

Justice Themes for Sunday Liturgies A Cycle

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Optional Theme: The Beatitudes

(See Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time. Appropriate also for the Fourth Sunday in Ordinary time, Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time and Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time or any Sunday or Weekday when Matthew 5:1-12 is read.)

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INTRODUCTION

In this A Cycle, 25 Sundays and two weekdays (Good Friday, and September 15, the sorrowful Mother) have been chosen for justice themes. (Corpus Christi is included in the Sundays). These are the days on which justice themes are especially appropriate. Other Sundays and feast days also have appropriate readings for the justice/peace themes. In this A Cycle we have included those Sundays in which the social justice/peace themes are most obviously presented in the readings. The Social Justice Commission of the Diocese of Crookston with the approval of the Priests' Continuing Education Committee produced this series written by Monsignor Bill Mehrkens of the Diocese of Crookston, Minnesota. It is presented as a set of suggestions for our pastors and other preachers as an implementation of the Priests' Retreat in 1997, "Preaching the Just Word."

The content of these pages are not intended to be prefabricated homilies, but are presented as possible ideas for developing homilies. Effective homilies need to be applied to local conditions and particular communities by homilists of varying interests and experiences. The ideas offered here can only serve as an aid for preachers rather than a finished product.

It was decided by the Social Justice Commission to preserve the diverse formats used in presenting the ideas of each Sunday (essays, articles, homilies, outlines, principles, and quotes). It is recommended that each person develop his or her own homilies using ideas and examples from each one's own experiences so that every homily or presentation becomes a unique creation of each speaker.

Other aids in developing homilies on the "Just Word" would be the several books of homilies of Walter J. Burghardt, S.J. (Paulist Press), three books by John Kavanaugh on Meditations on the Sunday Scriptures (Orbis Books), and the books of Megan McKenna (Orbis Books) presenting liturgical reflections according to the church year.

Biblical quotations are taken from the Lectionary or New American Bible.

ADVENT

Peace

The first two Sundays of Advent strongly suggest that we prepare the way through living nonviolently. Isaiah bids us to “turn our swords into plowshares” and points out that on “that day” in God’s reign, “the wolf will lie down with the lamb.” John the Baptist tells us, “reform your lives, the reign of God is at hand.” Psalm 122 is a prayer for peace and Psalm 72 extols both justice and peace.

The Third Sunday of Advent stresses justice for the oppressed especially the handicapped, the poor, the blind, the lame, women and children, and youth who suffer abuse — the *ANAWIM* (the little ones – the powerless ones), whom the promised Messiah will make his “preferential option.”

The Fourth Sunday of Advent identifies Jesus as Immanuel/Messiah. The Fourth Sunday is concerned about reverence for all life with emphasis on life in the wombs of Mary and Elizabeth.

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Peace

Isaiah 2: 1-5

Psalm 122

“Beat their swords into plowshares...”

Peace

“He shall judge between the nations, and impose terms on many people. They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; one nation shall not raise the sword against another, nor shall they train for war again...let us walk in the light of the Lord!” (Isaiah 2:4-5)

Preparing for the advent of the Messiah calls us to a new perspective in human relations for the church, nations, families and individuals. The conventional wisdom of “redemptive violence” is not good enough for “the day of the Lord.”

“Conversion from weapons of violence to instruments of nutrition and peace is an advent call of Christ in our personal as well as in our public lives. It is a call for conversion from the Domination System to the Jesus System.

Domination System:

- 1) Maintains power and control over others.
- 2) Seeks wealth as necessary to maintain the power to dominate others.
- 3) Believes in redemptive violence--violence to achieve its goals and to solve problems.
- 4) Sees self love as a high priority, love for others as a low priority.
- 5) Cultivates relationships with the rich and the powerful.
- 6) Believes repaying evil with evil when deemed necessary.
- 7) Is pervasive in the world of Europe, the Middle East and the Americas.
- 8) The Domination System is maintained by violence.

The Jesus System:

- 1) Relinquishes power except to serve, heal, and help others.
- 2) Diminishes the need and desire for wealth and power.
- 3) Shares power with others rather than dominate them.
- 4) Encourages love for others as well as self.
- 5) Cultivates and serves the powerless.
- 6) Replaces evil with good.
- 7) The Jesus System is a relatively rare but increasingly necessary antidote to the “Domination System” and violence.

Appendix A Series “*A Spirituality of Nonviolence*”

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Justice for the poor and nonviolence

Isaiah 11: 1-10	"he shall judge the poor with justice," "Then the wolf shall be the guest of the lamb,"
Psalms 72	Justice and peace
Romans 15:4-9	Live in harmony with one another
Matthew 3:1-12	"The reign of God is at hand." "Prepare the way of the Lord..."

"As King he claims dominion over all creation, that he may present to you, his almighty Father, an eternal and universal kingdom: a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace." (Preface of Christ the King).

This Sunday continues the peace/nonviolence theme of last Sunday and adds an emphasis on justice. Bringing together both themes, (peace and justice) shows the connectedness of the two themes. Injustice is a form and source of violence. Note how these themes are brought together in Psalm 72 in today's responsorial psalm.

Isaiah's poetic expression about the animals that are natural enemies is a strong metaphor for nonviolent human relations. This nonviolence is an intended result of the Messianic age. This theme is continued in the second reading from Paul's Letter to the Romans when he writes, "May God...enable you to live in perfect harmony with one another according to the spirit of Christ Jesus..." In this same reading from Romans, Paul pleads with us to accept one another as Christ has accepted us. This is a plea for us to practice unconditional love for one another, a love that demands just and nonviolent treatment of people.

The Gospel reading from Matthew reminds us "...the reign of God is at hand." The promised Messiah came among us to proclaim this reign of God as a spiritual force.

We might apply the above Advent reflections to current problems of injustice and violence such as racism, poverty, war, abortion, inadequate health care policies, domestic abuse and violence, and environmental pollution and destruction.

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

The handicapped: *anawim* (Hebrew word for the powerless ones, the little ones, the vulnerable ones)

Isaiah 35:1-6, 10

Psalms 146

Matthew 11:2-11

The handicapped – blind, deaf, lame.

Justice for the oppressed, the hungry, the captives the blind, the stranger.

ANAWIM will be the highest priority of the Messiah.

Go and report to John.

At a festive time of the year, with preparation for Christmas in full swing, especially by those who can afford affluent shopping and consumption, we are reminded firmly by Christ that his birthday is a time for justice and compassion for the little people who are not really invited to the American Christmas party. In St. Luke's Gospel, 14:12-14, Jesus tells us whom to invite to the celebration, the poor, the blind, the lame and the crippled.

It is not difficult to infer that love and justice for the under-privileged is a necessary condition for the authentic celebration of this festival for us who are affluent and privileged. In today's Gospel, Jesus offers his attitude toward, and service to, the *anawim*, the blind, the crippled, the leper, and the deaf, as indication that He is the Promised One.

This situation is not at all hopeless. Many people, families and groups, including whole parishes, are drastically changing their Advent-Christmas Season to a genuinely Gospel-Messiah based celebration, and are actually happier than they were when trapped in the compulsive consumption rituals of the past.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Who is the Messiah?

Reverence for Life

Isaiah 7:10-14

Matthew 1:18-24

Conception and birth of Immanuel

Conception and birth of Jesus

"Who is He?"

"Life in the Womb"

"WHO IS HE?"

"He was in the world and through him the world was made, yet the world did not know who he was." John 1:10

Our American way of Advent and Christmas indicates that we are still confused about who He is. Advent, a time of waiting, watching and hoping, is the celebration of the first coming of the vulnerable Servant-Messiah, and the expectation of His second coming as Lord to bring His Kingdom to completion.

Who is He? John's disciples asked the same question:

"Are you 'he who is to come' or are we to expect someone else?"... Jesus gave this response: "Go and report to John what you have seen and heard. The blind recover their sight, cripples walk, lepers are cured, the deaf hear, dead men are raised to life, and the poor have the good news preached to them." Luke 7:20-23

Care for the *anawim* — that is His mission. The *anawim* are the powerless people, "the least brothers" and sisters, the sick, the handicapped, the children, the "orphans and widows and aliens," the poor and the sinners. These are the first concern of the Messiah.*

Earlier in Luke's Gospel Jesus clearly identified Himself with the "anointed one" of Isaiah and He again designates His mission as a ministry especially to the *anawim*. Quoting Isaiah Jesus says:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; therefore he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and release prisoners, to announce a year of favor from the Lord... Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing." Luke 4:18-21

In our Advent-Christmas observance it is easy to lose track of the real Messiah and His priority concerns. If we sentimentally concentrate too much on the cute infant in the manger we forget that He came to serve, to liberate, to save. If we celebrate- -as most of us do- -only with our own comfortable friends and families, we lose sight of the *anawim*. If we lose sight of the real Christ and the *anawim* we miss the whole meaning of the first coming.

For the past fifty years we have had a campaign “to put Christ back into Christmas.” We have lost ground in this effort to re-Christianize Christmas because the slogan and the effort have missed an essential point. Christ never left Christmas; we did. To have Christ genuinely in our Christmases we have to put ourselves back into Christ and His concern for the *anawim* into our liturgies and lives- -into our Advent and Christmas. This calls for Gospel-conversion and not just changing the pictures and verses on the Christmas cards.

Advent-Christmas is the celebration of the Incarnation, of Emmanuel- -God with us. “The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us...” John 1:14

St. Paul grasped the meaning, the beauty, and the power of this mystery when he wrote of Christ:

“...He emptied himself and took the form of a slave, being born in the likeness of men... he humbled himself, obediently accepting even death, death on a cross...Jesus Christ is Lord.” Philippians 2:7, 8, 11

The “infant in the manger” image of Christ is comfortable and safe. The Cross, however, and the teachings of the adult Messiah are frightening and challenging. It is understandable that we prefer to remain locked into the manger scene rather than the Calvary theme. This is very possible to do if we do not understand the infancy narratives as theological previews of the adult mission of Jesus Christ, the Servant Lord, the suffering Savior.

*Hebrew for “anointed one;” Christos in Greek.

LIFE IN THE WOMB

The Bible is quite articulate about life in the womb. Without making an issue of womb life as human life, the Bible does assume personhood for life in the womb.

The womb is a strong theme and symbol in the Bible. The very season of Advent is a womb-season, a time of waiting for the “Fullness of time” when Life for the world is brought forth.

When the Angel Gabriel announced to Zechariah (father of John the Baptizer) that his wife Elizabeth would conceive a son in her old age, the Angel said “he will be filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother’s womb.” (Luke 1:15). Then the same Messenger from God told Mary that she would also “conceive a son.” Mary immediately went to visit Elizabeth, her relative.

When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, “Most Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to Me?” Luke 1: 41-43

In Sacred Scripture there is an awareness of the womb as a place and symbol of God’s providential design and care for his people. The significance of the womb as expressed in the first Chapter of Luke can also be found in the Old Testament. In the call of Jeremiah the “word of the Lord” is stated this way:

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you, a prophet to the nation I appointed you.” (Jeremiah 1:5)

In Psalm 139 the psalmist is overwhelmed by his realization of God’s personal care in the human person’s creation and development.

“Truly you have formed my inmost being; you knit me in my mother’s womb. I give you thanks that I am fearfully, wonderfully made; wonderful are your works.” (Psalm 139: 13-14)

This same theme is also found in Psalm 22, vs. 10-11.

Furthermore, according to Dr. Phyllis Tribble, a feminist protestant scripture scholar, a deeply held belief through the Old Testament is the idea that “the womb

belongs to God;" "it is God who opens and closes the womb." Indeed, the Hebrew word for womb becomes the word for "merciful compassion" in Hebrew usage. The biblical thought-pattern moves from a unique "female organ to a mode of being: self-less participation in life." (From a lecture by Dr. Tribble at Concordia College).

It seems to me that Sacred Scripture consistently assumes human personhood for the living being in the womb- - a being filled with the Holy Spirit, called and dedicated before birth.

Scripture also not only assumes, but also states that neither woman nor any man has the right to control her or his own body. Not only does the womb belong to God, but also the whole person is God's. (cf. Romans 14: 7-8 and 1Cor. 19-20)

When we recall that the Hebrew word for "womb" came to also mean "merciful compassion," it is ironic and significant that today the womb is no longer a very safe place in which one might find security and compassion.

March 25 is the Festival of the Annunciation celebrating the appearance of the Angel Gabriel to Mary informing her that she would become the Mother of Jesus. The Church has assumed for centuries that Jesus was conceived at the time of Gabriel's appearance to Mary. In other words, the Church assumes that the Incarnation- -God becoming human in Jesus- -was at conception, not at the birth of Jesus.

EPIPHANY

Peace – Nonviolence – Equality

Isaiah 60: 1-6	Darkness and light
Psalms 72	Justice and peace
Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6	Equality: Racism is sin.
Matthew 2:1-12	Conflict and violence
Optional Theme:	<i>“Crib and the Cross”</i>

The manger/crib held the body of the infant Savior; the Calvary Cross held the body of the Savior, Lord, in the fulfillment of the Christmas mystery.

The crib and the cross were made of humble wood but they held the Lord of the universe. We also hold the Lord in us if our hearts are humble.

* * * * *

This festival is a manifestation of Emmanuel, God with us, in Jesus--a manifestation to the Gentiles, and to the whole world. Epiphany shows God's inclusive interest in all peoples and nations. This is a good time to point out the unity of all people as one human family. It is an appropriate day to proclaim the evil of prejudice and the "terrible sin" of racism.

* * * * *

In Psalm 72, we pray the great Messianic Psalm for a just peace through the whole world with a special remembrance of the "oppressed," the lowly and the poor in the Messianic Reign.

THE CRIB AND THE CROSS

"The angel said to Joseph, 'Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt...Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him.'" Matthew 2:13

The threat to the life of Jesus by Herod and the power establishment, and the exile in Egypt while He was still a crib infant are previews of the later rejection of Jesus summarized in the experience of the cross.

Given a world in which human power is an obsession, greed is rampant and violence too often prevails, the message of the Crib and the Cross is the only wisdom that can cut through the vicious circle of injustice and violence in our world. This is the absurd message: that the Son of God relinquishes all power except the power to heal,

serve and save. No wonder Jesus was and is considered absurd by a world that worships wealth and seeks power by any and all means.

“The foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.” 1 Corinthians 1:25

This is the life-giving, liberating paradox of the Crib and the Cross. It is difficult to understand and appreciate this paradox, this absurd kind of wisdom except in story form.

In the Book of Exodus, it was the weak and powerless Israel that prevailed over powerful Egypt- -by the wisdom and power of God.

It was the weakened and stripped Job who prevailed over the power of Satan through faithfulness to YAHWEH.

It was John the Baptist, an absurd figure in the desert who prevailed, in the long run, over King Herod. Herod's kingdom is long gone while the reign of God, which Christ proclaimed, whose way John prepared, is still alive.

It was the martyrs of ancient Rome who prevailed over the power of the Empire. The church rose over the ashes of the Empire.

It was Francis of Assisi who divested himself of position and wealth and prevailed over the greed and power of a 13th century society- - by the foolishness of the Gospel.

It was a Maximilian Kolbe who, though as an apparently powerless Nazi Concentration Camp prisoner, prevailed over the arrogant, racist power of the Nazis to bring new life to others through going down into the pit of death with Christ.

It was Mahatma Gandhi, a Hindu, but one who knew and believed in Christ crucified, who prevailed in India over the powerful British Colonial Empire.

It was Jesus, Son of God, born in a barn and executed on the cross, who retained only the power to serve, heal, suffer and die- - who will prevail overall the kingdoms of this world.

“We speak God's wisdom, mysterious, hidden...which none of the rulers of this age know...” 1 Corinthians 2:7-8

Would that the brokers of power in government, church, and other segments of human society in today's world had a deep appreciation of the absurdity of the “Crib and

the Cross,” the wisdom of the foolish, the strength of the weak, and the foolishness of the Gospel. We would have a much less greedy and less violent world.

The Kingdom that Christ proclaimed is a Kingdom of the “foolish” and the “weak”-
-a Kingdom of the powerless.

“God chose the foolish of this world to shame the wise and
God chose the weak of this world to shame the strong, and
God chose the lowly and despised of this world, those who
count for nothing to reduce to nothing those who are
something.” 1 Corinthians 1:27-28

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Anawim

Zephaniah 2:3; 3:12-13	<i>Anawim</i> : humble and lowly
Psalm 146	Justice for the oppressed <i>anawim</i>
1 Corinthians 1:26 – 31	<i>Anawim</i> are powerless ones
Matthew 5:1-12	The Beatitudes

(Appropriate also for Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time, Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time and Thirty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time or any Sunday or Weekday when Matthew 5:1-12 is read.)

Optional Theme: The Beatitudes

Anawim are the powerless ones. In the Jewish scriptures they are usually listed as orphans, widows, and strangers. In the Christian scriptures, especially in the Gospels, they are listed variously, but include the poor, the sick, the blind, the lame and crippled, the women and children, the hungry, thirsty, naked, prisoners, captives and other outcasts - - the powerless ones.

The *anawim* are Jesus' highest priority in His ministry as Messiah (cf Luke 4:16-21; 7:18-23). Jesus expresses a "preferential option" for the *anawim*. I would conclude that Jesus expects the church to maintain the same priority, realizing that we, the people, are the church.

At the present time, and during much of the church's history, the *anawim* have not been the church's main ministry priority. Exceptions today are inner city and reservation parishes where funds are insufficient for the needs. Parishes with adequate incomes seldom share more than token gifts to poverty areas, locally and in the Third World.

The Beatitudes make up Jesus' charter for the reign of God that He proclaimed. The Beatitudes are mostly concerned for *anawim*: the poor in spirit, the hungry, the lowly, the sorrowful, and the persecuted.

The Beatitudes are an excellent outline for personal spiritual growth and action.

Every parish, to be truly Catholic, must have some plan and structure for caring for *anawim* such as hungry, homeless, sick, and imprisoned people in our church, neighborhood and in the Third World. It would be good for each diocese and parish to include concern for the most vulnerable of people in parish mission statements.

Optional Theme: The Beatitudes

The Reign of God

Blest are the poor in Spirit; the Reign of God is theirs.
Blest are the sorrowing; they shall be consoled.
Blest are the lowly; they shall inherit the land.
Blest are they who hunger and thirst for holiness; they shall have their fill.
Blest are they who show mercy; mercy shall be theirs.
Blest are the single-hearted; for they shall see God.
Blest are the peacemakers; they shall be called children of God
Blest are those persecuted for holiness sake; the Reign of God is theirs.

The Kingdoms of This World

Blest are the wealthy; they are celebrated and envied.
Blest are the comfortable; they have security.
Blest are those who have prestige and position; they will succeed.
Blest are the full and satisfied; they have the good life now.
Blest are they who can dominate others; they need no mercy.
Blest are those who compromise the truth; for they shall get ahead.
Blest are the violent; they shall rule and get their way.
Blest are the powerful; they shall not be persecuted.

The Beatitudes — A Powerful Prescription for Nonviolence

Matthew 5:1-12

The human need to dominate people and the environment is a major source of personal, social and political violence in our world. The Beatitudes are a powerful antidote to the passion for domination and, hence, a prescription for nonviolence. We will look at relinquishing of power and living nonviolently through the prism of the Beatitudes.

BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT

The poor in spirit are the “*anawim*,” the powerless ones. They are fortunate because they are favored by God. The poor do not have the power to dominate others; the poor

in spirit do not even have the desire to exercise power over others. Hence, the poor in spirit are relatively free of violent behavior.

BLESSED ARE THEY WHO MOURN

Those who mourn have experienced human vulnerability; they are in solidarity with others who know sorrow, or loss, or weakness, or sickness in their lives. Those who mourn are more likely to be in a compassionate relationship with others rather than a dominating, controlling relationship. Those who are compassionate seldom hurt others because they understand the dehumanizing hurt of being dominated- -violated.

BLESSED ARE THE MEEK

The meek are those who tend to be gentle, without addiction to power-seeking. Meek persons (sometimes called lowly or humble) are like St. Francis of Assisi, very nonviolent, very reverencing of all life and creation. But make no mistake about meekness; the meek are not weak. Outstanding courage and strength are definitely characteristic of persons like St. Francis, and especially Jesus, who spoke of himself as “meek and humble of heart.” To live meekly in a very violent culture such as ours takes a great deal of courage and strength.

BLESSED ARE THEY WHO HUNGER AND THIRST FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

Righteousness means a right relationship with God and people. The Hebrew word for righteousness is *sedaqah*. This word, having broad connotations, is often translated as justice, including what today we call social justice. Hungry and thirsty for righteousness/justice is a consuming desire for the welfare of people, especially for people who are mistreated or suffering- -for the orphans, widows and strangers in the Hebrew scriptures and for the poor, the sick, the children, the blind, the lame and outcasts in the Christian scriptures. As is true of mourning, so also with this desire for righteousness/justice, compassion is a strong underlying force in this spiritual hungering and thirsting. A driving concern for people in the name of God is a far cry from a self-serving domination of other people- -a far cry from violent behavior.

BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL

Mercy is the outgoing action of an inner attitude of compassion. Mercy is a hallmark of divinity — a distinguishing attribute of God. A forgiving heart is an eminently important quality of a merciful person. Mercy seeks the good of other persons, rather

than the control of others, especially when another is not particularly deserving of merciful treatment. Mercy always avoids dominating others. Mercy, is an important part of the way to nonviolence.

BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART

The pure in heart are those who are focused on Christ and the Kingdom of God. Their personal integrity is a high priority that protects the pure in heart person from becoming distracted by questionable or selfish motivation that might turn a person away from a just, living nonviolent life.

BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS

This is the Beatitude most directly involved with nonviolence. I prefer the word “nonviolence” to the word “peace.” In our culture, most people want “peace.” However, most are not willing to pay the price of peace by developing a nonviolent value system and way of life. From the perspective of the New Testament, the term “nonviolence” could usually be substituted for the word “peace.” Jesus taught nonviolence and lived it even to his death. Peace-making is nonviolence-making, reconciliation-making and power-relinquishing, especially power for control and self-aggrandizement.

After Jesus, Francis of Assisi is THE peacemaker. His famous prayer is a prayer for the attitudes and virtues that form a spiritual and psychological foundation for a nonviolent power-relinquishing way of life. Francis himself exemplified the Beatitudes in his own spiritual life; he was especially poor in spirit, meek, hungry for justice, thirsty for righteousness, mercifully pure in heart, and dedicated to nonviolence and peace-making.

A spirituality of the Beatitudes is a genuine and consistent effort to disarm oneself of the psychological weapons that continually cause violence in a culture of violence. The weapons that I have in mind are particularly the need to dominate, anger, fear, greed and racial hostility.

We do remember that nonviolence is social and political, but it “begins with me.”

A Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace,
Where there is hatred, let me sow love.
Where there is injury, pardon,
Where there is doubt, faith,
Where there is despair, hope,
Where there is darkness, light,
And where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be
consoled, as to console.

To be understood, as to understand;
To be loved, as to love;
For it is in giving that we receive,
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

BLESSED ARE THEY WHO ARE PERSECUTED FOR THE SAKE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

As I mentioned previously, Jesus taught and lived nonviolence. For this he paid a great price. The nonviolent behavior of Jesus is of even greater importance than his teachings about nonviolence since actions speak louder than words and because his preaching was an articulation of what He lived.

In His passion, He was treated most violently. His nonviolent response was silence, forgiveness, love, and the acceptance of death, rather than the use of retaliatory power to harm His violators. In short, He lived a nonviolent, suffering love. He willingly accepted death in His commitment to His Father's will. If He had "put down" His "enemies" whom He loved and forgave, it is not likely that the Centurion would have been able to say: "Indeed this was an innocent man! Indeed this was the Son of God!"; nor would the people who came to see a spectacle have returned home beating their breasts with no sense of victory. Jesus was the Messiah-King, the Son of God. He was co-creator with the Father, he was Lord of the Universe. He allowed His creatures to insult him and to destroy His human life rather than use His power in violent human behavior- -even in self-defense. For us, of course, it would take a good deal of faith and love to accept a violent death lovingly and forgivingly. Others have chosen the same course for the same reason, as did the martyrs, both ancient and modern. Jesus, the infant in the manger and the Savior on the cross allowed Himself to be completely

nonviolently vulnerable for our healing and liberation. Jesus certainly suffered persecution for the sake of righteousness.

Prophets have always been “persecuted for the sake of righteousness. Prophecy is not mainly concerned with foretelling the future. Prophecy means confronting a community, especially the leaders of a community with unfaithfulness to a covenant with God. In short, prophecy is “speaking the truth to power”- -the truth of God’s righteousness.

And who are the modern prophets? All people who are baptized and confirmed are called to be prophets. In the Baptism ritual, the baptized person is anointed with chrism with these accompanying words:

“He (God) now anoints you with the chrism of salvation. As Christ was anointed, Priest, Prophet and King, so may you live always as a member of his body, sharing everlasting life.”

In the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity (Vatican II), the church makes the baptismal anointing more specific, stating that the unique calling of lay people is to bring the Gospel to the world outside the church, to the marketplace and to the world of politics, business, education, and indeed, to the whole world of secular life. This is all a part of the calling to be prophets in the modern world.

Prophecy is the dangerous dimension of the Baptism/Confirmation calling. Prophecy today is a dangerous vocation as it has always been. Persecution of prophets is still usually an earmark of prophecy. The prophet needs the gift of courage, one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Worship and Justice

(Same theme as the Friday after Ash Wednesday)

Isaiah 58:7-10

(The whole chapter of Isaiah gives a more complete understanding of this theme)

Important points and principles

Optional Theme: Biblical Passages on Worship and
 justice

- 1) “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...”
 Justice in the World, 1971 Synod of Bishops
- 2) Living justly is an essential condition of worshipping authentically.
- 3) As long as there are people without the necessities of life, and insofar as I can relieve their misery and do not, I remain unreconciled with my brothers and sisters. Communicants need to be in the process of reconciliation. (Matthew 5:23-24)
- 4) “Do this in remembrance of me” means more than ritualizing the Eucharist; it also means living the Eucharist by doing justice.”
- 5) Receiving Holy Communion implies the acceptance of the Body of Christ, the people, the members of His Body, as well as the sacramentally present Christ.
- 6) Unless the cries of the oppressed are heard in our liturgies, Christ is not effectively present to the participants. This is not a denial of sacramental real presence. This is a statement that people who attend Eucharistic liturgies may not be in an open and faithful relationship with Christ.
- 7) In the U.S. one of the ironies of our worship is that the “least brothers and sisters” are usually neither present nor remembered.
- 8) It is more the rule than the exception that our liturgical celebrations are a psychological comfort for our relatively comfortable participants, rather than a Gospel challenge for our people.
- 9) “The Eucharist...has seldom forced us to question our assumptions. Instead of official worship calling everyone to a new

freedom in Christ, it has been brought into a weak and anemic supporting role only reinforcing the status quo.” Bernier, *Bread Broken and Shared*. Ave Marie Press, 1981.

- 10) “Prayer changes our frame of reference; it is...a potent political weapon to be used in spiritual warfare against the most powerful forces in the world. Prayer is not undertaken in place of other actions; it is the foundation of all the other actions we take.” Wallis, Jim, *Call to Conversion*. Harper & Row, 1981

WORSHIP AND JUSTICE

AMOS	2:6-8	Exploitation and profanation
	4:1-2	Cows of Bashan
	5:7-13	Corrupt officials
	6:3-7	Exploitative lifestyle
	8:4-7	Greed
	5:21-24	Hypocritical worship
	4:4-5	Hypocritical worship
ISAIAH	1:20-26	Violence and injustice
	3:13-26	Arrogant luxury
	5:8-13	Agricultural injustice
	10:1-4	More injustice
	1:10-18	Hypocritical worship
	58:3-10	Hypocritical worship
MATTHEW	5:23-24	Eucharist and Reconciliation
JOHN	13:1-7	Eucharist and Reconciliation
1 CORINTHIANS		
	11:17-34	Phony worship
	10:14-22	Purpose of Eucharist
JAMES	1:26-27	Orphans, widows, and worship

GOOD FRIDAY

The Cross and nonviolence

Isaiah 52:13-53:12	Nonviolent Suffering Servant
John 18:1-19:42	The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ
	The Cross and nonviolence
Optional Theme:	<i>"The Way of the Cross and a Consumerism Society"</i>
Optional Theme:	<i>"The Way of the Cross and Compassion"</i>
Appendix B Series "Compassion"	

Jesus is the Suffering Servant who responds to terrible, dehumanizing violence with love, forgiveness, and nonviolence. The Cross, THE symbol of unjust violence against Jesus, becomes THE symbol of Jesus' nonviolent love for all.

The darkness that was over the land on Good Friday afternoon is still over the land today. The triumph of the cross is like the reign of God. Both are in the process of developing and both will come to perfection only in the fulfillment of time, in the second coming of Christ.

In the meantime, darkness rests on the earth as long as people continue to be crucified. Christ is being crucified today as long as children die of starvation, as long as racist power oppresses people of color, as long as the environment is being destroyed, and as long as fetuses are aborted, criminals executed and the poor are denied adequate health care and as long as people receive inadequate wages, especially in an unjust minimum wage scale, and as long as people are killed in wars, most of which are unnecessary.

Our work, our ministry, our spirituality is to stand with those who are being crucified, with Mary and John and other women. We do not only stand with them at the cross, but we are called to do all we can to change the unjust system so contaminated with apathy, greed and the desire for power.

THE WAY OF THE CROSS AND A CONSUMERISM SOCIETY

When Jesus reached the top of the garbage dump called Calvary, where the dust is stained with dry blood from past executions and where the soil will soon be dampened with Jesus' blood, the soldiers stripped him of His last possessions—his clothes. Well, no, Jesus still owned those clothes because he still owned the earth and the universe. In fact, he owned the people who stripped and humiliated him. I remember what St. Paul said: "you (people) are not your own. You have been purchased at a great price." This is a great mystery, a mind-boggling mystery, that the Lord would so empty himself so that we might become rich in spiritual treasure.

Clothing, one of the necessities of life is also used as a conspicuous consumerism symbol of a successful economic lifestyle along with special kinds of food, housing, transportation, recreation, jewelry and others.

A lifestyle of consumerism is a part of the U. S. greed scene. In a consumerism society, people judge the value of a person by wealth and by what wealth can buy.

Jesus' emptying himself to be stripped of all material wealth was one of his ways to impress us about the spiritual danger of dollar addiction and about the seriousness of his teachings about a Gospel lifestyle, of letting go, and of using one's wealth as a service to others, especially to those who lack the necessities of life.

"For you know the gracious act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that for your sake he became poor although he was rich, so that by his poverty you might become rich." (2 Corinthians 8:9)

I believe that the desire for wealth is the greatest single hindrance to spiritual and nonviolent growth of people in the United States. Consumerism is becoming a globalized form of violence, a violence seen as necessary to maintain a highly selfish lifestyle. This kind of lifestyle tends to widen the gap between the wealthy and those living in poverty. Rev. James Forbes of Riverside Church in New York calls poverty a weapon of mass destruction. Indeed, lifestyles of high consumerism are probably a major cause of other forms of malicious violence including war and terrorism. It was St. Paul who wrote, "the love of money is the root of all evil." Jesus taught us a great truth when he allowed himself to be stripped of his last material possession in the eighth station on his way to the cross.

“Indeed, religion with contentment is a great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, just as we shall not be able to take anything out of it. If we have food and clothing, we shall be content with that. Those who want to be rich are falling into temptation and into a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge them into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all evils...” (1 Timothy 6:6-10)

Jesus, this world has never known your kind of generosity, this kind of love. Jesus, we become so possessive of material wealth and “stuff” that we begin to believe that we earned it and own it and think that we may use our wealth and stuff as we please. How wrong can we become? How do you put up with our stupidity and selfishness? You keep loving us and forgiving us as you forgave those who crucified you.

Lord Jesus, you recommended that people should sell what they have and give it to the poor. Some of your Saints reminded people that one’s abundant surplus belongs to those who lack the necessities of life. Many of us are gluttoned with stuff, so much stuff that we are burying ourselves under the garbage that too much stuff produces. Help us to Gospelize our lifestyles for our own spiritual good and for the good of the “anawim”—the poor—who lack what they need for a dignified life. Help us to live the Way of the Cross seriously. Help us to live nonviolently, lest our lifestyle should bring the violence of poverty on others.

THE WAY OF THE CROSS AND COMPASSION

Compassion characterized the heart of Jesus on his Way of the Cross. In the Third Station Jesus Meets his Mother, Mary. Both were in an agony of compassion. Each wanted to console the other. Words did not come easily but the silent tears of Mary spoke the depth of her love. She wanted to take him into her arms as she often did in his infancy and young life but she could not with the crowd and Jesus' cross blocking the way. Jesus' eyes spoke his silent compassion for his mother's anguish. They both longed to do something to ease the pain, but they could only silently be present to each other. We also try to ease the suffering of one another in our lives, but usually we are helpless to do very much. But a compassionate person speaks loudly and clearly by expressing the loving compassion by word or action. Sometimes just being with a person is an act of compassion.

As Jesus continues on his Way of the Cross, he meets others who cannot do much to relieve his suffering. Simon at least makes the cross lighter, and Veronica in her own suffering with Jesus lifts the veil from her head and tries to wipe away the spittle, blood and dirt from his face. This act in public took courage. She was also probably ridiculed for being helpful to a "criminal." She no longer felt the fear and the ridicule. "Love drives out fear." There is no room for fear in the heart of a compassionate person, one who suffers and shares deeply the suffering of one who is suffering despair.

When Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem and their children who are crying to see this friend so treated, Jesus responds by comforting the women and children. When we are filled up with our own pain, it is difficult for us to reach out in compassion and comfort others. Jesus so reached out beyond his own fatigue and pain to comfort, encourage and give hope to others. Compassion is an awesome gift filled with power to heal and help. Compassion helps us find the strength and maturity to keep on reaching to others to restore justice in our world. The human touch of a loving person is a powerful expression. Compassion can keep people "going" to do justice in spite of fatigue and discouragement. Twelve times in the Gospels the writers tell us that Jesus "was moved with compassion" in the face of sickness and injustice and suffering.

Lord Jesus, give me humble and compassionate faith- -a compassionate heart so that I will have the strength and vision to be "moved with compassion," to bring about a nonviolent world, a world of injustice and life in the face of a "culture of death."

SECOND SUNDAY OF THE EASTER SEASON - MERCY OF GOD SUNDAY

Appendix B

“Compassion”

Part I *“God is Compassionate,”* or

Part III *“Elder Son and Compassionate Father”*

PENTECOST

Justice and peace

Vigil:

Ezekiel 37:1-14

The dry bones vision can be symbolic of the violence and “death culture” of today—symbolic of about any form of violence one would choose to preach about.

Psalms 104

All God’s Creation

Sunday:

Acts 2:1-11 and

1 Corinthians 12:3-7, 12-13 Considering the 15 nations included in “every nation under heaven” and considering the unity of the Body of Christ, we have an opening not only to unity in general but also a reminder of the decisive evil of racism, classism and sexism.

Day:

Psalms 104

All God’s Creation

John 20:19-23

The gospel opens up themes related to peace/shalom, themes such as war, nonviolence, love and service to others. The forgiveness theme is a foundation for nonviolence and reconciliation.

All the Pentecost readings deal with power, the power of the Spirit, the power of life and of death, the power of the Spirit over all the forces of evil, sin, injustice and violence and power to help, to free, or to save.

SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Life and death – Consistent ethic of life

Sirach 15:15-20	Life and death
Psalms 119	Law of the Lord
1 Corinthians 2:6-10	Mature spirituality- -not the wisdom of this age
Matthew 5:21	You shall not kill <i>"Life in the Womb"</i> (See Fourth Sunday of Advent)

Pope John Paul II writes of our age as a "culture of death." Jesus' proclamation of this reign of God is a plan for a culture of life.

In their pastoral letter, "Economic Justice For All," our U.S. bishops wrote:

"Human personhood must be respected with a reverence that is religious. When we deal with each other we should do so with the sense of awe that arises in the presence of something holy and sacred."

The different forms of violence are interrelated and are forming a perceptible pattern. The most significant forms are abortion, poverty, hunger, war, and racism. The pattern interwoven in all the various expressions of violence include:

- 1) Depersonalizing and hence de-valuing of life; (e.g., cutting human service budgets in order to expand military budgets, some welfare policies and the sin of sexism);
- 2) Institutionalizing (legalizing) of violence; (e.g. abortion, arms race, and inadequate welfare aid for children);
- 3) Maximizing of profits — personal and corporate greed; (e.g., saving welfare money through abortion, and the violation of human rights in foreign countries to protect U.S. based corporations, and balancing national and state budgets on the backs of poor people by cutting human services);
- 4) Denial of personal and corporate responsibility (e.g. misuse of tax money for institutionalized forms of violence);
- 5) Euphemizing of the language of violence (e.g., "termination of pregnancy," and calling war "low intensity" conflicts);
- 6) Seeking instant solutions- -quick fixes for complex human problems;

- 7) Seeking a hedonistic way of life that necessarily excludes the way and meaning of the cross.

Our age needs consistency in an ethic of nonviolence. To decide to be nonviolent in one expression of violence and not in another is to misunderstand the meaning and the viciousness of violence against human beings.

SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Nonviolence

Leviticus 19:1-2, 17-18	Hatred, revenge, forgive, love
1 Corinthians 3:16-23	Reverence for life – Temple of God
Matthew 5:38-48	Nonviolence – love your enemy
Optional Theme:	Beatitudes

(Also appropriate on the Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time or the Thirty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary time. The Beatitudes readings are also appropriate any Sunday or weekday when Matthew 5:1-12 is read.)

Appendix A Series “Compassion”

All four readings are concerned with essentially related themes of hatred and revenge, forgiveness and love, money and compassion, love for enemies- -all in the theme of loving nonviolence.

Compassion is the personal virtue that motivates justice and nonviolence. Forgiveness is a necessary prerequisite for nonviolence. Realizing that we are temples of God helps us realize our dignity and that of all people and helps us to have reverence for people — others and ourselves.

These coalescing interdependent qualities make up what is called a “consistent ethic of life,” a consistent virtue of nonviolence.

Overcoming anger, hatred, hostility, and the temptation to revenge, demands forgiveness. Forgiveness frees both the forgiver and the forgiven. Forgiving is a process that takes time and includes prayer for self and the persons we wish to forgive, and usually some reconciling action. Forgiving is an act of loving.

The reading from 1 Corinthians, reminds us of God’s presence in each person, and is an important spiritual antidote to the disease of prejudice and racism, both of which are forms of violence.

EIGHTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

God and money

Matthew 6:24-34	God and money "Look at the birds in the sky"
Optional Theme	Economic Lifestyle
Isaiah 49:14-15	Trust in God's love
Psalms 62	Trust God's love for our needs and security
Matthew 6:24-34	Trust God, not economic security. Trust in self and wealth leads to greed and, hence, to economic injustice.
Appendix C Series <i>"Money and Power"</i>	

After speaking to His disciples about "God and money," Jesus, in the rest of this Gospel reading, goes on to emphasize the real and meaningful priorities in the context of trusting in God rather than in money.

Wealth is addictive because wealth supports a self-satisfying lifestyle, power over others, and personal independence. Money is necessary for a decent living and money is a good thing when used for the welfare of the people, self and others, but is always dangerous because the possession of wealth makes a person so vulnerable to selfishness- -to GREED.

Wealth is the highest value-priority in western society. Money has superseded other values such as truth, honesty, love, and, at times, even life itself.

Money, because it gives power to dominate others, is one of the main sources of violence. Violence is perceived as necessary to defend the security of one's holdings and power. Wealth is also perceived as necessary to rise out of poverty and powerlessness. The temptation to use dishonest means and even violence to escape poverty and powerlessness is a very real temptation and a source of criminal behavior.

St. Paul was quite astute when he wrote:

"There is of course, great gain in religion- -provided one is content with a sufficiency. We brought nothing into this world, nor have we the power to take anything out. If we have food and clothing we have all that we need. Those who want to be rich are falling into temptation and a trap. They are letting themselves be captured by foolish and harmful ruin and destruction." (1 Timothy 6:6-9)

IN GOD WE TRUST — This is the final text from my dollar bill now facing me. Yes, but which God do we trust? Idolatry is a subtle and slippery entity. Do we trust in the eternal, creating, saving God of the great world of faiths or do we place our trust in the metal gods of our weaponry, the gold and silver gods of our money, or the national God of U.S. - -security and power, protected by the lesser gods of metal and money?

Optional Theme:

Economic Lifestyle

Isaiah 49:14-15	Trust in God's love
Psalms 62	Trust God's love for our needs and security
Matthew 6:24-34	Trust God, not economic security. Trust in self and wealth leads to greed and, hence, to economic injustice. "You cannot serve two masters..." "You cannot give yourself to God and money."
Matthew 6:24	"...do not worry about your livelihood."
Matthew 6	"Seek first his reign over you..."
Other references:	
Luke 12:13-21	The rich fool farmer
Luke 18:18-23	The rich young man.

Statements and Quotes about Economic Lifestyle

- 1) Consuming stuff and increasing affluence in order to be able to belong to shopping mall society has become THE values system of American life.
- 2) The shopping mall has become the temple of worship for a large segment of our U.S. communities.
- 3) Celebrities—the rich and the famous—have become our heroes and a large part of our power structures.
- 4) Consuming and drug using are our escape routes from ennui, emptiness and meaninglessness.
- 5) Commercial TV is THE proclamation of the "good news" of consumerism. All ages are captivated by the message.
- 6) Some people kill to be able to consume.
- 7) When consumption becomes the meaning of life, we live in a culture of death.
- 8) The earth is being deeply wounded (pollution of water and air, destruction of forests, desertification, soil erosion, resource waste) by affluent living and human consumption.
- 9) Nations kill (war and exploitation) for oil, land, water and cheap raw materials to satisfy consumption needs.

TWELFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Value of Human Life and all Creation

The Poor - God's Kindness and Mercy

Jeremiah 49:3,5-69

Psalms 69

God's Mercy and the poor

Matthew 10:26-33

Value of the human person

Appendix B "*Compassion*" – (same suggested articles as the
Second Sunday of the Easter Season –
Mercy of God Sunday)

Part I, "*God is Compassionate,*" or

Part III, "*Elder Son and Compassionate Father*"

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

The Gospel of Matthew (A Gospel of nonviolence)

Zechariah 9:9-10	Peace - nonviolence
Psalms 145	God's kindness and compassion are the foundation for a nonviolent lifestyle
Matthew 11:25-30	A humble faith is the source of a nonviolent lifestyle. Jesus' example of meekness and humility are a challenge for our nonviolent lifestyle.
Mt. 5:1-12	Beatitudes
Mt. 5:21-24	Killing and anger
Mt 5:38-42	Non-retaliation
Mt. 5:43-46	Love enemies
Mt. 6:25-34	Self-interest and security
Mt. 15:17-20	Inner sources of violence
Mt. 16:24-25	Doctrine of the cross
Mt. 22:34-40	Love
Mt. 25:31-46	Last judgment
Mt. 26:51-53	The sword
Mt. 26:3-27	Passion and crucifixion

Epistles and Nonviolence

Rom. 12:7-21	"Never repay injury with injury"
1 Cor. 1:17-25	"Absurdity" of Gospel and Cross
1 Cor. 13:4-7	Love
Eph. 2:13-18	Reconciliation
Eph. 4:1-3	Unity and peace
Phil. 2:5-11	Suffering Servant
Col. 1:20-24	Hostility and reconciliation
Col. 3:12-15	Christ's peace
1 Pet. 2:20-22	Suffering Servant

Conclusions:

The Gospel According to Matthew Relating to Nonviolence

- 1) Jesus taught and lived nonviolence.
- 2) If we cannot conclude the above from the New Testament than we can know very little about Jesus.
- 3) Nonviolence is an essential dimension of the proclamation of the Gospel and Kingdom.
- 4) Gospel teachings on nonviolence are a consistent part of the broader Gospel presentation of Love (Agape).
- 5) The church, to be faithful to its evangelical mission, must proclaim nonviolence.
- 6) Personal violence is usually sin and hence requires repentance, conversion, and reconciliation.
- 7) Violence (e.g. war, economic oppression, sexist social structures, etc.) calls for change in public attitudes, political philosophy and societal structures. To abstain from social action is to condone violence by default.
- 8) The Doctrine of the Cross is the only adequate way for a Christian to cope with personal and social violence.
- 9) Jesus' teaching on nonviolence makes up the most practical plan for peace.

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Environmental issues – Land and Agriculture

Isaiah 55:10-11	"Making it fertile and fruitful,..."
Psalms 65:	Creation – Ecology – Fruitfulness
Romans 8:18-23	Earth suffers with the people as a result of sin — Cosmic Christ in creation
Matthew 13:1-23	Parable of the sower, seed and soil.
Optional Theme:	" <i>Renewing the Earth</i> " U.S. Bishops 1991

Appendix F Series "*Land and People*"

"The people of Israel were taught to make offerings of the fruit of the land to God and to leave unharvested grain in the fields for the poor to eat. They were taught to help the orphan, the widow, the dispossessed, remembering that they too had been sojourners who had wandered without a home. They were taught to respect and nurture the land itself by allowing it to lie fallow every seventh year. And, when they failed to live up to this ethic, their God would raise up prophets to call them back to justice. What does this biblical story tell us about our own stewardship of the land?

"The fact is that most of us know very little of the story of the land we live on, or of the contemporary demographic and economic activities that shape it. To begin to 'relocate' ourselves on the land, we must begin to identify some of the political, social, and environmental issues germane to this land. What would it mean to be faithful stewards of its human and non-human residents? The heart of a biblical land ethic is to love a particular place the way the Creator loves all of creation—to seek its well-being and that of the creatures this land sustains.

"The story of the land represents a spiritual as well as a political challenge. Today most of us find it difficult to answer questions about place: Where have I come from? Where am I now? Where do I belong? We are too busy living in a society in rapid flux to worry about where we stand. Our whole culture is uprooted and transient, made up of people moving quickly, abandoning one place for another. Our hearts are driven, wandering, ungrounded, cut off from a meaningful relationship with land. Many are never able to know the blessing of living on and with the land. Because we are estranged from the land, we are estranged from who God intended us to be.

“But Christian spirituality has as much to do with how we stand on the earth as how we experience heaven. It is crucial that we seek to re-establish a sense of groundedness, of place, of connection to a story of land. The person whose home was on the plains may experience life differently from one who grew up with mountains on the horizon; the world view of desert people is shaped differently from that of ocean people. Think about the land where you were born or where you grew up.”

Say to This Mountain. Ched Myers, Orbis Press, pp. 45-46.

Optional Theme:

“Renewing the Earth, U.S. Bishops, 1991

- 1) CRISIS AND WE: “Today the ecological crisis has assumed such proportions as to be the responsibility of everyone.” John Paul II. The Ecological Crisis, 1989.
- 2) INTERCONNECTED SYSTEMS: Air, water, soil and life make up interconnected systems. Human beings are inextricably embedded in the whole—even in orbit.
- 3) MORAL CRISIS: “Faced with the widespread destruction of the environment, people everywhere are coming to understand that we cannot continue to use the gifts of the earth as we have in the past...the ecological crisis is a moral issue. John Paul II, The Ecological Crisis, 1989.
- 4) A MORAL ISSUE — A CHURCH CONCERN: Environmental care and responsibility maintaining a sustainable earth — is not only a scientific and political issue, it is also a moral and, hence, religious issue. Facing this environmental crisis is a faith-in-God issue.
- 5) GOD OWNS THE EARTH
- 6) GOD’S DWELLING: The universe is God’s dwelling, God’s masterpiece.
- 7) DESECRATION: Environmental harm is desecration of what is sacred and an injustice to people.
- 8) DOMINATION: For centuries the people of our world have dominated one another and nature. Both forms of domination are forms of violence that harm people and nature.
DOMINATE/SUBJUGATE, VIOLATE/DESECRATE.
- 9) STEWARDS: “The Lord then took the man and settled him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate and care for it.” Genesis 2-15. We are God’s Stewards of the Earth.
- 10) MONEY/GREED: Money, profit, and greed make up the greatest single cause of environmental degradation and destruction.
- 11) CONSUMPTION AND POPULATION: Renewing the Earth, United States Catholic Conference, 1991, p.9: “In public discussions, two areas are particularly cited as requiring greater care and judgment on the part of human beings. The first is consumption of resources. The second is growth in population. More people seem ready to recognize that the industrialized world’s over-consumption has

contributed the largest share to the degradation of the global environment.

- 12) EARTH AND PRO-LIFE: Reverence for nature is a part of being pro-life. There is no human life without the earth and its environment, including diversity of species. The earth is like an organism. "Respect for life, and above all, for the dignity of the human person extends also to the rest of creation." John Paul II, The Ecological Crisis. 1989.
- 13) CONSISTENT NONVIOLENCE: Consistent nonviolence/consistent reverence for life must include all life and all environmental life supports; air, water, soil, sunlight, etc. "All Are Related."
- 14) OPTION FOR THE POOR: "The ecological problem is intimately connected to justice for the poor, the goods of the earth, which in the divine plan would be a common patrimony, often risk becoming the monopoly of a few who often spoil it and, sometimes destroy it, thereby creating a loss for all humanity." John Paul II, 1991.
- 15) CARE FOR THE EARTH: Caring for the earth is a necessary part of loving-caring for people, especially the economically marginalized people who suffer most from environmental pollution (air, water, toxic wastes, etc.)
- 16) COOPERATION: "We invite the Catholic community to join with us and others of good will in a continuing effort to understand and act on the moral and ethical dimensions of the environmental crisis: scientists, environmentalists, teachers and educators, parents, theologians, scripture scholars, ethicists, business leaders and representatives, members of our church, celebrants and liturgy committees, environmental advocates, policy makers and public officials, and citizens." Renewing The Earth, U. S. Bishops, 1991.

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Treasure

1 Kings 3-5

Solomon's treasure: wisdom, an understanding heart

Psalms 119

"The law of your mouth is to me more precious than thousands of gold and silver pieces...I love your commands."

Matthew 13:44-52

The reign of God is like a buried treasure.

Optional Theme: Reflection on Wealth

Appendix C Series *"Money and Power"*

(See Eighth Sunday In Ordinary Time)

Spiritual life is like a "vision quest" — a treasure hunt.

The story of Solomon's request: An understanding heart, wisdom.

Fool's gold: money, conspicuous consumption, power success, and celebrity popularity.

Luke 12: "Get purses for yourselves that do not wear out, a never failing treasure with the Lord...Wherever your treasure is, there your heart will be."

"Treasures that do not wear out": Jesus, life, love, family, friends, grace, peace, health, integrity, wisdom, open mind, faith, and a healthy environment.

Luke: "The Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head," -but the birds and foxes do. However, He owns the universe.

Share with one another what you consider your greatest treasure.

Life is a treasure-hunt.

**Optional Theme:
Reflection on Wealth**

1. It's not yours

Psalm 24, 50, 95, 100
Isaiah 5:8, 24:46
Jeremiah 12:14
Hosea 4:3
Cf Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

God and Money. Who owns the earth and all on it?

2. Share it or die

Luke 16:19-31	Lazarus and the Rich Man
Luke 19:8-9	Zacchaeus

Poverty is violence. Love for money kills. Share it and live

3. Wealth addiction is spiritually harmful

Luke 12:16-21	Rich Fool
Luke 18:18-23	Rich Man

4. Hoarding wealth rots the hoarder

Luke 18:24-25	Camels and needles
Exodus 16:19-21	Story of Manna

Greed is spiritual leprosy.

5. Wealth unshared renders relationship with Jesus impossible

Matthew 25:31-45

Relationship with Jesus demands love and service for the *ANAWIM*.

6. Apathy is evil

Matthew 25:31-45
Luke 16:19-31

"Apathy in the face of relievable human misery is radical evil." Charles McCarthy (tapes on nonviolence.)

7. Our treasures tell us much about ourselves

Luke 12:32-34
1 Timothy 6:6-10

One's attitude toward and use of money is best indication of a person's priorities and values.

8. "Love of Money is the root of all evil"

1 Timothy 6:6-10

Luke 16:13-14

"You can't serve two masters—God and Money"

9. Wealth is the highest value for many people.

Luke 12:15

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Food for the hungry and clean water for the thirsty

Isaiah 55:1-3

Food for the hungry

Psalms 145

Gratitude for God's gifts

Matthew 14, 13-21

"give them some food yourselves."

Instead of dealing only with food for the hungry, we will consider poverty in general among American children. After all, food is not the only problem for people living in poverty and "bread" may be considered as a symbol of all physical needs of people. The following information has been taken with permission from The State of America's Children 2004, published by the Children's Defense Fund, 25 East Street NW, Washington D.C. 20001:

- One in six children in the U.S. continue to live in poverty.
- More than 5.1 million children live in extremely low-income households spending at least half of their income on housing.
- One in eight children (9.3 million) have no health insurance.
- Three out of five children under six are cared for by someone other than their parents on a regular basis.
- 22,000,000 adults and 13,000,000 children live in households suffering from hunger or "food insecurity without hunger."
- The richest one-fifth of households made 10.7 times as much in median income as the poorest one-fifth, the widest gap on record from the U.S. Census Bureau.
- Infants born to Black mothers are more than twice as likely to die before their first birthday as infants born to White mothers.
- Almost 9,000,000 young people are overweight – over 15% of children and adolescents under age 19.
- An estimated three million children were reported as suspected victims of child abuse and neglect.
- Almost one in ten teens ages 16 to 19 is a school dropout.
- Eight children and teens die from gunfire in the U.S. each day – one child every three hours.

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Conformity to Injustice and violence

Romans 12:1-2

“do not conform yourselves to this age,
but be transformed.”

“Conformed”

CONFORMED

“Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed
by the renewal of your mind, so that you may judge what is
God’s will, what is good...” (Romans 12:2)

We, the church of “this age” (21st century), as individuals and as institutions, as lay people and religious, are, mostly unconsciously, too much conformed to the dominant values of this age.

Only when we deal with our present conformities “to this age,” can we discern “what is good,” “what is God’s will” both within the church and in our secular society.

What do I mean when I say that, as church, we are conformed to the injustices of “this age?” The church, since the 4th century has been, and now is, contaminated by the values of the cultures in which the church exists.

I invite you to look briefly at the history of this contamination of Gospel values in the church. Up to the Fourth Century the church remained relatively free of cultural contamination because the church was underground and persecuted. In the Fourth Century, the accession of Constantine to the throne of the Roman Emperor, the Christian Church became the official religion of the Empire. Now that Christians “belonged,” they began to compromise Gospel values, and the church, began to accommodate itself to the needs and values of the empire. This was the beginning of long-range repression of some Gospel values, especially as the Gospel related to war and wealth, and hence to justice and peace.

The secular world has always considered the teachings of Jesus to be unrealistic and hence to be rejected or ignored. This is particularly true of the Sermon on the Mount, including especially Jesus’ statement of the Beatitudes, as well as Jesus’ teachings about wealth and money.

Retrospectively, it is easy for us to criticize the church of the Fourth Century for accommodating itself to the needs and values of the Empire, but are not we, the church

of the 20th century in the United States, accommodating ourselves to the needs and values of our culture, repressing some teachings of the Gospel, and watered down other teachings to fit our national values today?

When the Gospel and the Kingdom of God come in conflict with the Kingdom of this world, “this age,” American civil religion usually, sub-consciously takes precedence in the values system of most U.S. Christians. Even the preaching is watered down to fit American ears.

I am listing, here, some of the moral-political-cultural issues that are either legal or held by large numbers of Americans, issues that contradict the Gospel and/or the Church: wealth and greed, poverty, minimum wage, inadequate welfare, consumerism lifestyle, liberal capitalism (free from governmental restrictions), war and redemptive violence, (using violence to improve the community), excessive self-interest, abortion, execution of criminals, sexism, environmental degradation for profit, and racism.

Some of these issues are considered socially acceptable and, hence, a good way to go by large members of American Christians. When we, as Christians, conform to these non-values — forms of violence — we are choosing a secular value system, we are conforming to that system and compromising our commitment to the Gospel. I do not have space to enlarge on each of these issues here, but I will explain a little about two of these.

The first example of what I mean by the accommodation of the people of the Church to the values of the dominant culture is acquisition and possession of wealth as the highest priority of a majority of the citizens of the U.S. Most of our home-grown violence is to acquire or protect our economic assets. As a nation, we seem to be stuck in wealth addiction. We tend to judge our self-worth in terms of our economic base. We live in what Eric From calls the “having” mentality rather than the “being” mentality. As John Kavanaugh puts it in *FOLLOWING CHRIST IN A CONSUMER SOCIETY*, we exist in the *COMMODITY FORM* of life rather than the *PERSONAL FORM* of life. The Church itself has been hooked into the commodity form in many ways. Greed is a normal outcome of wealth addiction. Most people are vulnerable to temptation to greed. Greed is socially acceptable in the U.S.

Another example of conforming to political and cultural values that contradict Christian values would be the willingness of so many American Christians to listen to political voices rather than the voice of the Church about the morality of war and other issues of violence such as abortion and capital punishment. When the U.S. is proposing or doing immoral actions, we need to take our stand from the Gospel and Church to maintain our own faith authenticity and personal integrity.

When we look intensely, prayerfully and historically at the Gospel it becomes quite clear that Jesus was radically counter-culture, in Galilee and Judea of the 1st century and is so in the U.S. in our age.

The life of North American churches has become utterly predictable on sociological grounds. Factors of race, sex, and national identity shape and define the lives of Christians just like everybody else. No one expects anything different of Christians. The predictability of the Christian style of life, or, more to the point, the loss of a distinctively Christian lifestyle, has severely damaged our proclamation of the Gospel. ...When the life of the church no longer raises any questions, evangelism degenerates. (THE CALL TO CONVERSION: JIM WALLIS — LIFESTYLE pp19-20)

Back to Romans 12: "Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, so that you may judge what is God's

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

The Beatitudes

Matthew 5:1-12 (Appropriate also for Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time and Thirty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time or any Sunday or Weekday when Matthew 5:1-12 is read.)

(See especially the Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time)

TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Compassion

Psalms 125

Philippians 2:1-11

God's compassion, mercy and kindness

"Let this mind be in you."

"Emptying self, relinquishing power, except to love and to serve, overcoming sins of domination, becoming one with the people"

Matthew 21:28-37

Jesus' concern for outcasts

"*Domination*" (Appropriate for Philippians 2:1-11)

Appendix B Series: "*Compassion*" (See *Good Friday*)

Compassion is the inner power of feeling with others, especially suffering with those who suffer. Mercy and kindness are the fruits of compassionate love.

SPLANGCHNIZOMAI "Moved with Compassion." This Greek word was used of Jesus twelve times in the Gospels. (e.g., Matthew 9:27, 9:36, 14:14; Mark 1:41, 8:2; Luke 7:13.)

When we are growing in compassion, the inner source of mercy, we are growing in humanness in wholeness, for our God is compassionate and Jesus is the human expression of our compassionate God. Jesus told us, "Be compassionate, as your Father is compassionate." (Luke 6:36)

Compassion requires the ability to place ourselves in another's position and perspective, to walk in his or her shoes, to feel as though inside another's skin. God becoming human in Jesus is the Divine empathy. In Jesus, God shares our joy, pain, grief, pleasure, and weakness. In Hebrews 5:1-6, Paul writes, "He is able to deal patiently with erring sinners, for he is himself beset by weakness..."

The opposite of compassionate mercy is usually not anger or hate, but simply **APATHY** — not caring. Apathy is being without seeing, without feeling, and hence, without mercy in the face of a suffering human being. The parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus shows us that "apathy in the face of relievable human suffering" is so radically evil that it implies the rejection of God Himself.

DOMINATION

The Gospel story Mark 1-:35-45

If Jesus coming into his kingdom turned to power-control domination and destruction of enemies, his kingdom would not be much better than the rest of the world; a culture of violence and death.

Domination means: power to crush

Parents	crush kids
Husbands	crush wives
Wives	crush husbands
Whites	crush Indians/Blacks
Rich	crush poor
U.S.	crushed other countries
Bishops	crush priests
Beating people into submission, torture / threat / fear / extort	
Teachers	can crush students

How do some people crush others? Torture / punishment / threats / tongue lashings / beatings / withhold love / create guilt / withhold pay.

TWENTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Land ownership - Stewardship

Isaiah 5:1-7

Song of the vineyard

“The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the people of Judah are His cherished plant; he looked for judgment, but see, bloodshed! for justice, but hark, the outcry!” Apply this to God’s people today, and apply to environmental destruction

Psalms 80

Apply to environmental pollution and deterioration.

Matthew 21:33-43

Parable of the vineyard

Exploitation of earth for personal and economic profit

Optional Theme:

Hospitality

Optional Theme:

“Who owns the Universe?”

Appendix F Series *“Land and People” (See Fifteenth Sunday In Ordinary Time)*

“The vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel and people of Judah are his cherished plant.” The Lord looked for judgment and justice but found only violence. God’s vineyard was exploited for profit by the stewards.

People do not own land. The land belongs to God, the Creator. A legal title to land gives the right to use the land and the responsibility for good stewardship.

Pollution and destruction of land fertility is a sin of desecration of what is sacred.

Psalms 24, “The earth is the Lord’s and all it holds, the world and those who live there. For God founded it on the seas, and establishes it over the rivers.”

Psalms 95, “For the Lord is the great God...Whose hand holds the depths of the earth; who owns the tops of the mountains. The sea and dry land belong to God who made them, formed them by hand.” (cf Psalm 50)

Psalms 100, “Know that the Lord is God, our maker to whom we belong, whose people are we, God’s well-tended flock.”

The big conflict between the American aboriginal people (Indians) and the European immigrants was over land. The land that the Indian people held from the

Creator was taken by force and injustice from the original people on the American continents.

We are appalled at the irreverence of the desecration of churches but seem to be unconcerned over the desecration of the land, even though certainly the earth is at least as sacred as a church.

The earth is the artistic masterpiece of God the Creator. Disrespect for the earth is an insult to the Artist.

Throughout the world, a few wealthy landowners control vast tracts of land while millions of people have no access to land use. This is injustice. God created the earth for all the people.

Comment on the following songs:

“This land is your land, this land is my land”

“America the Beautiful”

Whose land is it?

Who has first rights to “this land?”

What would be the thoughts and feelings of Native Americans who hear these songs?

Who has the more biblical view of the land?

Biblical Christians or traditional Native Americans?

Is there a moral demand of restitution to Indian peoples?

Optional Theme: See Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Other biblical references:

Isaiah 5:8, 24:4-6

Jeremiah 12:4

Hosea 4

WHO OWNS THE UNIVERSE?

1. "The Lord God placed the man in the garden to till and care for it."
Genesis 2:15
2. "Now, if you will obey me and keep my covenant, you will be my own people.
The whole earth is mine, but you will be my chosen people." Exodus 19:5
3. "The land shall not be sold in perpetuity; for the land is mine, and you are but
aliens who have become my tenants." Leviticus 25:33
4. "To the Lord belong even the highest heavens; the earth is also, and everything
on it." Deuteronomy 10:14
5. "There in front of the whole assembly King David praised the Lord. He said,
"Lord God of our ancestor Jacob, may you be praised forever and ever! You are
great and powerful, glorious, splendid, and majestic. Everything in heaven and
earth is yours and you are king, supreme ruler over all. All riches and wealth
come from you; you rule everything by your strength and power, and you are
able to make anyone great and strong. Now, our God, we give you thanks and
praise your glorious name. "Yet my people and I cannot really give you anything,
because everything is a gift from you, and we have only given back what is yours
already. 1 Chronicles 29:10-14
6. "The Lord's is the earth and fullness thereof; the earth and those who
dwell in it. For he had formed it upon the seas and established it upon the
rivers." Psalm 24:1
7. "I own the beasts of the forests, beasts in their thousands on my hills...All that
moves in the fields belong to me...I own the world and all it holds.
Psalm 50:10-12
8. "Yours are the heavens, yours the earth; you founded the world and
everything in it." Psalm 89:12
9. "For the Lord is the great God...In His hands are the depths of the earth, and the
tops of the mountains are his. His is the sea, for he has made it, and the dry
land, which his hands have formed. Psalm 95
10. "Know that he, the Lord is God. He made us, we belong to him. We are his
people..." Psalm 100
11. "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom
you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been
purchased at a price. Therefore glorify God in your body."
1 Corinthians 6:19-20

**Optional Theme:
Hospitality**

Earth and universe is God's home.

God shares His home with us and all other earth creatures

As our home, and as stewards of our earth home, we are expected to not only care for the earth, but also to be hospitable to people who do not have access to land as home. Abraham entertained angels when he shared his home with strangers. (Genesis 18:1-10).

Hospitality — sharing our “home” — has important implications for opening our land to homeless people.

Jesus said, “I was a stranger (homeless) and you gave me hospitality.”

In our diocese we have three very significant expressions of hospitality: The Care and Share Center in Crookston, Minnesota, the Dorothy Day House of Hospitality in Moorhead, Minnesota and Churches United, Bemidji, Minnesota. These centers offer hospitality, lodging and food and other services to homeless people — the “strangers” so often mentioned in the Bible. Sister Justina Violette founded the Care and Share Center, and the Dorothy Day House is a part of the Catholic Worker Movement founded by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin. For a more complete understanding of the Catholic Worker Movement, readers might borrow the video, “Entertaining Angels,” a full-length movie about the life of Dorothy Day. The video is available from the Resource Center of the Crookston Diocese. The Care and Share Center and the Dorothy Day houses are open to visitors including guided visits by Confirmation classes and other groups. All three groups are in need of volunteers.

Many books have been written by Dorothy Day and about Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement. Two recommended books are: Dorothy Day, Selected Writings, edited by Robert Ellsberg, Orbis Books, 1983; All is Grace, The Spirituality of Dorothy Day, by William D. Miller, Doubleday and Company, 1987.

THIRTIETH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

***Anawim*, immigrants, economic justice**

Respect for Life

Exodus 22:20-26

Aliens, widows and orphans

Matthew 22:34-40

Love God and people

This is a good day to consider Respect for Life. The Exodus reading is about the *ANAWIM*: Aliens, Widows and Orphans, the main powerless people of the Jewish scriptures. In the Gospels, Jesus lists the *ANAWIM* in various ways, including the poor, the sick, the lepers, the blind, the deaf, the crippled, the children, the hungry, the thirsty, slaves, prisoners, and the homeless — the powerless ones of Jesus' time. These people were a high priority of Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom (cf Lk 4:16-22; Lk 7:18-23; Lk 16:19-31; Mt. 5:3-12; Mt. 25:33-45).

This Sunday would be an appropriate day for emphasizing a consistent ethic of life, a consistent ethic of nonviolence for all life, from conception to life's end on this earth.

In today's Gospel, Jesus speaks of love. Love and justice are related. In most situations the virtue of justice is the minimum expression of love. Doing justice and love are the highest forms of respecting persons, the children of God.

The right to life is the greatest human right.

THIRTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Covenant, justice and nonviolence, reverence for life

Malachi 1, 14b-2, 2b,

8-10

Matthew 23:1-12

Unfaithfulness to the covenant

The scribes and the Pharisees exploit the little people for selfish reasons.

Optional theme:

Biblical Justice

Justice is an essential element of the covenant between Yahweh and the people. Violence is a form of injustice. Justice and nonviolence are an integral part of reverence for life. Justice is observing human rights. Human rights include, especially the right to life, bodily and psychological integrity, food, freedom, participation in community, health care, education, employment and housing.

The Scribes and Pharisees do not practice the justice that they preach. They jealously protect their own privileged positions in the community. Their great concern is for self-aggrandizement rather than service to the people whose leaders they are called to be. As a pastor, I am also a person of great privilege—white, male, middle class, and positioned in the community. We who are privileged have great responsibility to help lift up the unprivileged and under-privileged if we claim to respect life.

Are you privileged?

Who are the under-privileged?

How can we affirm and help the less privileged?

**Optional Theme:
Biblical Justice**

Walter Burghardt, in his recent (2004) book: Justice - A Global Adventure, develops the meaning of Biblical justice: Biblical justice is a broader and richer concept than the traditional meanings of justice and social justice.

“When are people just once again it is a question of right relationships. Right relationship to God, to their brothers and sisters, to the whole created reality, each relationship merits consideration.” (p.10)

According to the meaning of Biblical justice, injustice is a matter of unfaithfulness to our covenant with God, both the old covenant and the new covenant. In today's first reading the prophet Malachi writes:

“You have made void the covenant of Levi,
says the Lord of hosts....”
“Why do we break faith with each other
Breaking the covenant of our fathers?”

THIRTY-FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME — CHRIST THE KING

The reign of God: justice, peace, truth and love

Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17 The Good Shepherd cares, heals, and feeds the flock.

Matthew 25:31-46 “I assure you, as often as you did it for one of my least brothers (or sisters), you did it for me.”

The kingdom of Christ the King is a kingdom of love and service. Apply to our social governance: welfare, prisons, clean water, housing, etc.

Optional Theme: The Beatitudes

Jesus insists that our relationship with Him is a life and death situation depending whether or not we feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, housing to the homeless, care for the sick, clothing to the naked, and service to the sick and prisoners. “I assure you that as often as you did it for one of my least brothers (or sisters), you did it for me.”

The governance that Jesus proclaimed as King is far different than the conventional governance of the powers of this world. The leaders of this world seek power and self-aggrandizement. Jesus insists on loving service, especially for the most vulnerable people.

The kingdom that Jesus proclaimed is for all and it is “a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace” (from the Preface for Feast of Christ the King). The kingdoms of this world are especially kingdoms of dominating power with priority service for the wealthy and powerful citizens, largely influenced by money and maintained by violence.

The values of God’s Reign are best summarized in Matthew’s Gospel by the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12).

Cf. also Second Sunday of Advent

SPECIAL FESTIVALS

CORPUS CHRISTI

Appendix E: Series *"The Eucharist and Non-violence"*

Appendix F: Series *"Eucharist and Economic Justice"*

SEPTEMBER 15

The sorrowful mother

Gospel: John 19:25-27 Mary at the foot of the cross

Mary did not have the power to change the unjust, dehumanizing treatment of her Son, nor did she have the power to change evil policies of the Roman Empire or of her own country, Israel. However, she did stand with her Son to the end.

In recent years Mary stood with other sorrowful mothers who, with their children were crucified. I am speaking of mothers such as the mothers of disappeared sons and daughters in El Salvador, Guatemala, Argentina, Bosnia, Kosovo and several African countries who met in sorrow with one another in protest against the crucifixion of their children — mothers who met to pray for their children and to support one another.

I am also speaking of the single mothers in this nation who are forced to live with their children in shelters for homeless people because of apathy toward the poor in the United States.

I am also reminded of the sorrowful mothers and grandmothers in the Native American communities who grieve for their children and grandchildren who die young from sickness, accident, and suicide. They also grieve for their children who suffer from addiction or unfaithfulness to their heritage.

Mary continues to stand at the foot of the cross with these sorrowful mothers and she invites us to stand and be with her and them as people are being crucified today.

When we complain that God does not always save people from suffering, we are remembering that God did not save Jesus from crucifixion. Jesus says, "Give them some food yourselves." (Mark 6:37). In other words, YOU do something.

APPENDICES

These appendices are six series of articles written by Monsignor Mehrkens. These series are about social justice issues that are appropriate as an enlargement of the themes included in Cycle A.

A *"A Spirituality of Nonviolence"*

First Sunday of Advent
Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

- Part I *Lording it over Them*
- Part II *The Domination System and The Jesus System*
- Part III
- Part IV
- Part V *Hope in a Culture of Violence*

B *"Compassion"*

Good Friday
Second Sunday of the Easter Season
Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

- Part I *God is Compassionate*
- Part II *Elder Son and Compassionate Father*
- Part I *God is Compassionate*
- Part II *Sharing the Pain*
- Part III *Elder Son and the Compassionate Father*
- Part IV *Prayer*
- Part V *Learning to be Compassionate*
- Part VI *A Humble Heart*

C *"Money and Power"*

Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

- Part I
- Part II *A Meditation on a Dollar Bill*
- Part III *Planetary Destruction*
- Part IV *Wealth Addiction*
- Part V *If You Want Peace, Reach Out to the Poor*
- Part VI *TV-Life-Giving or Death-Dealing*

- D *“Eucharist and Nonviolence”*
 Corpus Christi
- Part I *Introduction*
Part II *Subversive Liturgy*
Part III *Word in Eucharist Implying Nonviolence*
Part IV *Holy Communion and Nonviolence*
Part V *Legalized Violence and the Eucharist*
Part VI *Bread, Blessed, Broken and Shared*
- E *“Eucharist and Economic Justice”*
 Corpus Christi
- Part I *Bread*
Part II *Housing*
Part III *Clothing, Household Items*
Part IV *Blood*
Part V *Do This in Memory of Me*
- F *“Land and People”*
 Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
 Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time
- Part I
Part II
Part III *Is Healing Possible?*

Appendix A

A SPIRITUALITY OF NONVIOLENCE – Part I

Lording It Over Them

“My Kingdom does not belong to this world.
If my Kingdom were of this world, my subjects would be
Fighting to save me from being handed over to the
Jews.” John 18:36

The “Domination System” of human relations, institutional life and government is deeply rooted in human life and history. This system is the main source of violence in every society from the family to the nation. By its very nature, the system almost inevitably causes power struggles. The opposite of the “Domination System” is the “Jesus System.”

In a homily on the festival of Christ the King, I reflected that I am more comfortable with perceiving Jesus’ leadership more like that of a Native American Chief as much closer to the Jesus System than that of the dominating Euro-American tradition.

Some of the outstanding Indian chiefs that exemplify this idea have been:

Chief Seattle (West coast Dwamish people 1850’s), Chief Lutheran Standing Bear (Oglala Sioux), Chief Black Elk (Oglala Sioux, mid 19th Century) and Chief Joseph (of the Nezperce in the late 19th and early 20th centuries).

The two systems contrasted are fundamentally incompatible. Many have tried to integrate and harmonize the two systems. If such harmonizers claim to be Christian, they usually end up being unfaithful to the Jesus System and serving the “Domination System.”

[Jesus said to his disciples: “You know how among the Gentiles those who seem to exercise authority, lord it over them...it cannot be that way with you. Anyone among you who aspires to greatness Must serve the rest.”
Mark 10:42-43]

The thoughts of this article are taken largely from Engaging the Powers, by Walter Wink, Fortress Press, Minneapolis.

A SPIRITUALITY OF NONVIOLENCE – Part II

The Domination System and the Jesus System

In 1995 our U.S. bishops published a pastoral message entitled: Confronting a Culture of Violence — A Catholic Framework for Action. I am pleased that our Bishops recognize that violence is deeply rooted in the American culture. It is not simply a social problem, but a part of our way of life. Violence, unconsciously, has been an integral part of our national problem solving process.

After describing the vast scope of violence in our culture, this pastoral message goes on to examine the causes of violence and the importance of a spirituality of nonviolence. In the second chapter we read:

“This growing culture of violence reflected in some aspects of our public life and entertainment media must be confronted. But it not just our policies and programming that must change; it is our hearts. We must condemn not only the killing but also the abuse in our homes, the anger in our hearts, and the glorification of violence in movies and music.”

The authors have done a good job in presenting an approach to violence of any kind and at all levels with a perception that views reverence for life in a truly consistent way. Our Bishops are concerned about all the faces of violence from abortion to crime, capital punishment and war. The document is a good, concise statement about a consistent ethic of life.

Confronting a Culture of Violence is short enough so that most people could read it in an hour or two. If a parish is looking for a good aid in adult enrichment, I suggest looking into this pastoral message.

I have named this series “A Spirituality of Nonviolence.” This means, in the words of the song, “let peace (nonviolence) begin with me.” Nonviolence is a way of life that rises to the surface from the “deep recesses of the heart.” Confronting a Culture of Violence puts it this way: “It is not just our policy and programming that must change, it is our hearts.”

In this first article I would like to mention some of the deeply rooted sources of violence in ourselves and in our culture. Violence is like poison ivy in the soul of

society. Cutting the weed won't do. We have to pull it out by the roots. Most of our efforts at dealing with the spread of the poison of violence have been simply to deal with the surface stems and leaves and not with the roots.

There are several interlocking roots of violence in ourselves and in our culture: POWER— DOMINATION, GREED (to nourish the power). FEAR, (loss of power and hence, security). Substance and gambling ADDICTION greatly intensify the strength of the other roots of violence. Together these roots produce the poison of violence- -the violence of domination of person over person, people over people, and nation over nation- -a dominance maintained by what is seen as "redemptive violence.

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Many of the ideas and phraseologies in this series have been borrowed from the following sources: Confronting a Culture of Violence, by U.S. Bishops; Unmasking the Powers, by Walter Wink; The Violence Within, by Paul Tournier; To make Peace, evangelize Culture, by Thomas E. Clark; Article in America, June 2, 1984; and the series of tapes on nonviolence by Charles McCarthy.

A SPIRITUALITY OF NONVIOLENCE – Part III

The deep roots of violence are power-domination-seeking, greed, fear and anger along with substance addiction that intensifies the strength of the other sources. These deep roots of violence need to be faced and dealt with. I agree with Walter Wink that dominating others by individuals and groups is the deepest and most widespread source of violence in the Western world.

What I am referring to here is what Walter Wink, Engaging the Powers, and what Charles McCarthy, tape series and A theology of Nonviolence call “The Domination System.” By the “domination system” they mean the need and tendency of people to gain power in order to dominate others- -person over person, group over group, men over women, white over black, rich over poor, nation over nation and people over the environment.

This kind of domination system of human relationships usually falls into abuse, and restricts the freedom of the person or group that is dominated. Dominating others is itself a form of violence that creates a climate of human relations in which violence easily escalates because those in power often use whatever means are possible (crime, war, etc.) to maintain their power base. Legalized violence, abortion, war, poverty, capital punishment and environmental pollution/destruction make domination over others and the accompanying violence seem to be okay since these forms of violence are socially accepted in a world considered to live with the domination system.

If we are to have a relatively nonviolent world we need to start moving from the “domination system” to a more egalitarian system (equality of human rights, civil rights, economic opportunity, and shared responsibility and power.”

This “domination system” and its opposite is what Jesus was referring to when he said to his disciples:

“You know that those who are recognized as rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them...but it shall not be so among you. Rather, whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you will be the slave of all. For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Mark 10:42-45

Moving from the “domination system” to the “Jesus system” will not be easy because we are so deeply enmeshed in the “domination system” that its dangers and violence are mostly unrecognized.

Wink, in his analysis of the history of at least the last 5,000 years is convinced that the “domination system” has developed in our world, especially in the Western world of Europe and the Americas, and in the Middle East as the over-riding system of human relations in society, government, commerce, professions, religion, and in family life.

The second part of the thesis of Unmasking the Powers is that the only significant antidote to the “domination system” is the “Jesus system” or the “reign of God” as proclaimed in the Gospel by Jesus the Christ. Walter Wink has convinced me that the radical nature of Jesus’ life and teachings is even more profound than I had realized. Wink does not call Jesus revolutionary, for most revolutions have simply substituted one leader or group for another with the ousted government and the revolutionaries both operating mainly from the “domination system.” The reign of God as proclaimed by Jesus is a 180 degree change from the “domination System” to an egalitarian system of human relations.

Although I have been emphasizing domination in human relations and the accompanying violence against people, irresponsible domination over nature (environment) ultimately becomes violence against people who need a sustainable environment. However, violence against the earth through domination for immediate human gain is evil in itself and an insult to the Creator of the earth. Human domination of the environment for human selfish reasons is part of parcel of the “domination system.”

A SPIRITUALITY OF NONVIOLENCE – Part IV

According to Walter Wink, the cross is the power for “breaking the spiral of violence” in the domination system. The cross is the keystone in the arch of the “Jesus system, “the reign of God”. Many people have been victims of the violence of the domination system, but with Jesus, as victim, something was very different. He is the Son of God. He chose to be the victim of violence rather than to act within the domination system and save himself by “redemptive violence.

“Jesus died just like all the others who challenged the Powers that dominate the world. Something went awry with Jesus, however. They scourged him with whips, but with each stroke of the lash their own illegitimacy was laid open. They mocked him with a robe and crown of thorns, spit on him, struck him on the head with a reed, and ridiculed him with the ironic ovation, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ — not knowing that their acclamation would echo down the centuries. They stripped him naked and crucified him in humiliation, all unaware that this very act had stripped them of the last covering that disguised the towering wrongness of the whole way of living that their violence defended.” Walter Wink, page 39

Jesus’ death on the cross was turned into victory because God placed a divine seal of approval on Jesus’ nonviolent approach to evil by raising him from death.

St. Paul writes:

“The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God...for the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.” 1 Corinthians 1:18-25.

With this statement from St. Paul, Walter Wink asserts that Jesus “unmasked the powers” through the cross, not the resurrection.

On the surface, the cross appears to be Jesus’ failure. In reality it became his victory when united to the resurrection. “The cross marks the failure, not of God, but of violence”. (Page 14. The cross unmasked the “powers of evil, of domination, of violence like no other victimization ever did.” Since Christ, other victims have also triumphed by the power of Christ, sharing in his power. Other Christ-figures in the name of Jesus, have also triumphed over violence as victims of violence, but mainly because

they participated in the cross experience. Such are the martyrs of the past and present, and in particular in our time, Martin Luther King, Jr., Bishop Oscar Romero and others. These also, through their nonviolent victimization, have helped to unmask the powers of redemptive violence and the domination system.

Walter Wink writes:

“Jesus Christ could not be killed. The massive forces arrayed in opposition to the truth are revealed to be puny over against the force of a free human being. Those who are freed from the fear of death are, as a consequence, able to break the spiral of violence...”

“...In his cry from the cross, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’, he is one with all doubters whose sense of justice overwhelms their capacity to believe in God; with every mother or father who cradles the lifeless body of a courageous son or daughter; with every Alzheimer’s patient slowly losing the capacity of recognition.”

A SPIRITUALITY OF NONVIOLENCE – Part V

Hope In a Culture of Violence *

“In the spiritual renaissance that I believe is coming to birth, the human figure of Jesus...in the teaching of Jesus., the sayings on nonviolence and love of enemies will hold a central place. Not because they are more true than any others, but because they are the only means known for overcoming domination without creating new dominations.”
Engaging the Powers, by Walter Wink, Page 263.

Jesus’ teachings and examples about nonviolence have usually been considered as idealistic and hence, unrealistic. There is an increasing significant body of historical evidence that the “Jesus system” of direct, creative, nonviolent resistance is more effective and hence, more realistic than the “domination system” of “redemptive violence.” Consider what has happened through nonviolent action in East Germany, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Albania, The Soviet Union, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, China, and South Africa and the Philippines.

“In 1989 alone, thirteen nations comprising 1,695,000,000 people, over 32 percent of humanity, experienced nonviolent revolutions that succeeded beyond anyone’s wildest expectations in every case but China, and were completely nonviolent (on the part of the participants) in every case but Romania and parts of the southern U.S.S.R. Engaging the Powers, by Walter Wink, Page 264.

If we consider what happened in our world in this century prior to 1989 in India, in many European-African colonies, and when we remember the nonviolent resistance in the U.S. in this century (civil rights, women’s rights, the peace movement, and anti-nuclear movements) it becomes increasingly clear that nonviolence is more effective than violence in bringing about significant positive change, even revolution. Certainly there has been, and is, some violence resulting from these movements, but the violence has been incidental rather than essential to the movement. Basically, the movements have been nonviolent in both method and purpose.

Historical and theological development in the Catholic Church since Vatican II and Pope John XXIII regarding nonviolence is also significant. From 17 centuries of the

“just war” theological preference, the Catholic Church is moving steadily toward a theological position of nonviolence in a consistent ethic of life.

I see this whole historical development in this century in the church and among the nations as a movement under the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit. We still have a long way to go, but could be on the way toward a new way of life. This gives us hope, an Easter hope for our times, identified by historical evidence:

“It appears as if the nonviolent way articulated by Jesus as the heart of the gospel message has finally found an unwitting following. The dream of abolishing war, like child sacrifice and exposure, gladiatorial combat, slavery, cannibalism, colonialism, and dueling, seems to be finally approaching the first stages of realization.” Engaging the Powers, by Walter Wink, Page 265.

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** Most of this article is drawn from the book: Engaging the Powers, by Walter Wink, Fortress Press, Chapter 14.*

Appendix B

COMPASSION – Part I

God is Compassionate

Compassion is probably the strongest power in us to motivate us to forgive, to do justice, to be nonviolent, and to grow in love for people- -in other words, to grow spiritually. After all, that is what Lent is all about. Jesus advises us: “be compassionate as your Father is compassionate.” Henry Nouwen comments:

“Becoming like the heavenly Father is not just one important aspect of Jesus’ teaching. It is the very heart of his message.”*

I would add that I believe that compassion is an excellent measurable gauge of a healthy, authentic spiritual life.

“Compassion” comes from a Latin word com passio which means, “feeling with someone” or “suffering with someone.” The phrase “moved with compassion” is used by Jesus twelve times in the Gospels. The Gospel word used is splangchnizoma, which comes from the word splangchna. This refers to the entrails of the body- -“guts.” “Moved to compassion” here means “felt in the depth of one’s being.”

This was Jesus’ attitude toward the crowds, the sick, the hungry, and a leper who came to him. This was also his feeling for the widow-mother of the deceased young man whom Jesus brought to life. What is important here is not only the physical healing but the deep compassion that moved Jesus to heal and help. It is his compassion that healed the spirits of the sick and disabled people who came to him for healing. The compassion of Jesus makes it possible for us to understand that He is Emmanuel, the compassionate God with us in our needs, fears and sufferings. The miracles restore sight to the blind, but Christ’s compassion restores life to the person. God is compassionate and Jesus is the human expression of our compassionate God. Compassion is a special dimension of AGAPE, the Gospel Greek word for love. Charles Emmanuel McCarthy (audio tape set “Theology of Nonviolence”) defines AGAPE, as unconditional love and then goes on to describe AGAPE in two basic statements:

“AGAPE is the willingness to serve without the Desire for reciprocation.” “AGAPE is the willingness to suffer without the desire for retaliation.”

McCarthy sees the Suffering Servant of Isaiah as Jesus, the Suffering Servant of the Gospel. He understands the Suffering Servant as the model of Agape. When we are growing in compassion, the inner source of merciful action, we are growing in love, in justice, and nonviolence, in humanness, wholeness and holiness.

The most fundamental reality of this series is that God is compassionately understanding, accepting and forgiving toward us. Lent is a good time to reread the parable of the Prodigal Son and the Compassionate Parent. Luke 15

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Many of the ideas in this series on “Compassion” were drawn from the following two books:

The Return of the Prodigal Son, A Story of Homecoming, by Henri Nouwen, Image Books, Doubleday and Company, 1992.

Compassion, A Reflection of the Christian Life, by Donald P. McNeill, Douglas A. Morrison, Henri Nouwen, Doubleday and Company, Inc. 1982

**All quotations in this series, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from Compassion, A Reflection of the Christian Life, by Donald P. McNeill, Douglas A. Morrison, Henri Nouwen, Doubleday and Company, Inc. 1982.*

COMPASSION – Part II

Sharing the Pain

Compassion — feeling with someone — implies a deep identification with another person, especially when he/she is undergoing pain, sorrow, fear, or some other form of suffering. This identification means trying to place oneself in another's position, condition and perspective- -to walk in his/her shoes- -to feel as though inside another's skin. Compassion also implies the desire and effort to alleviate the other's suffering if possible. It means at least being with the other person, being actively present to him/her even when one cannot alleviate the pain. It means opening oneself to another and allowing the other's pain to enter oneself. This is difficult and this is why compassion is repressed by many people. This is also why some people avoid visiting hospitals, nursing homes, homeless shelters and funerals.

Sometimes people have indicated that they “don't know what to say to someone who is suffering.” My response to this avoidance approach is: “What you say may not be real important. What is important to one who is suffering is that you are there and you are with and for that person, and that is louder than your words, for compassion is louder than what we say.

Active listening means giving another person our whole-minded and whole-hearted attention. What active listening says to the speaker is “I am interested in what you are saying and what you are saying is important to me- -you are important.” Active listening is a deeply compassionate act. In listening we enter others' lives. Sometimes listening is far more powerful than speaking.

The opposite of compassion is apathy, not caring. A good biblical picture of apathy would be the Rich Man in the parable of Lazarus. Luke 16. This parable as well as Jesus' narrative about the sheep and goats in Matthew 25 indicates that “apathy in the face of the relievable human miser” is so evil that it implies the rejection of God. Apathy is often a form of violence. It was the do-nothing violence of the rich man that killed Lazarus. If the Rich Man would have had compassion for Lazarus- -if he had simply gotten up from his sumptuous table and reached out to Lazarus with food, housing, and health care, it would have made the difference between spiritual life and spiritual death for the rich man himself.

COMPASSION – Part III

Elder Son and the Compassionate Father

In the parable of the Prodigal Son, consideration of the elder son is often neglected. The elder son stayed home and did everything right. He did it all correctly but he was cold, distant, jealous, unforgiving and completely lacking in compassion. He was the more lost of the two lost brothers. The younger brother was greedy, thoughtless, and lustful. However, the sin of the uncompassionate, self-righteous elder brother was the greater for his heart was constricted and cold. The younger was reconciled with father. The elder remained, in the story, separated from both brother and father.

The elder brother had an area of cold darkness in his psyche and soul, an area probably, not previously detected by himself or others at the surface of consciousness. His was a sterile orthodoxy, an emptiness that made him a man without compassion, a disadvantaged person deprived of the human experience of mercy, and the virtue of agape.

The sin of cool apathy in people who have leadership responsibilities does far more harm over the long haul than do the sins of human weakness. Lack of compassion opens the way to the dehumanizing process of power-grabbing and the devastating process of dominating others.

We not only may bask in the loving warmth of compassionate Parent-God as daughters and sons, forgiven and wholly accepted, but we also need to mature by growing into the compassionate parent depicted in Jesus' parable of the forgiving Father. This is the ultimate level of the spiritual evolution showing in this parable. Indeed, Nouwen, in the Return of the Prodigal Son states, "becoming the compassionate Father is the ultimate goal of the spiritual life." *

Maturing into the authority of compassion instead of remaining locked into the authority of power is a difficult and worthy goal. Ironically, compassion carries more power for the good of the people than dominating power ever did. This maturing process is much more than just a gutsy feeling. It is made up of grief and sorrow, gratitude and forgiveness: it is generosity and humility, and it is the decision to accept others into our lives.

Growth in compassion is, I believe, an important and essential dimension of our spiritual journey.

Without compassion, faith is hard and fruitless; worship is cold and sterile. What is hopeful about all this is that compassion can be learned.

“Go and learn the meaning of the words: It is mercy I desire and not sacrifice.” Matthew 9:12-13

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**All quotations in this series unless otherwise indicated are taken from Compassion, A Reflection of the Christian Life, by Donald P. McNeill, Douglas A. Morrison, Henri Nouwen, Doubleday and Company, Inc. 1982.*

COMPASSION – Part IV

Prayer

Prayer itself can make us more socially aware disciples of Christ and instruments of His compassionate ministry. McNeill, Morrison, and Nouwen (*Compassion*) develop the thesis that real authentic prayer makes us more conscious of other people, of people with whom we have personal relationships, and other people outside our circle of personal contact — people who are hungry, violated, oppressed, in whatever kind of suffering. Compassion is deep awareness, the fruit of prayer.

Praying for the suffering, the *anawim*, then becomes a prayer, not for God to do it all and take us off the hook, but in new solidarity, free of apathy, in compassion, to enable us to work for the poor and oppressed because prayer has changed us. We pray not only for peace but also for the grace to become peacemakers. We pray not only for the hungry but also for the grace to become justice-doers for the poor.

Many apparently prayerful people seem never to make the transition from a relatively safe kind of praying- -God and me- -to a way of praying that opens one to the suffering of the real world. Indeed, sometimes-unaware prayer is so immature that the prayer itself becomes a rationalized defense against compassionate openness and awareness. It might be fruitful to begin our praying with a prayer such as this:

“O God of compassion, send your Spirit into my life. Open my mind to your truth, open my heart to your people, let me see what you want me to see, to feel what you want me to feel. Remove my blinders and help me to be able to listen to you in spite of fear. Lead me where you will.”

Consider the elder son in the parable of the Prodigal Son. Did he eventually acknowledge his own sins? Pray for self and brother? Join the celebration? Forgive his brother? Admit he is not better than brother? Learn compassion? Light and warm the dark cold area of his soul? No! He is a man without compassion. He needs to pray!

A real test of compassionate prayer is praying for enemies- -for those who have hurt us, or for those whom we dislike to despise.

When we pray for those who dislike us or for those whom we dislike we are actually inviting those people into our lives- -we are wishing them well, we are becoming reconciled, we are forgiving, we are growing in openness and compassion.

“It is impossible to love our enemies up in the presence of God and at the same time continue to hate them...Prayer converts the enemy into a friend and is thus the beginning of a new relationship. There is probably no prayer as powerful as the prayer for our enemies. But it is also the most difficult...” *

“A compassionate heart can help us in the forgiving process. It leads the hurt victim to search out the sources of the violator’s hurting behavior. The victim is led to ask: ‘would I be violent if I had to walk the way of my enemy, a way of pain, poverty, abandonment, depression, and rejection’?” *

This kind of prayer is what I call AWARE PRAYER. This is prayer in which community members help each other to become aware of the unconscious, but nevertheless serious counter-Gospel elements in our lives and then help each other to consciously pray with and for each other about our involvement in counter Gospel attitudes and behavior. Praying awarely is praying for and, when possible, praying with people in their suffering. It is intentionally praying that we might be instruments of God in alleviating suffering of others when possible — of being God’s instruments of compassion by having the courage to at least be with them in their sorrow or pain.

“To pray, therefore, is to become those for whom we pray, to become the sick child, the fearful mother, the distressed father, the nervous teenager, the angry student, and the frustrated striker. To pray is to enter into a deep inner solidarity with our fellow human beings so that in and through us they can be touched by the healing power of God’s Spirit.” *

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**All quotations in this series unless otherwise indicated are taken from Compassion, A Reflection of the Christian Life, by Donald P. McNeill, Douglas A. Morrison, Henri Nouwen, Doubleday and Company, Inc. 1982.*

COMPASSION – Part V

Learning to be Compassionate

It is consoling knowledge that people can learn to be compassionate- -can develop the virtue of compassion. Following are some of the fundamental steps in achieving this goal.

- 1) Unhooking from psychic numbness, apathy and from the conventional dominant and dominating values of our Euro-American culture that prevent or disable compassion. What dominant cultural values am I thinking about? The domination of others, seeking the power that wealth provides, the legitimization of violence as a solution to human problems and conflicts, racism, sexism and hedonism as an escape from reality.
- 2) Experience redemptive suffering. Most of us will undergo enough suffering in life. However, for many it is not redemptive and spiritually growth giving. If we simply rebel against it with anger or self-pity it won't help us to become compassionate. Then we will not be learning "to weep with those who weep" and we will not understand Jesus when he says, "Blessed are the sorrowing." If life is too easy for us, Psalm 73 may apply.

"For they are in no pain; their bodies are sound and sleek; they are free from the burdens of mortals, and are not afflicted like the rest of the people."

- 3) Personally encounter people whom suffer- -people who are sick or homeless or hungry or lonely or treated unjustly or are in sorrow over a loss. To spend some time with, to personally encounter people who are suffering can help us to better identify with such persons and, hence, begin to unhook from apathy and to experience compassion.

Vicarious experiences such as reading, hearing the stories, taking the courses in school, etc. can help but cannot substitute for the personal encounter. We don't like to let the pain come into us — to share the suffering. As I stated in Part II of this series, this is one reason why many people avoid visiting hospitals, nursing homes, prisons, shelters for homeless people and attending funerals. It is much easier to "rejoice with those who rejoice" than to "weep with those who weep."

- 4) Participating in a compassionate, mutually supportive sharing and praying community is important for most persons. Within such a community setting we can allow ourselves to face the pain of others because we are not alone, and with others, we can do more to alleviate the suffering and to change conditions that cause suffering. None of us can face the demons of our world alone. We need to be with one another.
- 5) Prayer and Gospel meditation are the most important means of unhooking from apathy and the cultural non-values that block the growth of compassionate living and dying with Christ. Prayer is also the most fruitful means to a compassionate way of life- -of rising to new life.

COMPASSION – Part VI

A Humble Heart

We do not grow into the virtue of compassion without a humble heart. Compassion is making room for another person in our lives; it is learning to “weep with those who weep and to rejoice with those who rejoice.” Compassion is deep understanding. An arrogant person has little room in his/her life for another person except for someone who can enhance the self-centered satisfaction of one’s own person and life.

Those of us in positions of privilege and power might remind ourselves every day of a sentence in the Book of Sirach: “My Son, humble yourself the more, the greater you are...” Sirach 3:18.

St. Paul has excellent advice for us who are gifted, privileged leaders: “Associate with those who are lowly.” Romans 12:16. A prayer in the Breviary gives us a good reason for associating with the lowly “for it is the lowly who understand.” Maybe this is part of the meaning of Jesus’ prayer:

“I give praise to you, Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, for although you have hidden those things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike.” Matthew 11:25-26

Henri Nouwen reflects on the story of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples at the Last Supper. John 13:1-14 Ordinarily it is the servant who “looks up” to the master, the student to the teacher, the son or daughter to the parent, the vulnerable to the powerful. In washing another person’s feet, the washer must “look up” to the other, must “look up” with respect and compassion. Possibly this is what Jesus meant when he said that “I am meek and humble of heart.” Matthew 11:29.

In the parable of the Prodigal Son, the merciful Father from his position of power to accept or reject, to heal or to destroy his returning son, exercised his authority with humility and love. He could forgive, accept, heal and give life to another. The returning son could now learn compassion for he experienced it from his Father when he needed it. He could also now become compassionate because his youthful arrogance had been demolished when he was reduced to having only pigs as companions. The elder son

could not as yet be compassionate. His heart was arrogant, self-righteous, cold and rigid. For self-centered reasons he had no room in his cold heart to accept a brother who “was lost and now was found.”

Consider again the elder son in the parable of the Prodigal Son. The ending of the story would have been quite different if the elder son had acknowledged his sinfulness, his arrogance and unforgiving spirit. He needed to pray for himself and his brother. If he had prayed, would he have not joined the celebration and warmed the cold area of his soul? In this story he remained arrogant — a man without compassion:

“Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped at. Rather he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.” Philippians 2:5-8

Appendix C

MONEY AND POWER – Part I

I do not understand the technical dimensions of money, but I do appreciate its importance. However, I think that many so-called experts and non-experts in matters of money do not understand the psychological and moral power of human involvement with money — a power for good or a power for evil. St. Paul did understand this. He wrote: “the love of money is the root of all evil” (1 Timothy 6:10)

Money is of paramount importance. We cannot live without it. Still living with it can become destructive of life to a demonic proportion if one’s attitude toward money is an attitude of greed and power rather than of love and service — and the line between the two attitudes is not always clear. In the Gospel according to Luke, Jesus speaks of money, directly or by implication well over 30 times, most of those times pointing out the destructive force of greed and economic selfishness.

Most persons and communities, including religious groups as well as secular ones, want more money, but never become satisfied with any level of affluence. The more we acquire the more power and control we gain. However, the irony is that abundance of money or the desire for abundance begins to control the controller and to overpower the powerful. We smile at the quaintness of the golden calf in the Exodus story while we unconsciously worship the more sophisticated golden calf of our day. The church preaches the spiritual dangers of money, but the church itself, clerical and lay, gets sucked into money’s clutches. The Gospel recognizes that money can become an idol. Jesus said, “we cannot serve God and money.”

St. Paul was very astute when he wrote:

“There is, of course great gain in religion — provided one is content with a sufficiency. We brought nothing into this world, nor have we the power to take anything out. If we have food and clothing we have all that we need. Those who want to be rich are falling into temptation and A trap. They are letting themselves be captured by foolish And harmful ruin and destruction.” (1 Timothy 6:6-10)

Money and wealth, in the broader sense, is the highest value-priority in our western society and culture (golden calf?) Money brings power and control. Achieving

power seems to be an almost universal human temptation. Money brings power to do what one wishes, to go where one wills, and to have what one wants. Even beyond the purchasing power of money, wealth has come to possess a kind of detached power in itself even if the wealthy person is not particularly power-hungry. Those who have less treat the rich with deference, admiration, or even fear. Money becomes a big source of violence directly or indirectly. Violence is perceived as necessary to defend the security of one's holdings and one's power. The reactive violence of the exploited poor people completes the vicious circle of violence.

To voluntarily relinquish wealth beyond a "sufficiency" for decent human life is psychologically difficult but spiritually healthy. A simplifying of life is fast becoming necessary to maintain a sustainable environment as well as for creating economic resources to help people who are living below the level of "sufficiency."

"Among the actions and attitudes opposed to the will of God, the good of neighbor and the 'structures' created by them, two are very typical: on the one hand, the all-consuming desire for profit, and on the other, the thirst for power, with the intention of imposing one's will upon others." Pope John Paul II, "The Social Concern of the Church." Paragraph 37.

MONEY AND POWER – Part II

A meditation on a Dollar Bill.

Some texts for our meditation found on the green back of the bill are:

ANNUIT COEPTIS (It is Favorable to Our Undertaking).

NOVUS ORDO SECLORUM (The New Order of the Ages).

E. PLURIBUS UNUM (One from Many)

ANNUIT COEPTIS: Yes, there is much that is favorable to the whole United States undertaking. Our Constitution is wise and humane. However, Hispanic people, Black people, Indian people, poor people and women still do not enjoy equal freedom and power. Economic factors are among the big cause of this inequality. A liberal kind of capitalism, which makes maximization of profit its highest goal, tends to exploit large segments of our population. The profiteers carry the power and the poor are their victims. This dollar bill has been worn thin mainly by the fingers of the poor. The one hundred bills do not wear as fast because there are fewer affluent fingers that touch them.

There are other things that are favorable to our undertaking such as natural resources, including rich soil, good water, and valuable minerals. However, desire for great profits and consumption is causing us to destroy our resources and environment rather than develop policies for a sustainable environment.

NOVUS ORDO SECLORUM: Yes, a new order of the ages (a free translation could be: “a new world order”) is needed and possible. We have the political philosophy and the human and natural resources to build a “new world order.” Again, excessive economic self-interest and corporate kingdom building easily get in the way. Power hoarding rather than power sharing usually leads to exploitation and violence. If only this dollar bill could talk it would share some of the horror stories it has witnessed on skid row, in slum tenements, and in ghettos and reservations.

E. PLURIBUS UNUM: We have built a new kind of unity from ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity in our American experiment. However, we still have a long way to go to empower Native Americans, Black people, Hispanic people, poor people and women to achieve the kind of “life, liberty and pursuit of happiness” available directly to middle and upper class white citizens. More dollar bills in the hands of our unempowered

underclass would help. However, a change in the attitude of our more affluent citizens will be necessary for a “new world order.”

IN GOD WE TRUST: This is the final text from my dollar bill now facing me. Yes, but which God do we trust? Idolatry is a subtle and slippery entity. Do we trust in the eternal, creating, saving God of the great world faiths or do we place our trust in the metal gods of our weaponry, the gold and silver gods of our money, or the national God of U.S. security and power, protected by the lesser Gods of metal and money.

Near the end of my meditation while looking at the words “In God We Trust,” two texts from two other books come to mind:

“Seek out his kingship over you, and the rest will follow in turn...Get purses for yourself that do not wear out, a never failing treasure with the Lord...Wherever your treasure is, there your heart will be.” Luke 12:31-34

“It is necessary to state once more the characteristic principle of Christian social doctrine: The goods of this world are originally meant for all. The right to private property is valid and necessary, but it does not nullify the value of this principle. Private property, in fact, is under a ‘social mortgage’.” Pope John Paul II, “The Social Concern of the Church,” paragraph 42.

MONEY AND POWER – Part III

Planetary Destruction

The content of this article is made up of my reflections and comments while reading The Dream of the Earth by Thomas Berry, (Sierra Club. 1988).

In this series of articles on the money-power-greed syndrome in U.S and Western culture, my convictions were reinforced by the behavior of U.S. representation at the June 1992 Rio Summit on the earth (UN Conference on Environment and Development-UNCED). Among the 172 nations participating, the U.S. was the only nation holding out and forcing a watering down of an agreement on climate change. On other issues such as biodiversity and initiatives on forests, the U.S. was uncooperative, weakening the whole Summit. Why this U.S. intransigence? The U.S. reasons for blocking environmental progress were short-range corporation profits and employment maintenance. These goals were higher priorities for the United States than the long-range sustainability of the earth's environment. Our short-range policies on environmental issues have been the rule rather than the exception for many years in spite of the fact that our scientists and politicians are fully aware of the planetary destruction-potential of these short-range, money-motivated policies.

The priority of short-range, monetary profit over the long-range health of the earth and hence the long-range welfare of all life forms, has dominated industry and commerce in the Western world for a long time in spite of the fact that we have known for almost a quarter of a century what this policy has been doing to the environment. This attitude of exploiting the natural world for the short-term benefit for only a few members of the human species became deeply rooted in Western culture from the Age of Enlightenment in the 18th century through the Industrial Revolution, up to our time. These movements spawned the scientific, industrial, political faith in "PROGRESS" - a progress for human beings and human society based, at least partially, on the technological domination of nature. In short, because of the hold that the money-power-greed syndrome has on the Western world, we are still willing to destroy the earth and deprive future generations of a healthy environment, rather than change our philosophy and theology of the earth and our style of life in using the earth.

Thomas Berry writes that “In its present form, the industrial economy is not a sustainable economy” (pg 11). I would add that our high-consumption lifestyle is also a non-sustainable lifestyle.

Thomas Berry continues:

“The difficulty comes when the industrial mode of our economy disrupts the natural processes, when human technologies become destructive of earth technologies. When nature goes into deficit, then we go into deficit... The earth system is most threatened when the human economy goes out of balance and frantic efforts toward a remedy lead to a reckless plundering of the land, spending our capital as our interest diminishes.”

Thomas Berry is convinced that science-technology can no longer save the earth with a quick fix that would allow us to continue to follow our present philosophy and life style. To turn around the trend from earth-destruction to earth-salvation, a profound conversion is needed. We need to reject the destructive “works and poms” of an exploitive philosophy. We need to turn to a new philosophy and theology that recognizes the importance and sacredness of creation and our place in the universe, especially the earth and life forms of the earth if we are to be healthy or even to survive. We need to become a respecting, integrated part of the whole. This will not be an easy conversion. Thomas Berry states this conviction with these words:

“Our secular, rational, industrial society, with its amazing scientific insight and technological skills, has established the first radically anthropocentric society and has thereby broken the primary law of the universe, the law of the integrity of the universe, the law that every component member of the universe should be integral with every other member of the universe.”

We must choose a new vision for earth-care or the earth itself will continue to disintegrate until it can no longer sustain much life. “The love of money, the root of all evil,” could do us in, both the earth and the people.

“One cannot use with impunity the different categories of beings, whether living or inanimate — animals, plants, the natural elements — simply as one wishes, according to one’s own economic needs. On the contrary, one must take into account the nature of each being and of its mutual

connection in an ordered system, which is precisely the cosmos.” Pope John Paul II, *The Social Concern of the Church*, paragraph 34.

MONEY AND POWER – Part IV

Wealth Addiction

Wealth addiction is a serious disease. I am of the opinion that wealth addiction — greed at its sickly worst, causes more deaths throughout the world than does drug addiction, as destructive a malady as drug addiction is. Drug addicts destroy themselves and others when they encourage others to use drugs. Wealth addicts usually kill others more often than themselves. They destroy others by reducing to poverty and destitution the victims that the addicts exploit for personal economic gain. Wealth addiction is more violent than war, considering the body count. It is estimated that poverty kills about 40,000 children a day. This means that over 14,000,000 children die annually. If it were not for wealth addiction on the part of affluent persons and nations, much of the body count from poverty would be reduced.

Another important difference between wealth addiction and drug addiction (including alcohol) is that wealth addiction is more subtle and more difficult to diagnose. (We are now speaking here of gambling addiction, even though there may be some overlapping of wealth and gambling addictions). Wealth addiction is also more difficult to identify because it is often perceived as a good. Institutional, legalized greed is a reality. For these reasons wealth addiction is particularly pernicious because it insidiously works its way into our lives, culture and politics as something normal and good.

I am convinced that the addiction potential of wealth is its power-making dimension. Paul Tournier, a Swiss psychologist, has published a book entitled, The Violence Within. Tournier convincingly argues for the universality of violent aggressive tendencies in people and he develops his conviction that violence is progressive and escalatory unless checked. However, violence is the bottom line for Tournier. Tournier's main source of violence is desire for power. Most of us — maybe all of us — bluntly or subtly trap ourselves in the power-game, through the pursuit of wealth and the status, popularity or achievement that money can buy. This happens to people in families, in commerce, in nations, as well as in the church.

The church gets sucked into this vicious money-power-violence cycle because the church is made up of human beings and human beings are vulnerable to self-

interest and power-seeking. Leaders in the church easily forget the kind of Gospel servanthood leadership called for by Jesus.

“I have come not to be served but to serve; to give my life in ransom for the many.”

“Wall Street” is the name of a recent movie now in video form. This video, definitely an adult movie in interest and content, is a good modern parable about the personally and socially destructive potential of the money-power syndrome.

MONEY AND POWER – Part V

“If You Want Peace, Reach Out To The Poor”

This is the title of Pope John Paul’s New Year’s message. When the Berlin wall came down, the Soviet Union lost its threatening power, the cold war ended and significant nuclear disarmament was in the works. Nevertheless, concern for violence and war still continue with intensity. The terrible situation in Bosnia, Somalia, Sudan, Ethiopia, South Africa, the Middle East, and the urban streets in the USA will not allow us the luxury to forget about the reality of violence in our midst.

The Pope’s message stresses the reality of the connection between poverty and violence. He points out the concept of the “vicious circle of violence” developed by Archbishop Helder Camara in Brazil- -the violence of poverty stimulates violent reaction to economic injustice and the violence of the poor brings on another violent reaction on the part of those in power to suppress the violent uprising of the poor. And so the vicious circle escalates on and on and on...

“Poverty and peace...I would like to call attention to the threat to peace posed by poverty, especially when it becomes destitution. There are millions of men, women and children suffering every day from hunger, insecurity and emargination. These situations constitute a grave affront to human dignity and contribute to social instability. Pope John Paul’s New Year’s Message 1993

I think that what our Holy Father is saying and implying is that war and street violence will not be significantly diminished until we significantly reduce poverty and hence, the terrible consequences of economic destitution.

With this article, reflecting on John Paul’s New Year’s message, I conclude my series on money and power. Violence including war will continue to plague our world as long as greed and the drive for power is deeply rooted in the human situation. Greed and power will feed the “vicious circle of violence.” The New Year’s message states:

“To reject all temptations to secure economic dominance over the nations means to renounce a policy inspired by the prevailing criterion of profit, and to replace it with a policy guided by the criterion of solidarity toward all and especially toward the poorest.”

Toward the end of his message, John Paul recommends “evangelical poverty” — I call it Gospel life style — as a way not only of spiritual growth but also as a practical attitude and way of life that can help to reduce poverty and hence, violence.

“Such evangelical poverty is the source of peace, since through it the individual can establish a proper relationship with God, with others and with creation. The life of the person who puts himself in this situation thus witnesses to humanity’s absolute dependence on God who loves all creatures, and material goods come to be recognized for what they are; a gift of God for the good of all. Evangelical poverty is something that transforms those who accept it. They cannot remain indifferent when faced with the suffering of the poor.”

Pope John Paul is on record about the immorality of the Gulf War- -before, during and after the war itself. This is not generally known by U.S. Catholics. Now again, the Vatican considers our bombings in Iraq to be morally wrong. Our Holy Father is consistent with his previous position. He writes:

“After so many unnecessary massacres, it is in the final analysis of fundamental importance to recognize, once and for all, that war never helps the human community that violence destroys and never builds up, that the wounds it causes remain long unhealed, and that as a result of conflicts the already grim condition of the poor deteriorates still further, and new forms of poverty appear...Money ought not to be used for war, nor for destroying and killing, but for defending the dignity of man, for improving his life and for building a truly open, free and harmonious society.” Pope John Paul’s New Year’s Message, 1993.

MONEY AND POWER – Part VI

TV – Life-Giving or Death-Dealing

Television is a pervasive reality in modern life, an influential picture and voice in our homes from morning to night, upstairs and downstairs, for the young and the old and all in between. TV is a powerful influence for good or evil, for life or death.

I mentioned that TV is pervasive. On the average, children are watching about 25 hours of TV each week- -almost as much time as they spend in school, and 24 more hours than they spend in church if they attend church regularly. Regarding influence on children, I include the following quote from U.S. News & World Report (Feb 1, 1993):

“In a study of 875 third graders that began in 1960 and has continued over the years, psychologist Leonard Eron of the University of Michigan’s Institute For Social Research concludes that large doses of TV violence makes children more likely to act aggressively and to think of the world as frightening.”

There is no question that TV has great potential for good or for evil — for life or death. News broadcasts; good movies, science, nature, historical shows, family entertainment, and some religious presentations are a great service to viewers. However, the death-dealing shows outweigh the life-giving shows on commercial TV. Public Television (PBS) is mainly life-giving.

When analyzing commercial TV, and when considering the moral wasteland in TV programming, we need to remain aware of the bottom line; the commercial sponsors and networks and local stations are in the business of broadcasting to make money- -as much as possible. Both broadcasters and sponsors depend on the rating game to determine what shows will draw the most viewers and customers to maximize the profits. In other words, programs exist to draw viewers to the commercials. If the viewers want violence, greed, and promiscuous abusive sex, that’s what TV will produce to make them money.

Following is a brief overview of the problem. The average 16 year old has witnessed about 200,000 acts of violence and 33,000 murders in the media. Is it any wonder that more and more children and teenagers are bringing weapons to schools? Have you noticed that most TV cartoons are violent, crash-boom-bang shows?

Marriage is no longer an important value in a majority of movies and TV shows. Adultery, fornication and divorce are simply taken for granted as “normal” part of American life. MTV, so popular with a large segment of our teen population is largely abusive, violent perverted sex. In most of the above irresponsible portrayals of sex, women are especially abused and degraded.

Dishonesty — lying, cheating and stealing — is often portrayed as acceptable behavior on commercial TV. What the Gospel would consider greed is simply taken for granted as normal behavior.

Evil is a part of human life and conflict. It is a part of every art form. To portray evil as evil is responsible presentation. To portray evil as something good is perversion of the message in any art form and very confusing and negatively influential for immature viewers.

So...what can viewers do who want better programs for the whole family?

- 1) Write letters to the Board of Directors of TV Networks, through American Family Association. For more information you may contact the author of this article.
- 2) Write sponsors of programs that you consider most harmful. Mention that you will not buy their products until they discontinue sponsoring the show you consider harmful.
- 3) Protest is most effect at local levels. Write to local stations in protest against harmful shows and in praise of good programs.
- 4) Financially support Public Television.
- 5) Encourage churches and other groups to write letters.
- 6) Monitor TV watching in your family. Do not use TV as a babysitter unless you know what programs your children are watching.

Why not on TV or in a column an article about justice or peace issues? Peace is a matter of nonviolence. TV glorifies violence. The TV industry is largely about money, greed and power and these are causes of injustice.

I began this series with the statement that “money is of paramount importance. We cannot live without it. Still, living with it can become destructive of life to demonic proportions.” I would like to end this series on money with these words of St. Paul:

“You are well acquainted with the favor shown you by our Lord Jesus Christ: how for your sake he made himself poor though he was rich, so that you might become rich by his poverty.” 1 Corinthians 8:9.

Appendix D

EUCHARIST & NONVIOLENCE – Part I

Introduction

This article is the first in a series that I have entitled "The Eucharist and Nonviolence. This first article is an introduction to this series, including definitions of violence and nonviolence as well as some Biblical and Church teachings about nonviolence.

Violence is the abusive injury to and degradation of human persons; it is an injurious attack on the physical or psychological integrity of human beings. From a religious context, violence includes the dimension of profanation.

Violence has many faces. War is one of the more horrendous and dramatic expressions of violence. However, abortion and poverty are responsible for a greater body count. It is estimated that somewhere between one and two million people died as a result of the Vietnam War over a period of ten years. Over 50 million people were killed in World War II. Almost this many unborn children die annually in our world. Over forty thousand people (a majority of children) die annually in our world as the result of poverty (starvation, malnutrition, inadequate health care, polluted water, etc.).

There are many other forms of violence, such as economic exploitation, racial injustice, sexual exploitation, mind-control, child abuse, sexist inequality, drug abuse, and excessive manipulation in the educational process.

Nonviolence, negatively and minimally considered, means simply avoiding violent behavior as defined and described above. More importantly, nonviolence has come to have a positive, active connotation. Nonviolence is a special attitude of regard or even reverence for persons as subjects rather than as objects. This special regard includes such a strong, principled conviction, that one would rather willingly become the victim of violence rather than inflict the same on another

Mathew, chapter 5 and the Sermon on the Plain, Luke, chapter 6. For Jesus living "nonviolently," I especially refer readers to the Passion and Crucifixion of Jesus in all the Gospels. For Jesus' expectations about us and the Church, I would like to offer these sayings of our Lord:

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." (Matthew 5:9)

"Whoever wishes to come after me must...take up the cross and follow me." (Mark 8:34)

"Put your sword back into its sheath, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot call upon my Father, and He will not provide twelve legions of angels?" (Matthew 26:52-53)

For a more complete Bible study of Jesus' nonviolence, see the post script at the end of this article.

The word "justice" is almost synonymous with the term "nonviolence." Most expressions of injustice are also acts of violence and vice versa. A positive phrase for nonviolence would be a "consistent ethic of life."

* * * * *

Matthew & Nonviolence:

Mt. 5:1-12	Beatitudes
Rom. 12:9-21	Never retaliate
Mt. 5:21-24	Killing and anger
1 Cor. 1:18-25	Absurdity of Gospel
Mt. 5:38-42	Non retaliation
1 Cor. 13:4-7	Love
Mt. 5:43-45	Love Enemies
Eph. 2:13-18	Reconciliation
Mt. 6:25-34	Trust
Eph. 4:1-7	Unity and peace
Mt. 15:17-20	Sources of Violence
Phil. 2:5-11	Suffering Servant

New Testament Letters & The Cross

Mt. 16:24-26	
Col. 1:18-24	Reconciliation
Mt. 22:34-40	Love
Col. 3:12-15	Christ's Peace
Mt. 25:31-46	Last Judgment
1 Pet. 2:23-24	Suffering Servant
Mt. 26:51-53	The Sword
Mt. 26:26-75	Way of Cross

EUCHARIST & NONVIOLENCE – Part II

Subversive Liturgy

The Eucharist, in text and meaning, is the liturgy, "par excellence," of peace. Considering the Ordinary of the Mass along with the Eucharistic Prayer III, used most often at Sunday parish liturgies, the word "peace" is used fifteen times. Other words, implying nonviolence (grace, mercy, reconciled, pardon, forgive, covenant, bloodshed, cross, set us free, salvation, faith, love, unite, the reign of God, healing, brothers, sisters, etc.) are used thirty times for a total of forty-five nonviolent words in all in each Eucharistic celebration. I wonder how many participants in Sunday liturgies have the slightest clue that they are praying for nonviolence in themselves, in their community and in their nation. This is one reason why I call Eucharistic liturgies "subversive."

Considering the sources of Eucharistic language, the Bible and Jewish culture, "peace" is an English translation of the Hebrew "shalom." According to McKinzie's Dictionary of the Bible, "shalom" has a rich but related mixture of meanings: completeness, perfection, gift of Yahweh, communion with Yahweh, righteousness/justice, good wishes. It seems to me that these converging meanings make up the rich texture of the term "nonviolence." I prefer the word "nonviolence" to "peace." "Peace" has evolved into a rather weak term. Almost everyone is in favor of peace, but most people do not perceive "peace" as necessarily "nonviolent." As a spiritual exercise, I like to pray the word "peace" in the Eucharistic celebration by thinking "nonviolence" as I pray the texts of the Mass.

Liturgists and theologians have viewed liturgical texts as reliable sources of the meaning of our faith as these texts have developed over time under the influence of the Holy Spirit. The Eucharistic texts are surprisingly and quite radically significant in proposing a nonviolent Christian way of life. The hopeful sign is that the intentional theology of the Church, especially in papal and Episcopal documents, has been catching up with the Eucharistic implications of nonviolence since Vatican II and Pope John Paul XXIII. This is another reason for considering the Eucharistic emphasis of nonviolence.

Unless the cries of the poor, the oppressed, the violated are compassionately heard in our liturgies, Jesus may not be effectively present to the participants. This is

not a denial of Christ's real presence in the Eucharist. When Jesus walked the roads of his native land, he was not effectively present to many people who did not know who he was, did not care to know him or even rejected him. He was especially not effectively present to those who neglected the anawim, the "least brother and sisters" who are the first to be violated in our world.

The Eucharist is especially subversive since many people, maybe most, who celebrate the Eucharist are not even aware that institutionalized forms of violence (abortion, war, execution of prisoners, racism, condoning poverty, greed, environmental destruction, etc.) are accepted and taken for granted by Eucharistic participants even though forbidden as evil by Jesus and/or the Church. In the Eucharist, we are praying, whether we realize it or not, to overcome the violence, especially those socially accepted forms of violence.

EUCHARIST & NONVIOLENCE – Part III

Words In Eucharist Implying Nonviolence

I stated at the beginning of this series that, besides the word "peace," thirty other words implying nonviolence are used in most Sunday Mass liturgies. Following are my comments about some of these words and phrases that imply nonviolence.

GRACE is a gift from God, that enhances life, not death.

PARDON/FORGIVENESS: In human life there is no peace/nonviolence without receiving and giving forgiveness. The opposite of forgiveness is vengeance, hatred, anger--all sources of violence.

RECONCILIATION is a natural and expected follow through from forgiveness. If there is no healing, bringing back together, as friends, brothers, sisters, forgiveness is incomplete and the violence of separation is not healed.

MERCY is the external expression of the internal virtue of compassion. Where mercy is lacking, harshness easily takes over and harshness is a beginning of violence. The word "mercy" is prayed at least six times in every Eucharistic celebration.

COVENANT: In Sacred Scripture, covenant means a solemn agreement between God and a community of people — an agreement of mutual love and service for the good of the people. In the Eucharist, this nonviolent covenant of love is sealed in the blood of Christ.

BLOOD OF CHRIST: Jesus was treated violently. He shed his blood for us without retaliating violently.

"SET US FREE:" "Lord by your cross and resurrection you have set us free" from the violence of sin and our addiction to violence.

"DO THIS IN MEMORY OF ME:" Do what? Certainly continue to celebrate the death and resurrection of Jesus sacramentally in the Eucharist. However, it also means that we must exemplify in our lives the love, the nonviolence and the justice of Jesus. "Go in Peace to love and serve the Lord and his people.

"ONE BODY, ONE SPIRIT IN CHRIST:" Violence is divisive and alienating. Jesus and Holy Communion are unifying, and, hence, working against the violence of separation. (1 Corinthians 12)

"IN MERCY AND LOVE UNITE ALL YOUR CHILDREN:"
Agape the main Greek word for love in the Christian Scriptures, means unconditional serving love. Agape rules out violence and demands healing of sinful separations and opens us to acceptance of others--all others.

Our prayer might be: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, you are one God in three loving persons, a community of nonviolence, a unity of love, help us in our communities to live nonviolent love and unity.

EUCCHARIST & NONVIOLENCE – Part IV

Holy Communion and Nonviolence

Having prayed the Lord's Prayer as a preparatory prayer for receiving Holy Communion, we pray the "peace" prayer and exchange the sign of peace.

"Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your apostles, 'I leave you peace, my peace I give you...give us the peace and unity of your kingdom.'"

"The peace of the Lord be with you always."

"Let us offer each other a sign of peace."

"Shalom," an attitude of nonviolence is the proper attitude for recipients of Holy Communion. This means freedom from attitudes of hostility. The sign of peace is a reaching out in a spirit of reconciliation to others, including those not even present at Mass with whom we need to be reconciled. This is a good time to remember Jesus' words in the Sermon of the Mount: "When you are offering your gift at the altar and there you remember that your brother (or sister) has anything against you, leave your gift before the altar and go first and be reconciled with your brother (or sister), and then come and offer your gift." (Matthew 5:23)

Finally, before receiving Communion, we pray once more for forgiveness from sin, keeping in mind that most forms of sin are forms of violence.

"Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us...Grant us peace. Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word and I shall be healed."

The communion minister offers us the Body of Christ with the words: "the Body of Christ." When we answer "AMEN," we are saying YES! we accept the personal risen Lord and we accept the people, called the Body of Christ by St. Paul. (1 Corinthians 11:28-29 and the whole of Chapter 12)

When the minister offers "The Blood of Christ" and I answer "AMEN," YES, I am willing to identify with the nonviolent death of Christ--nonviolent from the victim's point of view--but also that I identify with the violently spilled blood of all the brothers and sisters of Jesus whose blood is still being violently spilled throughout the world. I am also

identifying with all the children of God who are working to stop the blood spilling through lives of prayer and works of nonviolence.

As part of the brief dismissal dialogue, the Celebrant says, "Go and live in peace of Christ," or "Go in peace to serve the Lord and his people."

"Eucharist" means thanksgiving. The last words spoken by the people at the dismissal are "Thanks be to God." Living gratefully is living with a great appreciation of life itself, realizing that life is a gift and realizing that violence is harmful or destructive of life. Thanking God for life and all the gifts that are a part of life is one way of saying that we hope to live nonviolently.

EUCHARIST & NONVIOLENCE – Part V

Legalized Violence and the Eucharist

God of love, God of nonviolence, your children live in a "culture of death" (John Paul II) and a "culture of violence" (U.S. Bishops). Many of these cultural dimensions of violence are institutionalized, legal, systemic violence, social forms of devastating violence not even recognized as such by large numbers of your people.

What do I mean by institutionalized, legal, systemic violence? In the United States, the following forms of violence are legal, that is, an accepted part of our American life: execution of criminals, including minors and mentally handicapped persons, abortion, war, poverty, homelessness, racism, sexism, environmental destruction and liberal capitalism, a euphemism for greed, a capitalism based on a free market economy that accepts maximization of profit in spite of great harm to low or no-income citizens. We might also add a foreign policy based on self-interest as highest priority of values in foreign policy. These forms of violence are even thought to be good things by some government leaders and/or by a large number of the people of our nation. Indeed, our nation was built on the violence of slavery of African Americans and on the violence of genocide and land-grabbing against Native Americans.

Indeed, we might admit without much hesitation, that celebrating and participating meaningfully and understandingly in the Eucharist is subversive activity as we indicated in the second article in this series. The very meaning of the Eucharist and text of the Mass express a nonviolent value system that is contrary to the institutionalized forms of violence condoned and practiced by the U.S. Government and people, many of whom attend Eucharistic liturgies Sunday after Sunday. Can an American Catholic authentically participate in the Eucharist and be in agreement with American systemic forms of violence? Is this not taking a stand against Christ, the Bible, and/or the Church? This situation appears to me to be quite similar to the situation in Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, where the rich abused the poor within the Eucharistic gathering itself. Paul indicates that they did not understand the Eucharist that they thought they were celebrating (1 Corinthians 12:1-29)

When Christians come face to face with American systemic violence, may we condone the violence as Americans or must we confront it as Christians--or even as faithful citizens of a nation guilty of violence?

The Lord's Prayer is a part of the Eucharistic text, The Lord's Prayer, in its own right, is a subversive prayer against injustice and violence as has been explained in depth by father Michael Crosby, Thy Will Be Done. As we pray this prayer as a prayer of preparation for Holy Communion, we pray:

"Our Father:" Whose Father? May we reject any one of God's children while praying this prayer and receiving Holy Communion? Is not violence against a person a dramatic rejection of that person and of Christ Himself?

"Thy Kingdom Come:" As the Church points out in the Mass preface of the Festival of Christ the King, the Kingdom of God is a kingdom of truth, love, justice and peace. Can we authentically pray this preface while supporting forms of systemic violence that harm God's people?

"Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread:" The fathers of the Church say that this bread refers to the bread that nourishes our bodies and to the Eucharist, the Bread of Life. What better substance could Jesus have chosen to represent Himself? Bread is harmless. Bread has one purpose--to nourish, to give health and preserve life. Jesus insists that we share our bread with others for their health and life.

"Thy Will Be Done:" It is not always easy for us to discern God's will. However, as we read the Gospels, it becomes quite clear that Jesus teaches and lives justice/nonviolence and expects us to do the same. Do we really mean "thy will be done on earth..." as we celebrate the Eucharist?

"Forgive as...as we Forgive:" Forgiveness is a necessary ingredient of nonviolence. Do I still carry animosity or even hatred for some people in my heart as I receive Holy Communion?

"Deliver Us From Evil:" The Church emphasizes violence as a part of this evil, for the text of the Mass responding to the Lord's Prayer is "Deliver us from every evil, and grant us peace in our day." Legalized systemic violence is among the most insidious and dangerous forms of evil. Here we are praying against the violence that we, as a nation, are part of.

We conclude the Lord's Prayer with, "**For the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory Are Yours, now and Forever.**" Sometimes the kingdoms of this world, along with their power (economic and military), contradict the Kingdom of God.

EUCHARIST & NONVIOLENCE – Part VI

Bread Blessed, Broken and Shared

In Matthew's Gospel, the story of Jesus feeding the thousands with bread and fish is closely related to the Eucharist, to discipleship and to biblical justice. Matthew states that Jesus blessed, broke and gave the bread and fish. Matthew also has Jesus telling the disciples that they should give the people something to eat. Jesus does not distribute the food. He gives it to the disciples to distribute.

Following are some reflections about the connection of the gospel reading, the Eucharist and biblical justice:

- 1) Jesus expects us (the Church) to be involved in the service of love and justice for the people.
- 2) Jesus has already given many of us more "bread" than we need, He expects us to share it. One in every four children born in the U.S. today is born into poverty. The right to eat is one of the basic human rights.
- 3) When we pray for justice and peace, especially in the Prayers of the Faithful at Mass, it might be better to pray "that we might be your instruments of peace, justice, love, feeding, etc.," rather than "that you would give us peace, and bring about justice for the poor."
- 4) Father Walter Burghardt writes:

"...a spirituality of biblical justice must be a Eucharistic spirituality. More than any other influence, the Real Presence of the whole Christ in the Eucharist makes it possible for you and me to be eucharists (small e). I mean really present to our brothers and sisters, particularly to the poor and the oppressed."
(Love Is a Flame of the Lord, page 4)

Considering Matthew's approach to the bread and fish on the lakeshore, his rendition of the story begins with the statement that "Jesus had compassion for the people..." Compassion is a deeply felt emotion and attitude that helps to express love and do justice for others, especially for those who are suffering. Compassion is feeling with, suffering with and just being with others in a loving way.

The First Eucharist was celebrated in the context of the Last Supper--Jesus' farewell dinner with his followers. Nonviolence was a significant part of the Eucharist

from that night on. At that Last Supper Jesus said to his disciples, "Peace (Shalom) I leave you; my peace I give you, not as the world gives do I give it to you."

"The liturgy teaches us to have grateful hearts: to thank God for the gift of life, the gift of this earth, and the gift of all people. It turns our hearts from self-seeking to a spirituality that sees the signs of true discipleship in our sharing of goods and working for justice. By uniting us in prayer with all the people of God, with the rich and the poor, with those near and dear and with those in distant lands, liturgy challenges our way of living and refines our values. Together in the community of worship, we are encouraged to use the goods of this earth for the benefit of all."
(ECONOMIC JUSTICE, 331, U.S. Catholic Bishops)

* * * * *

The spiritual tone underlying this article is borrowed from Father Walter Burghardt's, S.J, book of homilies entitled Love is a Flame of the Lord, Chapter 13, "He took, He Blessed, He Broke, He Gave," Paulist Press.

Appendix E

EUCCHARIST AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE – Part I

BREAD

The Eucharist is an economic event of sacramental worship. Of course, it is more than an economic event. It is a very outstanding event of sacramental worship and the spiritual life. As an economic event it is concerned with bread, wine, a building, furniture, equipment, lights, heat, vestments, — all things that cost money. It is also about a collection of money. However, the bread and the wine are the main beginning elements that have an economic value. These are food. Food is costly and absolutely necessary for human life.

The economic level of justice must be the overflow in daily life with actions that fulfill the love/justice teachings of Jesus whose presence and action are central to the whole Eucharistic action. Unity in the Body of Christ and love for the people are essential dimensions of the Eucharist. Sharing love and justice for people is the overflow of people sharing the Bread of Life. Indeed, if the cries of the poor, especially the hungry, homeless, the naked, the oppressed are not heard in the Eucharistic celebration, then Jesus is not effectively present to those who do not want to hear the cries of the poor or the suffering. (I said, “not effectively present” I do not deny the sacramental real presence. In Jesus’ historic presence on earth, many people were physically present to Jesus but not “effectively present”).

As my first biblical witness to this theme I remind my readers of Saint Paul’s writings in his First Letter to the Corinthians, Chapter 11: 18-33.

First of all, I fear that when you meet as a church there are divisions among you... When you meet in one place, then, it is not to eat the Lord’s supper, for in eating, each one goes ahead with his (or her) own supper, and when one goes hungry while another gets drunk... Or do you show contempt for the church of God and make those who have nothing feel ashamed?...In this matter I do not praise you... For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on oneself (the word *body* in this sentence refers to the church the people of God, as the Body of Christ. Those who do not reverence the people cannot reverence the sacramental Body of Christ).

Certainly Saint Paul makes it very clear that the living of justice and love are required for worthy reception of Holy Communion. Indeed two of the very essential purposes of Holy Communion are to build unity in the Body of Christ through loving one another.

The Eucharist is the sharing of a sacred meal, instituted by Jesus in the context of the Passover Seder meal. Evidently Jesus chose a form of food to continue his presence among us. Food is one of the absolutely necessary ingredients of a life support system of biological life. In the Eucharist bread becomes the Bread of Life, necessary for human spiritual life here on earth. To separate the Eucharist, the sacramental remembering and reliving the life, passion, death and resurrection of Jesus, from the real lives of people is to make religious experience unreal - - divorced from everyday human life as well as from the gospel teachings of Jesus who insisted that we feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the unclothed and shelter the homeless. (Luke 25: 31 ff).

EUCHARIST AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE – Part II

HOUSING

“This rather is the fasting that I wish: releasing those bound unjustly...Setting free the oppressed... Sharing your bread with the hungry, sheltering the oppressed and the homeless. Clothing the naked when you see them. Isaiah 58: 6-7

In this passage God is speaking through Isaiah to the people. I suggest that my readers read the whole chapter 58 in Isaiah (only 14 verses) from which the above quote is taken. The whole chapter is a statement about *love/justice* in the spiritual exercise of fasting. In reading the whole context of Isaiah 58 you may come to the same conclusion that I did: other spiritual exercises including prayer and public worship could be substituted for fasting. I apply these words to the celebration of Eucharistic worship as well.

In my last article I mentioned that a building is usually required for a Eucharistic gathering. Of all the material requirements for the Eucharist the most expensive is a building, usually a church building of some kind.

In the early 1980's I was the University pastor at Moorhead State University. Prior to the establishment of the Dorothy Day House of Hospitality, and a little later, the Church United for the Homeless, a shelter for the homeless. We invited homeless people to sleep in the lower level of the St. Thomas Newman Center at Moorhead State. We also furnished blankets and two simple meals for the homeless guests — supper and breakfast. A few Catholic students objected to the use of *their* Catholic student center for sheltering homeless people. My response to them was that we were doing what the Gospel expects us to do — to help people the best that we can when people are in need. I tried to explain that sheltering and feeding people in the lower level of our building authenticated in a very real way, our Eucharistic worship in the upper level in the same building. I also mentioned to the objectors that we were only doing what Isaiah and Jesus expected us to do. Jesus was very clear about serving the *anawim*, the powerless little people: the poor, the hungry, the homeless, the naked, the sick, the children and others who were also economically underprivileged. This lower level sharing authenticated the upper level sharing of Jesus, the *Bread of Life*. This

sheltering the homeless people did not interfere with our student program. Our homeless guests did not arrive until after 9:00 p.m. and left again by 8:00 a.m. after a simple breakfast. In fact, I felt that this program was our most effective religious education program with over fifty students of Moorhead State and Concordia College who volunteered to spend the night with and care for our homeless guests. They learned, in a very real down-to-earth way, in a lower level of this building where the upper level was a chapel for Eucharistic worship. This kind of loving service flowed from authentic worship.

A postscript: City Hall wanted us to discontinue serving homeless people at the student center since the city zoned this building as a church and not a shelter for homeless people. Our attorney, Randy Stephenson, settled the issue by reminding City Hall that when the Newman Center was zoned as a church the Newman Center would then be zoned as a center to care for people in need, for the Bible makes it very clear this is an essential part of what the church is supposed to do.

EUCCHARIST AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE – Part III

CLOTHING AND HOUSEHOLD ITEMS

Along with food and housing, clothing is a basic human need. Indeed, clothing also makes a statement about who we are as well as about our economic class in society. Other conspicuous consumption items that make our economic class statements are, houses, cars, furniture, dishes, silverware, neighborhood where we live and other things. If we might make a judgment about the clothing worn by Jesus and the apostles, or about the furniture and table settings of the upper room of the Last Supper we might conclude that the lifestyle of Jesus and the apostles was quite simple. “Foxes have dens and the birds of the sky have nests but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head”. Luke 9:58.

In the Gospel of St. Luke, Jesus emphasizes that generosity in the use of our wealth over thirty times. According to his statements it is necessary for us to share our wealth generously if we wish to come into his kingdom. (I have listed many of these scripture passages at the end of this article). A Biblical economic lifestyle is one of the strongest challenges of Jesus in the Christian scriptures. What does this gospel lifestyle have to do with the Eucharist? St. John Chrysostom has an interesting homily about this question. The following reflections come from his homily.

When we build unnecessarily luxurious churches, wear expensive gold threaded vestments, use precious vessels expensively studded with jewels and cover the altar with rich cloth, how can this please the Lord present in the Eucharist, especially while poor people in the community are inadequately dressed in shabby clothes, undernourished, without a table or bed in the shacks where they live. St. Matthew’s Gospel reminds us that this kind of treatment of destitute people is the way we treat Jesus himself. He said “I assure as often as you did this to the least of my brothers or sisters you did it to me (Matthew 25:31-ff).”

When we participate in the Eucharist without being generous to those in need we are not being generous to Jesus when we profess to honor Jesus in the Eucharistic celebration.

St. James also makes it clear that unjust economic or racial class discrimination destroys the authenticity of our worship.

My brothers (and sisters) show no partiality as you adhere to the faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ. For if a man with gold rings on his fingers and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and a poor person in shabby clothing also comes in, and you pay attention to the fine clothes and say, 'sit here, please,' while you say to the poor one 'stand there' or 'sit at my feet' have you not made distinctions among yourself and become judges with evil designs...

Listen, my beloved brothers. Did not God chose those who are poor in the world to be rich in the faith and heirs of the kingdom that he promised to those who love him?" James 2:1-5

St James adds in the fifth chapter of his letter:

"Come now, you rich, weep and wail over your impending miseries. Your wealth has rotted away, your clothes have become moth eaten, your gold and silver have corroded and that corrosion will be a testimony against you." James 5:1-3.

What Jesus, St. Paul, St. James and St. John Chrysoston teach us is that our lives must be consistent with the meaning of our worship, especially of Eucharistic worship.

* * * * *

Economic Lifestyle in the Gospel according to Luke

4/14-21	Mission of the Messiah
7/18-26	Mission of the Messiah
6/38	Giving
9/25	"What does it profit a man..."
12/15-21	Greed: Parable of the rich fool
12/32-34	Treasure
14/12-14	Guess who's invited to dinner
16/13-14	Avarice: God and money
16/19-31	Parable of rich man and Lazarus
18/18-23	Jesus and the Rich Man
18/24-25	About camels and needles

EUCHARIST AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE – Part IV

BLOOD AND LIBERATION

The great epic story of liberation in the Jewish scriptures is the Book of Exodus. (To gain the flavor and the meaning of the Passover story in the Book of Exodus I would suggest that my readers read at least chapters 12 and 13).

The powerful sacramental of the Passover event were the paschal lamb and the sprinkling of the door lintels with the blood of the lamb to liberate and save the people from slavery and the Egyptian pharaoh. In the New Covenant (covenant means solemn agreement between God and his people) the new Paschal lamb would be Jesus, who was sacrificed on the altar of the cross. The blood of the new Paschal Lamb was poured out for the salvation of the people, cleansing and freeing them from the slavery of sin. This new saving liberation event of the New Covenant sealed in the Blood of Christ was instituted and sacramentalized in the first Eucharist at the Last Supper, the Passover – Seder Meal.

The original liberation from Egyptian slavery was an event of social justice done under the auspices of Yahweh for his people with whom God made the Mosaic Covenant in the desert. A covenant is not only a solemn agreement it is also a firm commitment between God and the people. This new liberating covenant/commitment between God and the people was sealed in the Blood of the Lamb who is Christ. This new liberation covenant has the power to free people from sin, including the sins of social injustice such as violence, war, poverty, racism, greed, abortion and freedom from the deprivation and violation of human rights.

The Eucharist, born in the liberation ritual of the Passover supper to free us from the slavery of sin includes freedom from economic injustice. I am thinking of injustices such as minimum wages, exploitation of people imprisoned in poverty and the violation of human rights. So...again, the cries of the oppressed must continue to be heard in Eucharistic celebrations and beyond the sacramental ritual in the real life situations of those who participate in the Eucharist.

How does all of this work out as we share Holy Communion within the Eucharist?

As communicants approach the altar we answer *amen* to the words the Body of Christ. We communicants are saying *amen* not only to the sacramental Body of Christ

but also to the people in need in the Body of Christ in the world. I would suggest that my readers would also try to read a little book entitled Broken Bread and Broken Bodies by Joseph Grassi*. A communicant might well consider not receiving Holy Communion if he or she could not accept, at least in a beginning way, the other people who are receiving Holy Communion even if the other communicants are persons whom we might have difficulty forgiving or treating with equality or are poverty stricken. When we hold out our hands to accept “the Body of Christ” and “the Blood of Christ”, our *amen* is our covenant commitment to heal the wounds and feed the hungers of the whole Christ whose blood continues to flow from his members in the real world of today.

**Subtitle: The Lord's Supper and World Hunger, Orbis Press, P.O. Box 308, Maryknoll, NY 10545*

EUCHARIST AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE – Part V

“DO THIS IN MEMORY OF ME”

Do what in memory of Him? How people answer this question gives us a clue as to what the Eucharist means in peoples’ lives.

The most common interpretation of “do this in memory of me” is that the Church must continue to do the ritual of the Lord’s Supper, to keep celebrating the sacramental liturgy of the Holy Eucharist. There is no doubt in my mind that those words of Jesus do mean this. But, I am also convinced that the words mean more.

The sacrament of the Holy Eucharist is a commemoration not only of Jesus ceremonial Last Supper, but also of his life, teaching, death, Resurrection, and Ascension. In this perspective, “do this in memory of me” means living, as best we can, the life, teachings, sorrowful death, and Resurrection of Jesus. I mean not only celebrating the Eucharist, but especially living the Eucharist beyond the liturgical observance. In other words, doing our best to live, in our every day life, the values expressed by Jesus in his life, death and teachings.

I think that this means that in our active, communal participation in the liturgy of the Eucharist, we will do our imperfect best to take Jesus seriously.

Taking Jesus seriously means also taking the Eucharist seriously. This means participating in and living the Eucharist in the context of the real problems, politics and struggles of the present world. We might keep in mind the setting, politics, dangers and conflicts in which the First Eucharist was celebrated on the First Holy Thursday. It was the setting and context of a highly political, conflict centered Passover.

Outside the walls of that upper room it was dark. It was dark with conspiracy and death-plans to arrest Jesus and bring an end to his battle with evil in Jerusalem and throughout Judea and Galilee. It was dark with sinister meetings going on to put an end to Jesus’ life. The death thoughts outside the supper room were expressed by Jesus with the words, “This is my body given for you...this is my blood shed for many.” This was no safe, comfortable liturgy.

Today, outside the walls of the Church, beyond the light shining through beautiful stained glass windows, and in an atmosphere of soft organ music, it is still dark, very dark with a “culture of violence.” It is the darkness of war, abortion, poverty, racism,

sexism, crime and earth-destruction. The Eucharistic liturgy within the walls must not be an escape from the darkness but a praying, planning, energizing sacrifice of a community preparing the participants to engage the battle in the outside darkness to change the dark into light, and death into life. That is the action of the Paschal Mystery.

Appendix F

LAND AND PEOPLE – Part I

This land is your land
This land is my land
From California to the New York Island
From the redwood forests
To the Gulf Stream waters
This land was made for you and me.
Woody Guthrie

Land is considered sacred by the indigenous people of what are now called the Americas — North, Central and South. Land is sacred to our native people but not privately owned because it is part of Mother Earth made by the Creator. It is through Mother Earth that the Creator gives us most other gifts. The land is also sacred because it holds the remains of the people's ancestors.

At Red Lake, Minnesota, land is not owned privately by the individuals or families, but held in trust from the Creator by the tribal community, St. Mary's Mission land is one exception, it is owned by the Catholic Church. Church ownership of this land is legal, but is it moral? According to the Ojibwa tradition and values, the land is held in trust by the Tribal Community but owned only by the Creator.

Perceptive Jewish and Christian stewardship recognizes that:

“The Lord's are the earth and its fullness; the world and those who dwell in it. For he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers.” Psalm 24

Chief Seattle, of the Yakima people wrote the following letter to the president in the middle of the last century:

“The president in Washington sends word that he wishes to buy our land. But how can you buy or sell the sky? The land? The idea is strange to us. If we do not own the freshness of the air and the sparkle of the water, how can you buy them?

“Every part of this earth is sacred to my people. Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every meadow, every humming insect. All are holy in the memory and experience of my people...”

“The rivers are our brothers. They quench our thirst. They carry our canoes and feed our children. So you must give to the rivers the kindness you would give my brother.”

“Will you teach your children what we have taught our children? That the earth is our mother?”

“One thing we know: our God is also your God. The earth is precious to him and to harm the earth is to heap contempt on its Creator.”

When we sing “This land is your land, This land is my land...It was made for you and me” — who are “you and me?” Who are included in “you and me?”

Many traditions, teachings, and values of the Indian people are in complete harmony with the teachings found in the Bible. The Ojibwa understanding of the land is one such biblical teaching and value that the people of the Ojibwa tradition live out in practice better than most people do who claim faith in the Bible as God’s Revelation.

We human beings have no absolute ownership over creation. By the biblical meaning of ownership, we mean that we only hold in trust the gifts that belong to God. Real appreciation of this theological reality could lead us to a less violent world because it would lead us to a less greedy world.

LAND AND PEOPLE – Part II

“Simeon said to Mary: ‘You yourself a sword will pierce.’”
Luke 2:34-35

Our Lady of Guadalupe is a Native American, an Indian expression of Mary the Mother of Jesus. I believe that it is appropriate to consider our Lady of Guadalupe as an expression of the “Sorrowful Mother” of Catholic tradition. She is the Mother of the exploited aboriginal people of the Americas.

Over a period of 500 years, from 1492 to the present, the indigenous people of what is now called North, Central, and South America have been thoroughly exploited by our European colonial ancestors who colonized this continent. Our European forbearers were able to steal with impunity from the native people over one-third of the land on the planet, because the immigrants had guns and the indigenous people did not. One U.S. historian justified this greatest land heist in human history as “Manifest Destiny,” as God’s plan. Except for a few miniscule pieces of land called reservations, all the land and the rich resources of the land became the possessions of immigrant colonists and their succeeding generations. This was done by church going Christians who considered the natives as sub-human savages who, of course, had no rights because they were not favored by God as were the white Christian Europeans.

Besides depriving the American Indians of the land and its resources they held in trust from the Creator, our predecessors who left us their stolen riches also grew wealthy stealing the very persons of American Indians and Africans to be used as slaves to do the hard labor of Euro-American wealth builders. So — today with all of our stolen assets we are the most wealthy and, hence, powerful nation on Planet Earth, while the rightful stewards of it all sit on tiny patches of unproductive land suffering devastating poverty and powerlessness.

During these past 500 years of blood and sorrow, the dominant power structures of the colonies and later the United States of America made a concerted effort at genocide to destroy the original people of the United States. Over 50,000,000 Indian people lost their lives over these centuries, through the violence worked against them. This was a much greater body count than the Nazi Holocaust of the Jews.

“Approximately 56 million native people died as a result of European exploitation of the New World. In many areas, this translated into a reduction of the population to 10 percent of its initial size. Some died in combat and many as a result of social disruption, but most died of introduced diseases.”
Francis Black, 1992, Why Did They Die? Science, 258 pp
1739 ff

Euro-Americans have often considered the aboriginal people of this continent as uncivilized savages. The more I learn about the history of relationships of the Native Americans and the European immigrants, I believe that we need to be very careful about whom we call “savage.”

“This land is your land
This land is my land...”

Whose Land?

LAND AND PEOPLE – Part III

Is Healing Possible?

Part II, of this series, talks about our European ancestral immigrants to the Americas who literally stole by force of offensive warfare (forbidden by the church's just war teaching), the land masses of the American Continents. They stole these lands from the indigenous people of the North, Central, and South Americas. These same predecessors killed off about 90% of the Indian population of the Americas. In numbers, education guesses range from 54 million to 70 million people destroyed.

Some may ask why I write about this incredible land-heist and demonic people-holocaust. My reasons follow.

Such egregious injustice and violence cannot be healed and genuine reconciliation cannot be brought about by denial. The resulting double-edged racism can only be exorcised and healed in the succeeding generations of both the perpetrators and the victims by admitting and facing the evil. Healing and reconciliation calls for confession of sin, and seeking forgiveness on the part of succeeding generations of the perpetrators and offering forgiveness on the part of succeeding generations of the victims. Reconciliation must include what restitution is possible. We can at least go back to the broken treaties and fulfill government responsibility to the victim peoples.

Another reason for facing this repressed history is that most of our aboriginal tribes are today living in the worst forms of economic deprivation as consequence of the injustices. This horrible poverty and deprivation needs to be healed and living conditions need to be changed as part of the restitution. Some readers might object that our generation had nothing to do with the injustice of the whole land-heist. This is true. However, the present generation is enjoying the use of almost all the land that our ancestors stole, knowingly or unknowingly, from the Indian people while the present generation of Indian people are living in either dire or relative poverty because of the injustices of the past.

Most of those who, knowingly or unknowingly, participated in the injustice and violence, claimed to be Christian- -mostly Roman Catholic among the Spanish and French. There will not be any deep healing without an end to racist scapegoating on

the part of Euro-Americans, nor will there be a healing of the anger on the part of the present Indian people without the process of reconciliation.

* * * * *

If the dominant and dominating segment of American society had not been and, if we now were not so intent on denying injustice and racism in regard to the indigenous peoples, we might have been more open to learning from the people of such cultures. There is much wisdom and deep values in their culture, especially as they relate to our earth environment. We could still learn from their values about earth-care, sacredness of the land, accountability to the Creator about our use of water, soil, and the life systems of the earth's biosphere. It was not the Indian people who decimated the buffalo, polluted the atmosphere and water, and deeply wounded the earth. The Indian people had learned what the rest of us had not and have not learned — to intimately connect with nature and to preserve a sustainable natural environment.

Knowledge and appreciation of aboriginal values could have prevented us from doing so much harm to the natural environment of this once beautiful and rich part of the planet that we call America — a land that we have greatly wounded and partially destroyed out of ignorance and greed.