peacebuilding, conflict resolution and trains them in the skills of democracy, trains them to run for public office. The church does not endorse any political party, any political platform, but Sister Marie believes women should participate at the highest level of politics in the Congo in order to stop the cycles of conflict, and to make sure that there's an end to this impunity and violence against women. Women are not problems; women are leaders. Sister Marie Bernard has trained thousands of women, has turned out 50,000 election monitors (primarily women) in the 2006 and the 2011 elections in the Congo. She reports a case in which a woman who'd been raped, went through their programs, learn to read and write through their programming, went through the citizenship and democracy training programs and decided to run for office. She was elected as head of her village, and was *elected by the men who had raped her*. That is a very profound form of reconciliation. That is a profound form of restoration of human beings, restoration of right relationship, peace building by people building, in ways that will be much more sustainable over the long haul, starting with the participation of those most hurt by the war, with their active participation in building peace. ³

This approach is a very different form of demobilization, disarmament, reconciliation and reintegration (DDR) than is often practiced by the United Nations, or by the governments of countries as a standard tool in the toolbox of international peace and security. Religious women peacebuilders around the world regularly criticize government and IGO DDR programs as “Men with guns forgiving and paying off other men with guns for the violence they have done against women.” International Pax Christi Peace Laureate Justine Masika Bihamba, a female director of a faith-based NGO in the Congo, describes the DDR done by UN, EU, and AU forces as simply giving the rapists new uniforms. Combatants who have raped as a tool of war move from the rebel forces to government security and police forces, without screening for soldiers who committed rapes and war crimes, and without any significant or coordinated training programs in international human rights

standards and with no zero tolerance policy toward rape. This greatly diminishes the reputation, legitimacy, credibility, and trust women have for government security forces. DDR done without the participation of women has consequences. This sets up a perverse incentive system. Male combatants who commit human rights abuses are given a seat at the peace table and are offered financial incentives to demobilize and disarm, and jobs to reintegrate them into society, while their women victims are offered nothing. Thus the cycle of rapes and impunity for rapes continues in the Congo.⁴

As the example of Sr. Marie-Bernard shows, women bring a sorely needed programming focus on women's reintegration and participation in the political process, not merely the reintegration of male combatants. This is a very different type of DDR, focusing first on the needs of women most impacted by the conflict.

This pattern is global, this exclusion of women from peace processes around the world while women are disproportionately victims of war. Women are excluded from the peace table today in those peace processes that I mentioned in Colombia and DRC. There are literally no women present at the peace table. Women, and particularly religious women, are excluded from formal, governmental and IGO peace processes. In UN-sponsored peace processes, only 2.5 percent of peace signatories were women. (The number is actually close to zero when one country is excluded, the Philippines, which has had female presidents). Of the international monies budgeted for postconflict reconstruction, less than 2.9 percent of budgets focus on women's needs. Fewer than 29 cents out of every \$10 budgeted for post conflict reconstruction goes to women.⁵ Women point out often that they are excluded from both the design and the implementation of DDR programs. This is a real loss, because women religious peacebuilders have much to offer, particularly for the ethic and practice of participation. The Congo is not an outlier.

Women are disproportionately victims of war, victims of rape as a tool of war. Jesuit Refugee Services reports that 80% of refugees and internally displaced persons are women and children, people who flee the violence, who literally run for their lives. Just Peace principles say we must begin building peace with the participation of these people, starting with the most marginalized, starting with the poor, starting with women and children. We must attend to the justice component of building a just peace, especially when you consider that prior to war, women are already 70 percent of the poorest of the poor, 70 percent of youths not in school are girls, girls are three times more likely to be malnourished. When food is scarce, that food is given to the boys and the men not to the girls and women. That's before war breaks out. After conflict breaks out, food becomes more scarce, as distribution networks are disrupted. Women and girls in war zones and who flee conflict are even more vulnerable to

human trafficking, to rape as a tool for war, to all these harms that can come in war zones. Their participation in building the peace is imperative.

Lest you think that the example of Sister Marie Bernard Alima in the Congo is an outlier, let me give you a few more examples. Sister Azizet works in Palestine with women and girls who are trafficked, who flee war zones in Africa and Somalia and Sudan and other countries and cross over the Sinai desert trying to enter Europe or even trying to enter Israel and Egypt.⁶ They are kidnapped by human traffickers and tortured for ransom. Their families are very poor, so they often cannot come up with the ransom. These women are tortured, raped and impregnated by the rapists in these torture centers in the Sinai. Sister Azizet has been threatened with death many times by the human traffickers and others in the area who don't want her drawing attention to this issue, who may profit by these extortion rings or who may not feel that their efforts are shown favorably by the work that sister Azizet does. Sister responds, "What can they do, kill me? Don't they understand that I've long ago given my life to Christ? I have no children that I would leave behind, no mouths that would go hungry and unfed if I were not there. Of course, I'll give my life to Christ. I've already done that. I do not fear death; as a Christian I do not fear death." That's a very powerful person to have in pursuing restoration, participation, reconciliation, right relationship, and sustainability. Peace talks have sputtered on and off for decades between the male Jewish and male Muslim leaders of Israeli and Palestinian military and governing forces. No women, Christians, or victims of the violence have been part of the formal peace talks. We should expand the constituents for peace to include the Sister Azizets of the world.

In the Philippines,⁷ Myla Legura and Deng Giguento have been working on peace and justice work for the Catholic Church for many decades. The Philippine military has often been implicated in human rights violations, particularly under the military dictatorship of Marcos, but also the many paramilitary groups that are associated with the military have a very uneven record on human rights. Yet Deng and Myla worked to extend participation in Catholic peacebuilding training in the Mindanao Peace Institute to include NGOs and also members of the military, despite their own difficult experiences with the military. Once, when Deng was doing a trip documenting human rights abuses, she was walking back across the field at dusk with a priest colleague, and they were surrounded by some drunken troops who pointed their machine guns into Deng's waist. The altercation began between the priest and the armed troops and Deng tried to break it up. The soldiers had ripped off their nametags, showing that they really intended harm and not to be detected when they did harm. Deng engaged in dialogue, and was able to talk them down and to escape with her life. Yet it was Deng, who reached out to the military to include them in the peacebuilding workshops and the peacebuilding

training CRS was doing in this long-running conflict in the southern area Philippines, building right relationship, reconciliation, restoration, through participation, to build a sustainable peace.

In these examples, people of faith use three I's to build Just Peace, their religious institutions, ideas and imagination. In these examples they use religious imagination to envision enemies as neighbors, to imagine a different world, a world in which victims of rape, refugees and child soldiers can be leaders in peace building, a world in which there is no such thing as a throwaway person, no such thing as a marginalized person, where we are all children of God. They tap these religious ideas of peace and justice, and come up with very different answers for how to build peace based on people building rather than state building. They make use of the religious institutions, whether it's the religious orders, the missionary orders that Sister Azizet hails from, whether they use the Justice and Peace commission of the bishops conferences, such as Sister Marie-Bernard Alima represents, or the Catholic peacebuilding network and Catholic Relief Services that Myla and Deng serve. They use those institutions in peacebuilding, but they bring them together with religious ideas and imagination in a very creative and challenging way. How can you build peace if you have never known peace? How can you imagine it? Can you imagine yourself within a web of relationships that includes your enemies? How can you disarm, not just the guns, but how can you disarm your mind and disarm your spirit, how can you do that at the spiritual level? These are spiritual and moral tasks; it's not simply a material or physical task.

CONCLUSION

Governments around the world recognize that they've done a pretty bad job of including women in the peace process, and they've made a number of historic declarations saying we need to do better. The UN Security Council passed resolution 1325 14 years ago, and they've passed subsequent inclusive security resolutions since, to include women in formal peace processes. They recognize they haven't done a very good job of reaching out and including the participation and the gifts of women. Also in US law, the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, the United States is supposed to engage religious actors, to inform U.S. foreign policy around the world, but usually when they do interact with religious actors they engage with men, with male clerics. On the positive side, we have these two initiatives: the inclusive security resolutions to engage women, and the International Religious Freedom law and office, to engage people of faith. Yet there are still gaps. If we look around the world at who is building peace at the grassroots level, they are women of faith, but our government and intergovernmental groups don't really

recognize their work and recognize them as actors, as peacebuilding partners. I'm trying to draw attention not only to Just Peace in the work of these women at the front lines of building peace, but to draw attention to the ways in which religious ideas and imagination are building peace around the world. Following Pope Francis' peace plan entails challenges in building peace: are we serving the poor, are we serving women and youth, are we investing in people building in our peacebuilding? Starting at the personal level, are we educating our hearts to be people of peace?

I asked Sr. Azizet what we can do to support her work, and she replied, "Help the woman in need near you." What can you do to be a peace builder? Through the activities of the Romero center here at home, through the activities of our own institutions at the local level, we all can help.

You can organize a weekend at the Romero center. You can support St. Joseph's Carpenter Society. Volunteers are welcome with the Catholic Partnership Schools of Camden. You can host an event for Guadalupe Family Services summer camp. St. Joseph's Pro-Cathedral welcomes volunteers, as does Joseph's House of Camden, or you can help with the high school youth program, Lifting Up Camden's Youth (L.U.C.Y.), as a mentor for young adults. Camden Churches Organized for People welcomes support and participation. There are many things you can do at the local level to build peace. You don't have to go to Congo or the Philippines to build peace. There's so much that needs to be done in our own communities.

Part of the Romero prayer, written to commemorate his death, says "We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something, and to do it very well."

We are a loaves and fishes people in our peacebuilding. We don't have to be able to stop all violence in the world in order to be able to build peace in our families, around our kitchen tables, in our communities, in our schools, in our neighborhoods, in Camden, as well as around the world. That is real work. That is necessary work. That is the work of peace and justice. And it starts here at home. Thank you very much for inviting me to be with you in Camden tonight.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss Dr. Cusimano Love's criteria for a just peace: participation, right relationships, reconciliation, restoration, and sustainability. How might these criteria apply in neighborhood or parish conflicts/disagreements? How might these criteria relate to gun laws in the U.S. or to our Drone use overseas? How do the criteria differ from traditional just war theories?

2. Talk about rape and sexual violence as a weapon of war and how painful reconciliation would be in such circumstances. Why do women end up as the most severe and violated victims of war? Why do you think Dr. Cusimano Love singles out women of faith as unique peacemakers? Reflect on Pope Francis' view that "peacebuilding is people building."

3. Discuss ways that your faith community might become a peacebuilding body. What faith-inspired, concrete actions might you organize in your own neighborhood, community, or city? What advocacy role could you take on in trying to influence our government toward a more non-violent response to international problems?

ENDNOTES

¹ Much of this article is drawn from Maryann Cusimano Love, *Morality Matters*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, forthcoming), and two book chapters, "What Kind of Peace Do We Seek," in the book, *Peacebuilding: Catholic Theology, Ethics, and Praxis*, R. Scott Appleby, Robert J. Schreiter, and Gerard F. Powers, eds., (New York: Orbis Books, 2010), and "Catholic Women Building Peace: Invisibility, Ideas, and Institutions Expand Participation," in *Exploring the Invisible: Women of Faith Building Peace*, Katherine Marshall and Susan Hayward, eds., (Washington, DC, U.S. Institute of Peace Press, 2014).

² <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=34502#.UqZlpWSG1cQ>.

³ Sr. Marie-Bernard Alima, interviews with Author; Sr. Marie Bernard Alima, "Just War Theory and the Congo," October 27, 2011, CUA on Tap, Catholic University of America, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=22HiyaU6cfQ>; Catholic Relief Services, "Sexual and Gender Based Violence Program Activities in D.R.Congo," June 2011.

⁴ Interview with the author, September 21, 2010.

⁵ Maryann Cusimano Love, "Left Out," *America* (October 25, 2010): pg. 9. "...only 18 of 300 peace accords since 1989 even mentioned sexual based violence in the conflicts... UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and associated resolutions 1820, 1888, and 1889 were supposed to change this, but too little implementation has been done."

⁶ Interview with the author, March 6, 2014.

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FURTHER STUDY

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For the Catholic Peacebuilding Network, go to: www.cpn.nd.edu

For Catholic Relief Services, go to; www.crs.org

For Jesuit Refugee Services, go to: www.jrsusa.org

For Justfaith, faith-based social justice and peace education, go to: www.justfaith.org

For Network: A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby, go to: www.networklobby.org

For U.S.Catholic Bishops on Peacebuilding, go to: www.usccb.org

For Pax Christi peace with justice advocacy, go to www.paxchristiusa.org

APPENDIX A

THE ONGOING LEGACY OF OSCAR ROMERO*

PETER FEUERHERD

LAST MARCH (2010), as the city of San Salvador began its weeklong commemoration of Archbishop Oscar Romero's death, the souvenir T-shirts were abundant, worn by locals and visiting pilgrims alike. They were hot sellers in the stalls surrounding the downtown cathedral. There, Romero's body lies in a crypt where everyday *campesinos* (native farmers) come, light candles, touch his tomb and metaphorically whisper in his ear, beseeching favors.

"As a Christian, I do not believe in death without resurrection. If I am murdered, I will arise again in the Salvadoran people," reads one popular shirt. The shirt bears the archbishop's words and his bespectacled image above a map of the New Jersey-sized nation where more than 75,000 people perished in the civil war of the 1980s.

Romero, killed by soldiers while celebrating Mass at a hospital chapel on March 24, 1980, was an atypical victim, if one judges by his elevated position. But he joined thousands of others far less famous, from human-rights lawyers to union organizers to *campesinos*, as well as three North American sisters and a laywoman missionary, whose deaths have never been legally addressed in El Salvador. No one has ever been convicted of the murder of the archbishop.

Romero remains alive in the hearts of Salvadorans. Three decades later, tens of thousands crowded the downtown streets in a march to the cathedral, shouting, "*Viva Romero*." Long an unofficial national hero, he has been formally embraced by the country's new government. At the country's only airport, international visitors are welcomed with an official mural depicting the archbishop.

President Mauricio Funes, elected in 2009, joined last year's commemoration march, the first Salvadoran president to do so, and has formally apologized for the government's role in the murder. During his inaugural address, he asked that his administration be judged by the standards set by Romero.

While Romero's prophetic witness stirred divisions within the Church when he was alive—some of his auxiliary bishops cautioned that

* ["The Ongoing Legacy of Oscar Romero" by Peter Feuerherd, from St. Anthony Messenger magazine is used by permission of Franciscan Media, 28 W.Liberty St. Cincinnati, OH 45202. 800-488-0488. www.FranciscanMedia.org © 2010. All rights reserved.]

he went too far in defending the poor—his cause for sainthood is being pursued by the Archdiocese of San Salvador.

Reaching a New Generation

Even the younger generations, who did not experience the civil war or know Romero personally, invoke his legacy. The streets are filled with murals depicting the man, often with quotes from his many homilies and radio talks.

“Christ and Romero are the same to us,” says Mauricio Lemus, a lay leader at Santa Cruz Church outside San Salvador. At 33, Lemus was a child when the archbishop was murdered.

Mario Salvador Diaz, 21, a student at the national university, was born nearly a decade after Romero’s death, but has read countless books and seen films about the archbishop. His parents told him stories of the impact the archbishop had on their lives. Diaz helped construct a mural outside his parish, Our Lady of Guadalupe, dedicated to the memory of the archbishop.

For younger Salvadorans, who comprise the vast majority of the population, Romero “has become the spiritual support of those who have their hearts broken. He has become the saint of El Salvador and the Americas,” says Diaz.

“The people believe Romero is still with them,” says Dennis O’Connor, director of CRISPAZ, a Cincinnati-based organization devoted to forging links between American Christians and Salvadorans. “Thirty years after his death, he remains legendary.”

A Romero Revival

Jesuit Father Dean Brackley ministered in New York’s South Bronx until being called to teach theology at the University of Central America in San Salvador after six of his fellow Jesuits and two women helpers—a mother and daughter—were murdered by Salvadoran military soldiers in 1989. That event was the last great spasm of violence directed against the Church during the civil war. Father Brackley has noticed a revival in Romero interest and public favor over the past decade.

For many years, says Father Brackley, “Romero was absent from public discussions, his memory suppressed by the media.” This year’s commemoration was an indication that the resurrection of Romero’s legacy has come full circle.

In El Salvador, he has been embraced as a Christ figure, a national hero, his memory kept alive through the efforts of those who suffered during the civil war.

Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, retired archbishop of Washington, D.C., spoke at a commemorative Mass for Romero in San Salvador's cathedral. The cathedral was filled with visiting foreign pilgrims, the poor and President Funes.

The cardinal, in his homily, emphasized the slain archbishop's personal piety. He noted that Romero had written in his diary as a young priest: "The Lord has inspired in me a great desire for holiness....I have been thinking of how far a soul can ascend if it lets itself be possessed entirely by God."

Noted the cardinal, "Oscar Romero allowed this to happen in his life....He was possessed by a desire to serve the least among us, possessed by a desire to reach out to the mighty and the rich and the powerful and to call them to love and to gentleness and to a common mission of bringing all things to Christ

Faith and Politics

The view of Romero in El Salvador today is much like that of African-Americans toward Martin Luther King, Jr., says Father Brackley. Dr. King is seen in both a Christian prophetic and political context.

From a Church perspective, Romero's canonization process continues. Still, that is expected to be a long-term project, for the archbishop's actions and words remain controversial.

While almost all Salvadorans concede that Romero was a man of saintly proportions, that legacy, as it often is with popular saint-like figures, continues to be contested.

"There is a struggle over Romero and his legacy," says Father Brackley. Some argue that "Romero's political critique is not essential to his sanctity." He was, in this model, a man of prayer and simplicity, devoted to the Church and his people, eschewing the offer of a mansion in a secure gated community to live in a simple series of rooms on the grounds of a hospital for children with cancer.

This faction points to a man, a carpenter's son born in 1917, who faithfully served the Church, with a devotion to the popes honed through service as a young priest in wartime Rome. In his pursuit of peace and reconciliation, he was willing to criticize all factions, including the rebels, in a conflict that became internationally colored by the Cold War. Some say that Romero's reputation for personal piety was hijacked by those with a political agenda.

These concerns, it is expected, could slow down the formal Romero canonization process. Martyrdom is a surefire road to formal sainthood, but even his death is steeped in controversy: Was he murdered because of his politics or because of his faith? Father Brackley argues that the two cannot be separated.

“His prayer flowed from his love and defense of the poor, his belief that the Church must walk with the poor,” says Father Brackley, who has written extensively on the Romero legacy and frequently greets international visitors who come to the University of Central America, wanting to learn more about the legendary figure.

“Romero points the Church forward. This is the way we have to go. We have to walk with the crucified people today. Romero understood that, if it was not good news for the poor, it was not the gospel,” he says.

Compelled to Be a Prophet

While emerging as an international figure, Romero cannot be understood without understanding the context in which he lived.

El Salvador is, while small, densely populated—it now has more than six million people. It has frequently been wracked by violence. Today, it is the criminal drug gangs who wreak havoc.

In Romero’s day, soldiers—in large part financed by the U.S. government—and militia death squads wrought terror on large sections of the population. Most Salvadorans continue to live in poverty; many have escaped to the United States, Canada and Europe in search of work.

At the time of Romero’s appointment as archbishop in 1977, those who clamored for change openly expressed disappointment. Romero was perceived at the time as timid and allied with the wealthy. He was, critics said, a man chosen so as not to disturb the powerful, who saw the emergence of liberation theology and the growing movement in the Church for a “preferential option for the poor” as a threat.

Romero was considered a safe choice, a quiet intellectual who would not prove a problem. His visage evoked a quiet placidity. Few saw him as a man who would disturb the status quo in a Catholic country where a small group of families controlled almost all the wealth. They crushed any efforts at rebellion by controlling the government and the military.

But that analysis proved wrong. Romero, says Father Brackley, began as an archbishop simply dedicated to advancing the agenda of the Church. But he quickly discovered, in the circumstances of his time, that he was compelled to be a prophet.

How Did This Happen?

Some say the roots began early, in Romero’s quiet upbringing in a small provincial village. He was born poor, lived among the poor and sympathized with their struggles. But other factors as well galvanized him into action.

Romero had spirited discussions with a friend and Jesuit priest, Father Rutilio Grande. Father Grande had long been identified with groups advocating change, and Romero thought his friend was pushing too aggressively. But once Father Grande was murdered soon after Romero became archbishop, the quiet, scholarly Church leader emerged as a prophetic lion.

His homilies became more pointed. At a time when the press in El Salvador was heavily censored, his Sunday homilies, broadcast over the radio, offered hope for those who wanted recognition and condemnation of massacres in the countryside, as government troops and militias swept through whole villages, killing thousands. Romero heard the stories as he listened to peasants who trekked, sometimes with donkeys in tow, to their archbishop's office, pleading with him to say something.

So he did. Romero's condemnations of the violence became bolder toward the end of his three-year tenure as archbishop. He challenged wealthy Catholic families, who were well-known for public displays of piety but financed death squads. He emphasized the Church's call for the rights of workers to organize, and decried the poverty that caused so many Salvadorans to leave the country in search of work. He called upon the leaders of the only country formally dedicated to Jesus, the Savior, to live up to its namesake.

Many think he sealed his fate when, days before his murder, Romero clamored for soldiers to "cease the repression" and lay down their arms, because "no soldier is obligated to obey an order contrary to the will of God." The statement was seen in some quarters as a call to mutiny.

Robert Ellsberg, author of *All Saints* (Crossroad), a book of short reflections on those of heroic virtue, included the archbishop in his roster of saints because he has been so acclaimed by popular will, if not as yet formally canonized.

Romero's canonization, says Ellsberg, is a question of when, not if. His legacy continues worldwide as a bishop "who overcame the gulf that so often exists between the hierarchy and the faithful. He was a true prophet."

While Romero was known for his personal piety, he cannot be seen solely from that perspective. His role of prophetic witness is unavoidable in capturing his true legacy, says Ellsberg.

"What was distinctive about his life was what contributed to his murder. It would be difficult to separate the fact that Romero was killed because he stood up to the oppressive forces in his society on behalf of the poor," he says.

O'Connor, a frequent visitor to El Salvador, agreed: "Romero really stood up to the regime. He died a violent death. There is little you can soft-pedal about him. He was an activist for all the people of El Salvador."

While the social and political legacy of Romero is still debated, his sanctity is still celebrated in traditional Catholic ways. The crowds who come to the crypt at the San Salvador cathedral are a testament to the Catholic belief in the Communion of Saints. They murmur quiet prayers, touch his coffin and beseech him for favors. Popular religiosity merges with Romero's prophetic witness without contradiction. His tomb is always covered in flowers brought there by the people he served, as well as by international visitors.

A Miracle?

Dennis O'Connor knows very well about Romero's impact, even 30 years after his murder. While visiting El Salvador in 2008, O'Connor came down with severe pains. He hurried home to Cincinnati, where he underwent surgery that removed cancerous tumors from his colon, and was told by his doctors that he might not have lived if he had waited much longer. Recovery was expected to be arduous, marked off in years.

Meanwhile, in El Salvador, a group of visiting pilgrims from St. Margaret of York Church in Cincinnati joined hands and prayed at the Romero crypt for O'Connor's recovery. Something happened: O'Connor was back at work in a few weeks, surpassing any medical expectations. Today his cancer is in remission.

"I think that my case was miraculous," says O'Connor. "I was given a second chance because I was working with the people of El Salvador. There is no doubt in my mind that there was divine intervention and a whisper in the ear from Romero."

It is a case that has not been formally proven. O'Connor is considering documenting it for the canonization process, but there is a possibility that nothing miraculous actually happened. Perhaps he was fortunate to have skilled doctors and a little bit of luck.

Still a Strong Presence

But in any case, there has been a miracle of resurrection regarding Romero. He is acclaimed as a national hero. Perhaps his killers thought someday they would be hailed for ridding El Salvador of a controversial Churchman by marching into a hospital chapel and taking out the man who had proven so troublesome to those in power. Perhaps they thought they were ridding the turbulent Central American region of a dangerous revolutionary leader. If those who plotted the murders are still alive, they dare not offer themselves for public scrutiny.

By contrast, Romero's image, rare for a bishop anywhere in the world, is emblazoned on T-shirts, akin to a rock star. It is expected that the anniversary of his death will become a national Salvadoran holiday.

Despite the controversy that still surrounds him, he is expected to be canonized someday, a sign of personal piety and prophetic witness for all the Americas.

The crowds continue coming to his crypt. On the exact day of the 30th anniversary of the murder, in the pulpit in the floor above the archbishop's tomb, U.S. Cardinal McCarrick spoke of Romero at a Mass as if he were still there, as if death never really did come for the archbishop.

"Your death was not the end of your mission or your ministry. It was only the beginning," he told a cathedral packed with foreign visitors, the country's president and the Salvadorans who embraced their champion in life, death and resurrection.

Key Dates in Archbishop Romero's Life

August 15, 1917	Oscar Arnulfo Romero y Goldámez is born in Ciudad Barrios, a Salvadoran mountain town near the Honduran border.
April 4, 1942	Romero is ordained a Catholic priest in Rome.
1944	Romero returns to El Salvador, where he serves as a parish priest.
February 23, 1977	Romero is appointed archbishop of San Salvador.
March 12, 1977	Romero's friend and fellow priest Rutilio Grande, S.J., is assassinated, an event that profoundly affects Romero.
March 23, 1980	In a homily, Romero urges soldiers to disobey orders that go against God's will: "I ask you, I pray you, I order you in the name of God to stop this oppression," he pleads. Many feel it was this homily which sealed Romero's fate.
March 24, 1980	Archbishop Romero is shot and killed while celebrating Mass.
1981	Romero is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.
March 24, 2010	Thirty years after Romero's assassination, El Salvador's President Mauricio Funes offers an official state apology for Romero's assassination.

Appendix B

THE CALL TO FIX STRUCTURAL CAUSES OF ECONOMIC INJUSTICE NOW*

Sr. Simone Campbell, SSS

The need to resolve the structural causes of poverty cannot be delayed, not only for the pragmatic reason of its urgency for the good order of society, but because society needs to be cured of a sickness which is weakening and frustrating it, and which can only lead to new crisis. Welfare projects, which meet certain urgent needs, should be considered merely temporary responses. As long as the problems of the poor are not radically resolved by rejecting the absolute autonomy of markets and financial speculation and by attacking the structural causes of inequality, no solution will be found for the world's problems or, for that matter, to any problems. Inequality is the root of social ills. (Pope Francis, *Joy in the Gospel*)

In November 2013, Pope Francis stirred up the world again with his call to have *Joy in the Gospel* by living justly in our modern world. He boldly stated that trickle-down economics has not worked and will not work. The market needs to be regulated to ensure that the 100% benefit from our economy. But he also challenges all of us to think beyond Band-aids to actual structural change.

We here at NETWORK have been working on this issue of income and wealth disparities for years. Our *Mind the Gap! and Mend the Gap!* Campaigns have at their heart changing the structures that create inequality. But we have a lot of work yet to do.

Pope Francis notes that the “welfare projects” we have been working so hard to protect (like unemployment benefits, SNAP/food stamps, WIC and others) should only be considered temporary responses. We have to spend so much energy protecting the day-to-day safety net for struggling families that it sometimes appears we are content with having families predictably in the net.

* [Reprinted from *Network/Connection* (First Quarter, 2014) p.3, by permission of NETWORK, a National Catholic Social Justice Lobby, 25 E Street NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20001, www.networklobby.org.]

Pope Francis challenges us to imagine a world where the structures work to benefit the 100%, not just the 1%. He urges us to dismantle the system that shifts money to the top and exploits workers who create the wealth. He says that we should be working to not need the big programs that have provided the lifeline for so many in our nation. Imagining this new world will take prayer, deep listening to the needs around us, and the willingness to risk changing our current system in order to provide a more just distribution of income and resources.

So far, here at NETWORK, we have been especially mindful of tax policy as a key component of undoing structural causes of poverty. It is interesting to note that between 1949 and 1979 most of the time the top tax rate was 80%. Having a tax rate of 80% discouraged high salaries because the individual did not realize that much of a return. It was during this period that all sectors of the economy saw approximately a 100% increase in salaries. However, beginning in the Reagan Administration's trickle-down economics, the top tax bracket was decreased until it reached 33%. This created a much greater incentive for the top to seek more in salaries since they could keep 66% of their income and shelter other income in various investment schemes. This change in tax structure lit the fire of rapid acceleration of income for the 1% and stagnation of wages for workers who create the wealth. This is not just and we need to re-imagine how we compensate for hard work. Trickle-down economics has failed, and it is time to change.

But it requires all of us to re-imagine what a just society is. It requires us who advocate so vigorously for the safety net to realize that we need to be just as vigorous about changing the system so that work pays a just wage. It requires those who want to dismantle the safety net to realize that what is required are wages that allow a family to live in dignity. The pope is correct that, until we change the system so that 100% can benefit from their hard work, we will not have peace and a cessation of violence in our world. All need to come together on this crusade. "We the People" can form a more perfect union.

If this makes you nervous, I join with Pope Francis when he says:

If anyone feels offended by my words, I would respond that I speak them with affection and with the best of intentions, quite apart from any personal interest or political ideology. My words are not those of a foe or an opponent. I am interested only in helping those who are in thrall to an individualistic, indifferent and self-centered mentality to be freed from those unworthy chains and to attain a way of living and thinking which is more humane, noble and fruitful, and which will bring dignity to their presence on this earth. (*Joy in the Gospel*).

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Simone Campbell, SSS is Executive Director of Network, a National Catholic social justice lobby and one of the organizers of the “Nuns on the Bus” campaign. She has recently authored, *A Nun on the Bus: How All of Us Can Create Hope, Change and Community*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2014).

Anthony ‘Tony’ Campolo is an ordained Baptist minister and professor emeritus of Sociology at Eastern University. He is the author of numerous books, including: *Red Letter Christians: A Citizen’s Guide to Faith and Politics*, (Ventura, CA: Regal/from Gospel Light, 2008); *Revolution and Renewal: How Churches are Saving our Cities*, co-author, Bruce Main, (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2000); and *Red Letter Revelation: What if Jesus Really Meant What He Said*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2012).

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THE COUNCIL FOR RESEARCH IN VALUES AND PHILOSOPHY

PURPOSE

Today there is urgent need to attend to the nature and dignity of the person, to the quality of human life, to the purpose and goal of the physical transformation of our environment, and to the relation of all this to the development of social and political life. This, in turn, requires philosophic clarification of the base upon which freedom is exercised, that is, of the values which provide stability and guidance to one's decisions.

Such studies must be able to reach deeply into one's culture and that of other parts of the world as mutually reinforcing and enriching in order to uncover the roots of the dignity of persons and of their societies. They must be able to identify the conceptual forms in terms of which modern industrial and technological developments are structured and how these impact upon human self-understanding. Above all, they must be able to bring these elements together in the creative understanding essential for setting our goals and determining our modes of interaction. In the present complex global circumstances this is a condition for growing together with trust and justice, honest dedication and mutual concern.

The Council for Studies in Values and Philosophy (RVP) unites scholars who share these concerns and are interested in the application thereto of existing capabilities in the field of philosophy and other disciplines. Its work is to identify areas in which study is needed, the intellectual resources which can be brought to bear thereupon, and the means for publication and interchange of the work from the various regions of the world. In bringing these together its goal is scientific discovery and publication which contributes to the present promotion of humankind.

In sum, our times present both the need and the opportunity for deeper and ever more progressive understanding of the person and of the foundations of social life. The development of such understanding is the goal of the RVP.

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A set of related research efforts is currently in process:

1. *Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change: Philosophical Foundations for Social Life*. Focused, mutually coordinated research teams in university centers prepare volumes as part of an integrated philosophic search for self-understanding differentiated by culture and civilization. These evolve more adequate understandings of the person in society and look to the cultural heritage of each for the resources to respond to the challenges of its own specific contemporary transformation.

2. *Seminars on Culture and Contemporary Issues*. This series of 10 week crosscultural and interdisciplinary seminars is coordinated by the RVP in Washington.

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4. *Foundations of Moral Education and Character Development*. A study in values and education which unites philosophers, psychologists, social scientists and scholars in education in the elaboration of ways of enriching the moral content of education and character development. This work has been underway since 1980.

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