

**Justice Theme**

**Homily Aids**

For Sunday Liturgies

**B Cycle**

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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usinfo.state.gov

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## INTRODUCTION

This is the second of a three-part series of homily suggestions entitled Justice Theme Homily Aids for Sunday Liturgies. Even though most of the offerings are for Sunday liturgies, by way of exception we have included a few holy days and weekdays.

The offerings in this series are made up of several formats including sample homilies, homily outlines, quotations from various sources and reprints (with permission) from periodicals and newsletters. It is suggested that these offerings be used not as complete homilies, but as ideas for your homily preparation.

All the pieces in this series flow from the Sacred Scripture readings of the day in some real way. The use of Sacred Scripture for spiritual growth and for preaching must try to answer two questions:

- (1) What did the original author mean by his writing in a different time, place and culture? This exegesis should be done before one deals with the second question.
- (2) (2) What does this particular passage and context have to say to us today in a very different time, place and culture? The answer to this second question could be quite arbitrary and have very little to do with the original meaning of the writing if we neglect the first question, the exegesis.

This series of suggestions for Justice Theme Homily Aids for Sunday Liturgies usually does not develop the exegesis. That is left to each reader, preacher, or teacher with his or her own study resources. Having considered the exegetical meanings, I believe the materials in this book are in harmony with the original meanings offered by Scripture scholars.

Readers will notice that there is only one piece offered for some Sundays and several for other Sundays. There is no particular reason for this other than the author had more relevant material for some days than for others.

This series was originated and is intended as a follow-up to a priests' retreat on "Preaching the Just Word" conducted by Father Walter Burghardt and his team in the Crookston Diocese. Following are Father Burghardt's own words about his project:

“Preaching the just word” is an effort to move the preaching of social issues more effectively into the Catholic pulpits of our country. Not to solve complex social, economic, or political problems; this is not possible even within the very best of homilies. Rather to raise the issues, to raise the Christian conscience, to get our graced faithful thinking, talking, acting.”

“We at the Center are persuaded that such preaching will always be less persuasive than it should be unless sheer skills are integrated with a spirituality. So, time and again we will bring preachers of promise and compassion to a retreat house, where spirituality is the heart and soul of the enterprise, filling not only their minds with information but their bellies with fire, and send them forth to spread the flame in their acre of God’s world.” (When Christ Meets Christ, Homilies on the Just Word), Paulist Press, 1993, page 90).

In this series of homily suggestions we have tried to carry out Walter Burghardt’s insistence that “spirituality be the heart and soul” of homilies on justice and peace.

Many aids in developing homilies on the “Just Word” are available. Some suggested books of homilies are:

Books in the Homilies on the Just Word, Walter J. Burghardt, S.J. (Paulist Press).

John Kavanaugh, Meditation on the Sunday Scriptures, (Orbis books); (three books).

Megan McKenna (Orbis books); presenting liturgical reflections according to the three cycles.

The Good News According to Luke, by Richard Rohr (Crossroad).

The Jerome Bible Commentary (Prentice Hall).

Most readers are also familiar with several homily helps, periodicals and publications. However, not all are helpful in justice/nonviolence themes.

Also included in B Cycle homily suggestions are some relevant quotations from three pastoral letters of the American Bishops: The Challenge of Peace, Economic Justice for All, and To the Ends of the Earth. These were chosen from a series entitled, The Pastorals on Sundays by Jacquelyn S. Graham and Roger LaBonte (Liturgy Training Publications). This series is out of print.

## **FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

### **The End Times - Christ's Second Coming**

Mark 13:33-37 The Second Coming of Christ

### **An Eschatological Perspective**

This time of year—November and early December—the Church reminds us of the end of times, the last things and the end of human history as we know it. Included in the “last things” will be resurrection of the dead, the second coming of Christ, and the Last Judgment. The study of these projected happenings makes up what is known in theology as eschatology. An eschatological perspective means living our lives now in the faith and expectation of the end of the kingdom of this world and the full establishment of the reign of God.

Some Christians are so concentrated on the eschatological perspective of the second coming of Christ that they neglect to take seriously the present life on earth. They seem to see little value in the present, and seem to have little hope in making life in this world a better, less violent, more just experience. This misguided vision of the end times seems to be an escape from responsibility for present reality instead of involvement in the present world and time.

A healthy eschatological perspective can be a source of great wisdom now because such a focus can enable us to discern real values, lasting values and gifts worth cherishing. Such a perspective can help us discern the difference between fools gold and real gold, and aid us in choosing the priorities proclaimed by Christ as the priorities of the reign of God. Such priorities would include love, reverence for life, nonviolence, justice, forgiveness, and perceiving this life as good but leading toward a better life, a lasting life. Such a perspective can help us see the present emphasis on wealth, power, prestige, greed, violence, vengeance and the terrible injustices of current life, as non-values, as evil. Indeed, in the light of an eschatological perspective, violence is seen as the epitome of human stupidity and evil.

If we maintain an eschatological perspective, then in wisdom we can realize beyond any shadow of a doubt that no amount of money, prestige, position or power

can ever come close to the value of life and love. We will then clearly understand that human rights (justice), especially the right to life, merit top priority among our moral values. If we consider abortion, marital unfaithfulness, sexual promiscuity, dishonesty, vengeance, material wealth and violence in the light of our eschatological perspective, then all these things will clearly be seen as serious evils in our value system.

In the broader social scope, war, racism, wealth building, and power seeking are seen as dehumanizing in the light of the eschatological perspective.

An eschatological perspective makes hope possible in hopeless situations and helps us live wisely, justly, and nonviolently in the present. Jesus' parable of the rich fool (Luke 12:16-21) is to the point here. A rich farmer had a most plentiful crop. In order to insure his own security and affluent living he built larger barns and storage bins. Then he said to himself, "now you have so many good things stored up for many years, rest, eat, drink, be merry." But, God told him, "you fool, this night your life will be demanded of you; and the things you have prepared, to whom will they belong?"

A healthy eschatological perspective can make a big difference in how we live this life.

## THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

### THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

#### Liberation of *Anawim*: Jubilee 2000

Isaiah 61:1-2, 10-11 “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me.”

*Anawim*—Jubilee—Messiah

John 1:6-8, 19-28 Exile/Poverty/Liberation “...there is one among you whom you do not recognize...”

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- Optional Theme: “They Did Not Recognize Him “
- Optional Theme: “Where is He?”
- Appendix D Series “Catholic Social Teaching;  
Part V: “On the Development of Peoples” VI  
Part VI: “Living Wages”, Part I and Part II
- Appendix E Network – A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby:  
[www.networklobby.org](http://www.networklobby.org)

### A Book Review

“Proclaim Jubilee—A Spirituality for the Twenty-First Century” authored by Maria Harris, (Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky, 1996), is a book about the Sabbath and the Jubilee Year. This was an appropriate reflection for us in preparation for the year 2000 proclaimed by Pope John Paul II as a “Jubilee Year—The Great Jubilee. The meaning of the Jubilee Year remains an important concept for justice spirituality for all times.

What is a Jubilee Year? To answer this question, we need to take a look at the book of Leviticus, Chapter 25 and Luke 4:19.

“You shall hallow the fiftieth year (after every 49 years) and you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants.” Leviticus 25:4 and Luke 4:19.

In every Jubilee Year, the people were to allow the land to lie fallow, forgive debts, free the captives and slaves, return land and property to those who had been deprived of their property and, in general, to proclaim liberation and observe the Sabbath rest. From these prescriptions, it is quite evident that the Jubilee Year was, in a special way, a year of social justice and nonviolence—a time to “repair the world.” It was the hope and prayer of Pope John Paul that the year 2000 would be a year of spiritual renewal, a year for a new start for the world, a year to “repair the world” and replenish the earth.

The year 2000 hopefully was a year of forgiveness and reconciliation, both personal and social. Indeed, it will always be in keeping with Sabbath/jubilee for developed nations to even pardon the oppressive debts that the poor nations could not repay without seriously further depriving their own poverty-stricken people. In preparation for, and in light of Sabbath/jubilee, Bishop Balke proclaimed years 1999 and 2000 as a special time for forgiving and reconciling in the Diocese of Crookston.

Forgiving people who have harmed us, and reconciling ourselves with persons from whom we have been alienated is an absolutely necessary first step in living the justice and nonviolent prescriptions of the Jubilee Year. Forgiveness and reconciliation are usually processes that take time, courage and effort, but the good to be accomplished is so important that we cannot afford to put off the process. As long as hard feelings, grudges, prejudices, anger and our hatreds continue to contaminate human relationships, there will be no end to violence and injustice. We need to start the process now by seeking God's forgiveness for ourselves and by praying for the grace to forgive others. We also need to pray for the good of those whom we perceive to be our enemies. For the Jubilee Year to be a time of jubilation and spiritual growth, we need to wind down our hostilities and gear up our forgiveness and compassion.

“Advent is a good time to talk jubilee, a new start for this old world now winding down the most violent century in human history.”

Maria Harris adds that “it can be argued that the dominant motif of biblical jubilee is liberation.”

“You shall have the trumpet sounded throughout all your land. And you shall hallow the fiftieth year and you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you: you shall return every one of you to your property and every one of you to your family. For it is a jubilee: it shall be holy to you.”  
(Leviticus 25:9b- 10, 12a)

The author then enlarges on the jubilee liberation theme by emphasizing five freedoms: the freedom to go home, the freedom to remember, the freedom for re-creation in community, the freedom for prisoners, and the freedom for children. I offer here a little reflection on three of the freedoms: re-creation, prisoners and children.

Under re-creation, Maria Harris stresses the growth and the value of creation theology in the United States. As a part of re-creation or creation theology, she mentions that “all are related”, a tradition of Native Americans that we are not only related to all human beings but also to the whole of creation, “that we create new relationships to soil and water and air and all living things, relations that liberate them, too.”

When she writes about freedom for prisoners, she writes about freedom from the death penalty, freedom from prison abuses, freedom from modern forms of slavery and apartheid, and freedom from violations of human rights around the world. Freedom from the death penalty, political imprisonment, and torture are forms of freedom that Amnesty International has been working on for several decades. At the present time, Amnesty International is challenging the United States for our abuses of human rights, especially police brutality, prison brutality, racial discrimination, violation of women and children held in adult U.S. prisons and jails, racist and juvenile death penalties, and violation of human rights by the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

When the author writes about freedom for children, she is aware that abuse, and even slavery of children still exists on our planet, sometimes in our home towns and sometimes by U.S. corporations in the third world. Children are sold into prostitution in Cuba to help out destitute families. Children in the Philippines are held in bonded servitude and in the U.S. Children need to be freed through liberation.

In a statement of Pope John Paul II in his Apostolic Letter, *On the Coming of the Third Millennium*, 1994, he wrote:

“The Jubilee Year was meant to restore social justice. The social doctrine of the Church...is rooted in the tradition of The Jubilee Year.” (This Apostolic Letter is available from the United States Catholic Conference, Washington D.C.)

“The fiftieth year you shall make sacred by proclaiming liberty in the land for all its inhabitants.” (Leviticus 25:10).

Liberation of captives, prisoners, and debtors is an important justice concern. Amnesty International has reported political imprisonments in over 80 countries. Amnesty has also investigated abuse, violation of human rights, and torture as practiced in many countries today.



Amnesty International is in the process of investigating human rights abuses in the United States. Already, in a preliminary report, Amnesty has pointed out some of these abuses in our treatment of arrestees and prisoners by law enforcement and prison personnel. It was especially noted that women and children are violated in our own country—a nation that “preaches” human rights to other countries.

A reader might respond that this tradition of Jubilee is no longer relevant since slavery ended in the United States with the Emancipation Proclamation of 1862. In reality, we still have various forms of slavery in the modern world. Today we have violation of the rights of children in many nations: Bangladesh, Guatemala, Honduras, Haiti, Nicaragua, China, and even in the United States. Many of these children work 12 to 15 hours a day for a few cents an hour. Part of the scandal is the fact that U. S. corporations are involved in these sweatshop factories. Among these corporations are Gulf Western, Wal-Mart, Nike, J.C. Penney and Disney. (Information drawn from “Catholic Peace,” Fall 1998, Pax Christi, U.S.A.) In the Dominican Republic, Haitian children are held captive and forced to work in the sugarcane fields. This industry is largely operated by U. S. Corporations. U. S. citizens who buy low-cost cane sugar are benefiting by the slave labor of Haitian children. Other forms of slavery, especially of women and children, still exist around our modern world. Even in the U. S., there are forms of sexual slavery of children and women.

Certainly, jubilee liberation may be extended to all people and especially people of color who suffer the violence of the “terrible sin” of racism. Jubilee time is a good time, especially in this country, to bring an end to the pervasive evil that prohibits some people from the privilege of enjoying full humanity and citizenship. African Americans, Native Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Asian Americans have been dehumanized in this land for too many centuries by Euro-Americans who consider themselves a superior race.

Maria Harris reminds us that “liberty in the land for all its “Inhabitants” and liberation for “the land” itself is part of Jubilee liberation. After recommending thoughts of Thomas Berry, the creation theologian, she writes:

“Such a theology would demand—and Berry’s own work embodies this—that we create new relations to soil and water and air and all living things, relations that liberate them

too. It would apply also to North Americans joining, for example, the northern Indian women who hug the trees to save them: the Kenyans who are part of the Green Belt movement to plant new trees.”

As this violent millennium came to an end, and as the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the most violent in human history, wound down, our world certainly needed and still needs mention of forgiveness, reconciliation, prayer and hope; a new start for the earth and its people. We, the people of the past 2000 Year Jubilee need reminding of jubilee years’ biblical values.

\* \* \* \* \*

“The obligation to provide justice for all means that the poor have the single most urgent economic claim on the conscience of the nation. Poverty can take many forms, spiritual as well as material. All people face struggles of the spirit as they ask deep questions about their purpose in life. Many have serious problems in marriage and family life at some time in their lives, and all of us face the certain reality of sickness and death. The Gospel of Christ proclaims that God’s love is stronger than all these forms of diminishment. Material deprivation, however, seriously compounds such sufferings of the spirit and heart. To see a loved one sick is bad enough, but to have no possibility of obtaining health care is worse. To face family problems, such as the death of a spouse or a divorce, can be devastating, but to have these lead to the loss of one’s home and end with living on the streets is something no one should have to endure in a country as rich as ours. In developing countries these human problems are even more greatly intensified by extreme material deprivation. This form of human suffering can be reduced if our own country, so rich in resources, chooses to increase its assistance.

ECONOMIC JUSTICE 86

**Optional Theme:**  
**“They Did Not Recognize Him”**

Gospel: John 1:6-8, 19-28 Exile/Poverty/Liberation

“...there is one among you whom you do not recognize.”

“I did not recognize Him” – John the Baptist

“She did not recognize Him” – Mary Magdalene

“They did not recognize Him...” – disciples on the way to Emmaus.

This litany of lack of recognition is repeated many times in the Gospels, especially in the gospel according to John. In the Christmas season it comes up several times. In the prologue to John’s Gospel we read:

“He was in the world and through Him the world was made, yet the world did not know who He was.” (John 1:10).

In the same Gospel (John 1:26), John the Baptist tells the people:

“There is one among you whom you do not recognize—the one who is to come after me...”

John the Baptist admits that even he did not recognize Him at first:

“I confess I did not recognize Him, though the very reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel. (John 1:31)

Recognizing the identity of Jesus was and is fundamental for the authenticity of our faith. Jesus himself was concerned about people recognizing Him. He asked his disciples two questions; “Who do people say that the son of man is?” Who do you say that I am?” (Matthew 16). The disciples’ answer to the first question included four possibilities: “John the Baptist, or Elijah, or Jeremiah, or some other prophet.” Peter’s answers to the second question was, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” Even with Peter’s correct answer, his recognition was only partial for in the very next paragraph Peter rejected the “Suffering Servant” dimension of Jesus’ Messiahship. At this point in their lives, Peter and the other disciples did not recognize “The Christ of the Cross.”

I think that our answers today indicate that there are many different answers to the question: “Who do you say that I am?” Some of the answers, even among Christians, seem to indicate that our recognitions of Him are varied, and sometimes contradictory. Do we recognize Him as the Christ of Black Theology, the Christ of Liberation Theology, the Christ of Native Americans, the White Affluent Christ, the Christ of the World’s *anawim*, or some other Christ?’

How do we search out our answer to this fundamental question: “Who do you say that I am?” I have three suggestions;

1. Openly, humbly, prayerfully and regularly searching the gospel and the Church.
2. Praying regularly to the Holy Spirit for wisdom, understanding and knowledge.
3. Consulting wise persons through reading and personal conversations.

No matter what answers people come to, we will not have the whole Christ unless we accept the difficult Christ of the Cross, the weak and humble Christ, the Christ of the Suffering Servant, the Christ of the *anawim*—the poor and the powerless, and the nonviolent Christ.

Certainly, one will not recognize him if we do not recognize him in disguise—in the poor, the oppressed, and the handicapped, as well as in the persons we live with and work with.

**Optional Theme:**  
**“Where is He?”**

Is He in the crib at Christmas?

Is He in the Church on Sunday?

Do we find Him in the Bible, the parish, the Sacraments?

Yes, maybe, but only if we recognize Him in his many disguises?

He’s a man of color beaten on a city street - -

He’s a lonely old woman living over a store in a small town - -

He’s a “welfare case” in a rural countryside - -

He’s an unknown baby whom the mother doesn’t want - -

He’s a frightened girl, pregnant and alienated from her parents - -

He’s a passionate teenager groping his way to understand love and sex - -

He’s a husband torn between faithfulness to his wife and, unfortunately, his attraction to another woman - -

He’s a soldier separated from family while at war - -

He’s an agnostic searching for faith - -

He’s a wife trying to be dealing with her alcoholic husband - -

He’s all the confused sinners and criminals that fascinate readers of newspapers, and viewers of TV news programs.

He’s a student I know, a priest I don’t like, - -a doctor, a teacher

He’s a homeless person - -

He’s mother, dad, sister, brother, neighbor, friend, enemy - -

He’s each person I love - - or find hard to love - -

Maybe I’ve been looking for Jesus in all the wrong places. I can’t find him in the Church unless I find him in people. The Church is the people, and the people are the Body of Christ - -Christ in disguise.

P.S. I discovered this piece about 35 years ago. I have lost track of the author, or I would have given him/her credit.

## Christmas Season Themes

December 28 – Matthew 2:13-18 Holy Innocents--Violence against Children

December 29 – Luke 2:33-35 Presentation of Jesus in the Temple

December 30 – I John 2:12-17 *Sixth Day in the Christmas Octave*

“The World...”

- Appendix A Series “Christian or American”
- Appendix D Series “Catholic Social Teaching;  
Part IV “*Peace on Earth*”

December 28th gives us the downside of the Christmas story, the conflict, violence and death of the Infancy narratives. These are the foreshadowing of the final conflict, passion and death of Jesus.

The Feast of the Holy Innocents (Matthew 2:13-18) pictures the evil violence of King Herod, a jealous, conniving, murderous man who kills children in order to maintain his own power structure.

Today, the children still die by abortion, poverty, forced labor and enslavement, neglect and abuse in families in the U.S. and world and by inadequate welfare and congressional denial of health insurance for millions of U.S. children. Causes for today’s abuse and killing of children are still abusive domination, greed and other adult sins and sicknesses.

The proclamation of Christmas begins with these words at the Midnight Mass:

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light:  
upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has  
shone.” (Isaiah 9:1).

We still have the option of choosing Christ, the suffering, loving servant “Light of the World.” We still have the option of finding this saving Light by following the Magi’s star of faith. If we do not choose this option, the children will continue to die.

December 29<sup>th</sup>, the fourth day in the Octave of Christmas, gives us Luke’s conflict and death dimension of the Christmas story in Simeon’s prophecy.

“This child is destined to be the downfall and the rise of  
many in Israel, a sign that will be opposed—and you  
yourself, shall be pierced with a sword...” (Luke 2:33-35).

Jesus is a sign that is still opposed and mothers' hearts are still being pierced with sorrow. Just in our country alone, Jesus is a sign of contradiction in matters of greed and compulsive consumption, poverty and homelessness, war and capital punishment, abortion, racism, sexism, environmental destruction and abuse of power.

The killing of their children in crime is still piercing mothers' hearts, and by the reality that one in every six children in America is born into poverty—and poverty destroys - - “Poverty is a weapon of mass destruction”. (James Forbes)

On December 30<sup>th</sup>, the sixth day in the Christmas Octave, we read the first reading:

“Do not love the world or the things of the world. If anyone loves the world the love of the Father is not in him (or her). For all that is in the world, sensual lust, enticement for the eyes, and a pretentious life, is not from the Father but is from the world.” (1 John 2:15-17)

In John's Gospel, the author uses the word, “world,” often. It usually carries a very negative connotation, standing in contrast with a universe of good, of faith, of light, of love and eternal life. For John, “world” means the power and influence of evil, sin, darkness and absence of God. In this reading for December 30<sup>th</sup>, John indicates three kinds of evil: “sensual lusts, enticements for the eye, and a pretentious life”. These certainly are not an inclusive listing of influences of “the world” but they do point out several of the priorities of “the world:” irresponsible sex, greed, the celebration of power, popularity, vain, glory and shallow values (*cf Jerome Commentary* for more complete analysis).

We are called to separate ourselves from these empty values of “the world” but not from the secular world itself. As followers of Christ, we are also called to transform ourselves. Church history and current social analysis indicates that the Church itself has often accommodated itself to “the world.” If we view the Church as “the people,” we know that it is still a great struggle for us to unhook from “the world's” values and influence and to give ourselves to Christ and His values. St. Paul puts it this way;

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

I find it interesting that commercial television proclaims “the world’s” values by exalting irresponsible sex, consumerism, and by the celebration of life of “the rich and the famous.” TV is an immensely powerful influence on the values of the people—an influence backed by hundreds of billions of dollars. It is difficult for the Church to compete with TV. Sometimes, it appears to be a losing battle for the Church. Indeed, I would consider the battle a losing one for the church if I did not have faith in God’s power and the reality that the Reign of God will eventually be victorious.

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“Present in the beginning as the word of the Father, present in history as the word incarnate, and with us today in his word, sacraments, and spirit, he is the reason for our hope and faith.”

CHALLENGE OF PEACE, 339

“In worship and in deeds for justice, the church becomes a ‘sacrament’, a visible sign of that unity in justice and peace that God wills for the whole of humanity.”

ECONOMIC JUSTICE, 331

“In prayer we join Mary in her Magnificat, and show ourselves to be a people of hope, confident that God’s promises will be fulfilled. With Mary and the apostles and disciples, we pray to be empowered by the strength of the Holy Spirit as we pursue the Church’s mission to all nations.

TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH, 60



## EPIPHANY

### 2000--The Great Jubilee and Racism

Isaiah 60: 1-6 Darkness and light

Psalm 72 Justice and peace

Matthew 2:1-12 Conflict between darkness and light

- Appendix A Series "Christian or American"
- Appendix C Series "Racism"

"Rise up in splendor, Jerusalem! Your light has come the glory of the Lord shines upon you. See darkness covers the earth, and thick clouds cover the peoples; but upon you the Lord shines...Nations shall walk by your light...."(Isaiah 60:1-3)

Epiphany readings, like Pentecost, are concerned with all nations. The light of Christ shines through the "darkness that covers the earth." Part of this "darkness" and these "thick clouds" is prejudice/racism that excludes some nations and peoples. All nations and peoples are called to walk by the light of Christ.

"All Nations shall serve him." (Psalm 72)

As I have written above, the jubilee year was established (Leviticus 25, Isaiah 61:1-2, and Luke 4:18-19) as a special year of liberation of the poverty stricken, slaves and other captives. In this article, I will limit my remarks to the new slavery, the new imprisonment—racism. Racism imprisons both the victims of racism as well as racists themselves. The victims of racism in the United States, the people of color, are dehumanized and are often reduced to poverty and imprisonment in ghettos, reservations and literally, within prison walls. White racists imprison themselves in white suburbs and especially within their myopic minds and constricted hearts. Both need a Jubilee year of awareness and liberation. We all need this Jubilee year for the liberation of the secular world and the church. A large segment of the Church is mired in racism, buried under the debris of complacency that impedes spiritual growth.

Joseph Barndt in his book entitled Dismantling Racism (Augsburg, Minneapolis 1991), writes that our nation, the world and the church need a "kairos moment," a special time of crisis and opportunity to confront racism in our world. He writes:

"Perhaps the single most vivid symbol of this kairos moment is the rapidly approaching turn of the millennium—a promise

of new beginnings. The final decade of the old millennium should be a time of anticipation and planning for that opportunity. As the time draws closer; there will be a sense of urgency and resolve the world over to enter the new century with a commitment to achieve national and world unity and community and to live in justice and peace. It is an opportunity for us as a nation to leave behind our tragic heritage of racism and enter a new millennium of racial and ethnic pluralism.”

Finally Barndt, in the same book, quotes the Road to Damascus,

Kairos and Conversion (Center of Concern Publishing, 1989):

“All of us who profess to be followers of Jesus of Nazareth are in continuous need of conversion. While we see clearly the idolatry, the heresy, the hypocrisy and the blasphemy of others, we ourselves need to search our own hearts for remnants of the same sins and for signs of triumphalism, self-righteousness, dogmatism, rigidity, intolerance and sectarianism. There should be no place in our hearts for any kind of complacency.”

Isaiah beautifully states liberation from the darkness of racism and from other expressions of violence in our “culture of death”:

“I, the Lord, have called you for the victory of justice...I formed you and set you as a covenant of the people, a light for the nations, to open the eyes of the blind, to bring out prisoners from confinement, and from the dungeon those who live in darkness.” (Isaiah 42:6-7)

Jubilee 2000 is not passé. The spiritual social justice thrust must be kept alive in our pulpits to years to come.

**JANUARY 8, TUESDAY AFTER EPIPHANY**

I John 4:7-10    God is love  
Psalm 72    Justice shall flower  
Mark 6:34-44...you feed them

- Appendix E: Network – A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby: [www.networklobby.org](http://www.networklobby.org)
- Appendix F: Children’s Defense Fund: [www.childrensdefense.org](http://www.childrensdefense.org)

1 John 4: “The person without love has known nothing of God.”

The virtue of justice is the minimum level of the virtue of love. Love for God is impossible without love for people—a love that includes justice.

Psalm 72: “He shall defend the afflicted among the people, save the children of the poor.”

Mark 6:34-44: “You give them something to eat.”

Jesus broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to distribute. It seems that the plan of Jesus is to involve us as his instruments of service and his instruments of peace. Our prayer in the spirit of the gospel might be:

“Lord make me an instrument of your peace.”

Make me a servant of your people.

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“People are summoned to be “just,” that is, to be in a proper relation to God, by observing God’s laws, which form them into a faithful community. Biblical justice is more comprehensive than subsequent philosophical definitions. It is not concerned with a strict definition of rights and duties, but with the rightness of the human condition before God and within society. Nor is justice opposed to love; rather, it is both a manifestation of love and a condition for love to grow. Because God loves Israel, he rescues them from oppression and summons them to be a people that “does justice” and loves kindness. The quest for justice arises from loving gratitude for the saving acts of God and manifests itself in wholehearted love of God and neighbor.”

ECONOMIC JUSTICE, 39

## **SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – REVERENCE FOR LIFE**

### **Nonviolence**

1 Corinthians 6:13-15, 17-20 “Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. so glorify God in your body.” Jesus said:

“This is an evil age. It seeks a sign, but no sign will be given it except the sign of Jonah. Just as Jonah was a sign for the Ninevites, so will the Son of Man be a sign for the present age.” (Luke 11:30)

- Appendix A Series “Christian or American”
- Appendix E: Network – A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby: [www.networklobby.org](http://www.networklobby.org)
- Appendix F: Children’s Defense Fund: [www.childrensdefense.org](http://www.childrensdefense.org)

### **Jesus, The Sign of Life in A Culture of Death**

Jesus is a sign of contradiction and THE sign of hope in a wasteland of violence and injustice. He is a sign of new life in a “culture of death.” He is a sign of contradiction insofar as his values are rejected by a majority of the citizens of the wasteland, many of whom are “church-going” Christians who do not even recognize that many of their strongly held values and convictions are in conflict with those of Jesus and the Church. National patriotism/nationalism is often a stronger loyalty than their religious faith even though such persons claim to be followers of Christ. As St. John wrote: “He came to his own and his own received him not.” Many of his own today are not receiving him.

What kind of sign was Jonah?

“Just as Jonah was in the belly of the whale three days and three nights, so will the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights.” (Matthew 11:40)

Jesus is a sign of hope and new life after his saving death and resurrection.

In our age, an age of poverty and hunger for millions, Jesus is a sign of justice, a sign that stands for feeding the hungry. We have plenty of resources for sharing but not enough willingness.

In an age of violence (war, capital punishment, abortion, poverty), Jesus is a sign of nonviolence.

In an age of racism and sexism, Jesus is a sign of equality of rights, a sign of open fellowship.

In an age of greed, Jesus is a sign of generous sharing—indeed of a simplified lifestyle on the part of the affluent.

In an age of exploitation of workers (minimum wages), Jesus is a sign of a living wage.

In an age of power seeking, Jesus is a sign of shared power and governance—a sign of servanthood on the part of leaders.

In an age of refugees and other homeless people, Jesus is a sign of hospitality.

In an age when millions of people cannot afford adequate health care, Jesus is a sign of healing.

In an age when nationalists choose—sometimes want—war, Jesus is a sign of nonviolence.

In an age of environmental destruction and pollution of the earth, Jesus is a sign of reverence for the sacred, for creation.

In an age of hate and revenge, Jesus is a sign of love and forgiveness.

Do we dare to take Jesus seriously? Can we say with Him: “Not my will but yours be done?” “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.” Whom will I trust? Whom will I follow through the wasteland in the face of temptation? Do we listen? His words and way and life lead to a new life.

“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.” (1 Corinthians 1:18)

## FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

### **Harden not your hearts**

Psalm 95: "If today you hear his voice harden not your hearts."

Oh, that you would hear his voice, harden not your hearts  
as at Meribah, as in the day of Massah in the desert, when  
your fathers tempted me..." (Psalm 95:7-9)

In the desert during the Exodus from Egypt, the Israelites quarreled with God and complained ungratefully at a place called Meribah.

We should not be too quick to judge that we have open, compassionate hearts and not hard hearts. St. Mark in his Gospel is quite definite in sharing that the disciples of Jesus were hard-hearted and had blind eyes and deaf ears until they matured spiritually between Easter and Pentecost. (Mark 4:1-34; 5:1-6; 6:7-5; 8:1-21; 7:32-37; 8:22-26; 9:30-41; 10:32-41; 10:46-52)

A few questions about our possible hardness of heart:

1. Are we sometimes so anxiously concerned that we shut out others consciously or unconsciously?
2. Do I use the excuse that there is no point to helping feed the hungry because the problem is too big to handle?
3. Do I allow my fears or my economic selfishness to close my hands and my heart? Do I avoid contact with poor people, homeless people, sick people, handicapped people?
4. Am I unwilling to look at some change in lifestyle to free up my personal resources with which to help people?

In the Divine Office, the daily official public prayer of the Church, prayed by priests and religious communities, there is a simple but profound prayer response in the Office of Readings:

"When we listen to your word our minds are filled with light It  
is the lowly heart that understands."

It is my experience that reading sacred scripture, praying and having personal contact with people who are hurting—the sick, the homeless, the oppressed—are three good ways of getting a "new heart"—exchanging a hard heart for a compassionate heart.

“I will give you a new heart and place a new spirit within you taking from your bodies your stony hearts and giving you natural hearts...you shall live in the land I gave your fathers; you shall be my people, and I will be your God.”  
(Ezekiel 36:26 and 28)

Furthermore, it is my experience that often the *anawim*—the poor, the mentally ill, the handicapped, the homeless persons—have a “lowly heart that understands” more readily the suffering of others than do many of us who are healthy, well-educated, sophisticated and well-positioned.

Marvin, a mentally ill man was the one who noticed John, a developmentally handicapped middle-aged man, at Hardees in downtown Fargo. He brought John to me. John needed food, housing and counseling. The middle-class Catholics having breakfast at Hardees after Mass were not the ones who noticed the hurting John, nor were they the ones that John felt comfortable approaching. Too many of us have not developed a “lowly heart.” Jesus had this kind of heart, “meek and humble” understanding the needs and feelings of the *anawim*—the little people, the powerless ones.

*Oh, God, grant me a “lowly heart” that I may understand.*

(Some of the ideas and terminology in this article were borrowed from Robert C. Tannehill. A Mirror for Disciples, Discipleship Resources, 1977)

Political Postscript: Some political actions of Congress sound a bit “hard hearted.” On subjects such as Medicare, minimum wage, and health care for the uninsured this is especially so. Will millionaire members of Congress and tax avoiding corporations again try to balance the budget on the backs of the poor and the lower middle class people? Let’s balance the budget on the backs of the still exorbitant defense budget, the large corporations, and the very affluent Americans, including most Congress men and women who are shamefully overpaid and under-taxed.

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“Jesus also described God’s reign as one in which love is an active, life-giving inclusive force. He called for a love, which went beyond family ties and bonds of friendship to reach even those who were enemies. (Matthew 5:44-48; Luke 6:27-28). Such a love does not seek revenge but rather is merciful in the face of threat and opposition. (Matthew 5:39-42; Luke 6:29-31). Disciples are to love one another as Jesus has loved them. (John 15:12).”

CHALLENGE OF PEACE, 47

“The commandments to love God with all one’s heart and to love one’s neighbor as oneself are the heart and soul of Christian morality. Jesus offers himself as the model of this all-inclusive love: ‘love one another as I have loved you’ (John 15:12). These commands point out the path toward true human fulfillment and happiness. They are not arbitrary restrictions on human freedom.”

ECONOMIC JUSTICE, 64



## SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

### Health Care

Reading 1 Leviticus 13:1-2, 44-46 Leprosy

Reading 3 Mark 1:40-45 Jesus cures a leper

- Appendix A Series “Christian or American”
- Appendix B Series “Human Rights”

### Health Care - - A Right or only a privilege?

Health care, by Catholic teaching, is a human right. The social concerns documents of the Church are clear that all human beings have the human right to whatever is necessary for physical survival and/or development of human potential. Adequate health care is a human right along with food, clothing, shelter, education, and other needs. Pope John XXIII, in “Peace on Earth”, wrote:

“Beginning our discussion of human rights, we see that every human being has the right to life, to bodily integrity, and to the means which are necessary and suitable for the proper development of life. These means are primarily food, clothing, shelter, rest, medical care, and finally the necessary social services. Therefore, a human being also has the right to security in cases of sickness, inability to work, widowhood, old age, unemployment, or in any other case in which one is deprived of the means of subsistence through no fault of his/her own.”

It is ironic that people with the best of insured health care (people in Congress, The American Medical Association, and in business endeavors) are the ones erecting the roadblocks to this human right of health care. This is not too surprising when we consider another human right – a living wage for laborers—that is blocked by affluent employers by holding minimum wage to a level that prevents full-time workers from climbing out of poverty. Of course, legally depriving workers of fair wages enables employers to receive exceptionally high salaries.

To hear some members of Congress, American Medical Association, and U.S. businesses whine about our country not being able to afford universal health care for all, one would conclude that this must be a very poverty stricken country. It is interesting that less affluent nations seem to be able to afford health care for all.

Furthermore, one who hears opponents of adequate health-care reform argue that proposed reforms would diminish the quality of health care in the U.S. when they say we have the best health care in the world. We may have the best for those who are adequately insured, but we definitely do not have the best for over 40,000,000 people uninsured or underinsured. Our infant mortality rate is higher than 20 other countries.

I am not pushing any one of the complicated plans. However, any plan that I would vote for would have two provisions: accepting of adequate coverage for all persons and rejection of coverage for abortion. Abortion is not part of my definition of health care.

From a Christian perspective, healing has been a high priority of both Jesus and the Church -- especially for the poor and other powerless people.

When we say "with liberty and justice for all" we will be speaking with a forked tongue until all Americans have health care, since health care is a human right and not just a privilege.

## LENT

- (1) Forgiving, reconciling and being reconciled with God and human persons is a fundamental Lenten theme. These are also foundations for the virtue of nonviolence.
- (2) Penance is related to justice. Self-denial can be practiced in order to enable us to share more with people in need. The “Rice Bowl” concept is a good example.
- (3) Almsgiving is one of the essential Lenten practices (Ash Wednesday Gospel). Generosity in participating in the Catholic Relief Service Collection is not only charity but also justice.
- (4) Fasting is usually related to food, and food is a powerful symbol of exploitation or social justice. People have the right to eat.
- (5) Jesus is the nonviolent Suffering Servant of the people.

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“The example of Jesus poses a number of challenges to the contemporary church. It imposes a prophetic mandate to speak for those who have no one to speak for them, to be a defender of the defenseless, which in biblical terms is the poor. It also demands a compassionate vision that enables the church to see things from the side of the poor and powerless and to assess lifestyle, policies, and social institutions in terms of their impact on the poor. It summons the church also to be an instrument in assisting people to experience the liberating power of God in their own lives so that they may respond to the Gospel in freedom and in dignity. Finally, and most radically, it calls for an emptying of self, both individually and corporately, that allows the church to experience the power of God in the midst of poverty and powerlessness.”

ECONOMIC JUSTICE, 52

“Jesus came to bring good news to the poor, proclaim liberty to captives, give sight to the blind and release prisoners. His mission became that of the church, and it is now ours.”

TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH, 47

## **The Cross and Power**

St. Paul expresses the meaning of the cross in several places:

Philippians 2:5-8

1 Corinthians 1:18-25

1 Corinthians 26-31

Part of the meaning of the cross is the paradox that power very often is weakness, and powerlessness has its own strength. The cross is a “folly” and a “scandal” to those who do not understand the cross and Jesus’ relinquishment of power except the power to teach, heal, serve and save.

We should be slow to criticize people who do not grasp the meaning of the cross. It is difficult for most of us, including leaders in the church, to understand the obedience and emptying process expressed in Philippians 2:18 ff. It is also difficult for us to understand the spiritual reality of the power of powerlessness and the wealth of poverty and the poverty of wealth.

I mentioned above that Church leaders often miss the point of the cross when they allow themselves to get trapped in power struggles, in personal greed and in the practice of dominating others rather than serving them. It is quite human to slip into an authoritarian role using an authority of power rather than an authority of compassion.

With St. Paul, “I must preach Christ and him crucified.” With St. Paul, I must remember that “the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.”

One further reflection for Good Friday: Our Christian world can commemorate the ritualized crucifixion of Jesus in Good Friday liturgies, but we do all we can to conceal the Good Friday of the ongoing crucifixion of his people.

During the Gulf War, television showed the spectacular fireworks of the nightly bombing raids over Iraq but it did not show the thousands of victims of those raids. Clean, sterile action of war—war at a distance—is easier to accept than the bloody reality of human slaughter close up. The nation and the world do not want to look at the crucified people. However, if we do not look at the reality of violence today, there may be little point commemorating the historical crucifixion of Jesus. The real victims of

violence today make up part of the Body of Christ in our time. The crucified people of our time and the place are the Suffering Servant of Yahweh today.

Other crucified people today making up the Body of Christ are children suffering hunger and other abuses. Wherever people are suffering abuse, violence and injustice, Jesus is crucified in and through the people that constitute the Mystical Body of Christ.

\* \* \* \* \*

“Because prevention of nuclear war appears from several perspectives, to be not only the surest but only way to limit its destructive potential we see that our role as moral teachers precisely in terms of helping to form public opinion with a clear determination to resist resort to nuclear war as an instrument of national policy. If ‘prevention is the only cure,’ then there are diverse tasks to be performed in preventing what should never occur. As bishops, we see a specific task defined for us in Pope John Paul II’s, *World Day of Peace Message 1982*.”

‘Peace cannot be built by the power of rulers alone. Peace can be firmly constructed only if it corresponds to the resolute determination of all people of good will. Rulers must be supported and enlightened by a public opinion that encourages them or, where necessary, expresses disapproval.’”

CHALLENGE OF PEACE, 139

## **The Cross --The Most Subversive Power in the World**

Steeped in the Domination System of this sinful world for thousands of years, can we human beings even understand the meaning and positive subversive power of Jesus' emptying himself (Phil. 2:58)? How difficult it is for us to grasp the great power of powerlessness and the weakness of power misused? This is the wisdom of foolishness that St. Paul wrote about in 1 Corinthians: 1

“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 Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom but we proclaim Christ crucified... for the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.”

For eons of history we, as a race of people, as nations, as human communities, as a church have believed strongly in the power of domination. By this historical and current reality of domination I am referring to the fact of nations dominating nations, races crushing races, rich exploiting the poor, family fighting family, men dominating women--a Domination System of governance and power over the earth.

In this Domination System, deeply rooted and widely exercised, we have believed in wealth as the foundation of human power and in “redemptive violence” as the solution of problems on planet earth. Yes, we have believed that the sought-after power to dominate is funded in material wealth- -wealth to produce the weapons that can hold others under dominating suppression.

Our nation is the most affluent and powerful nation on this planet. We can as a nation and often do dominate the rest of the people on earth and we try to convince others that our dominating power is caring for and protecting others, a caring that in reality is very paternalistic and sometimes violent. This is part of the meaning of “redemptive violence”, a violence that is thought to redeem as it destroys.

But, of course, we Americans believe that we are the most trustworthy nation in the world, so we do our best to prevent other nations from developing weapons of mass destruction, and we try to convince others that our form of democracy is far superior

than that of other nations. However, we will keep nuclear weapons in order to police the rest of the untrustworthy nations.

The subversive power of the cross is the only effective power capable of dealing with the destructive power of the Domination System. Walter Wink\* has expressed this subversive power of the cross in the following way in his book: Engaging The Powers:

“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 a 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. They nailed him to the cross, not realizing that with each hammer’s blow they were nailing up, for the whole world to see, the MENE, MENE, TEKEL, and PARSIN by which the Domination System would be numbered, weighed in the balances, found wanting, and finally terminated (Dan.5:25-28).

What killed Jesus was not irreligion, but religion itself; not lawlessness, but precisely the law; not anarchy, but the upholders of order. It was not the bestial but those considered best who crucified the one in whom the divine Wisdom was visibly incarnate.

To understand and appreciate the unconventional wisdom of Jesus and the subversive power of his cross, I’ll end pointing out a few people who have walked in his footsteps. It was the martyrs of ancient Rome who prevailed and presided over the burial of the empire. It was Gandhi, a Hindu who had great respect for the crucified Christ, who prevailed over the exit of the British Empire in India. It was Archbishop Oscar Romero whose life is remembered and honored in El Salvador. It was Martin Luther King, Jr. who died in Memphis so that all Americans could be freed of domination of race over love. It was John the Baptist, an absurd desert figure who prepared the way for the Messiah and prevailed over King Herod. It was Jesus, Son of Man, and Son of God born in a barn and executed on the cross, who rose again and will prevail and preside over

all the kingdoms of this world. Jesus the Christ became, in His Resurrection, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. But he never wore a crown of gold; he preferred a crown of thorns.

\*Walter Wink, Engaging the Powers, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, MN 1992

The non-biblical quotations and most of the ideas in this article are from Wink's book.



## GOOD FRIDAY

Philippians 2:5-8

1 Corinthians 1:18-25

1 Corinthians 1:26-31

- Optional Theme: “Where Is God?”

### **The Cross, Creation and Violence**

The cross of wood is placed on Jesus’ shoulders. He is to carry it through the streets of Jerusalem to the garbage hill called Golgotha. The Roman Empire used wooden crosses as instruments of execution, instruments of complete dehumanization, humiliation and excruciating pain. Jesus accepted this instrument of domination by the Roman Empire. Jesus, with the Father and the Holy Spirit created the tree--gave it life—the tree out of which this cross and all the trees out of which all crosses are made. Several times he fell under the weight of this tree-cross, fell to the earth that he also created when the Spirit of God moved over the waters in the beginning.

Jesus embraced the cross lovingly and probably kissed it with reverence as part of sacred creation and as the altar of his sacrifice. Jesus knew that people would abuse the forests of trees out of which crosses and houses are built for reasons of greed even though greedy deforestation would deeply injure the earth and the health of the people.

Along with embracing the cross, did he also kiss the earth as the weight of the cross pushed his face into the earth’s dust? He knew that the whole earth is sacred and the source of nourishment of the trees and of all living things—the earth we continue to damage and destroy and desecrate in our day. All creation continues to weep in its own way as the blood of God’s people continues to seep into the dust of earth. Blood is spilled by crime, wars, abortion and all violence on the planet earth.

Jesus was nailed to his cross with iron nails pounded through his hands and feet into the wood with an iron hammer. Both nails and hammers are made from iron deposits in the earth’s crust, deposited there by geological evolution under the creating influence of God. The metal deposits in the earth are important gifts of the Creator for our use, resources that we continually turn into weapons with which we kill one another and shed more blood.

As Jesus hangs on the cross the leaders of his own people, whom he created, are satisfied that he is now completely dominated by them, rendered powerless and, as they think, unable to challenge them to a better life than they were living. They mocked him shouting, "You who claimed to be the Son of God, come down off that cross if you can and we will believe you." Jesus only response to this was, "Father, forgive them, they don't know who I am. They don't understand what they're doing. Forgive them Father."

*Loving Lord, we know who you are. You're the beloved Son of the Father, you are God, You are our Savior, our brother, and our friend. You could have come down from that cross. Your Father chose otherwise and you "came to do his will." For thousands of years people and nations have chosen to solve human problems by dominating one another, and domination is violence and the greatest cause of other forms of continuing violence. Nations crush nations, white people crush people of color, men crush women, the rich crush the poor, and so violence, stupid as it is, often prevails in human relations—all wars are stupid power struggles. You told us, your followers, "it shall not be that way with you."*

The way of the cross and the crucifixion are Jesus' ways to live non-violently, to suffer with those who suffer rather than violently crush the oppressors. The crucifixion was Jesus' supreme act of nonviolence—responding nonviolently and compassionately when treated most violently.

*Lord when I dominate others in my arrogance, I deprive them of their freedom and dignity. I become the weight of the cross that pushes their faces into the dust of the earth. When I do this, I also do it to you, who said, "I assure you as often as you did it to one of these, my least brothers or sisters, you did it to me." Forgive us, Lord, and help us to lift up again those whom we pushed down.*

*Lord, our Creator, help us also to grow into a sense of reverence, for trees and for all of creation.*

**Optional Theme:**  
**“Where is God?”**

**Earthquakes, Terrorism, Barbarity and Hope**

A book review of a book by Jon Sobrino, Orbis Press 2004.

Along with earthquakes, terrorism, barbarity and hope I would add hurricane Katrina to the disasters listed in this subtitle, and its terrible after effects. (September 2005)

Great catastrophes, especially natural disasters do raise questions about God. Nothing shakes up the faith of good people, as does the question: Can there be a good God in the face of evils and sufferings in our world, especially natural disasters.

The author describes this problem with the following quotation of Lactantius:

“Either God does not want to eliminate evil, or he cannot:  
Either he can but does not want to:  
Or he cannot and does not want to:  
Or he wants to and can.  
If he can and does not want to, then he is evil, which must  
be against God’s nature.  
If he does not want to and cannot, then he is evil and weak  
and therefore he is no God.  
If he can and wants to, which can only be true of God, then  
where does evil come from and why does he not eliminate  
it?”

Sobrino comments:

“There is something in innocent suffering that reason cannot grasp. It is a scandal, pure and simple. Our only choice, I believe, is to live with a theodicy (an indication of the goodness of God in the face of great evil), unresolved in theory, and with a practice that goes on opening a pathway with God walking it beside us throughout the history of suffering.” Page 142

Our author suggests that we not trivialize this problem about God to find a simple answer to a profound question. To only say “God brings good out of evil” is not enough.

Sobrino’s answer follows:

“The problem must be faced humbly and soberly. Triumphalism is also out of place for a Christian believer”. Page 143

The author then proposes that a realistic answer “might include indignation in response to human suffering... against what human beings have done or what God has failed to do”.

Even in natural disasters the poor people suffer the most. Remember pictures of the after effects of Katrina. Poverty is not God’s doing—the selfishness of human beings is to blame.

We cannot stop all natural catastrophes but we can do something about the poor people who suffer the most. However, the present administration will still not challenge the very rich people of the nation to do their part in rebuilding the cities and states after Katrina. There will be no tax increases for the rich but there will be more cuts in national programs that help the poor in order to pay for Katrina’s damage.

To Jon Sobrino’s incomplete answers to the most difficult questions about God’s presence in the face of terrible evil and suffering, I have a personal response of my own.

Even though I do not have a simple satisfying answer to this question, I am confident that we can and must do what we can to alleviate poverty and suffering. The United States answer tries to ignore poverty. We Americans like to throw token aids at major suffering—or just ignore it. I don’t have an easy answer to the question of God’s presence nor to the terrible unjust dehumanizing reality of poverty. However, I do believe in a compassionate God in spite of the lack of satisfying answers to our questions. I would consider my struggling faith as unauthentic unless, for the rest of my short life, I would do all I can to alleviate suffering and bring about justice in any small way I can. This I hope to do from within my faith in God.

The highest priority of Jesus in his ministry was the powerless, sick and poor, especially those who are suffering the most. These are the people Jon Sobrino calls the “crucified ones” today. These are the ones Jesus seems to be especially fond of. These are the ones that we must also be willing to associate with.

I will conclude with one more quote from this book:

“To relate God to suffering, helplessness and vulnerability can bring on metaphysical dizziness. At the very least it forces us to look beyond what is rational and verifiable. Some theologians are reluctant to speak of God as suffering; others are not.”

Sobrino believes God is present through Jesus, with the people who are the “crucified ones” today.

## **EASTER – Justice Themes**

(1) Easter is about new life—not only about the new life of final resurrection, but also about new life now to change the “culture of death” into a culture of life. New life now would mean raising our world, our nation, our church, our families from injustice to justice, from violence to nonviolence, from poverty to fulfillment of human needs, from racism to equality of rights, from exploitation of workers to a living wage, from violence of all kinds to a consistent ethic of life, from sexism to gender equality, and from earth-pollution and destruction to earth-care and from war to negotiation, cooperation and peace.

(2) The Gospel of the Second Sunday of Easter has the theme of forgiveness. Forgiveness and reconciliation are essential elements of nonviolence and peaceful relationships.

(3) Jesus’ most frequent greeting in the Easter narratives is “peace be with you.” “Shalom” is a term with deep meaning. It merits some exposition.

(4) On the fifth Sunday of Easter the Gospel reading from John is Jesus’ metaphor of vine and branches. Several themes may sprout from this narrative.

I. Unity in Church community, the Body of Christ.

II. We are all related to one another and the earth and its life forms.

III. Care for the earth

(5) In the Sixth Sunday of Easter, the theme of racial and gender equality flow easily from the first reading. The theme of readings I and II is love. Nonviolence and justice are two of the fruits of love and compassion.

(6) *cf Page 19.* “Jesus the Sign of Life in a Culture of Death” is also relevant for the Easter Season.

## PENTECOST VIGIL

### **Dry Bones, Spirit and Life**

Ezekiel 37:1-14

About the year 600 B.C.E. (before the Christian Era) Ezekiel was a prophet of Israel in exile in Babylon when the Israelites, disheartened were saying, “our bones are dried up, our hope is lost, and we are cut off.” In the Book of Ezekiel, Chapter 37, the prophet tells the story of his vision of dry bones, and how the Spirit of the Lord brought them back to life.

“Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! Thus says the Lord God to these bones: See! I will bring spirit into you that you may come to life.” (Ezekiel 37:5)

The dry bones are symbolic of the walking death-like experience of the people in exile.

This vision of the dry bones (Ezekiel 37:1-14) is a viable parable for today, for each of us as individuals, for our church, and for our nation. In significant ways we are in exile from the “American Dream” and from the Gospel. Our living plain is strewn with dry bones, with priorities that are more death dealing than life giving. I will limit my reflections here to just four kinds of dry bones that strew our present way of life:

(1) callously refusing health care to low-income people, especially mothers and children,

(2) balancing the national budget by depriving the poor while offering tax-perks to those who do not need the help, and by insisting on (3) self-interest as the bottom line in almost all foreign policy decisions. Many Americans live under the false impression that we are a generous people when it comes to aiding destitute nations. (4) The United States ranks 19<sup>th</sup> proportionately among the nations in humanitarian aid to other countries. We are the wealthiest and we share less than 1% of our wealth with others who are in great need.

We seem to be so addicted to wealth that wealth makes up the highest single priority in our western culture and life.

Self interest--a euphemism for selfishness at the expense of others--guides our politics, our industry, our corporate agriculture, our business and, to a large extent, even our education and religion.

These four expressions of our dry bones are probably as difficult for us to rise out of as it was for the Israelites to rise up from their disheartening, demoralizing conditions in exile. They needed "spirit" from God. We need the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit to turn around our dry bones priorities--our death dealing ways.

"Then He (the Lord God) said to me: Prophecy to the spirit....and say to the spirit: Thus says the Lord God: From the four winds come, O spirit, and breathe into these slain that they may come to life....The spirit came into them; they came alive." (Ezekiel 37:9-16)

Is it possible to convert the dry bones of our nation and culture into the fruits of the Spirit? Yes! But only by the power of the Spirit within us. These deeply rooted dry bones of our violence and selfishness could rise to the new life of kindness, patience, gentleness and peace. Our addiction to the dry bones of greed and power could be converted to generosity and self-control and our death-dealing dry bones priority of self-interest could change to the new life of love and faithfulness. Maybe this is what the building of the reign of God means today--the dry bones of society coming to new life- - a life of grace, faith, justice, and peace through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.



## TENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

### Beelzebub and other demons

Mark 3:23-30

“...while the scribes who arrived from Jerusalem asserted, ‘He is possessed by Beelzebub...He expels demons with the help of the prince of demons.’ Jesus answered. ‘How can Satan expel Satan? If a kingdom is torn by civil strife, that kingdom cannot last.’”

### Something Demonic

An evil spirit is a part of the gospel reading for this Sunday. The introduction of evil spirits in the Bible raises several questions. Is Satan an impersonal evil force? Is Satan a symbol of evil or is Satan a spirit person? How seriously are we to take the stories of evil spirits in the Bible? Do evil spirits (devils, demons, fallen angels) have an influence in our lives or in human communities? The answer of sacred scripture and the Church (note the new Catholic Catechism) is that Satan and other evil spirits are personal and, yes they do have influence in our world.

What do these conclusions have to do with justice and nonviolence? Sojourners magazine, one of the most significant periodicals concerned with social justice and nonviolence, states that racism is a result of a demonic force in our society. Racism is too persistent, so intractable, and so pervasive that Sojourners attributes its force to human sin and demonic influence.

I have believed for over two decades now that another situation in our world has been and is so egregiously evil that it also can hardly be explained by human sin alone. It is estimated about 40,000 people (including a large proportion of children) die daily from the results of poverty, malnutrition, contaminated water and inadequate health care. Nations could prevent much of this human holocaust with just a portion of the funds spent on weapons and other military endeavors, euphemistically called defense budget. This seems demonic to me.

One other uniquely American U.S. situation I consider demonic in its malevolence and far-reaching evil would be the U.S. armament sales. Since the demise of the Soviet Union, the U.S. has become the biggest weapons sale country in the world. We sell weapons for profit and for political advantage to almost any nation on earth. These

weapons sales shows are paid for by our taxes. Furthermore, our own weapons, sold to Iraq in the past, were probably used against us in Gulf War I and have probably killed our soldiers. These weapons sales projects border on self-destruction and hence, insanity. To anthropomorphize the demons for a moment, I think that Satan and his legions laugh with glee about our worship of blood money in wanton and stupid destruction of human beings that our weapons, including landmines bring about in our world. How about the abortion holocaust? Might not this also rate being called demonic? It is not an exaggeration when Pope John Paul II calls our culture a “culture of death.”

Maybe it's time to pray to God to help us fight this sort of evil by activating the role of St. Michael the Archangel who scripturally vanquished Satan.

\* \* \* \* \*

“The hundreds of billions of dollars spent by our nation each year on the arms race create a massive drain on the U.S. economy as well as a very serious ‘brain drain.’ Such spending on the arms race means a net loss in the number of jobs created in the economy, because defense industries are less labor-intensive than other major sectors of the economy. Moreover, nearly half of the American scientific and engineering force works in defense-related programs and over 60 percent of the entire federal research and development budget goes to the military. We must ask whether our nation will ever be able to modernize our economy and achieve full employment if we continue to devote so much of our financial and human resources to defense-related activities.”

ECONOMIC JUSTICE, 148

## ELEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Ezekiel 17:22-24 Cedars of Lebanon

Psalm 92 Palm trees and cedars

Mark 4:26-34 Parable of the mustard seed

- Optional Theme: The Mustard Seed - -"Small is Beautiful"
- Optional Theme: "Who owns the Universe?"
- Appendix A Series "Christian or American"
- Appendix B Series "Human Rights"
- ❖ See A Cycle Appendix F Series: "Land and People"

### Earth Care and Environmental Spirituality

Here are biblical principles that are fundamental for earth care.

#### (1) EARTH IS OUR HOME

We have no other home (unless we believe that eternal life is elsewhere)

Home is where we belong.

Earth is gift (for use and care).

#### (2) GOD MADE EARTH/GOD OWNS EARTH:

Earth is sacred.

We are stewards not owners.

"The Lord God placed the man in the garden to till and care for it." (Genesis 2:15)

"The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the earth and those who dwell in it. For he has formed it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers." (Psalm 24:1)

"Know that he, the Lord is God;" He made us, we belong to him. We are his people. (Psalm 100)

"I own all the beasts of the forests, beasts in there thousands on my hills...all that moves in the fields belong to me...I own the world and all it holds." (Psalm 50)

"For the Lord is a 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)

In our Western culture we assume that we can own property, land, water, etc., absolutely. Biblical understanding of ownership is simply the right to use and the

responsibility of stewardship. Until we realize that human beings do not have unlimited rights to control nature, good environmental care probably will not take place.

### (3) EARTH IS FOR ALL PEOPLE AND ALL CREATURES

Hoarding stuff (land, water, food, animals, etc.) molds the stuff hoarded. The “manna” becomes wormy and rotten (cf Exodus 16:16-20).

In the U.S. (6% of world population) hoards and controls about 30% of the world’s wealth, land, water, energy food, etc. 20% of the earth’s population controls and uses about 80% of the world’s wealth and resources.

Does the U.S. or any nation have the moral right to prevent destitute people from immigrating and enjoying some of “our” part of God’s earth?

Do the rich have the moral right to gain, keep and use more than they need while millions are destitute? Some would answer, “Yes! I earned it!” What do you think about that?

### (4) ALL ARE CALLED TO CARE FOR THE EARTH

This call exists by virtue of each one’s creation, Baptism and Confirmation.

CARE means:     PROTECT THE EARTH  
                     PREVENT HARM  
                     REPAIR DAMAGE

HOW??

- “Careful” responsible living and using (lifestyle)
- Learning / teaching earth knowledge
- Healing damage
- Recycling
- Advocacy (through education and public political advocacy)

### (5) NEGLECT / ABUSE OF EARTH = SIN

Abuse of the sacred is desecration/sacrilege. Compare defacing/abusively damaging a Church, a crucifix, and a U.S. flag, with doing the same to the earth.

I find it interesting that in my experience of hearing confessions for over 50 years, I do not remember one instance of a person confessing the sin of environmental desecration. (Regarding the terrible sin of “racism”, I could count the number of times this sin has been confessed to me on one hand.)

(6) ALL ARE RELATED

This is part of Native American tradition. If we recognized that each of us is related to all people, all life forms, all earth elements, we might have more respect for our “relatives.”

(7) WORSHIP DEMANDS EARTH CARE

Earth care/environmental responsibility is a part of spiritual and moral integrity.

(8) JESUS IS AN ENVIRONMENTALIST

The Cosmic Christ “fills the universe in all of its parts.”

(cf Colossians 1:15-17, Romans 8:19-22, Ephesians 1:3)

(9) EARTH CARE IS LOVE FOR PEOPLE

Without earth care people suffer.

(Recommended reading: Renewing the Earth, The United States Catholic Conference).

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“Our Christian faith calls us to contemplate God’s creative and sustaining action and to measure our own collaboration with the Creator in using the earth’s resources to meet human needs. While Catholic social teaching on the care of the environment and the management of natural resources is still in the process of development, a Christian moral perspective clearly gives weight and urgency to their use in meeting human needs.”

ECONOMIC JUSTICE, 216

“We are concerned that the nation’s food system may be in jeopardy as increasing numbers of farm bankruptcies and foreclosures result in increased concentration of land ownership. We are likewise concerned about the increasing damage to natural resources resulting from many modern agricultural practices: the over consumption of water, the depletion of topsoil, and the pollution of land and water. Finally, we are concerned about the stark reality of world hunger in spite of food surpluses. Our food production system is clearly in need of evaluation and reform.”

ECONOMIC JUSTICE, 217

**Optional Theme:**  
**The Mustard Seed—“Small is Beautiful”**

The Kingdom of God “is like a mustard seed which, when it is sown in the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on the earth. But once it is sown, it springs up and becomes the largest of plants and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the sky can dwell in its shade.” (Mark 4:30-32)

“Small is Beautiful” This is the title of a significant book on environmental and economic responsibility written by E. F. Schumacher.

We live in a culture of death that exalts bigness, power and greed. The bigness is destroying the environment and exploiting the *anawim*, the little ones, the powerless ones, the poor. Unless people begin to relinquish the obsession with bigness, the lust for power and greed for wealth and the stuff money can buy, we will continue to destroy the environment and exploit the little, powerless ones.

Jesus taught and showed us how to live. He was all-powerful. However, he relinquished all power except the power to heal, serve, teach and save. He created all wealth; he owns the universe. However, he relinquished our human wealth. “The Son of Man has not a place of his own to lay his head.” He was certainly a paradoxical Messiah. He was born in a barn, became a homeless refugee in Egypt, grew up in an inconspicuous, unpretentious village, was arrested as a criminal, executed on a garbage dump, buried in another man’s grave. However, he rose from the dead and sits at the right hand of the Father. In his teaching, he made the *anawim* his highest priority. St. Paul wrote:

“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 and 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.

Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every other name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee must bend, in the heavens, on the earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that

Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”  
(Philippians 2:5-11)

A few among us who walked in his footsteps relinquishing bigness, power and wealth were John the Baptist, Archbishop Romero, Mother Teresa and Dorothy Day.

As Jesus is a paradoxical Messiah so is the reign of God that he proclaims, a paradoxical reign. This world’s bigness, power and wealth are not assets for spiritual growth but violent hindrances that destroy life on the earth.

Exploitation and greedy lifestyle are two of the main causes of earth pollution and destruction. These kill life on earth. “Small is beautiful because smallness in size, power and wealth are life giving. These are antidotes to the sicknesses and violence of our culture of death.

A postscript to these reflections: Does the U.S. have the moral right to keep the poor and the people of color out of our land? After all, God made the earth, God owns it, and he made it for all the people.

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“Moved by the example of Jesus’ life and by his teaching, some Christians have from the earliest days of the church committed themselves to a nonviolent lifestyle. Some understood the gospel of Jesus to prohibit all killing. Some affirmed the use of prayer and other spiritual methods as means of responding to enmity and hostility.”

CHALLENGE OF PEACE, 111

**Optional Theme:**  
**“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 25:23)
4. “To the Lord belong even the highest heavens; the earth is his 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 the 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 there 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)

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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: A Common Responsibility, No. 1, 15, 1990

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

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. Page 13.

## **FIFTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**

### **Justice and peace go together**

Psalm 85: Justice and peace are inseparable

If you want peace, work for justice.” Pope Paul VI

Mark 6:7-13 A just economic lifestyle is important for effective ministry.

### **Why the Church is “Political?”**

December 1998 marked the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the United Nation’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

“The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a sweeping and visionary statement encompassing not only protections from political repression but also ‘the right to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being,’ the right to education, to work and join unions, to enjoy the arts and to have leisure. It consists of a preamble and 30 articles that put forth basic human rights to which all women, men and children are entitled without discrimination. The Declaration continues to be proclaimed as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, and its goal include teaching people to promote respect for human rights everywhere.” Mary Elizabeth Clark, SSJ, & Kathy Thornton, R.S.M. Network Connection, July/August 1998.

Is the Church involved in political issues? Yes!

Should the Church be so involved? Yes!

Why, because the Church, as Church must be involved with HUMAN RIGHTS. This is a matter of the Church’s very nature and charter from Jesus.

Yes! The Church always has been, is, and will be involved with political, moral issues because human rights make up an essential part of both politics and religion. The World Synod of Catholic Bishops in 1971, with Pope Paul VI, issued an official document entitled: Justice in the World. In this document we read:

“Action on behalf of justice and transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church’ mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.”

The purpose of government is the common good of the people, and absolutely fundamental to the common good of the people are human rights. The very mission of the church and the mission of the state necessarily overlap and are inter-dependent in matters of human rights—of social justice.

In his encyclical letter to the people of the world entitled: “Peace on Earth” (1963), Pope John XXIII took the space to specifically list the human rights that the Church is particularly concerned about. Among the human rights listed are the following: “life, bodily integrity and the means which are necessary...for the proper development of life.” These are food, clothing, housing, medical care, social services, freedom in search for the truth, freedom of expression, and the right to be informed truthfully about public events. Also included are the rights to worship, to seek an education, to work, and to choose one’s state or vocation in life. People also have the right to a just wage, decent working conditions, and the right of assembly. These are among the rights due each person, not by legal grant or privilege, but by simply being human persons.

The Catholic Church’s involvement with Human Rights has been more intense, conscious and conspicuous in modern times since 1891 when Pope Leo XIII issued his social justice encyclical letter: “Rerum Novarum.” This was the beginning of over a century of the Church’s conscious development of a modern social teaching tradition that reached a climax in the Second Vatican Council and the years since.

Because the church is necessarily concerned about human rights, the Church is involved with politics. Because the Church is the people, the Christian people must be responsibly involved in politics. Knowledgeable voting is an important part of this political responsibility.

The church always has been and always will be involved with social justice (human rights are a part of social justice), and social justice often has an overlap with politics. The Church would be unfaithful to its call as a teacher of morals and a conscience voice for society if it did not concern itself with social justice issues, since justice is a matter of morality. Many Catholics see no problem with the Church involved in justice-related politics, over abortion and parochial school aid, but object to the

politically related involvement of the church in matters of economic justice, hunger and disarmament. We do need a consistent ethic of justice.

Vatican II The Church in the Modern World and the 1971 Bishop's Synod in Rome, Justice in the World, placed the church officially in the very center of the world's arena in the struggle for justice and peace.

This means that social justice ministry is one of the dimensions of life that makes the Church the Church, along with worship, proclamation of the Gospel and community building. This principle certainly has implications for diocesan policy, parish liturgy and education, as well as personal holiness and prayer.

We are in the midst of a worldwide movement in the Church toward more and more awareness throughout the world about the essential nature of the social justice ministry.

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“Distributive justice requires that the allocation of income, wealth and power in society be evaluated in light of its effects on persons whose basic material needs are unmet. The Second Vatican Council stated: “The right to have a share of earthly goods sufficient for oneself and one’s family belongs to everyone. The fathers and doctors of the church held this view, teaching that we are obliged to come to the relief of the poor and to do so not merely out of our superfluous goods.’ Minimum material resources are an absolute necessity for human life. If persons are to be recognized as members of the human community, then the community has an obligation to help fulfill these basic needs unless scarcity of resources makes this strictly impossible. No such scarcity exists in the United States today.”

ECONOMIC JUSTICE, 70

## **SIXTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**

### **Nonviolence and Unity**

Ephesians 2:13-18      Nonviolence through the blood of Christ

- ❖ See A Cycle, Appendix A series: “A Spirituality of Nonviolence”
- ❖ See A Cycle, Appendix D series: “Eucharist and Nonviolence”

“Take this all of you, and drink from it; this is the cup of my blood, the blood of the new and everlasting covenant. It will be shed for you and for all...do this in memory of me.”  
(From the Mass Sacramentary)

### **Blood and the Eucharist**

Blood is a symbol of life. Blood is more than a symbol; blood is absolutely necessary for human life. The loss of blood brings death. Because of the prevalence of violence in our world, we live, to quote Pope John Paul II, “...in a culture of violence, a culture of death, a massive shedding of blood.” In spite of the demonic shedding of blood in the Twentieth Century, the most violent century in history, there is too little awareness of this violence, in the Eucharistic celebration. The celebration of the Eucharist is often a celebration separated from real life. As such, the participation of the people does little to change the “culture of death,” lived out in everyday life of the people. Our Mass needs more remembrance of the blood of Christ shed for us and more awareness of the blood of the violated people, members of the body of Christ, mingled with the blood of Christ. In our mind’s eye, with aid of a little imagination, we need to recognize the mingled blood and water in the cup, the Christ-blood of the covenant and the blood of all the people of the covenant. When the shed blood of people is seen as mingled with the shed blood of Jesus, it is more likely that we will begin to view the Eucharist as a powerful force to stop the violence in our “culture of death” that keeps needlessly spilling the precious blood of people in the world.

When Cain spilled the blood of his brother, Abel, God said to Cain, “What have you done? Listen, your brother’s blood cries out to me from the soil.” Violently spilled blood cries out to God, not only from the soil of the earth, but especially from the center of worship, the Eucharist. It is our responsibility to hear that cry, to magnify the volume of that cry in our world, and to begin to make reparation for the spilled blood by stopping

the violence. When we hold out our hands to receive “THE BODY OF CHRIST” and take in our hands the cup to receive “THE BLOOD OF CHRIST” our AMEN is the accepting commitment, the responsibility and the privilege to do our best to heal the wounds of the whole Christ for which the blood continues to flow. (We might be more specific about wounds to be healed and the blood that continues to flow.)

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“Under the rubric, ‘curbing the savagery of war.’ The Second Vatican Council contemplates the ‘melancholy state of humanity.’ It looks at this world as it is, not simply as we would want it to be. The view is stark: ferocious new means of warfare threatening savagery surpassing that of the past, deceit, subversion, terrorism, and genocide. This last crime, in particular, is vehemently condemned as horrendous, but all activities, which deliberately conflict with the all-embracing principles of universal natural law, which is permanently binding, are criminal, as are all orders commanding such action. Supreme commendation is due the courage of those who openly and fearlessly resist those who issue such commands. All individuals, especially government officials and experts are bound to honor and improve upon agreements which are ‘aimed at making military activity and its consequences less inhumane’ and which ‘better and more workably lead to restraining the frightfulness of war.’”

CHALLENGE OF PEACE, 71

## SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

### **Hungry people have the right to eat**

2 Kings 4:42-44 "Feed the hungry

Psalm 145 Food is from God

John 6:1-15 Jesus feeds the hungry

Ephesians 4:1-6 The virtues that are the sources of love, compassion, and justice

- Appendix E Network – A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby:  
[www.network.org](http://www.network.org)
- ❖ See A Cycle, Appendix E series: "*Eucharist and Economic Justice*"
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### **Poverty Amid Plenty:**

#### **The Unfinished Business of Welfare Reform**

This title is the name of NETWORK'S new report about the so-called "welfare reforms." The report is the result of a two-year survey of thousands of clients of Catholic social service agencies.

The main conclusion of this report is that welfare rolls are drastically diminishing and severe poverty is on the increase. Following are other conclusions of this report. When Congress passed and Clinton signed the Reconciliation Act of 1996, more and more poor people were placed at risk in the U.S.

- (1) Entitlement to government assistance by women and children who are poor was gone.
- (2) This Act "instituted a five-year accumulative lifetime cap on benefits.
- (3) Help for immigrants were significantly restricted.
- (4) Access to health care became more limited.
- (5) The law mandated workfare—moving from welfare to jobs even though low-paying jobs were the only jobs available for most welfare recipients. It is impossible for full-time workers to move out of poverty with minimum wage jobs.
- (6) "Several other safety-net programs including food stamps were significantly diminished. Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Medicaid were also scaled back by the new welfare reform law.

Quotations in the article were taken from an article that summarizes “Networks” 28-page report NETWORK CONNECTIONS, Kathy Thornton, May-June 1999. Since 1999 some details of the welfare laws have changed, but not the basic reality of the welfare injustice as of 2005.

A copy of the complete report, POVERTY AND PLENTY, is available from NETWORK, 801 Pennsylvania Avenue SE, Suite 460, Washington, D.C. 20003-2167 or [www.networklobby.org](http://www.networklobby.org).

#### **MORE ON WELFARE REFORM NETWORK**

SOLUTIONS TO POVERTY, Kathy Thornton,  
“CONNECTIONS” May-June 1999 page 5 printed with permission.  
WELFARE REFORM: “Don’t Blame the Hype” Lucy Mayo,  
NETWORK CONNECTIONS July-Aug. 1999, page 6.

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“Catholic social teaching spells out the basic demands of justice in greater detail in the human rights of every person. These fundamental rights are prerequisites for a dignified life in community. The Bible vigorously affirms the sacredness of every person as a creature formed in the image and likeness of God. The biblical emphasis on covenant and community also shows that human dignity can only be realized and protected in solidarity with others. In Catholic social thought, therefore, respect for human rights and a strong sense of both personal and community responsibility are linked, not opposed.”

ECONOMIC JUSTICE, 9



## EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

### **Bread and the right to eat**

Exodus 16:2-4, 12-15 Manna, bread from heaven

Psalm 78: Bread from heaven"

John 6:24-35 Bread of life"

- Appendix A Series "Christian or American"

### **"Bread Blessed, Broken and Shared"**

Gospel quotes for comment:

1. "Where shall we buy bread for those to eat?"
2. "Philip replied, 'Not even with two-hundred days wages could we buy loaves enough to give each of them a mouthful.'"
3. "There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and a couple of dried fish, but what good is that for so many?"
4. "Jesus took the loaves of bread, gave thanks, and passed them around..."

In Matthew's Gospel, this same story is more 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 us more "bread" than we need. He expects us to share it. One in every six 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.,” 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 Eucharist. 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)

P.S. 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.

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“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

## NINETEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

### Personal nonviolence

Ephesians 4:30, 5:2 Sources of violence; Sources of nonviolence

“All bitterness, fury, anger, shouting, and reviling must be removed from you, along with all malice. And be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another as God has forgiven you in Christ.” (Ephesians 4:31-32)

“Put on then, as God’s chosen ones...heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another...as the Lord has forgiven you...And over all those put on love...And let the peace of Christ control your hearts...” (Colossians 3:12-15)

- Appendix D Series “Catholic Social Teaching”;  
Part IV “Peace on Earth”
- ❖ See A Cycle, Appendix A series: “A Spirituality of Nonviolence”

### Nonviolence in Families and Other Small Communities

Our dominant culture considers the above virtues recommended by Saint Paul to be the weak virtues. I consider them to be the strong virtues, absolutely necessary for nonviolence in human relations. In this nation, families are the center of more violence than any other small community.

In family and other small communities, conflicts will almost inevitably turn into abuse and hurt—violence in action or word—unless these strong virtues are practiced. Without patience, anger takes over and without gentleness and kindness, hurt and harshness rule the day. Without humility, arrogance and domination contaminate the relationships and without compassion, selfishness leads to hurt and harm. Without these “strong” virtues, war usually ensues—either hot or cold war.

I am very acutely aware that consistent nonviolence is very difficult. I have been around long enough to realize that there are a lot of “difficult” people and that each of us is capable of being “difficult.”

Some defend themselves by saying, I’m not violent, I don’t hit people.” Such persons sometimes forget that words and attitudes can be as destructive as actions.

A friend of mine once asked: “Father Bill, how can you love someone you can’t stand?” It’s helpful to remember that Saint Paul is talking about Gospel love called agape. Agape is more of a decision than a feeling. This kind of love does not demand that we like difficult people. It does demand that we abstain from hurting and continue to forgive and respect even people whom we do not particularly like. Agape calls us to serve and help persons, even when we do not particularly like them. It also calls us to avoid hurting and to keep forgiving people. I suspect that Jesus did not like the people who crucified Him, but he did forgive them. That’s agape.

Following are a few hints for avoiding violence in families and other face-to-face communities:

1. Face it! Negotiate.
2. Forgive and forgive and forgive...
3. Remember, the only person that I can change is myself
4. Win/lose equals all lose. Win/win equals all win
5. Give people the benefit of the doubt.
6. Think! Do I have the same faults?
7. Learn a safe, fair way to unload anger.
8. If you fight, fight fair—to express but not to hurt.
9. Laugh! A sense of humor gives perspective.
10. Pray, pray, pray...for self and people that I find it hard to accept.
11. Remember! Violence is not only evil it’s also stupid. The violator hurts him/herself.
12. Live humbly, compassionately, patiently, kindly, gently, and forgive, forgive, forgive.

I call these my twelve steps for recovering from violence in small communities.

## ASSUMPTION OF MARY

### Magnificat

Luke 1:46-55

“He has scattered the proud in their conceit. He has cast down the mighty from their thrones and has lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. (Luke 1:51-53).

*Cf Third Sunday of Advent*

These are startling words from a teenage mother. Mary, like Jesus her son, identifies with the *anawim* of Israel. She praises God for liberating the powerless ones—the lowly and the hungry. She exalts God for protecting the humble ones and the oppressed. She exalts God for protecting the humble ones from the exploitation of the proud, the mighty and the rich. Jesus, her son, will choose the little ones, the powerless ones as the highest priority of his Messianic mission. (Luke 4:16-19).

Gustavo Gutierrez comments on the Magnificat:

“Preference for the poor and the oppressed runs through the entire Bible. Mary’s song powerfully recalls this preference...the text simply states what we read here in the whole Bible. Attempts to soften it and to take away its historical bite simply ignores the biblical promises. Once again we are in the presence of what is called a messianic inversion. (Gustavo Gutierrez, Sharing the Word Through the Liturgical Year. Orbis, page 275.)

In 1531, Mary appeared to a peasant of Indian blood, Juan Diego, on the mountain of Tepayoc, Mexico outside of Mexico City. The picture of herself as Our Lady of Guadalupe on Juan’s outer garment is the picture of a woman of mixed blood—Aztec Indian and Spanish. Mary again identifies with the lowly, with persons considered inferior by the racists.

Mary is a “Christopher”—a Christ Bearer. She brought Jesus the Messiah to our world. We are also called to be “Christophers,” bringing Christ to our world by the way that we live and by the way we love and identify with the *anawim*.

## TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

### Exploitation of *ANAWIM*

Psalm 15 The just and the unjust

James 1:27 *Anawim*: orphans and widows

Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23 Jesus in conflict with Pharisees, lawyers and scribes over human traditions that exploit the ordinary people.

Verses 20-23: Sources of personal violence.

- Optional Theme: “The Pledge of Allegiance”
- Optional Theme: “Balancing Budgets”

### Exploiting the Little People

In the 32<sup>nd</sup> Chapter of the Book of Exodus, we find the story of the golden calf. Having left Egypt, the Hebrews were wandering through the desert on their way to the Promised Land. Moses was delayed on the mountain where he received the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments. The people were fearful and restless at the base of Mount Sinai. They collected the gold jewelry of the people and constrained Aaron to make a gold calf, which they acknowledged as their God, and they worshipped this image in an idolatrous way. God said to Moses:

“Go down at once to your people...for they have become depraved. They have soon turned away from the way I pointed out to them.” (Exodus 32:7)

We might be inclined to judge this incident in the desert as a quaint expression of a naïve people. However, the golden calf is still going strong today.

Whenever people give their hearts to money, power, popularity, or pleasure rather than to God, they are worshipping the golden calf.

The increasing gap between the haves and the have-nots in the United States is a form of golden-calf worship because the rich are unwilling to share with people trapped in poverty.

Whenever the U.S. exploits poor nations, making exorbitant profits on weapon sales, cuts welfare for the poor while cutting taxes for the rich; whenever employers pay ridiculously low minimum wages to increase their own income; whenever a nation

leaves its homeless on the streets to save public money, the golden calf is being worshipped. “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be.” (Matthew 6:21)

Whenever the church makes buildings, especially expensively conspicuous monuments, a greater priority than the poor, the golden calf is still around.

In a second reading for the Fifth Sunday of Lent, C Cycle, St. Paul writes:

“I have come to rate all as lost in the light of the surpassing knowledge of the Lord, Jesus Christ. For his sake I have forfeited everything; I have accounted all else rubbish so that Christ may be my wealth...” (Philippians 3:8)

When we choose the “rubbish” in preference to Christ as our wealth, we are choosing the golden calf and not even recognizing that we are as naïve and depraved as the people in the desert at the foot of Mount Sinai. Whenever a country like the U.S. or a state like Minnesota debates what to do with surplus funds without even considering relief of the most destitute citizens—the homeless and hungry people—the golden calf is very much alive. Whenever we cut human services to balance the budgets, the Golden Calf is still with us.

Jesus and St. Paul recognize the danger of “rubbish” worship. Jesus warned, “you cannot serve God and money.” St. Paul stated... “the love of money is the root of all evil.”

St. Paul’s priority of giving our hearts to Christ instead of to “rubbish” is also emphasized in his letter to the Romans 8:35 and 37.

“What will separate us from the love of Christ? Will anguish, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril or the sword? ...no, in all these things we conquer overwhelmingly through him who loved us.”

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“The fulfillment of the basic needs of the poor is of the highest priority. Their effects on those who lack the minimum necessities of nutrition, housing, education and health care must evaluate all personal decisions, policies of private and public bodies, and power relationships. In particular, this principle recognizes that meeting fundamental human needs must come before the fulfillment of desires for luxury consumer goods.

ECONOMIC JUSTICE, 90

## **“THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE”**

For the past two years the Pledge of Allegiance has been back in the news about the name of “God” being included in the text. I have another problem with the pledge in the phrase: “with liberty and justice for all.” Here the words and the grammar assume that we as a nation believe and live the words: “with liberty and justice for all.” As a nation we do not believe nor live these words very well.

Following are some of my reasons for stating that we do not, as a nation, believe in “liberty and justice for all”:

1. One in every six children in the U.S. is still born into poverty.
2. The gap between the rich and the poor is still increasing.
3. Over 43,000,000 people in the U.S. still cannot afford health insurance.  
These people do not receive equal health care.
4. Efforts to relieve the plight of millions of homeless people in our land have been mere tokenism measures.
5. Racism is deeply rooted and widespread throughout our nation, racists give lip service to “with liberty and justice for all.”
6. Government budget deficits are being corrected not by the resources of the rich whose taxes are being cut but by the vulnerable citizens whose services are being cut.
7. Women are still paid lower wages than men for equal services rendered.
8. Corporations and private businesses through minimum wages exploit workers.
9. Amnesty International attests to human rights brutality in law enforcement in the U.S.
10. We continue to pollute and destroy the natural resources of the earth for economic gains.
11. We continue to erode democracy through legal, corrupt campaign and election finance practices.



12. Self-interest dominates our foreign policies, while about 40,000 people die daily in the world from poverty causes: malnutrition, polluted water, and very inadequate health care.
13. Unbridled market economy aids us and other rich nations and exploits the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> world poverty nations.
14. Selfish, luxurious lifestyle of many of the economically affluent Americans deprives many on the other side of the economic spectrum who lack the necessities of life
15. Intended abortion deprives millions of unborn lives of the right to life.
16. We are wasting huge amounts of natural resources and human lives on wars considered unjust by most churches and theologians, including the late Pope John Paul II and the American Bishops.

So, instead of “one nation indivisible, with liberty and justice for all” we have a nation divided between rich and poor, white and colored, the powerful and the vulnerable; a nation “with liberty and justice for” some, especially the rich, the white and the powerful, the well-fed and the well-cared for in matters of health.

From my experience in studying the Bible, I believe that God is less concerned about the name of God included in the Pledge text than about “liberty and justice for all” not being carried out. “This amounts to a serious neglect of the least brothers (and sisters)” of Jesus. (Matthew, Chapter 25: 31-45)

The answer is not to discard the Pledge but, as a nation of citizens, to begin to live the text, to take it seriously. We preach human rights to other nations but we have a long ways to go in practicing what we preach. I’m not looking for a perfect democracy. However, “all” could and should have the necessities for dignified lives. We have the resources to do something significant about the injustices listed above. In the meantime maybe we should not expect our children to give lip service to a Pledge that we adults do not intend to keep.

When Dr. Bellamy wrote the text of the Pledge in 1894, the original words would have included “equality”. The text would have read: “with liberty, justice and equality for all.” At that time the nation was not ready to accept the equality of African Americans and Native Americans. So “equality” was deleted. I think that we should reinstate

“equality” now and reevaluate our national priorities according to what we profess in the Pledge.

## **“Balancing Budgets”**

*“By Exploiting the Poor and Subsidizing the Rich”*

A quote from the Book of Wisdom 6: 1-6 New American Bible

Exhortation to Seek Wisdom

“Hear, therefore, kings, and understand;  
learn, you magistrates of the earth’s expanse!

Harken, you who are in power over the multitude and lord it  
over throngs of peoples!

Because authority was given you by the Lord and  
sovereignty by the Most High, who shall probe your works  
and scrutinize your counsels!

Because, though you were ministers of his kingdom, you  
judged not rightly, and did not keep the law, nor walk  
according to the will of God,

Terribly and swiftly shall he come against you, because  
judgment is stern for the exalted - -

For the lowly may be pardoned out of mercy but the mighty  
shall be mightily put to the test.”

January 2004 is Poverty Awareness Month.

President Bush is taking credit for the very recent economic surge of over 7% by attributing the rise to his recent tax cuts for the rich. He may or may not be correct. Some economists and politicians disagree that the tax cut is the cause of the surge. However, it is quite clear that the tax cut and the surge have benefited those who are economically comfortable and not the low-income people. The tax cut widened the gap between the rich and the poor. The statistics have also pointed out that the economic surge has had little if anything to do with solving the unemployment problem.

As most Americans will remember, the budget deficits, national and state, including Minnesota, were attacked by cutting the taxes of the rich (national) and not raising taxes of the rich (Minnesota). Instead, President Bush and Governor Pawlenty decided to exploit the low-income citizens by cutting human services significantly (increasing poverty) and by maintaining or increasing the wealth of the wealthy.

To put some flesh and blood on my statement I'll do a true story. I'll change the names and places to protect the privacy of the exploited family.

In the early winter of 2003 a family of seven (children range in age from 6 months to nine years) requested financial help for food, clothing, medicines, transportation and heating fuel (before fuel assistance was distributed). Over a period of time the local church helped this family. One parent was working part time for minimum wage and they were also helped by inadequate welfare aid. It was assumed that medical assistance would pay for medical prescriptions. We discovered that medical assistance does not cover all medications and that co-payments for medications must also be made before receiving the medicine. Some of these problems were the result of cut-backs in human services in 2003. There are many situations arising in the poverty population for which there is neither government nor private agency solutions to family needs.

This story is not an exception to situations of people in poverty. There are no sufficient assistance programs for the needs of millions of people. This story is dealing with the tip of the iceberg of people falling through the cracks. It is being enacted by hundreds of thousands of households of people in the US, a nation that claims to offer "liberty and justice for all". Many churches are paying the taxes that the rich should be

paying if these taxes were not being cut. This whole process is a legal way for the government, wealthy people, and corporations, especially those receiving corporate welfare, to work together in exploiting people of low or no income. Jesus had a strong word for this kind of injustice: "This is an evil generation." As I read history and the Gospels we are no better than Jesus' generation. In fact I think that we have exacerbated the selfishness and injustice that Jesus condemned.

A quote from The Church in the Modern World, (Paragraph 69)

"For the rest, the right to have a share of earthly goods sufficient for oneself and one's family belongs to everyone. The Fathers and Doctors of the Church held this view, teaching that men are obliged to come to the relief of the poor, and to do so not merely out of their superfluous goods. If a person is in extreme necessity, he has the right to take from the riches of others what he himself needs. Since there are so many people in this world afflicted with hunger, this sacred Council urges all, both individuals and governments, to remember the saying of the Fathers: "Feed the man dying of hunger, because if you have not fed him you have killed him." (II Vatican Council)

I return to my opening quotation from the Book of Wisdom. It is irresponsible for leaders of the people, especially political leaders to forget that they are elected or appointed to serve the people and not to be served by the people.

P.S. War is a horrendous waste and drain of resources. The poor are the ones left holding the empty bag.

## TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

### Help for the disabled – *anawim*

Isaiah 35:4-7 The blind, the deaf, the lame and dumb

Psalm 146: The oppressed, the hungry, the captive, the blind, strangers, orphans and widows

James 2:1-5 Prejudice: classism and racism

Mark 7:31-37 The deaf and speech impeded

“I, the Lord, have called you for the victory of justice...I formed you and set you as a covenant of the people, a light for the nations, to open the eyes of the blind, to bring out prisoners from confinement and from the dungeon, those who live in darkness.” (Isaiah 42:6-7)

- Optional Theme: “Ending Racism in the Church”
- Optional Theme: “*Racism*”
- Optional Theme: “Racism and the Bible”
  - Appendix A Series “Christian or American”
  - Appendix B Series “Human Rights”
  - Appendix C Series “Racism”
  - Appendix D Series “Catholic Social Teachings”
  - Appendix E: Network – A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby:  
[www.networklobby.org](http://www.networklobby.org)
  - Appendix F: Children’s Defense Fund: [www.childrensdefense.org](http://www.childrensdefense.org)  
U.S. Newswire: <http://releases.usnewswire.com>
- ❖ See A Cycle, Appendix B series: “*Compassion*”

### Jubilee 2000 The Great Jubilee and Racism

As I have written recently, the Jubilee Year was established (Leviticus 25, Isaiah 61:1-2, and Luke 4:18-19) as a special year of liberation of the poverty stricken, slaves and other captives. In this article I will limit my remarks to the new slavery, the new imprisoning-racism. Racism imprisons both the victims of racism as well as racists themselves. The victims of racism in the United States, the people of color, are dehumanized and are often reduced to poverty and imprisonment in ghettos, reservations, and, literally, within prison walls. White racists imprison themselves in white suburbs and especially their own myopic minds and constricted hearts. Both need a Jubilee year of awareness and liberation. We all need this Jubilee year for the

liberation of the secular world and the Church. A large segment of the church is mired in racism, buried under the debris of complacency and, hence, is spiritually impeded.

Joseph Barndt in his book Dismantling Racism, (Augsburg, Minneapolis, 1991), writes that our nation, the world, and the Church need a “Kairos Moment,” a special time of crisis and opportunity to confront racism in our world. He writes:

“Perhaps the single most vivid symbol of this kairos moment is the rapidly approaching turn of the millennium—a promise of new beginnings. The final decade of the old millennium should be a time of anticipation and planning for that opportunity. As the time draws closer, there will be a sense of urgency and resolve the world over to enter the new century with a commitment to achieve national and world unity and community and to live in justice and peace. It is an opportunity for us as a nation to leave behind our tragic heritage of racism and enter a new millennium of racial and ethnic pluralism.”

Finally Barndt in the same book quotes the Road to Damascus, Kairos and Conversion (Center of Concern Publishing 1989):

“All of us who profess to be followers of Jesus of Nazareth are in continuous need of conversion. While we see clearly the idolatry, the heresy, the hypocrisy and the blasphemy of others, we ourselves need to search our own hearts for remnants of the same sins and for signs of triumphalism, self-righteousness, dogmatism, rigidity, intolerance and sectarianism. There should be no place in our hearts for any kind of complacency.”

It will take at least the whole of the 21<sup>st</sup> century to erase racism from our country and world. The world will need many “Kairos Moments” beyond the Jubilee Year.

**Optional Theme:**  
**“Ending Racism in the Church”**

James 2:1-5

This is the title of a relatively new book edited by Susan E. Davies and Sister Paul Teresa Hennessee, S.A., published in 1998 by the United Church Press, Cleveland Ohio.

This book is a collection of essays authored by black and white religious leaders of several Christian denominations. These authors all recognize the serious evil of racism, and the serious contradiction between racism in the Church and the teachings of Jesus. These authors offer suggestions and plans for “ending racism in the Church.”

I will quote several of these essays that I believe would be appropriate for a homily about the contradiction between racism and Christian faith and practice.

Chapter 7: “Ending Racism in Society Through the Church.” By Alonzo Johnson.

“The most basic component of the structure of human meaning centers on the recognition of the true spiritual kinship between all persons and things in the cosmos. In his 1971 text The Search for Common Ground, by Howard Thurman, he spells out the dimensions of this kinship in clear terms. Directly related to this is the human sense of infinite worth of oneself and of all other human beings. When the individual human being is religious, especially a true Christian, she or he is especially called to nurture this insight. The very essence of being human is to ‘experience’ the kinship with other humans.” (Page 60)

Chapter 8: Baptism as Sacrament of Struggle and Rite of Resistance by Deborah Flemister Mullen.

“The call to discipleship consists of two parts—an invitation and a response. For Christians, it is the most important invitation we will ever receive. Each person must respond for herself or himself in light of the many and different ways this most awesome call comes. Christian tradition considers baptism to be a fundamental response of discipleship, whether administered as an initiation rite to infants and young people or later in life upon the profession of one’s



more mature faith. In either case, it is rightly understood as an act of faith community in covenant relationship with God. Therefore, whatever form the baptismal ritual takes...baptism is a sign and universal symbol to the world that the one baptized is on a faith journey rooted in the ministry of reconciliation, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth."

"This chapter is concerned with the question of what it means to follow Jesus and be his disciple today. How do we sort out the meaning of Christian discipleship in an increasingly secularized world, in which the relevance of the church and its ministry is under serious attack, not the least, because of racial divisions among Christians? What role, if any, does or should baptism (as sacrament, ritual practice or ordinance) play in the lives of those who are seeking the visible unity of the church?"

"Finally, as disciples of Christ, how do we measure faithfulness to our baptismal vows and renew the commitment to unity as our calling in the midst of a world that has little regard either for what we believe or for the unity we seek?" These questions beg our serious attention and thoughtful response if we truly believe that 'in sovereign love God created the world good and makes everyone equal in God's image, male and female, of every race and people, to live as one community.'" (Page 66)

"Racism must not be tolerated in the body of Christ because it clearly violates our unity in Christ given to us in baptism. This biblical interpretation of our unity thus forms the basis for the ethical mandate of the churches to eradicate racism." (Page 67)

"Is not baptism compromised, as a sign of visible unity and proclamation of faith, as long as racism is practiced in the church? Put another way, if baptism is the basis of our unity in Jesus Christ; are not racist beliefs and practices among baptized Christians a scandal within the community of believers? Does not the presence of racism and the Christian family pose a stumbling block to those for whom the church's witness is intended to reveal God's unconditional love and justice for all?" (Page 68)

## Chapter 9: “The Eucharist and Racism,” by Tee Garlington

“In 1 Corinthians 11:17-34, the Apostle Paul gives instructions about the proper attitude and conduct that believers should have in sharing the Eucharist. The key verse in this passage is verse 29: ‘For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body.’ This verse is not only the key to understanding the whole passage: it is also the central concept in understanding why racism cannot exist alongside the Eucharist. To understand this verse, however, we need to look at several other passages also penned by the Apostle Paul.” (Page 76)

I Corinthians 10:16-17 1 Corinthians 12:12  
Ephesians 1:22-23 Colossians 1:18  
Romans 12:4-5

“Therefore, Paul’s warning in I Corinthians 11:29—‘he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body’—becomes clear. ‘Discerning the Lord’s body’ means accepting and receiving all brothers and sisters on an equal basis, not withholding community from some because of racial prejudice. Clearly, the Christian goodwill that we experience in our local church setting will likely be the most personal and intense. But we cannot, we must not, refuse community with any believer on the basis of racial or national origin. To do so would be to violate the warning of ‘not discerning the Lord’s body.’” (Page 79)

## Chapter 10: “Violence in the Household,” by Sister Paul Teresa Hennessee, S.A.

“Racism is a form of violence, a violation deeper than any of the horrors about which we read in our daily news, and these are legion. Racism not only harms a person’s physical being; it does violence to the human soul.”

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“To share in Christ’s glory, each person must be willing to be baptized in Christ’s passion and drink his cup of suffering. That is Jesus’ message to his disciples. By this willingness to suffer with Christ and with one another in him, we commit ourselves to the new covenant, to new relationships which transcend every consideration of race, sex, family, nationality, economic or social standing.”

TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH, 57

**Optional Theme:**  
**“Racism”**

- (1) Racism is a serious attitude and belief that one race is superior to other races of people. Racism is prejudice with power—power to control, exploit and harm persons of other races.
- (2) Racism is pervasive, persistent, deeply rooted in American Society.
- (3) Racism did not end with the Civil Rights Movement and laws of the 1960’s.
- (4) Racism in the United States is mainly a white problem, and all of us white people—people of Euro-American roots—are touched by and involved in racism. We are the people of privilege and power while people of color are usually under-privileged and relatively powerless.
- (5) Dismantling racism calls for a change in attitude of individual white persons (unconditional love) and for a change in U.S. social and political structures.
- (6) Racism is a psychological and spiritual prison for both racists and victims. Often racism causes physical imprisonment for its victims.
- (7) Spiritual antidotes to the sin of racism are the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist, the process of forgiveness, and prayer for self and for the people of color.
- (8) “Racism is a sin that contradicts both the Bible and the Church. Therefore, let the church proclaim for all to hear that the sin of racism defiles the image of God and degrades the sacred dignity of humankind, which has been revealed by the mystery of the Incarnation. Let all know that it is a terrible sin that mocks the cross of Christ and ridicules the Incarnation. For the brother and sister of our Brother Jesus Christ are brother and sister to us.” (American Bishops)
- (9) Racism may be intentional or unintentional, conscious or unconscious.
- (10) Racism is deeply rooted among people of our U.S. Churches.
- (11) “Racism obscures the evils of the past and denies the burdens that history has placed upon the shoulders of our Black, Hispanic, Native American, and Asian brothers and sisters. An honest look at the past makes plain the need for restitution wherever possible—makes evident the justice of restoration and redistribution.” (American Bishops)
- (12) “For through faith you are all children of God in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew

nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:26-28)

(Most of the ideas above are taken from the American Bishops’ Pastoral Lesson on Racism and Joseph Barndt’s book, Dismantling Racism, Augsburg Press, 1991)

## Optional Theme

### “Racism and the Bible”

- |     |   |   |
|-----|---|---|
| 1.  | Genesis 1:27  | Image of God  |
| 2.  | Psalms 8:5-7  | Crowned with glory and honor  |
| 3.  | Matthew 5:1-12<br>Matthew 25:31-46                      | Blessed are the <i>anawim</i><br>Jesus and the <i>anawim</i>                                  |
| 4.  | Luke 4:17-21<br>Luke 10:25-37<br>Luke 14:12-14          | Jesus' Priorities— <i>anawim</i><br>Love and the Samaritan<br>Unclean, outcast fringe folk    |
| 5.  | John 14:23 and 27<br>John 15:1-12                       | Indwelling: Skin color irrelevant<br>Vine and branches: Skin color irrelevant                 |
| 6.  | Acts 2:1-11<br>Acts 10:ff<br>Acts 10:43<br>Acts 11:1 ff | Pentecost<br>Vision of Peter<br>Forgiveness for all<br>Gentiles accepted; especially verse 17 |
| 7.  | Romans 12<br>Whole chapter                              | Love, Body of Christ and nonviolence  |
| 8.  | 1 Corinthians 12<br>Whole chapter                       | Body of Christ  |
| 9.  | Galatians 3:26-28                                       | Jew or Greek, slave or free   |
| 10. | James 2:1   | Partiality  |
| 11. | 1 John 3:17   | Compassion for a brother: Skin color irrelevant   |
| 12. | Revelation 7:9-10                                       | All Saints' Day   |

## TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

### We are called to nonviolence

Isaiah 50:4-9 Nonviolent Suffering Servant.

Psalm 116 Blest are the persecuted

James 2:14-18 Care for people – practice of faith

Mark 8:27-35 Jesus is nonviolent Suffering Servant

- Optional Theme: “The Gospel According to Matthew – Relating to Violence”
- Optional Theme: “Conclusion to the Scriptural Citations” (previous page)
- Appendix A Series “Christian or American”
- Appendix D Series “Catholic Social Teaching”;  
Part IV *“Peace on Earth”*
- ❖ See A Cycle, Appendix A series: *“A Spirituality of Nonviolence”*
- ❖ See A Cycle, Appendix B series: *“Compassion”*

### Just Wars

In my lifetime the United States has been involved in two world wars and many regional wars, euphemistically called low-intensity conflicts. We need to struggle with life and death issues in our own consciences. The Church’s most commonly held teaching about the moral justification of killing in war is the age-old “just war teaching.” This 1700 year-old teaching is held not only by the Catholic Church, but also by most mainline Protestant churches. In its simplest form, the “just war teaching” states the following conditions for moral participation of Christians in war:

- (1) A war must have serious and just cause.
- (2) The war must be defensive—never offensive
- (3) Legitimate government authority must declare the war.
- (4) War must be the last resort after all reasonable negotiations have failed.
- (5) No intentional killing of non-combatants (those not involved directly in the war effort) is allowed.
- (6) There must be some reasonable hope of achieving the defensive goals--something good.

- (7) The means of conducting the war must not cause more harm than good. The means must be appropriate for achieving the goals—no overkill.

St. Augustine, who initiated this teaching in the church, also stated that if one killed another in war, it must not be out of vengeance or hatred.

I encourage my readers to evaluate prayerfully every military conflict that our nation becomes involved in. I also encourage my readers to pray daily in church and home for a nonviolent solution to our personal and national conflicts.

In this article, I am stating the Church's minimum conditions for participating in war. The church also accepts a pacifist moral conviction—the rejection of all violence in our relationships, whether personal or national.

In my personal conviction, I believe that both Gulf Wars (1991 and 2003)--did not satisfy all the conditions for a just war on the part of the U.S., nor did the recent war in Afghanistan, which began the war on terrorism following 9/11.

\* \* \* \* \*

“The moral theory of the ‘just-war’ or ‘limited-war’ doctrine begins with the presumption, which binds all Christians: we should not harm our neighbors; how we treat our enemy is the key test of whether we love our neighbor; and the possibility of taking even one human life is a prospect we should consider in fear and trembling.”

CHALLENGE OF PEACE, 80



**Optional Theme:**

**“The Gospel According to Matthew Relating to Violence”**

Matthew 5:1-12    Beatitudes  
Matthew 5:21-24   Killing and Anger  
Matthew 5:38-42   Non-retaliation  
Matthew 5:43-46   Love Enemies  
Matthew 6:25-34   Self-interest and Security  
Matthew 15:17-20   Inner Sources of Violence  
Matthew 16:24-25   Doctrine of the Cross  
Matthew 22:34-40   Love  
Matthew 25:31-46   Last Judgment  
Matthew 26:51-53   The Sword  
Matthew 26:36-75 and Chapter 27:1-66   Passion and Crucifixion

**EPISTLES AND NON-VIOLENCE**

Romans 12:17-21    “Never re-pay injury with injury”  
1 Corinthians 1:17-25   Absurdity of Gospel and Cross  
1 Corinthians 13:4-7   Love  
Ephesians 2:13-18    Reconciliation  
Ephesians 4:1-6    Unity and Peace  
Philippians 2:5-11    Suffering Servant  
Colossians 1:20-24    Hostility and Reconciliation  
Colossians 3:12-17    Christ’s Peace  
I Peter 2:20-24    Suffering Servant

**Optional Theme:**

**“Conclusion to the Scriptural Citations”** (previous page)

1. Jesus taught and lived nonviolence.
2. If we cannot conclude the above from the New Testament, then we can know very little about Jesus.
3. Nonviolence is an essential dimension of the proclamation of the Gospel and the Kingdom.
4. Gospel teachings on nonviolence are a consistent part of the broader Gospel presentation of LOVE (AGAPE), and reconciliation and community (Body of Christ).
5. The church, to be faithful to its evangelical mission, must proclaim nonviolence.
6. Personal violence is usually sin and, hence, must be dealt with through repentance.
7. Social 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’ teachings on nonviolence make up the most practical plan for peace.

## TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

### Second Prediction of the Passion and death of Jesus

#### The greatest must be servant of all

Wisdom 2:12, 17-20 The “just one” is nonviolent in the face of persecution

Psalm 54 God upholds us in the face of persecution

Mark 9:30-37 Jesus is the Suffering Servant who offers his life in nonviolent love. Jesus encourages us to become child-like. Humility and gentleness are inner sources of nonviolence.

- Optional Theme: “Gospel Sources of Nonviolence: Mark’s three Predictions of The Passion”
- Appendix A Series “*Christian or American*”
- Appendix D Series “*Catholic Social Teaching*”; Part IV “Peace on Earth”

### The Suffering Servant

“Then he sat down, called the Twelve, and said to them, “if anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all. Jesus said to them (the twelve): ‘If anyone wishes to be first, he/she will be the last of all.’ Taking a child he placed it in their midst, and putting his arms around it he said to them, ‘whoever receives one child such as this in my name, receives me: and whoever receives me, receives not but the one who sent me.’” (Mark 9:35-37)

In the very next chapter of Mark, Jesus re-emphasizes his statement about the “first,” the “last” and the child. In the context of his third prediction of his Passion, Jesus said:

“You know that those who are recognized as rulers over the Gentiles, lord it over them and their great ones make their authority over them felt. But it shall not be so among you. Rather, whoever wishes to be great 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)

This statement of Jesus makes up, in my opinion, the most revolutionary teaching of all the sayings of Jesus. Far back in history, at least 5,000 years, domination of people by people, nation over nation, government over subjects, rich over poor, adults over children, and men over women have been the persistent form of governance in human

society. So pervasive has this system prevailed that the Church itself easily falls into the domination system rather than give witness to the Jesus system of governance.

About this domination system, Walter Wink writes:

“Breaking with domination means ending the economic exploitations of the many by the few. Since the powerful are not likely to relinquish wealth, the poor must find ways of transcending the Domination Epoch while still in it.” (Walter Wink, Engaging the Powers, page 114)

**Optional Theme:**

**“Gospel Sources of Nonviolence: Mark’s three Predictions of the Passion”**

Mark 9:30-37 “Jesus is the Suffering Servant who offers his life in nonviolent love. Jesus encourages us to become child-like. Humility and gentleness are inner sources of nonviolence. Welcoming a child is welcoming Jesus. “He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer greatly and be rejected by the elders, the Chief Priests, and the scribes.” (Mark 8:31-37)

In his passion and death, Jesus lived nonviolence. He possessed divine power but he relinquished his power to protect himself, and the power to harm anyone else, even in violent self-defense. He had the power to vanquish his enemies, but he chose to accept on himself the violence worked against him by others. When Jesus predicted his arrest and execution, he was also predicting that he would allow the violence against him rather than retaliate and defend himself through violence against others.

In predicting his unjust arrest and gross mistreatment, he also followed the prediction with the statement that his followers must act as he would--to take up their cross and follow him.

Jesus then re-emphasizes his teaching about the nonviolent cross by saying that “whoever wishes to save one’s life must lose it, but whoever loses one’s life for his sake will save it.” One might save one’s biological life through violence against others, while losing one’s life of grace and eternal life by living unjustly, unlovingly and violently.

Jesus, speaking about the sources of nonviolence said: “What profit is there for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his/her life?” In other words, one might lose grace-life by seeking material gain at the same time.

These sayings and statements are about the sources of nonviolence, in so far as greed feeds into power, and any abuse of power is a form of violence. Persons in possession of authority/power easily become violent unless such persons exercise their power to serve others. Jesus relinquished all power except the power to heal, to serve, and to save people.

This whole section is sometimes called the Doctrine of the Cross. It seems quite alien to people playing power games of this world which usually lead to violence. St. Paul said that the Cross is absurd in the light of the conventional wisdom of this world.

\* \* \* \* \*

“All of the values we are promoting in this letter rest ultimately in the disarmament of the human heart and the conversion of the human spirit to God who alone can give authentic peace. Indeed, to have peace in our world, we must first have peace within ourselves. As Pope John Paul II reminded us in his *1982 World Day of Peace* message, world peace will always elude us unless peace becomes a reality for each of us personally. ‘It springs from the dynamism of free wills guided by reason towards the common good that is to be attained in truth, justice and love.’ Interior peace becomes possible only when we have a conversion of spirit. We cannot have peace with hate in our hearts.”

CHALLENGE OF PEACE, 284

“In a world which is not yet the fulfillment of God’s kingdom, a world where both personal actions and social forces manifest the continuing influence of sin and disorder among us, consistent attention must be paid to preventing and limiting the violence of war.”

CHALLENGE OF PEACE, 200

## TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

### Economic injustice – lifestyle – greed

James 5:1-6 “You rich, weep and wail over your impending miseries.”

- Optional Theme: “Arms for the Poor”
- Appendix A Series “Christian or American”
- Appendix D Series “Catholic Social Teaching
- Part V: “On the Development of Peoples
- Part VI: “Living Wages”, Parts I and II

### Consumerism and a Culture of Death

Following are quotes of two authors from two books: Brian Swimme, The Hidden Heart of the Cosmos, Orbis Books, 1996; and Jim Wallis, The Best Preaching on Earth, Judson Press, Valley Forge, 1996. This second book is a collection of sermons and homilies about environmental issues. Jim Wallis’ contribution is “I Shop, Therefore I am.”

“Where are we initiated into the universe? To answer we need to reflect on what our children experience over and over again, at night, in a setting similar to those children in the past who gathered in the caves and listened to the chant of the elders. If we think in terms of pure quantities of time the answer is immediate: the cave has been replaced with the television room and chant with the advertisement. One could say that the chant has been replaced with the television show, but at the core of each show, driving the action, and determining whether or not the show will survive the season is the advertisement. That is the essential message that will be there night after night and season after season. Television’s *Bonanza*, *Cheers*, and *Cosby* shows all come and go; the advertisement endures through every change.” (Swimme, Page 13)

“The time our teenagers spend absorbing ads is more than their total stay in high school.” (Swimme, Page 13)

“The fact that consumerism has become the dominant world-faith is largely invisible to us, so it is helpful to understand clearly that to hand our children over to the consumer culture is to place them in the care of the planet’s most sophisticated religious preachers.” (Swimme, Page 14)

“We parents demand that our children’s teachers, to take just one example, should have our children’s best interests foremost in mind. Such teachers will shape our children when they are young and vulnerable, so of course we want this shaping to be done only by people who care. So to hand over so much of our children’s young lives to people who obviously do not have our children’s well-being foremost in mind is at the very least questionable.” (Swimme, Page 15)

“Put it all together and you can see why it’s not a great mystery that consumerism has become the dominant world faith of every continent of the planet today.” (Swimme, Page 17)

“The point I wish to focus on here has to do with the question of how we are initiated into the world. Advertisements are where our children receive their cosmology, their basic grasp of the world’s meaning, which amounts to their primary religious faith, though unrecognized as such. I use the word ‘faith’ here to mean cosmology on the personal level. Faith is that which a person holds to be the hard-boiled truth about reality. The advertisement is our culture’s primary vehicle for providing our children with their personal cosmologies. As this awful fact sinks into awareness, the first healthy response is one of denial. It is just too horrible to think that we live in a culture that has replaced authentic spiritual development with the advertisement’s crass materialism.” (Swimme, Page 17)

“But eventually we all get the message, it’s simple cosmology, told with great effect and delivered a billion times each day not only to Americans of course, but to nearly everyone in the planetary reach of the ad: *humans exist to work at job, to earn money, to get stuff.*” (Swimme, Page 18)

“The ultimate meaning for human existence is getting all this stuff. That’s paradise, and the meaning of the earth? Remanufactured consumer stuff.” (Swimme, Page 18)

“To wade into a fuller awareness we need bring to mind our roadside billboards, the backs of cereal boxes, the fifty thousand magazines crammed with glossy pictures, the lunch boxes wrapped with toy advertisements, the trillion radio commercials...” (Swimme, Page 18)

“Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet their heavenly Father feeds them.



Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?

And why, do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying 'what shall we eat?' or 'what shall we drink?' or 'what shall we wear?'" (Matthew 6:25-33)

"Not only does consumption define the culture; materialism has become the culture in America. Our possessions have come to possess us." (Wallis, Page 198)

"The problem is not that the young people haven't learned our values: it's that they have. They can see beneath our social and religious platitudes to what we care about most. Our great cultural message comes through loud and clear. It is an affluent lifestyle that counts for success and happiness." (Wallis, Page 198)

"That addiction--the addiction to materialism--is fed every hour of every day in this society. And it is not only legal to feed that addiction; it is the whole purpose of the system. It is our reason for being as a people--to possess and consume."

(Wallis, Page 198)

"The images dance before us every waking moment. They attract, allure and create desire; they awaken the greed and covetousness of our worst selves. Our children are glued to the television screen, and the beat of incessant consumption pounds in their ears. At every level of the life cycle our hopes and fears, vanities and insecurities, aspirations and appetites are carefully researched and mercilessly exploited. Our many addictions are systematically created, creatively cultivated and constantly manipulated." (Wallis, Page 199)

Our shopping malls have become the temples, shrines and communal centers of modern America." (Wallis, Page 199)

The issue here is deeper than greed and selfishness. Material consumption--buying and possessing things--has become the primary way of belonging in America and around the world. If we can't buy, if we can't consume, we simply can't belong." (Wallis, Page 200)

“Television rules the popular culture and advertising dominates television. Television has become the principal vehicle for promoting consumerism. It is the message of the medium. Consumption has become our highest social value and purpose.” (Wallis, Page 200)

Farmer and poet, Wendell Berry reflected at the end of the Gulf War:

“If we want to be at peace, we will have to waste less, spend less, use less, want less, need less. The most alarming sign of the state of our society now is that our leaders have the courage to sacrifice the lives of our young people in war, but have not the courage to tell us that we must be less greedy and less wasteful.” (Wallis, page 206)

“Underneath the noisy chaos of our consumer culture, the constant thrust of medial images that define our reality, and the relentless pressure of a lifestyle that demands our very souls, do we even hear the cry of the poor? Beneath their cry, can we hear the cry of creation itself?” (Wallis, page 206)

\* \* \* \* \*

“Renouncing self-centered desires, bearing one’s daily cross, and imitating Christ’s compassion all involve a personal struggle to control greed and selfishness, a personal commitment to reverence one’s own human dignity and the dignity of others by avoiding self-indulgence and those attachments that make us insensitive to the conditions of others and that erode social solidarity. Christ warned us against attachments to material things, against total self-reliance, against the idolatry of accumulating material goods and seeking safety in them.”

ECONOMIC JUSTICE, 328

**Optional Theme:**  
**“Arms for the Poor”**

*(Written in 1999, this situation hasn't changed much up to the present, 2005).*

“Arms for the Poor” is a new video produced by Maryknoll World Productions. This article is a summary and review of this video available at the Crookston Diocese Resource Library, Crookston, MN.

The U.S. today is the largest weapons selling nation in the world. We sell mostly for profit and political advantage. Eighty percent of our arms sales are to non-democratic countries that violate the human rights of their own people.

We have forgotten the advice of General President Dwight D. Eisenhower in his “Farewell to the American People.” January 17, 1960

“We must guard against the unwarranted influence by a military industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous use of misplaced power exists and will persist.”

During the Cold War, the U. S. sold weapons to any country that might be an ally of the U.S. and/or an adversary of the Soviet Union even if the “ally” violated human rights more flagrantly than the Soviet Union. Our nation has greatly increased its arms sales in spite of the demise of communist power in the world. In 1999, I suspect that the U.S. weapons sold to Indonesia years ago were used again against the people of East Timor where the UN tried to stop the slaughter of the people who voted for independence. Are some of our soldiers in Iraq being killed by U.S. weapons sold to Iraq in the past?

Suharto's Indonesia is an example of how one of many nations has used U.S. weapons to practically destroy another tiny country--East Timor. The U.S. during the Ford Administration raised no objection to Indonesia's immoral use of American weapons. In fact, U.S. dollars, as well as weapons, helped carry out the bloody work of the Suharto regime.

Recently the U.S. refused to sign an international agreement outlawing the use of landmines. In Vietnam, 64 American service personnel were killed or maimed by landmines. 90% of which were made in the U.S. The video failed to mention that

weapons used against our servicemen and women in the recent Gulf War were sold to Iraq by the U.S. prior to the war.

The U.S. will sell weapons to almost anyone who will buy, and the weapons- shows produced around the globe are paid for by tax money of American citizens. We also pay through taxes a large amount of the weapons sales procedures on which the arms-producing corporations make big profits.

When we sell F15 and F22 fighter planes to other countries, we then need to develop better fighter planes so that we can defend ourselves from the planes we sold to other countries. This borders on insanity. Our government does stress the jobs that this policy produces. I would not deny that jobs are produced, but the wages become “blood money.” There are better ways to produce jobs, especially through investing our exorbitant military expenditures (our taxes) in peaceful, needed infrastructure development.

Among 18 industrial nations, the U.S. is number one in military power. We are also number one in the number of children living in poverty among those nations. Furthermore, as our sale of weapons to poor countries (“developing countries” is a euphemism”), the poor get poorer because the U.S. receives the money that should be used by our customer-nations for their own people.

In my personal opinion beyond the presentation of this video, I consider our sale of arms sales for profit to be so egregiously evil that it is demonic. This practice destroys the bodies of people and the souls of the nations who sell and buy. This is the Judas syndrome--betraying Jesus for money. St. John says of Judas: “Satan entered him.” (John 13:27)

## **TWENTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**

Injustice of sexual unfaithfulness and the violence of sexual abuse

Mark 10:2-12 Holiness of married sex, injustice of adultery, sexual abuse and some divorces

### **Sexual Injustice**

Today, the first reading from the Book of Genesis is about the creation of woman and part of the meaning of sexuality: the suitability of men and women as compatible companions, both similar in nature. This reading from Genesis, referred to by Mark in today's Gospel, ends with the beautiful and intimate partnership expressed in this way: "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate." Having been asked by some Pharisees about divorce Jesus enlarges upon his statement about separating what God has joined.

Later, in the presence of his disciples, Jesus introduces the sin and the injustice of adultery of both a separated man and a separated woman having sex with a partner other than his or her spouse. This teaching of Jesus is a departure from the double standard of sex when the adultery of the man was condoned but not the adultery of the woman.

The church has consistently taught that adultery is an injustice against one's married partner. This Gospel points out the equality of the sin and the injustice--the injustice of the former inequality of the double standard as well as the injustice of the adultery itself.

Adultery and divorce are also dealt with by Jesus in the Gospel according to Matthew in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:27-32) where Jesus again departs from the double standard. It is interesting that the Sermon on the Mount sandwiches Jesus' saying about adultery and divorce between two passages: the violence of killing on one side and the passage about relationships and love of enemies on the other side. The Church considers adultery to be a form of injustice.

Expressions of sexual violence would certainly be sexual abuse, against anyone, whether in the family or outside the family. Rape would seem to be the most egregious

form of sexual violence. The sins of sexual abuse imposed on people constitute psychological violence as well as physical violence. Such abuse is dehumanizing of the victim of the abuse--one of the egregious, barbarous expressions of forced domination on a human person. As most forms of violence, sexual violence is unjust.

Lest I give the wrong impression about sexuality by over emphasizing the injustice and violence of bad sex, we need to also emphasize the goodness, the justice and the human fulfillment of good sex. By good sex I mean sex in the context of marriage that is expressed and enjoyed with mutual love, honesty, and with tenderness, understanding and justice.

## **TWENTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**

### **The spiritual danger of wealth**

Wisdom 7:7-11      “Riches are nothing in comparison with her wisdom”  
Mark 10:17-30      The rich young man

- Optional Theme: “Principles for a Christian Economic Lifestyle”
- Optional Theme: “Conclusions” to Luke’s Bible Study on Wealthy, Money and Lifestyle
  - Appendix A Series “Christian or American”
  - Appendix D Series “Catholic Social Teaching”;  
Part V “On the Development of Peoples”  
Part VI: “Living Wages”, Parts I and II
- ❖ See A Cycle, Appendix C series: “Money and Power”

### **The Gospel According to Luke relating to Wealth, Money and Life-Style**

Luke 4:14-21      Mission of the Messiah  
Luke 7:18-23      Mission of the Messiah  
Luke 3:10-14      John the Baptizer  
Luke 5:27-28      Matthew’s call  
Luke 6:20-26      Luke’s Beatitudes and oracles of woe  
Luke 6:35          Lending  
Luke 6:38          Giving  
Luke 8:14          Seed among the briars  
Luke 9:2-3          Take nothing for the journey  
Luke 9:25          “What does it profit a man...”  
Luke 9:58          Poverty and Jesus  
Luke 10:35          Good Samaritan pays  
Luke 12:15-21      Greed: Parable of the rich fool  
Luke 12:22-31      God will provide  
Luke 12:32-34      Treasure  
Luke 14:12-14      Guess who’s invited to dinner  
Luke 16:1-14      Parable of unjust steward  
Luke 16:13-14      Avarice: God and money  
Luke 16:19-31      Parable of the rich man and Lazarus  
Luke 18:18-23      Jesus and the rich man

Luke 18:24-25	About camels and needles
Luke 18:28	“left all”
Luke 19:8-9	Zacchaeus
Luke 20:47	The scribes and exploitation
Luke 21:1-4	The widow’s mite
Luke 22:5	Judas: the price of betrayal



## Optional Theme

### **“Principles for a Christian Economic Lifestyle”**

(From two of Father Bill’s homilies)

1. Wealth is spiritually dangerous; selfish use of wealth can be spiritually fatal.  
Luke 16:19-31  
Mark 10:17-27  
Matthew 25:31-45
2. In the Bible, ownership of property is stewardship; what we have is on loan from God who is the owner of the universe.  
Leviticus 15:23  
Psalm 14:1  
1 Corinthians 6:19-20
3. The gospel demands generous sharing of wealth; my surplus wealth (beyond my necessities) belongs to those who lack the necessities of life.  
Mark 10:17-27  
Luke 3:10-14  
Luke 19:8-9  
1 Timothy 6:6-10
4. Poverty is violent and vicious; poverty kills more people than war. Over 40,000 people die daily as a result of poverty.  
Matthew 22:34-40  
Matthew 25:31
5. Apathy in the face of relievable human misery is damnable (mortal sin).  
Luke 16:19-31  
Matthew 25:31-45
6. My attitude toward wealth is critical for my spiritual life; my attitude to the *anawim* (poor, sick, powerless, oppressed) is crucial for my relationship with Jesus.  
Luke 6:13-14  
Luke 12:15-21  
Mark 10:17-27  
Matthew 25:21-45
7. Consumerism gluts the consumer and wastes the earth.  
James 5:1-6  
1 Timothy 6:3-10  
Luke 12:15-21

## TWENTY-NINTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

### Domination rather than service leads to violence

Isaiah 53:10-11    The Suffering Servant suffers nonviolently to save others  
Mark 10:35-45    The greatest must serve the rest. Jesus is the Suffering Servant who came to serve others.

- Appendix A Series “Christian or American”
- Appendix D Series Catholic Social Teachings, Part IV: “Peace on Earth”
- ❖ See A Cycle, Appendix A series: “A Spirituality of Nonviolence” Part II The Domination System and the Jesus System

### Century of Holocaust

The twentieth century was a century of phenomenal progress and unbelievable violence. In that century we moved swiftly from horses to spacecraft; from slow traveling letters to sophisticated radio, television and computers; and to medical technology undreamed of in 1900. The twentieth century was also a century of massive slaughter and vast environmental destruction.

October is the month during which we remember in a special way the importance of reverence for life--all life. Consistent reverence for life is synonymous with the virtue of nonviolence.

In the rest of this article, the ideas and phraseology will be a combination of my thinking and that of Marc Ellis, Director of the Institute for Justice and Peace at the Maryknoll School of Theology. Marc authored a significant book entitled, Faithfulness in an Age of Holocaust, (1980, Amity House Inc.)

Ellis' book develops the historical record that the 20<sup>th</sup> century was an age of incredible technological progress and a time of great violence. A few of the holocausts in that century were the Nazi holocaust of the Jews, the multimillion deaths of two world wars (about 50 million in WWII), plus hundreds of regional wars, killing and displacing millions more people. That was also the century of countless deaths of children resulting from poverty, malnutrition, inadequate health care, and polluted water--about 40,000 daily in recent years. That was the century of racially motivated killings in South Africa, the U.S. and other places. If we were to include the past 500 years, the

holocaust of the indigenous people of the Americas would be the worst racial genocide in human history (estimates range from 50 million to 74 million).

In the above perspective of a century of holocaust, I would interject the reality of the body count resulting from abortion in our world as the most massive slaughter of human beings ever known (1 ½ million annually in the U.S. alone).

The holocausts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the vast replay of these holocausts in the media have benumbed the sensitivities of people worldwide to the terrible suffering of vast and cruel violence.

Pope John Paul responds to such holocausts is his 1995 encyclical letter. *The Gospel of Life*. He writes:

“We are facing an enormous and dramatic clash between good and evil, death and life, the culture of death and the culture of life. We find ourselves not only faced with but necessarily in the midst of this conflict: we are all involved and we all share in it, with inescapable responsibility of choosing to be unconditionally pro-life.”

This month is a time for remembering the holocausts, for forgiving injustices, and for renewing our commitment to Jesus’ teachings of consistent nonviolence, of a consistent ethic of life.

Hopefully, the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be a more life-giving century. We need to pray and work for this hope. The first five years of the twenty-first century have not given much hope for improvement as yet.

## THIRTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

### Love for God and people: the source of reverence for life

Deuteronomy 6:2-6 Love

Mark 23:1-12 Love and the reign of God

- Optional Theme: “The Death Penalty”
- Optional Theme: “The Death Penalty or Restorative justice”
  - Appendix A Series “Christian or American” “
  - Appendix B Series “Human Rights”
  - Appendix D Series “Catholic Social Teachings, *Part V*”, On the Development of Peoples”
  - Appendix G: Data Presented on Capital Punishment in the United States. [usinfo.state.gov](http://usinfo.state.gov)

### A Consistent Ethic of Life

In reflecting for many years on the varied faces of violence and injustice in our world, I have come to the conclusion that the forms of violence are inter-related and are forming a perceptible pattern. In my opinion, some of the significant kinds of violence forming this pattern are war, hunger, abortion, racism, sexism, crime, environmental destruction and capital punishment. This pattern includes the following dimensions of the violence pattern.

- 1) Depersonalizing and hence de-valuing of life;
- 2) Institutionalizing (legalizing) of violence;
- 3) Maximizing of profits (personal and corporate greed);
- 4) Denial of personal and corporate responsibility;
- 5) Euphemizing the language of violence
- 6) Seeking instant solutions--quick fixes for complex human problems;
- 7) A mind set of domination; person over person, race over race, class over class, gender over gender and nation over nation.
- 8) Seeking a hedonistic way of life that necessarily excludes the way and the meaning of the cross.

Institutionalized (legal) violence is the most likely kind of violence to influence people to condone violence because legal violence gives the false impression that it's

morally okay if it's legal. Capital punishment shares the stage of legal violence with war, exploitation of the poor, abortion and environmental pollution and destruction.

As long as large numbers of people perceive the killing of criminals and even innocent people in war, abortion, and in poverty as morally permissible for human problem solving, then the violence-virus will continue to spread.

Pope John Paul II calls the present reality of violence a "culture of death." My hope and prayer is that we can convert the "culture of death" into a culture of life.

**Optional Theme:**  
**“The Death Penalty”**

The author of this book is opposed to the death penalty for the following reasons:

1. Capital punishment is sometimes mistakenly applied to innocent persons whose innocence has been discovered after the execution.
2. The death penalty does not deter crime any more than does imprisonment.
3. There is a strong racist dimension to legal execution. In proportion to population, significantly higher numbers of persons of color are executed in the U.S., even though there are in absolute numbers, more murders by white offenders than by black.
4. The economics of the death penalty indicate that most criminals on death row are from poor or low-income segments of our society who cannot hire highly competent attorneys of their choice.
5. I believe in a consistent ethic of life. Most violence is morally evil. Evil reinforces evil. One form of violence can cause a spiritual and moral callousness in individuals and society that makes other forms of violence easier to condone (violence especially appears to be condoned when legalized, institutionalized violence is initiated and increased).
6. The execution of criminals does not bring closure, healing or peace to those who grieve for the victims.
7. There is injustice, and indeed, a level of depravity in any society that executes persons who are mentally ill or mentally handicapped. This takes place in the United States.
8. Revenge is usually one of the motives for the death penalty. Revenge is never a morally acceptable motive for any human behavior.
9. Criminals on death row may receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Communion if there is real repentance for their crimes. I think that human beings need to struggle with the process of forgiving no matter how long the process may take. If God has forgiven the criminal, why should not society do the same? By forgiving a criminal, I do not imply release from

prison. Imprisonment protects innocent people from violence by the same violators.

10. If the victim who is killed, is with God in heaven, that victim has already forgiven his or her violator. Surviving family members would best honor their beloved victim by following suit in the difficult process of forgiving.
11. We need to be careful lest we assume to ourselves the prerogatives of God. The criminal is a creation of God--indeed a son or daughter of God albeit unfaithful. Some things we need to leave in God's hands, remembering that God does not take killing lightly.

**Optional Theme:**  
**“The Death Penalty or Restorative Justice”**

As a nation, we are still locked into an ancient kind of retaliation known as “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” However, we call it “a life for a life.”

A relatively new approach in the United States is what is named “restorative justice.” This is an approach to help victims, if still alive, and victims’ families to heal, to find inner peace, and even to begin a process of forgiving. Professional facilitators carry out the restorative process in sessions, even with the perpetrators of a crime, if possible. Sometimes restorative justice is the goal of a therapeutic support group of persons suffering from similar kinds of grief resulting from great harm. A part of restorative justice is also a continuing process to “restore” criminals involved in the crimes.

One publicized effort in Minnesota in recent years is the process of restorative justice that has been carried out by Don and Mary Streufert of Grand Rapids, Minnesota with the help of Mark Umbreit of the University of Minnesota. Don and Mary are the parents of Carin Streufert, a young woman who was kidnapped, raped and murdered in Grand Rapids several years ago. This restorative justice process included meetings with James Swanson and Gary Sullivan who were convicted and imprisoned for the murder of Carin Streufert. Both Don and Mary are dedicated to fighting violence in rural areas. They have both testified in the Minnesota Legislature against the death penalty. This restorative justice story was published in the “Minneapolis Star Tribune,” October 26, 1997 under the byline of Robert Franklin. When asked if there has been forgiveness in this experience, Don and Mary answered in the following manner.

“If it means a diminished animosity, Don said, ‘I believe I am experiencing it and benefiting from it on a personal level’. But he does not pardon, condone, excuse, rationalize or forget their actions, he said.

Said Mary, ‘If forgiveness is defined as letting go of the anger and not...letting the bitterness and anger and grief define me, then indeed I have forgiven them. I don’t spend a lot of time thinking about it, or them.’”



Execution of the offender will not bring peace of mind and inner healing to members of a victim's family members. Nothing will heal and bring peace without at least the beginning of the process of forgiving. The process may take a lifetime, but it is possible.

Jesus was given the death penalty unjustly. His response was not revenge. He forgave his killers for their crime, as did Pope John Paul II when he was severely wounded a few years ago.

The process of forgiveness is one of the most difficult human endeavors but one of the most rewarding for the person who forgives. Usually forgiving for great hurt requires the help of a spiritual advisor or a therapist.

Bishop Skylstad has recently written that we need to "break the culture of violence that grips our society."

## THIRTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

### Wealth, power and stewardship

Psalm 146 Justice for the oppressed, hungry handicapped widows, orphans and aliens.

Mark 12:38-44 Exploitation and selfishness by the powerful: generosity of the poor

- Appendix D Series “Catholic Social Teachings”
- ❖ See A Cycle, Appendix C series: “Money and Power”

### Money and Power

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 towards 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 seldom 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.”

“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, and into many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge them into ruin and destruction. (1 Timothy 6:6-9)

Money and wealth in the broader sense, is the highest value-priority in our western society and culture (golden calf?) Money has superseded other values such as truth, honesty, love and even life itself. 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 wishes to go, 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 for 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 to create economic resources to help people who are living below the level of 'sufficiency.' --indeed some relinquishing of wealth may be necessary to maintain one's spiritual balance.

"Among the actions and attitudes 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.

## THIRTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

### The End Times

Daniel 12:1-3 “At that time...”

Mark 13:24-32 The second coming of Christ

### An Eschatological Perspective (*First Sunday of Advent*)

## THIRTY-FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME - CHRIST THE KING

### Jesus and Pilot

John 18:33-39 Two forms of leadership:

- 1) Irresponsible, violent, unjust, and dominating
- 2) Responsible, just, nonviolent and loving

“The soldiers led him away inside the palace...they clothed him in purple and, weaving a crown of thorns, placed it on him. They began to salute him with ‘Hail King of the Jews,’ and kept striking his head with a reed and spitting upon him. They knelt before him in homage.” (Mark 15:16-19)

- Optional Theme: Possible Justice/Nonviolence Themes for Christ the King

### The Crown of Thorns

Purple, crown, king, and homage--all words designating kingship. These were all words of mockery applied to Jesus whom the Roman dominators considered to be a man without power, wearing not a regal robe but a purple rag, wearing not a gold crown but a crown of thorns. How wrong were the mockers whom Jesus came to save? His kingdom would eventually dwarf the Romans and all empires of this world.

The crown of thorns has accomplished far more for the good of the world than all the tons of gold crowns that have tried to dominate the world down through time.

The gold crowns have symbolized brute power, military might, human arrogance, crushing oppression, despotic control, greedy exploitation of people, environmental destruction and often a hedonistic way of life. Rarely has the gold crown been concerned about the little people, the powerless ones. Even the presidents and prime ministers of democratic countries have leaned more on the power of gold than on the power of thorns.

“Jesus summoned them and said, ‘You know that those who are recognized as rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones make their authority over them felt, 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)

The crown of thorns symbolizes the opposite of governance through domination. The crown of thorns expresses the kind of governance that emphasizes loving, teaching, serving, saving and sharing authority. Possibly this was what was meant when people said that Jesus spoke “as one having authority and not as the scribes.” (Mark 1:22)

The sinfulness of human beings is especially evident and dangerous in persons of authority who stress law without love and who seek “to be served rather than serve.”

Each time that I pray the third sorrowful mystery of the Rosary--“Jesus is crowned with thorns”--I pray for Pope Benedict XVI, for Bishop Balke and other bishops, for myself and for all the leaders in the Church. Secular government leaders are almost hopelessly locked into the dominating power mystique of the crown of gold, even though Church leaders are very vulnerable to the temptation of the golden crown.

**Optional Theme:**

## Possible Justice/Nonviolence Themes for Feast of Christ the King

1. What kind of King? Contrast Christ's kind of governance with that of conventional kings, emperors and other political leaders.
2. What kind of kingdom/reign of God did Jesus proclaim? The Gospel is quite clear about this. Note especially the parables, the Sermon on the Mount and on the Plain, Beatitudes, Passion and Crucifixion.
3. What kind of authority did Jesus propose and exemplify? Note especially the three predictions of the Passion in Mark, Chapters 8, 9 and 10 with context of each. Contrast the "domination system" with the Jesus system." (*cf. the suggested pieces for the Twenty Fourth Sunday in this series*)
4. Comment on the Preface for the Mass of Christ the King. "As King, He proclaims dominance over all creatures that he may present to you, his almighty Father or eternal and universal kingdom; a kingdom of truth and life; a kingdom of holiness and grace; a kingdom of justice, love and peace."
5. What did Jesus mean when he told Pilot, "my kingdom is not of this world?"
6. Why were Herod and Pilot afraid of Jesus?
7. What does Luke 4 and 7 tell us about the Messiah King and the priorities of his messiahship?
8. Do you see signs of the Messiah King in the world today?
9. Does this festival suggest hope for the new century? New millennium? Jubilee? Might not this new century be perceived as an auspicious time for spiritual renewal, environmental concern and the dismantling of racism and domination?
10. A growing number of theologians and political commentators perceive that the United States is appearing more and more as a growing "empire". What do you think?

## APPENDICES

These appendices include four series of articles written by Monsignor Mehrkens. Also included in this B Cycle are three suggested readings from the Internet. These series and readings are about some of the social justice issues that are appropriate as an enlargement of the themes included in Cycle B

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Part II	
Part VII Conclusion	

E Network – A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby: [www.networklobby.org](http://www.networklobby.org)

F Children’s Defense Fund: [www.childrensdefense.org](http://www.childrensdefense.org)



## G Data Presented on Capital Punishment in the United States

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Also mentioned in this B Cycle are a series of articles ( A through F) written by Monsignor Mehrkens about social justice issues that are also appropriate as an enlargement of the themes and are available in A Cycle published in 2004.

Eleventh Sunday In Ordinary Time	F Series:	Land and People
Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time	F Series:	Land and People
Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time	A Series:	A Spirituality of Nonviolence
	D Series:	Eucharist and Nonviolence
Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time	E Series	Eucharist and Economic Justice
Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time	A Series	A Spirituality of Nonviolence
Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time	B Series	Compassion
Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time	A Series	A Spirituality of Nonviolence
	B Series	Compassion
Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time	A Series	A Spirituality of Nonviolence
Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time	C Series	Money and Power Part II
	The Domination System and the Jesus System	

## Appendix A

### CHRISTIAN OR AMERICAN –Part I

“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)

An ironic dichotomous reality has developed in the U.S. It is becoming more and more difficult to be both Christian and American—as our strong nationalists define “American.” National loyalties and values rather than Christian loyalties and values are becoming primary in the lives of a large segment of our population who claim to be Christian people. This is a problem because the dominant values of the U.S. population are often in conflict with the gospels and the Church’s stated values and teachings.

The Catholic Church has produced a significant library of documents on matters of social justice and peace over the past century since *Rerum Novarum* (*On the Condition of Laboring Man*) by Pope Leo XIII in 1891). Besides these documents of the Church, regional bishops conferences throughout the world have added to the libraries of Catholic social teaching by issuing pastoral letters on important social issues.

To be more specific, an increasing number of U.S. Catholics find themselves in conflict with the teachings of the Church in matters of poverty, welfare, homelessness, and abortion. Large numbers of Catholic people also disagree with Church teachings about health care, Medicaid, minimum wage, taxes, affirmative action, environmental responsibility, war, nuclear weapons (including the Hiroshima/Nagasaki events), and capital punishment. Many are racist in varying degrees without fully realizing it or admitting it. The Church’s documents, both papal and the U.S. Bishops’ documents do have statements and principles that have some strong stated and implied positions on these issues. For Instance, starting with *Rerum Novarum* in 1891 and up to the present, the Church has many times stated the importance of fair wages for working people. The present minimum wage is obviously unfair—not a living wage according to the teaching tradition. Consistently the Church has stated that governments have a moral responsibility of special care for the most vulnerable of citizens. When welfare, health care, Medicare and Medicaid are inadequate to deal with the poverty of millions

of Americans there certainly is an implied discrepancy between the Church's teachings and governmental practice.

My objection, and the objection of the U.S. bishops, to the present thrust of Congress to balance the budget by cutting human services across the board is not a political partisan opposition. I am neither Republican nor Democrat. My convictions stem from the gospel and the Church's social teaching.

Too many Christians have "conformed to this age" and now need to "be transformed by the renewal of mind" and heart "so that they may judge what is God's will, what is good..." I am far more concerned about "what is God's will" than I am about the will of the Republicans or the Democrats of Congress or of the White House. As I read the Bible and the social concerns documents of the Church it seems obvious and clear that *anawim*—the little ones, the powerless ones, the most vulnerable—should be the highest priority for both Church and state. In the present time, *anawim* are the least our national Congressional and presidential priorities. I suggest that Congress may be a real hazard to the health, safety, and environment and even to the life of vulnerable U.S. citizens.

The Church is concerned about pick-and-choose cafeteria Catholics. Some have judged that the cafeteria- Catholics are the "liberal" Catholics. It is my observation that "liberal" Catholics more often tend to pick-and-choose among the sexually related and gender related teachings of the Church, including abortion, celibate priesthood, ordination of women, divorce, premarital sex, and birth control. "Conservative" Catholics have their own cafeteria choices. Most of the nonviolence, social justice, and economic related offerings of the Church are not to the liking of many "conservative" Catholics. So, we have our cafeteria patrons on both sides of the aisle.

## Appendix A

### CHRISTIAN OR AMERICAN—Part II

“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, the people, often accommodate our values to those of our culture, repressing some elements of the gospel and, hence, rendering the gospel compromised. Jesus was usually counter-cultural in his teaching and acting. The Church, in its tradition of social teaching is still counter-cultural in most areas of life. This social teaching, however, is “one of the best kept secrets of the Church’s teaching.” Lay members of the Church are mostly unaware of these teachings. (The next article in this series will outline more specifically these social teachings of the Church).

The Church today is strongly influenced by the values of our dominant secular society as it has been through most of its history. The Church of the fourth century, the Church of St. Augustine was influenced in its theology of war by the Roman Empire, particularly by Cicero. Today, in Europe and the U.S., the people of the Church often conform to the attitudes of the dominant society in matters of economic justice, war, position of women, and governance by domination rather than by the authority of compassion and servanthood.

In my analysis of the social scene, acquisition and possession of wealth is the highest priority of a majority of citizens of the U.S. including segments of the membership of the Church. Most of our homegrown violence is done to acquire or protect our material assets. Our security and self-worth search has an economic base. We live in what Eric Fromm calls the “having” mentality rather than the “being” mentality. Or, 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 hooked into the commodity form in many ways. Instead of really making the poor the highest priority, we spend unnecessarily great amounts of money on Church buildings, furniture, decorations, altar vessels, vestments, etc. Some of these expenditures seem close to what we might consider “conspicuous consumption” in our secular life-style.

When we look intensely and prayerfully at the gospel it becomes crystal clear that Jesus was radically counter-culture in Galilee and Judea in the First Century and the people of the Church should be counter-culture. in every time and place.

Some would say: "Father Bill, you are being unrealistic and impractical." That's right. To "succeed" in this world we need to compromise with the "powers" of this world. But Jesus did not accommodate Himself to the world of his day. True, He ended up on the cross. Maybe we need to recommit ourselves to a way of faith rather than the "ethics of survival" in this world. Jesus was unrealistic and impractical. Consider the counter-cultural Beatitudes, and the rest of the Sermon on the Mount. Consider Jesus' radical teaching about money and serving the *anawim*. Consider Jesus' nonviolent teaching and behavior. St. Paul understood this quite well when he wrote in 1 Corinthians:

"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 18 and 25)

I have come to believe that the "foolishness" of God and the absurdity of Jesus' teachings are practical and realistic. It is obvious enough in history and current events that "human wisdom" has not and is not working very well.

## **Appendix A**

### **CHRISTIAN OR AMERICAN—Part III**

Compassion is a necessary approach to life if human life and society is to be civil, humane, just and nonviolent. Without the dimension of compassion in human relations, human life becomes cold, callous, and barbarous. Compassion is important, not only in individuals and small group relationships, but also in public relations, on a large scale, such as politics and government.

If political and governmental leaders and voters were to take seriously the life and teachings of Jesus, along with the past century of the Church's social teachings, we would have a "politics of compassion." Most of what follows below would also be in harmony with the teachings of the Christian Churches as well as with the other great religions of the world. The rest of this article will be a brief summary of some of these teachings just mentioned, and often referred to in general in my articles—values and teachings that are more and more ignored or rejected in the U.S. life and politics.

#### **GOSPEL:**

"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."  
(Matthew 7:12)

"Love your neighbor as yourself." Matthew 22:34)

Feed the hungry. (Matthew 25:35)

Give drink to the thirsty. (Matthew 25:35)

Clothe the naked. (Matthew 25:36)

Visit the sick and the imprisoned. (Matthew 25:36)

Welcome strangers. (Matthew 25:35)

"When you hold a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind." (Luke 14:13)

"Sell what you have and give to the poor." (Luke 18:22)

"Take care and guard against all greed." (Luke 12:15)

## Appendix A

### VALUES-CONFLICT BETWEEN CATHOLIC CHURCH AND U.S. GOVERNMENT AND SOCIETY

U. S. Government	1) Death Penalty		
U. S. Government	2) War		
U.S. Government	3) Poverty / Economic Justice	)	<u>Deficit Recovery</u>
	• Taxes (of rich)	)	↓
	• Welfare	)	↓
			<u>Human Rights</u>
	• 40,000 Deaths Daily	)	↓
	• Living Wage/Minimum Wage	)	↓
	• Hunger	)	↓
	• Homelessness	)	↓
	• Preferential Option	)	↓
	• Campaign Finance Corruption	)	↓
	• Health Care	)	↓
U. S. Government	4) Racism		
U. S. Government	5) Use Nuclear Weapons		
U. S. Government	6) Weapons Sales		
U. S. Government	7) Self Interest in Foreign Policies		
U.S. Government	8) Refugees		
U.S. Government	9) Environmental Issues		
U. S. Government	10) Domination / Power Abuse / Greed		





## **Appendix B**

### **HUMAN RIGHTS, THE CHURCH, AND POLITICS - - Part I**

Should the Church be involved in any way in political issues? If so, why and how?

The American Bishops are currently and have been recently deeply involved in political dialogue with the government on the issues of abortion, peace, disarmament, and economics. The Church, leaders and lay people, have been and are deeply involved in the political process in matters pertaining to private schools and environmental responsibility. The Churches, individually and ecumenically are involved significantly in the politics of food as this relates to hungry people. The U.S. church as well as the Latin American Church has been and are politically concerned and active in the face of the terrible violation of human rights in Central America and elsewhere.

Why? Because the Church must be concerned that human rights be established, implemented, and protected in the world. This is the meaning of the virtue of justice. This is also the work of government. In his encyclical letter to the people of the world entitled: "Peace on Earth," (1963) Pope John XXIII took the space to specifically list the human rights that the Church is particularly concerned about. Among the human rights listed are the following: life, bodily integrity and the means, which are necessary for the proper development of life. These are food, medical care, social services, freedom in search for the truth, freedom of expression, and the right to be informed truthfully about public events. Also the right to worship, to seek an education, to work, and to choose one's state or vocation in life are considered human rights by the Church. People also have the right to a just wage, decent working conditions, and the rights of assembly. These are among the rights due each person, not by legal grant or privilege, but by simply being human persons.

As individual human rights become intertwined with the structures of society the issues become matters of social justice. Concern for social justice is an essential dimension of the very mission of the Church.

In 1971, the World Synod of Catholic Bishops, with Pope Paul VI issued an official document entitled: "Justice in the World." In this document it is stated:

“Action on behalf of justice and transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel.”

The purpose of government is the common good of the people, and absolutely fundamental to the common good of the people are human rights. The very mission of the Church and the mission of the state necessarily overlap and are inter-dependent in matters of human rights- -of social justice.

Furthermore, in a democracy, what my government does, I do. If I take seriously- -and I do- -the description of democracy as “government of the people, by the people, and for the people,” then I share responsibility for my government. If my government sins, then I share the guilt if I condone my country’s sin by my silence in the face of evil. In other words, my very personal integrity, my very Christian spiritual life sometimes demands that I be, as a Christian, involved in political issues and processes.

How should the Church be involved in and with politics?

Not by endorsing a particular candidate nor political party.

-BUT especially preaching and teaching from “the fabric of the faith” about human rights and nonviolence even though there usually are political implications and ramifications.

-By conscience formation in society.

-By also COOPERATING with significant movements and organizations working for Social Justice such as:

a) Bread for the world

b) Amnesty International

-By voting in elections.

-By expressing moral convictions to political representatives.

Underlying all that I have said above are the three following principles of faith:

- ❖ God is Creator of all beings.
- ❖ Jesus Christ is Lord of the universe.
- ❖ Christians require profound reverence for all life, and for the earth.

## Appendix B

### HUMAN RIGHTS – Part II

#### Why the Church is “Political”

December 1998 marked the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the United Nation’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

“The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a sweeping and visionary statement, encompassing not only protections from political repression, but also the ‘right to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being,’ the right to education, to work and join unions, to enjoy the arts and to have leisure. It consists of a preamble and 30 articles, which put forth basic human rights to which all women; men and children are entitled without discrimination. The Declaration continues to be proclaimed as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, and its goals include teaching people to promote respect for human rights everywhere.” Mary Elizabeth Clark, SSJ, & Kathy Thornton, RSM, Network Connection July/August 1998.

Is the Church involved in political issues? Yes!

Should the Church be so involved? Yes!

Why? Because the Church, as Church, must be involved with HUMAN RIGHTS.

This is a matter of the Church’s very nature and charter from Jesus.

Yes! The Church always has been, is, and will be involved with political, moral issues because human rights make up an essential part of both politics and religion.

The World Synod of Catholic Bishops, in 1971, with Pope Paul VI, issued an official document entitled: *Justice in the World*. In this document we read:

“Action on behalf of justice and transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church’s mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.”

The purpose of government is the common good of the people, and absolutely fundamental to the common good of the people are human rights. The very mission of

the Church and the mission of the state necessarily overlap and are inter-dependent in matters of human rights--social justice.

In his encyclical letter to the people of the world entitled, "*Peace on Earth*", (1963), Pope John XXIII took the space to specifically list the human rights that the Church is particularly concerned about. Among the human rights listed are the following: "bodily integrity and the means which are necessary...for the proper development of life." These are food, clothing, housing, medical care, social services, freedom in search for the truth, freedom of expression, and the right to be informed truthfully about public events; also, the right to worship, to seek an education, to work, and to choose one's state or vocation in life. People also have the right to a just wage, decent working conditions, and the right of assembly. These are among the rights due each person, not by legal grant or privilege, but by simply being human persons.

The Catholic Churches' involvement with Human Rights has been more intense, conscious, and conspicuous in modern times since 1891 when Pope Leo XIII issued his social justice encyclical letter: "*Rerum Novarum*." This was the beginning of almost a century of the Church's conscious development of a modern social teaching tradition that reached a climax in the II Vatican Council and the years since.

Because of the Church's increasing concern about human rights, the Church is involved with politics. Because the Church is the people, the Christian people must be responsibly involved in politics. Knowledgeable voting is an important part of this political responsibility.

## Appendix B

### HUMAN RIGHTS - Part III

In my last article, I reflected on our strengths in political human rights and our weaknesses in economic human rights. The Bill of Rights amending the U.S. Constitution is a strong statement about political rights. We are in need of a strong economic bill of rights to compliment the original Bill of Rights.

In last fall's edition of the Catholic Peace Voice, a publication of Pax Christi, USA, Holly Sklar's article, "We need an Economic Bill of Rights," is significant. This kind of proposal has been floating around since 1944 when President Roosevelt suggested such a bill of rights. Holly Sklar lists the following as important possible inclusions in an economic bill of rights.

- ◇ The right to a job at a living wage.
- ◇ The right to equal pay for equal or comparable work.
- ◇ The right of workers to organize and bargain collectively.
- ◇ The right to decent adequate health care.
- ◇ The right to a decent home...
- ◇ The right to paid leave for the care of newborns and sick family members...
- ◇ The right to national and international regulations ensuring fair labor practices, environmental sustainability and worker/consumer health and safety."

Another publication *Center Focus*, December 1997, a publication of the Center of Concern, included an article on "*Wages or Wealth?*" by Thomas J. Harvey. This article presents one of the main reasons why an economic bill of rights is needed: the rich have been and are getting richer and richer, and the poor are getting poor and poorer (in purchasing power), and the gap between the two is getting bigger and bigger. This means that the human rights (necessities for a quality human life) of the poor are being violated more and more.

To again quote Holly Sklar - -

"Only with an Economic Bill of Rights will Americans be able to realize the rights to equality, life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness promised in the Declaration of Independence."

\* \* \* \* \*

P. S. I find it interesting that, at both Minnesota state level and at the U.S. federal level, most recommendations about surplus tax funds (billions) are to refund the money to the taxpayers. This means that we will probably recycle funds mainly to the rich, funds that could be used to lessen the gap between the rich and poor and restore a little of the economic human rights to the poor.

## Appendix B

### HUMAN RIGHTS - Part IV

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## **Appendix B**

### **HUMAN RIGHTS--Part V**

#### **The Right to Life**

In the last article, I focused on economic human rights. This time, it will be the most fundamental of all rights, the right to life. In a sense, all human rights are a part of the right to life, indeed the right to develop and live a decent quality life.

The right to life includes all the human rights that engender and protect human life and all levels and in all human diversities and unique nesses. I am speaking here of a consistent ethic of life including concern for the unborn and the elderly, the poor and the rich, the healthy and the health impaired, children and adults, white people and people of color, the powerful and the powerless. Our concern must be for people of both genders, different sexual orientations, and varying Ethnic roots, the free and the imprisoned (convicted criminals lose some civil rights, but not fundamental human rights). As a part of the right to life, we also include a healthful, natural environment, adequate health care for all, decent housing and sufficient nourishing food, bodily integrity and freedom from violence.

As we consider the varied human rights to life, we necessarily also insist on a living wage, a wage that supports a decent life (not necessarily an affluent life) rather than a wage that simply maintains poverty, the poverty of the working poor rather than a wage that supports quality living conditions. For the rest of this article, I will focus on a “living wage” without which other human rights to life are difficult or impossible to achieve or protect.

A “living wage,” or a wage for human life, must include the ability to afford the basic human rights that we have been considering in this series of articles. The present federal level minimum wage and the various level minimum wage levels are immoral because they are inadequate to maintain a level of life beyond poverty. It is impossible for a person receiving minimum wage to gain and protect his or her (including family) basic human rights. A living wage, to be “living” must also be sufficient to prepare for a decent retirement and for health care throughout life.

At the present time, in the United States, there is no moral justification for the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few while millions of citizens cannot enjoy their own human rights. Exorbitant “luxury wages” of the “rich and shameless” make up a sinful situation that principles of justice and Christian spirituality cannot condone.

I end with a quote from Manning Marable:

“Unfortunately, despite the billions of dollars generated on Wall Street, the capitalist economy has conspicuously failed to produce living wage jobs for millions of Americans... All over the country, more than a dozen cities have passed ‘living wage ordinances.’ We must support state referenda that would raise the minimum wage. But perhaps the most important reform would be to close the vast gap between the salaries of the corporate elite vs. most working people. Blue Print for Social Justice, February 1999

Reverencing the right to live is THE antidote to a “culture of violence” and death. Respecting the right to life could be a great first step to new life in the new millennium.

## **Appendix B**

### **HUMAN RIGHTS – Part**

#### **Double Talk about Double Standards**

In this land of ours, we have been listening to much double talk about the double standards. In this article, I am doing some political, ethical analysis, but from the perspective of the New Testament and Catholic social teachings.

We need to face the reality that the double standard is pervasive in Congress and throughout our country in matters of human rights, law enforcement and judicial practice, and in the injustices in farm economy. In these areas of government, the double standard exists between people of privilege (Euro-Americans) and the underprivileged people of color: African Americans, Native Americans, Hispanic Americans and Asian Americans. This is Racism. We also have a double standard of treatment for affluent Americans as contrasted with poverty-stricken Americans. This is classism. The initial report of Amnesty International about human rights in the U.S. supports the above statements. Much of the self-righteous talk about double standards is “double talk.”

Our U.S. preaching about human rights to other nations forgets that of eighteen industrial nations, we have the greatest incidence of poverty among children - 1 in 6 in the U.S. This is a scandalous reality considering that we are the richest of the eighteen nations. We could be the best of the eighteen countries if we were not so concerned about protecting the affluence of well-off Americans and so willing to waste billions of dollars on military budget overkill. We continue to be willing to sacrifice of the poor for the good of the rich and powerful.

Other double standards about which we double-talk are the following. We insisted, with sanctions and bombings and war, that Iraq rid itself of weapons of mass destruction, while we refuse to rid ourselves of nuclear weapons. We insist now that North Korea give up their plans for nuclear weapons. Also, we give special treatment to China, one of the world's most irresponsible violators of human rights, while we maintain sanctions against Cuba and Iraq for the same kinds of human rights violations.

If we would take seriously the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag - - to say nothing of Christian commitment to Jesus' teaching - -we would end much of our double talk about double standards, for then we would really believe in "liberty and justice for all." It would also be good if all politicians were to take their oath of office more seriously, to say nothing of living up to the spirit of the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution:

"We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common Defense, promote the general Welfare and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this CONSTITUTION for the United States of America." (The underlined phrases in the Preamble are the emphasis of the author of this article).

I am fully aware that the Church is also vulnerable in double standards and double talk, especially when the Church says one thing about justice in its teaching traditions and then does another in its daily life when it does not practice what it teaches and preaches about racism, salaries, lifestyle, and the use of wealth. We in the Church must work hard to clean up our own act.

## **Appendix B**

### **HUMAN RIGHTS--Part VII**

#### **Human Rights in the U.S.**

It is often assumed that our nation is the best in the world in respecting the human rights of the people. This assumption is definitely debatable. The lack of knowledge about human rights in the U.S. and our frequent violation of human rights make this series an important one for us. It is true that we have an outstanding system for political human rights. However, our failure in a system of economic, judicial and law-enforcement human rights leaves much to be desired. In some ways, this nation is quite primitive when it comes to human rights. Some more obvious examples would be hunger, homelessness, abortion, capital punishment.

As of now, the United States has signed the United Nation's Declaration of Human Rights and two added covenants (conventions or agreements) but not the ICCPR (International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights). One of the amendments of the ICCPR is the abolition of the death penalty. The U.S. has not, as yet, achieved a sufficiently sophisticated and humane level of behavior in order to give up the practice of executions.

In our misconstrued assumptions that we are the world's leaders in human rights, we often criticize the abuses of human rights in other countries. In our own abuses of human rights, we sometimes fall into the situation of the hypocrite in the Gospel who did not see the plank in his own eye while trying to remove the speck in his brother's eye.

Besides abuses in human rights in our land, there are very serious - -even barbarous abuses elsewhere.

“In many nations, people are tortured, discriminated against, imprisoned and killed for publicly expressing ideas counter to their repressive governments. Women are denied the right to marry according to their own choice. Girls receive little or no education in some societies. Some very young children are forced to work.” Mary Elizabeth Clark, SSJ and Kathy Thornton, RSM, Network Connection July/August 1998.

Human rights issues are important not only for our nation, but also for each of us personally as citizens and as Christians.

In a democracy, what my government does, I do. If I take seriously, and I do, the description of democracy as “government of the people, by the people, and for the people,” then I share responsibility for my government’s decision. If my government sins, then I sin, if I condone my country’s sin - - and silence in the face of evil is usually interpreted as condonation. In other words, my very personal integrity, my very Christian spiritual life demands that I be involved in political issues and processes.

“The Church has rejected the totalitarian and atheistic ideologies associated in modern times with ‘communism’ or ‘socialism.’ She has likewise refused to accept, in the practice of ‘capitalism,’ individualism and the absolute primacy of the law of the marketplace over human labor. Regulating the economy solely by centralized planning perverts the basis of social bonds; regulating it solely by the law of the marketplace fails social justice, for there are many human needs which cannot be satisfied by the market.”  
(Catechism of the Catholic Church)

## **Appendix B**

### **HUMAN RIGHTS – USA – Part VIII**

I wrote an article recently on honesty in government. We should be honest with one another about who we are and what we are as Americans. We like to think about ourselves as a nation with a great history of human rights. In reality, we have at times failed dismally in our example to the world on human rights. Human rights are the rights that are necessary for fulfillment of human potential.

For the first three hundred and fifty years of our history we depended largely on slavery for our nation's economic growth. We ended our era of slavery only at the cost of a bloody war. We still suffer from the leftovers of slavery, although racist behavior is no longer legal. Racist behavior is a gross violation of human rights.

I think that we should not be so surprised at the recent human rights abuses by some of our military personnel in Iraqi prisons. We have been drifting down the stream away from our traditional human rights sources, although we still consider ourselves a highly civilized society when it comes to human rights.

I can understand the violent abuses of some of our soldiers, considering our national sins of legal violence and human rights abuses that our people have grown up with through the years. Certainly the prison abuses in Iraq are gross and deplorable violations of human rights that are sometimes taken for granted. I am not thinking of any one brand of human rights violations in our history, past and current. No one political party has caused all the violations. It is a national social sin. I am convinced that the perpetrators of recent violations in Iraq were thought to be condoned by those involved because of the very negative language and behavior that was used against Arab people in recent history and because of our present attitudes. Our people, including our military personnel are aware of the U.S. mistreatment of the prisoners in Guantanamo Bay in Cuba. For the sake of U.S. security we consistently ignored some of our principles of civil and human rights.

I am in no way condoning the terrible human rights abuses of Saddam Hussein or other dictatorial leaders in the Middle East, Africa or Asia.

Furthermore, it is important for us that to realize that war almost always slips out of control. History seems to remind us that those men and women who are trained to kill and destroy sometimes find it difficult to realize “when it is inappropriate to kill” and when killing and violence are criminal acts.

What, more specifically, do I mean when I speak of the U.S. drifting away from our human rights tradition? I have already mentioned slavery but I have not sufficiently emphasized the racist leftovers of slavery in our nation. We still sometimes consciously and sometimes unconsciously, treat people of darker color as inferior human beings. I am also thinking of economic injustices toward our people in poverty in the U.S. and overseas. Food and the other necessities of human life are human rights. I am remembering a phrase of Rev. James Forbes that, “poverty is a weapon of mass destruction”. I am very concerned about the thousands of people in the poorest countries of the world who die daily from malnutrition, polluted water and lack of adequate health care. I am also very concerned about the 43,000,000 people in the U. S. without health care insurance. Health care is a basic human right. I repeat from past articles, we do not really believe in “liberty and justice for all” even though we still recite the Pledge of Allegiance. We rank about 19<sup>th</sup> among the industrial nations in our proportionate humanitarian aid to developing countries.

There are many more examples of our national drift from our human rights traditions-- many others that I have written about in the past in this column. Following are some of the human rights violations in the United States as found by Amnesty International: police brutality, electric shock treatment, stun guns, pepper spray, permanent isolation in prisons, mentally ill in inhuman restraint systems, and children held in adult prisons with the risk of physical and/ or sexual abuse. Women especially are vulnerable to rape and assault. Young blacks, Latinos and Asian males are unjustly targeted in law enforcement, while juveniles and mentally handicapped are inhumanely treated by immigration officials.

I certainly am not forgetting that abortion is a violation of the human right to life. The greatest right is the right to life itself. I believe that the widespread acceptance of abortion also makes us calloused in our sensitivity to the violation of human life.



The common good of the people must be a priority concern of governance. More specifically, justice is the heart of the common good and human rights are synonymous with justice.

So, - - I believe that the Iraqi prison human rights' abuses are influenced by the human rights deterioration in our national life.

## **Appendix C**

### **RACISM--Part I**

This is the first article in a series on racism. By racism, I mean a deeply rooted racial prejudice that is combined with power--power to dominate and harm victims of racism. I would also consider an attitude to be racist if a person's prejudice amounts to a firm belief that people are really inferior because of their race.

The poison of racism contaminates almost every segment of American society, possibly every institution in the United States. This is true of government at all levels, business, education at all levels, churches, health care, and recreational programs. Racism is deep, pervasive, persistent, and often unconscious since it colors almost every phase of life in our land.

Many citizens are under the impression that the Civil Rights Movement and laws of the 1960's ended most racism in the United States. This is an illusion. Racism became less politically socially acceptable, but it was not ended. It went underground for a while and now has been re-surfacing for about the past 15 years throughout the land as a more subtle but nevertheless very real part of U.S. life.

It is also important to realize that racism in the U.S. is mainly a matter of white people against people of color, especially African Americans, Hispanic people, Native Americans, Asians and Polynesian people, practice racism. This is not to say that people of color are without racial prejudice. It is to say that power to harm, hate and dominate others is almost exclusively in the hands of white people. The Kerner Commission of 1968, a presidential commission of President Lyndon Johnson, stated that the United States was moving toward two nations, one white and the other colored. That same commission also wrote about the reality that racism was, even then, a white people's problem.

“What white Americans have never fully understood - -but what the Negro can never forget - -is that the white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain it and white society condones it. White racism is essentially responsible for the explosive mixture which has accumulated in our cities since the end of World War II.”

“Amistad,” a movie in our recent past, was in my opinion, one of the finest movies produced in the past ten years. It was poorly attended, and almost ignored by Academy Awards judges. I suggest that this movie was too threatening for a white American audience to face. We would prefer to live under our comfortable illusion that we are a just and open-minded people. The whole context of “Amistad” is racism - -a matter of slavery, freedom, life and death in the United States.

\* \* \* \* \*

The ideas in this series on racism are drawn from many sources including the experience of the author. Other main sources are

Joseph Barndt, Dismantling Racism Augsburg Press  
Ian F. Haney Lopez, White by Law; New York University Press;  
U.S. Bishops, Brothers and Sisters to us: A Pastoral Letter on Racism USCC;  
Sojourners Magazine, March / April 1998.

## **Appendix C**

### **RACISM--Part II**

An overview of the Bible leads us to the following conclusions about Jesus and racism.

- (1) God created all people in the divine image. All are God's children. (Genesis 1:27). Therefore, all are brothers and sisters of Jesus.
- (2) Jesus' basic ethical teaching is love (agape) for all people. We have no right to make exception because of race, religion, gender or economic class. (Matthew 25:31-46, Luke 10:25-37, John 15:12)
- (3) Jesus died for all. Salvation is open to all. All people have the same basic human rights. (Revelation 7:9, Galatians 3:26-28)
- (4) Jesus' teachings and behavior showed him to be very impatient with behavior that excludes people and to be very insistent upon inclusive behavior. The Synoptic Gospels show the great concern of Jesus to eliminate those elements of society that exclude people by virtue of race, religion, gender and class. The underprivileged, the outcasts, become the specially privileged in God's kingdom. (Mark 7:1-27, Luke 14:12-14, Luke 15:1-2)
- (5) "Now you are Christ's body, and individually, parts of it...if one part suffers, all the parts suffer." Some parts are of a darker color and some lighter, but all are one in Christ. To reject or put down any member is to reject Christ. "I assure you, whatsoever you do to the least of my brothers and sisters, you do to me." Racist behavior is violence, violence against Jesus as well as against people that we victimize. Our Native American brothers and sisters have a saying that summarizes this quite well: "All are related." (1 Corinthians 12:12-27, Romans 12:1-21, Matthew 24:41 ff.)
- (6) "The Word was made flesh." The incarnation, the Son of God becoming human, is the Divine affirmation, the making sacred of all human beings. The

color of the skin has nothing to do with this sacredness. In this context racism is the desecration of the sacred and the ridicule of the Incarnation of Jesus. (Luke & Matthew Infancy Narratives, John 1:1-14.)

(7) Jesus is the Good Shepherd. He excludes nobody from the flock because of color difference. He shows special concern for the lost, vulnerable lamb. (John 10, Matthew 18:10-14)

(8) The Holy Eucharist is THE sign, symbol and energizing power for love and unity among the people. We are not properly disposed to receive Holy Communion if we knowingly and willfully reject some of God's people from our life and love and respect. (Matthew 5:23-24, 1 Corinthians 11:17-34). Once we begin the process of recovering from racism, we need Holy Communion to energize the continuing of the reconciliation process.

(9) Jesus' main teaching was the proclamation of the Reign of God. The preface for the festival of Christ the King summarizes the biblical meaning of the Reign of God with these words:

“...an eternal and universal kingdom; a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace.”

There is not room for racism in the reign of God. Racism is part of the wasteland of the kingdoms of this world. (Matthew 5:1-12, Luke 4: 16-21)

Considering inclusive unity throughout the gospel and the other New Testament books, racism, sexism, divisions according to economic class and other forms of exclusion of people must be considered anti-Christian-with no loopholes to excuse prejudice and racism.

**Appendix C**  
**RACISM—Part III**  
**A PRISON**

Racism is a prison for the victims of racism, the powerless people of color as well as the racists, people of power who control the powerless. The places of imprisonment are ghettos, reservations and wherever victims of racism are gathered to live. White suburbs are also places of imprisonment where white folks confine themselves and their lives—voluntarily separate from the rest of human life.

At first sight, the white suburb (same for small towns and rural communities) does not appear to be a prison since it is filled with people of the three P's—position, privilege and power. But it is a prison nevertheless—a prison that restricts personal freedom to grow spiritually and psychologically. The suburb prisons cut people off from the riches of other races and cultures and tend to develop the malady of myopic vision about people, priorities and meaning of life. The psychological imprisonment is a more dangerous and destructive impairment than the geographical restriction of people according to racial groups.

The protected, restricted life of the suburbs can easily lead one to accept the false indoctrination that the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States is true—“one nation indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.” In reality, we have, “a nation divided, without liberty and justice for all.”

The victims of racism will not readily become free unless the racist people first free themselves from their own imprisonment. Unless the persons of position, privilege and power begin to voluntarily dismantle racism, the suppressed, oppressed powerless ones may be tempted to dismantle racism violently. However, all will be losers if it comes to this because physical violence destroys the souls of the violators as well as the bodies of the victims. In short, the sin of racism is not only demonically evil, it is simply stupid.

As we will develop in a later article in this series, dismantling racism involves two main thrusts: personal conversion in the direction of open inclusive, unconditional love for people, and the social racial integration of institutions in the sharing of power.

Isaiah may not have had the imprisonment of racism in mind, but his words in Chapter 42:6-7 fit the blindness and confinement of deep prejudice. Writing about the suffering servant he wrote:

“I formed you, and set you...as a light for the nations, to open the eyes of the blind to bring out prisoners from confinement and from the dungeon, those who live in darkness.”

Racism is so deeply entrenched in our culture and institutions that we probably will never dismantle racism and free ourselves from the darkness and confinement of this evil force by our own power. I know of no other evil force so resistant to merely human power. We need the help of the Holy Spirit, our advocate, our truth and our life—the One who has the power “to renew the face of the earth.”

## Appendix C

### RACISM AND DOMINATION—PART IV

“Jesus said to them, ‘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.’”

Racism will continue to be a “terrible sin” in our lives as long as domination of the less powerful people by those with power remains the demonic foundation of divisions among people and nations. Instead, we will not recover from racism as long as the violence of domination of people continues to spawn exclusion of people according to class, gender, religion and race. Walter Wink has stated that “inequality can only be maintained by violence. The root of violence, moreover, is domination.” Wink continues:

“Only when we see the Domination system as the context to which the gospel was addressed do we begin to grasp something of the context of what Jesus meant by the reign of God... The failure of the Church to continue Jesus’ struggle to overcome domination is one of the most damning apostasies in its history. With some thrilling exceptions, the churches of the world have never yet decided that domination is wrong.” “Engaging the Powers”

It is difficult for the churches to recognize that domination is the parent of other forms of violence, including racism, it is not likely that nations will easily recognize the connection between domination and racism.

It is my conviction that domination of people by people and domination’s offspring, racism, will not be dismantled and overcome by human efforts alone. I believe that this demonic evil will be driven out only the power of the Holy Spirit, symbolized on Pentecost as the “driving wind” the “breath of God” the non-consuming “fire” of light, truth and love. In short, prayer must be our main means of dismantling the sickness and evil of racism or racist domination will dismantle our society.



Racism will not be dismantled in our land until people in power (usually white people) are willing to share the power and the wealth that maintains power. This will probably not happen until our institutions, including the Church, make every effort at racial integration of membership and especially leadership.

“The structures of our society are subtly racist, for these structures reflect the values which society upholds. They are geared to the success of the majority and the failure of the minority.” *A Pastoral Letter on Racism* by U.S. Bishops.

**Appendix C**  
**RACISM—Part V**

**RECOVERY**

Recovery from prejudice and racism is a spiritual process that takes time. Like the recovery from an addiction, the process of recovery from prejudice and racism calls for admitting our spiritual weaknesses and psychological illusions, recognizing our need for a “higher power,” confessing our sin, and making amends. Indeed the 12-step program for recovery might be very appropriate in recovery from racism.

As Christians, we recognize God as our higher power. We need God’s grace to recover from racism. This spiritual process from within the Church calls for:

- (1) Renewing our baptismal vows;
- (2) Confessing our sins of prejudice and racism;
- (3) Receiving Holy Communion for growth in love and compassion
- (4) Prayer for our own recovery and prayer for the welfare of the victims of our racism.

We need to renew our baptismal vows, remembering that we are all related and one in Christ. St. Paul wrote:

“For through faith you are all children of God in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

(Galatians 3:26-27)

For recovering, we need to admit our sins of prejudice and racism and begin the process of reconciliation with all of God’s children. This whole process calls for prayer “in season or out of season.” Demonic powers are not overcome by our efforts alone. We need the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the power of grace.

In the Book of Revelation, Jesus says:

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will enter his/her house and dine with that person.”

If we open the door to Jesus, we must also open the door to Jesus' "least brothers and sisters" and to all God's children.

We need Holy Communion because the very meaning of the Eucharist is loving unity. When we say "Amen" to "the Body of Christ," we are saying that all people are our sisters and brothers.

New life now and here is an Easter grace. The process of recovery from racism includes the removal of the boulders that block access to Christ, and to freedom.

I want to conclude with another quote from our American Bishops Pastoral Letter on Racism:

"Racism is not merely one sin among many. It is the radical evil dividing the human family and denying the new creation of a redeemed world. To struggle against it demands an equally radical transformation in our minds and hearts as well as in the structure of our society." *Brothers and Sisters, It's Us: A Pastoral Letter on Racism by U. S. Bishops, 1979.*

## **Appendix C**

### **RACISM—PART VI**

#### **MISSIONARY CONQUEST A Book Review**

The title above is the title of a book written by George E. Tinker and published by Fortress Press in 1993. The sub-title is “The Gospel and Native American Genocide.” Following is an evaluation of this book by “The Christian Century” periodical.

“In a time of both strong interest in and questioning of cross-cultural ministries, George Tinker provides a fascinating, disturbing probe into missionary history... This is a refreshing addition to a growing literature on cross-cultural ministry. Tinker’s command of his material is impressive and appropriately supports his arguments. His book helps us better to own our past and to ask how contemporary missionaries and their supporters can avoid duplicating an earlier generation’s blindness.”

I would summarize the basic thesis of this book with the following statements: Christian missionaries, both Catholic and Protestant, were participants in the cultural genocide of American Indian People. This violence was sometimes intentional, but more often unintentional. This cultural destruction was done by the most famous of missionaries, such as John Eliot, Junipero Serra, Pierre Jean De Smet and Henry Benjamin Whipple.

Manifest Destiny is the belief of Euro-Americans that the people of the United States were especially chosen by God to lead the world. Missionaries brought into this mythology as reason enough to cooperate with secular goals of expansion of land and domination of Native people.

The author makes a believable case, through historical investigation, that the Churches that participated in Indian mission work were the willing partners of invading countries (Spain, France, England and of the United States Government after the War of Independence) in the invasion of indigenous people of North, Central and South Americas. The missionaries themselves, thoroughly immersed in their own renaissance understanding of the superiority of European culture and religion, believed that Christian conversion of aboriginal peoples necessitated a drastic conversion in culture as well. In

fact, the invading nations, including the religious leaders were unconsciously racist in their attitudes about the people they were ministering to. The author writes:

“Cultural genocide is more subtle than overt military extermination yet it is no less devastating to the people...The Native American population of coastal California was reduced by some 90 percent during seventy years under the sole proprietorship of Serra’s mission system. (1769-1834). (Page5)

Both secular and religious authorities considered the inferiority of native cultures and religion to be good reason to control, exploit (land), and even enslave the indigenous people. This attitude was rationalized as something for the good of the people who were exploited. In reality, it was for the economic aggrandizement of the invaders.

One of the ironies and tragedies of the combined secular and religious indoctrination of the aboriginal people was that many of the Indians themselves came to accept their own inferiority and to “look up” to the Euro-Americans who were oppressing them because of the technological advances of the Europeans.

Just as our nation has not faced up to its long history of genocide, neither has the Church adequately recognized its deep involvement in racism and cooperation in the sin of genocide. Both need to face the responsibility of restitution and restoration.

The author of this significant study raises two important, practical questions: How is our ministry among the Indian people influenced today by the “system whole,” the Euro-American culture from which we have emerged? How can we distance ourselves today from our own culture in ministry to people of cultures other than Euro-American without our cultural roots contaminating our attitude toward the people we try to serve? I know that the answers to these questions are of great importance and I know that the answers are not easy to come by, having lived for over seven years with the Ojibwa people at Red Lake, Minnesota.

The successors of our Euro-American ancestors working among and ministering to Native American communities today need the benefit of prayer and guidance of the Holy Spirit to avoid the same pitfalls that former missionaries fell into, mistakes that were racist in nature, and that blocked the very fruitfulness of their ministry.

George Tinker, the author of Missionary Conquest is a careful scholar, an associate professor of Cross-Cultural Ministries at Iliff School of Theology and Pastor of Living Waters Episcopal/Lutheran Indian Ministry in Denver. I am convinced that he is sensitive to both the traditional Indian way and the Christian way. In his book he goes out of his way to face the realities of history without engaging in missionary bashing.

## Appendix D

### CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING- - A RICH HERITAGE OF DOCUMENTS – Part I

This rich heritage has been relatively unknown to most Catholic people. I have decided to make this heritage better known to our OND readers.

All through history the church has preached and written her teachings, mostly from sacred scripture, applying these social teachings to the problems of each age of history.

Beginning in 1891 Pope Leo XIII wrote an encyclical letter\* to the church and the world entitled, On the Condition of Labor. This was the beginning of a more organized library of church documents on social justice issues over more than a century of time. Other documents on social justice are called Pastoral Letters published by national groups of bishops. These documents have been clarifications of Bible and church teachings intended for the guidance of bishops, priests and people of our times.

For the past 19 years I have been drawing heavily from this Catholic Social Tradition for this column.

The church's competency in Catholic social issues rests on the fact that these issues are moral issues as well as social, political and economic issues. Even though the church has no particular competency in politics, sociology and economics, the church does have competency in matters of morality, and these issues are serious moral issues. Social justice is an essential part of the church's mission and teaching authority since these issues are a matter of morality. In one of the documents in this heritage, the church has spoken officially in these words:

“Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us (pope and bishops) as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the gospel, or in other words, of the church's mission of the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.” (Justice in the World, Synod of Bishops, 1971.)

Conflicts over these issues often arise between church and state in the life of nations and cultures. At the present time, for instance, the U. S. government and/or the culture are in definite conflict with the church over several social justice issues. Some

of the issues in which the Catholic Church and government and/or culture are in definite conflict are listed below.

1. Abortion
2. Capital punishment
3. Unjust wars and neglect of U.S. veterans
4. Injustice in the U.S. prison system
5. Liberal market capitalism
6. Neglect of people in poverty  
(Inadequate welfare, homelessness, hunger, and health care insurance)
7. Injustice in matters of taxes
8. Environmental deterioration and destruction.
9. Racism
10. Need for economic reform in political campaigns and elections
11. Minimum wages vs. living wages
12. Consumerism
13. Abuse in civil rights All through history the church has preached and written her teachings, mostly from sacred scripture, applying these social teachings to the problems of each age of history.
14. Excessive national self-interest in foreign policies

These issues have been, are, and probably will be issues dealt with in Catholic social teachings. Indeed, the church must deal with these issues in her teaching to be faithful to the church's mission and development of moral theology. We will continue to reflect on these conflicts in this series.

Most of these social/political issues are not only matters of civil rights but also of basic human rights. Basic human rights are necessary for the very development of human beings. One of the more complete listings of basic human rights can be found in the catholic heritage document entitled Peace on Earth written by Pope John XXIII in 1963. When governments and agencies of government cross the moral line and violate such rights, the church does and must speak out. This is one of the situations in which people criticize pastors and writers for preaching "politics in the pulpit". I am aware of a situation where a priest was accused of "politics in the pulpit" by simply preaching the



content of the encyclical letter Peace in the World by Pope John XXIII. Recently, I have been criticized for reviewing a book about the Bush administration's harmful policies on environmental issues. The church will continue to challenge government on such issues.

Some people prefer that religion teachers, preachers and writers stick to generalities and general principles from the Bible and church teachings. When we apply these teachings and principles to the real problems of everyday life, some people get upset because now they feel that they have to do something about these problems. Most of us would rather coast along and not be too much challenged in our real life.

In my next article in this series I will review and comment on the social document of the Second Vatican Council entitled "The Church in the Modern World. (1965), Vatican I

I\*\*\*A Papal Encyclical is a worldwide letter by one of the popes about religious matters. Many modern encyclicals have been written about social and political problems.

\*\*Vatican II: The Second Vatican Council (1961-1965), Catholic World Council of all Bishops and the Pope. On the average such councils have been held about once a century through church history.

## **Appendix D**

### **CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING – A RICH HERITAGE OF DOCUMENTS - Part II**

#### **The Church in the Modern World**

This is the second article in a series in the Rich Heritage of the Catholic Social Teaching. This is one of the major documents of the Second Vatican Council\* held in the 1960s. The fact that this document is named “A Pastoral Constitution” designates it as a major document of the council.

The purpose of this document, representing the official teaching of the church is to explain the relationship of the church to the changing world of today. This is the Vatican II document that deals most directly with some major social justice issues. Three of these major issues in this document are: “The Life of the Political Community”, “The Principles of Socioeconomic Life” and “Fostering of Peace”. In this article we will deal only with “The Life of the Political community”.

According to this teaching of the church the basic concern of politics is the COMMON GOOD of all the people. The COMMON GOOD is the shared responsibility of both the government and the church. Neither the state nor the church may responsibly ignore the COMMON GOOD. The COMMON GOOD spans the responsibility of both church and state. The COMMON GOOD is involved with the development of just law for the welfare of the people. Sometimes civil law conflicts with the divine law. When this happens a Catholic person, must, in conscience, try to change or improve the civil law.

\*\* Such a person must obey the divine law even to the point of disobeying the civil law if the civil law conflicts with God’s law. However, Christian people are obliged to obey civil law when there is no conflict with the laws of God.

I would like to quote from the document “The Church in the Modern World”:

“The political community exists for that common good in which the community finds its full justification and meaning, and from which it derives its pristine and proper right. Now, the common good embraces the sum of those conditions of social life by which individuals, families and groups can

achieve their own fulfillment in a relatively thorough and ready way....”

“It also follows that political authority whether in the community as such or in institutions representing the state, must always be exercised within the limits of morality and on behalf of the dynamically conceived common good, - - - When such is the case citizens are conscience-bound to obey...”

“Where public authority oversteps its competence and oppresses the people, these people should nevertheless obey to the extent that the objective common good demands. Still it is lawful for them to defend their own rights and those of their fellow citizens against any abuse of this authority, provided that in so doing they observe the limits imposed by the natural law\*\*\* and the gospel.”

\*The Church also insists that the GOOD of the most vulnerable citizens is a high priority.

To state the church’s rights in political issues, the document says:

“It is always and everywhere legitimate for her (the church) to preach the faith with true freedom, to teach her social doctrine and to discharge her duty among people without hindrance. She also has the right to pass moral judgments even on matters touching the political order whenever basic personal rights or the salvation of souls makes such judgments necessary. In so doing, she may use only those helps which accord with the Gospel and with the general welfare as it changes according to time and circumstance.”

Furthermore, the Church considers participation in politics to be morally responsible for Catholic persons, according to each one’s ability. This responsibility stems from the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation. The layperson’s mission and competence is to give witness to Christ in the public sector of one’s life. \* \* \* \*

\*The Second Vatican Council, usually referred to as Vatican II, was the world meeting of the bishops and the pope, in the first half of the 1960s. These world councils, named Ecumenical Councils, are called to clarify the church’s teachings and to fulfill the needs of the people.

\*\*Conflicts: In Part I of this series I listed some of the conflicts between civil law and divine law.

\*\*\*Natural laws are moral principles of right living that can be discovered by reason itself with reflection and study. Some examples would be the moral obligations to speak the truth, avoid harm to people and to encourage whatever is for the moral and spiritual good of the people.

\* \* \* \*Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, Vatican Council II, 1965

## Appendix D

### **CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING - - A RICH HERITAGE OF DOCUMENTS – Part III The Church in the Modern World**

In my last article, Part II of this series, I wrote about the “*Church in the Modern World*”: The Life of the Political Community. This article is about this same document’s section called, Principles of the Socioeconomic Life.

In this article I will present seven principles on economic justice as presented in this document.

- 1) Living wage
- 2) Globalization
- 3) Unions
- 4) The common good of all
- 5) Ownership
- 6) Economic generosity
- 7) Greed

- 1) Living Wage. Employers are required by justice to pay a living wage. A living wage is a wage that empowers a worker to cover at least the basic human needs of each worker and his or her family. This is a matter of justice to be fulfilled by the employer.

“Finally, payment for labor must be such as to furnish a man with the means to cultivate his own material, social, cultural, and spiritual life worthily, and that of his dependents. What this payment should be will vary according to each man’s assignment and productivity, the conditions of his place of employment, and the common good.”  
(Ch. 3, Section 2, Par. 67)

- 2) Globalization. Globalization policies that favor the good of rich people to the detriment of low or no income people is unjust. The same for nations. The

present forms and policies of globalization are immoral and unjust. They definitely enhance the rich and exploit the poor.

“Economic development must be kept under the control of mankind. It must not be left to the sole judgment of a few men or groups possessing excessive economic power, or of the political community alone, or of certain especially powerful nations.” (Ch. 3, Section 1, Par 65)

3) Unions. Employees have the right to organize and even strike non-violently to achieve and maintain their human and civil rights.

“Among the basic rights of the human person must be counted the right of freely founding labor unions. These unions should be truly able to represent the workers and to contribute to the proper arrangement of economic life. (Ch. 3, Section 2, Par. 68)

3) The Common Good of All. At the present time in the United States concern for the economic common good of the economically comfortable people is the priority. The common good of low income and no income people is seriously neglected and hence, unjust. Society that lives according to the gospel and Christian principles must make the most vulnerable citizens the first economic priority.

4) Ownership. Ownership of Property and wealth is never absolute ownership for human beings. The only absolute ownership is the ownership of God, the Creator. Human ownership is really the right of stewardship of property and wealth under God’s absolute ownership. This principle is clear in both the Jewish scriptures and the Christian scriptures. Furthermore, in the Church’s social teaching, all the earth and its resources are for the use and benefit of all human beings on planet Earth.

“God intended the earth and all that it contains for the use of every human being. Thus, as all men follow justice and unite in charity, created good should abound for them on a reasonable basis; attention must always be paid to the universal purpose for which created goods are meant. In using them, therefore, a man should regard his lawful possessions not merely as his own but also as common property in the sense that they should accrue to the benefit of not only himself but of others.”

(Ch 2, Section 2, Par. 64)

- 5) Economic Generosity. Generosity in the use and sharing of property/wealth is a basic teaching of Jesus and the Church. This is a basic moral requirement for spiritual growth and discipleship with Jesus.

“For the rest, the right to have a share of earthly goods sufficient for oneself and one’s family belongs to everyone. The Fathers and Doctors of the Church held this view, teaching that men are obliged to come to the relief of the poor, and to do so not merely out of their superfluous goods. If a person is in extreme necessity, he has the right to take from the riches of others what he himself needs. Since there are so many people in this world afflicted with hunger, this sacred Council urges all, both individuals and governments to remember the saying of the Fathers: “Feed the man dying of hunger, because if you have not fed him you have killed him.”

(Ch 2, Section 2, Par 69)

- 6) Greed. Greed is one of the seven capital sins. Generosity with one’s wealth is clearly a major part of Jesus’ teachings. In my opinion, greed is the major cause of immorality and evil in the United States. Greed is a major cause of much of our violence. St. Paul wrote, “The love of money is the root of all evil.”

“The fundamental purpose of this productivity must not be the mere multiplication of products. It must not be profit or domination. Rather, it must be the service of man, and indeed of the whole man, viewed in terms of his material needs and the demands of his intellectual, moral, spiritual, and religious life. And when we say man, we mean every man whatsoever and every group of men, of whatever race and from whatever part of the world.”\*

(Ch. 3, Section 1, Para 64)

\*I realize that the language of these documents is sexist, written in the early 60’s. I did not change the wording to inclusive language.

Suggested Reading for This Series:

Catholic Social Thought, David O’Brien, and Thomas Shannon, Orbis Press, 2003

Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church,

- ❖ Economic Generosity. Generosity in the use and sharing of property/wealth is a basic teaching of Jesus and the Church. This is a basic moral requirement for spiritual growth and discipleship with Jesus.

“For the rest, the right to have a share of earthly goods sufficient for oneself and one’s family belongs to everyone. The Fathers and Doctors of the Church held this view, teaching that men are obliged to come to the relief of the poor, and to do so not merely out of their superfluous goods. If a person is in extreme necessity, he has the right to take from the riches of others what he himself needs. Since there are so many people in this world afflicted with hunger, this sacred Council urges all, both individuals and governments to remember the saying of the Fathers: “Feed the man dying of hunger, because if you have not fed him you have killed him.” (Ch 2, Section 2, Par 69)

- 7) Greed. Greed is one of the seven capital sins. Generosity with one’s wealth is clearly a major part of Jesus’ teachings. In my opinion, greed is the major cause of immorality and evil in the United States. Greed is a major cause of much of our violence. St. Paul wrote, “The love of money is the root of all evil.”

“The fundamental purpose of this productivity must not be the mere multiplication of products. It must not be profit or domination. Rather, it must be the service of man, and indeed of the whole man, viewed in terms of his material needs and the demands of his intellectual, moral, spiritual, and religious life. And when we say man, we mean every man whatsoever and every group of men, of whatever race and from whatever part of the world.”\*  
Ch. 3, Section 1, Par 64)

\*I realize that the language of these documents is sexist, written in the early 60’s. I did not change the wording to inclusive language.

Suggested Reading for This Series:

Catholic Social Thought, David O’Brien, and Thomas Shannon, Orbis Press, 2003

Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church,

Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace

U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops



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## **Appendix D**

### **CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHINGS – A RICH HERITAGE OF DOCUMENTS - Part IV**

#### **The Church in the Modern World (Vatican II) Peace on Earth (Pope John XXIII)**

Peace is not only the absence of war but also a living of nonviolence, individually and nationally. Peace is a matter of working for justice, of development of poverty-stricken nations, of love among people who differ from one another, of a gospel way of life through Jesus “The way, the truth and the life”. After this introduction the bishops and the pope in the Second Vatican Council wrote:

“All these considerations compel us to undertake an evaluation of war with an entirely new attitude. The men of our time must realize that they will have to give a somber reckoning for their deeds of war. For the course of the future will depend largely on the decisions they make today.” Ch. 5, Section I, Par. 80.

In the very next paragraph the document continues:

“Any act of war aimed indiscriminately at the destruction of entire cities or of extensive areas along with their population is a crime against God and man himself. It merits unequivocal and unhesitating condemnation.” Ch. 5, Section 1, Par. 80

To apply these words of the Second Vatican Council to nuclear war, the bishops and Pope John XXIII are telling the church and the modern world that nuclear weapons have changed the very nature of war. They are telling us that the use of such weapons as used by the United States in Hiroshima and Nagasaki are immoral. This is “Total War”, where all are in danger of destruction. They are saying that “An entirely new attitude toward war” is now called for.

Since this document of Vatican II and the Papal Encyclical Peace on Earth the Catholic Church has begun a new theological journey toward becoming a church of peace in the modern world. That journey as yet, is not complete.

This new vision continues on the next page of the document: The Church in the Modern World.

“Therefore, it must be said again: the arms race is an utterly treacherous trap for humanity, and one which injures the poor to an intolerable degree. It is much to be feared that if this race persists, it will eventually spawn all the lethal ruin whose path it is now making ready....” (Ch 5, Section 1, Par.8)

The arms race is not just a problem of the past; today the arms race includes North Korea and Iran as well as Russia and the U.S. To strengthen this resolve of Vatican Council II and Pope John’s Encyclical, both documents speak of a “universal public authority” to make peace possible throughout the world.

“It is our clear duty, then, to strain every muscle as we work for this time when all war can be completely outlawed by international consent. This goal undoubtedly requires the establishment of some universal public authority acknowledged as such by all, and endowed with effective power to safeguard, on the behalf of all, security, regard for justice, and respect for rights.” Ch 5, Section 1, Par 82.

This document then goes on to a general vision of what the United Nations could be and do for a new vision of peace in the world. After spending five more paragraphs outlining United Nations and the need for Christians to support a world authority, the document states:

“An outstanding form of international activity on the part of Christians undoubtedly consists in the cooperative effort which, as individuals and in groups, they make to institutes established for the encouragement of cooperation among nations. The same is true of their efforts to establish such agencies. These deserve to be strengthened by an increase in the number of well-qualified associates and in the needed resources.” Ch. 5, Section 2, Par 90.

The United States could make or break the development of the United Nations. IN recent decades the United States has not given the potential of the U.N. sufficient support. Rather, our nation has hindered the potential of the U.N. In recent history the U.S. has tended to denigrate the U.N. rather than work to build it up.

The final words of these documents on peace emphasize the role of the churches in supporting the United Nations. However, “peace begins with me” in following the nonviolent Christ.

My own conclusion to this article on peace is scriptural. It is quite clear in the gospels that Jesus taught non-violence, Jesus lived non-violence and Jesus expects us to be non-violent.

P.S. President Bush has stated that he would authorize the use of nuclear weapons if necessary. This is a dangerous intention and the Catholic Church and most theologians would consider such use immoral.

**CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING - -**  
**A RICH HERITAGE OF DOCUMENTS – Part V**  
**On the Development of Peoples**

With this article I will review On the Development of Peoples by Pope Paul VI, 1967, in no way out of date today.

This document expresses the concern of Pope Paul VI and the Catholic Church about the needs of the Third World, the less developed part of our planet. In Pope Paul's own words:

“There can be no progress toward the development of the peoples of the earth without the simultaneous development of all humanity in the spirit of solidarity. This duty must be the concern especially of better-off nations.” Par 43 and 44.

The document continues:

“The same duty of solidarity that rests on individuals exists also for nations: advanced nations have a heavy obligation to help the developing peoples. ...we must repeat once more that the superfluous wealth of rich countries should be placed at the service of poor nations. Par 48

This is an official teaching of the Catholic Church. The U.S. for decades has given only a token nod to this teaching. Our nation, the richest in the world, ranks only 19 in comparison with other industrial nations in giving financial humanitarian aid to nations in need.

In the section of this document entitled: “The Universal Purpose of Created Things” we read:

God intended the earth and all it contains for the use of every human being and people. Par. 22

In paragraph 23, this document quotes St. Ambrose:

“You are not making a gift of your possessions to the poor person. You are handing over to him what is his for what has been given in common for the use of all, you have arrogated to yourself. The world is given to all, not only to the rich.

To most people in the United States, this statement of St. Ambrose sounds quite radical. Actually this teaching has been part of the church's teaching for many centuries. St. Ambrose lived in the fifth century. I believe that not many Christians and not many modern nations believe in this official teaching of the Catholic Church.

Pope Paul continues to write:

"It is unfortunate that on these new conditions of society our system has been constructed which considers profit as the key motive for economic progress, competition as the supreme law of economics and private ownership as the means of production as an absolute right that has no limits and carries no corresponding social obligation. This unchecked liberalism tends to...produce the international imperialism of money.  
Paragraph 26

When we ignore the principals stated in this document, The Development of Peoples, we slide into personal and national greed that is contrary to the Gospel of Christ and perpetuates the modern condoning of the evil of poverty, " a weapon of mass destruction." (Rev. James Forbes)

This document of Pope Paul VI (1967) does not make much sense to a nation whose main foreign policy is our own national self-interest.

**CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING –  
A RICH HERITAGE OF DOCUMENTS  
On the Condition of Labor, Pope Leo XIII, 1891  
Economic Justice for All by U.S. Bishops, 1980 - - Part VI  
**Living Wages - *Part I*****

As I continue my series on Catholic Social Teaching, I am writing this article on living wages on Labor Day, 2005. Wages are certainly a key issue in the justice of human labor. Unjust, non-living wages are quite common, almost the rule of the day, especially when it comes to the minimum wage, a wage that keeps most workers locked in poverty.

Great concern for just remuneration for work has been a constant theme in the social justice documents of the Church since 1891. Pope Leo writes:

“To the State, the interests of all are equaled whether high or low. The poor are members of the national communities equally with the rich; they are real component parts, living parts, which make up, through the family, the living body; and it may hardly have been said that they are by far the majority. It would be irrational to neglect one portion of the citizens and to favor another; and therefore the public administration must duly and solicitously provide for the welfare and the comfort of the working people, or else that law of justice will be violated which ordains that each shall have his or her due. (On the Condition of Labor, Par 27)

In the United States and in most other nations the poor are not considered “members of the national community equally with the rich.” In most nations, including our own, the poor, are not considered a high priority.

In the same document Pope Leo adds:

“The preservation of life is the bounden duty of each and all, and to fail therein is a crime. It follows that each has a right to procure what is required in order to live; and the poor can procure it in no other way than by work and wages... The remuneration must be enough to support the wage earner in reasonable and frugal comfort. If through necessity or fear of the worst evil, the workman accepts harder conditions because an employer or contractor will give him no better he is the victim of force and injustice. Par 34

In this quotation Pope Leo gives a beginning definition of a living wage- - a wage sufficient for a worker to take care of all of the necessities of life for self and family, and to procure what is needed to live decently in frugal comfort. Poverty allows neither the procurement of necessities nor frugal comfort.

In the United States Bishops' Pastoral Letter of 1986, Economic Justice for All, the Bishops write:

“The commandments to love God with all one’s heart and to love one’s neighbor as oneself are the heart and soul of Christian morality.” Para 64

This love, the foundation of Biblical morality, applies to employers employees and to the question of wages for labor. The bishops continue in paragraph 70:

“Distributive justice requires that the allocation of income, wealth, and power in society be evaluated in light of its effect on persons whose basic material needs are unmet.”

The Second Vatican Council stated:

“The right to have a share of earthly goods sufficient for one’s self and one’s family belongs to everyone.”

To support their stand on living wages the U. S. Bishops mention almost 20 citations from the Bible about wages and care for the poor. (Paragraphs 48, 49, 50, 51 and 52). The Bible is quite clear that unjust wages would be cheating employees in remuneration for work.

The only moral excuse for paying workers less than a living wage would be the willingness of a worker to work for less because the employer could not pay a living wage without real economic harm to himself and his business. This certainly is not the case of a corporation that can pay exorbitant salaries to CEO’s and upper level administrators while cheating workers legally with legal minimum wages. Our national condoning of greed does not excuse employers from the responsibility of giving living wages.



## **Appendix D**

### **Catholic Social Teaching – A Rich Heritage of Documents**

#### **Living Wages – *Part II***

This article on “Living Wages” is a practical application about living wages for our time. The ideas in this article are from a book entitled “Nickle and Dimed” by Barbara Ehrenrich. She reports on the Economic Policy Institutes recent statements about a living wage

Following are the main elements of this report:

- The average annual wage required for a “living wage” would be \$30,000 for a family of one adult and two children. This would amount to a wage of at least \$14.00 an hour.
- The budget includes health insurance, a telephone and child care at a licensed center.
- This wage does not include restaurant meals, video rentals, internet access, wine and liquor, cigarettes and lottery tickets, or even very much meat.
- About 60% of American workers make less than \$14.00 an hour.
- A \$30,000 wage is at least twice what entry-level workers make today. (This wage is about five times larger than the minimum wage.)
- The Catholic Bishops of Minnesota have written that we should “establish a just minimum wage at a level high enough for people to exercise economic control over their lives. With this statement of our bishops in mind as well as the Church’s century old teaching about a “living wage,” I think that the Church should take the lead in this matter of working for a minimum wage increase. This century-old commitment to a “living wage” includes a wage that can provide a humane way of life for working people, enough for the necessities of life which include medical care, education, and reasonable recreation, as well as decent food, clothing and housing according to the needs of individuals and families.
- About a quarter of all minimum wage workers are heads of families. I would find it very depressing to work full-time for years and know all the time that I would never get my family out of poverty.

- With recent welfare changes (reform?), most single parents would be forced to take a job that pays only minimum wages and so remain poor after working full-time.
- Members of Congress like to preach family values. Many of these “preachers” are willing to deprive low-income families of the ability to climb out of poverty by refusing to raise the minimum wage. One of the criteria of a truly civilized society is that its most vulnerable members are given “preferential option.” Minimum wage has never been a “living wage.” To legislatively hold people in poverty is irresponsible governance.

Pope John Paul II reinforced the Church’s century old development of a living wage when he wrote:

“Just remuneration for the work of an adult who is responsible for a family, means remuneration which will suffice for establishing and properly maintaining a family and for providing security for its future.” (On Human Work, by Pope John Paul II, 1981, Para 19.

In an article by our own Bishop Balke, 1990 he wrote:

“The temptation to exploit workers is certainly not new. In the Bible, letter of James, Chapter 5, we read: ‘Here, crying out are the wages you withheld from the farmhands who harvest your fields. The shouts of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of Hosts’”

## SUMMARY

In 1891 Pope Leo XIII published the first modern encyclicals (Papal document to the whole Church) on social issues. In 1991 the Catholic Church celebrated one hundred years of social teaching. The U.S. Bishops published a book entitled, A Century of Social Teaching, briefly summarizing the basic themes of social teachings since 1891. Following is a brief summary of A Century of Social Teaching:

### I. THE LIFE AND DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON

“Each person possesses a basic dignity that comes from God, not from any human quality or accomplishment, not from race or gender, age or economic status.”

### II. THE RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE HUMAN PERSON

“People have a fundamental right to life and to those things that make life truly human: food, clothing, housing, health care, education, security, social services, and employment.”

### III. THE CALL TO FAMILY, COMMUNITY, AND PARTICIPATION

“The human person is not only sacred, but social. We realize our dignity and rights in relationship with others, in community. No community is more central than the family; it needs to be supported not undermined. It is the basic cell of society, and the state has an obligation to support the family.”

### IV. DIGNITY OF WORK AND RIGHT OF WORKERS

“Work is more than a way to make a living: it is an expression of our dignity and a form of continuing participation in God’s creation. People have the right to decent and productive work, to decent and fair wages, to private property and economic initiative.”

### V. THE OPTION FOR THE POOR AND THE VULNERABLE

“Poor and vulnerable people have a special place in Catholic social teaching. A basic moral test of a society is how its most vulnerable members are faring.”

VI. SOLIDARITY

We are one human family, whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic and ideological differences. We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers. " (cf. Genesis 4:9)

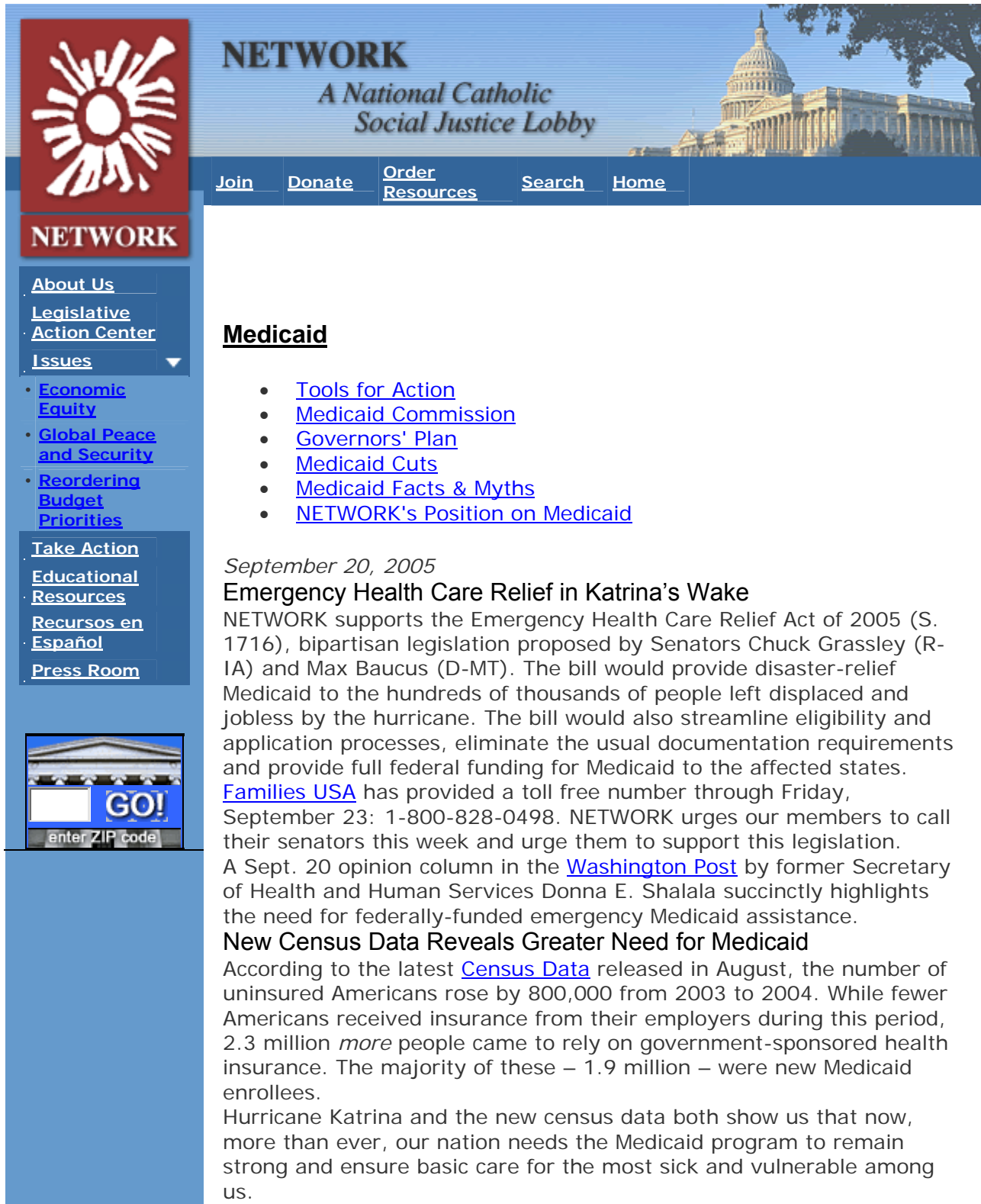
VII. JUSTICE AND NONVIOLENCE ARE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF THE CHURCH'S MISSION

"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, or, in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation." SYNOD 1971: Justice in the World

If the above social priorities of the Bible and the Church were also priorities of our nation, the United States would be a more just and nonviolent society. I do not expect the U.S. government to implement or even agree with, the teachings of the Catholic Church. However, I would expect Catholic Christian people to make Catholic teachings and principals a higher priority when political policies contradict the religious teachings.

## Appendix E

### NETWORK – A National Catholic Social Lobby



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*A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby*

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### Medicaid

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- [Medicaid Facts & Myths](#)
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*September 20, 2005*

### Emergency Health Care Relief in Katrina's Wake

NETWORK supports the Emergency Health Care Relief Act of 2005 (S. 1716), bipartisan legislation proposed by Senators Chuck Grassley (R-IA) and Max Baucus (D-MT). The bill would provide disaster-relief Medicaid to the hundreds of thousands of people left displaced and jobless by the hurricane. The bill would also streamline eligibility and application processes, eliminate the usual documentation requirements and provide full federal funding for Medicaid to the affected states. [Families USA](#) has provided a toll free number through Friday, September 23: 1-800-828-0498. NETWORK urges our members to call their senators this week and urge them to support this legislation. A Sept. 20 opinion column in the [Washington Post](#) by former Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna E. Shalala succinctly highlights the need for federally-funded emergency Medicaid assistance.

### New Census Data Reveals Greater Need for Medicaid

According to the latest [Census Data](#) released in August, the number of uninsured Americans rose by 800,000 from 2003 to 2004. While fewer Americans received insurance from their employers during this period, 2.3 million *more* people came to rely on government-sponsored health insurance. The majority of these – 1.9 million – were new Medicaid enrollees. Hurricane Katrina and the new census data both show us that now, more than ever, our nation needs the Medicaid program to remain strong and ensure basic care for the most sick and vulnerable among us.

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*July 29, 2005*

July 30, 2005 marks the Fortieth Anniversary of Medicaid and Medicare. The timing seems significant as the **National Governors' Association**, the **Commission for the Study of Medicaid** and the **Congress** vie for leadership in Medicaid's reform.

The **National Governors' Association** (NGA) passed its Medicaid Reform Policy (EC-16) during the annual meeting, July 15 – 18, 2005. ([more on the Governors' Plan below](#)) Their attempt to slow the growing cost of Medicaid would allow states to demand co-payments, which according to Ron Pollack of Families USA will, "merely have people covered on paper. But in reality, they won't truly have health coverage because they can't afford it." Some governors are in agreement, stating that they will decline some provisions of the policy, particularly co-pays.

The **Commission for the Study of Medicaid** held its first session on July 27th. Congress has given the Commission an early September deadline to recommend means of cutting \$10 billion over five years from the Medicaid budget. Commission meetings are open, having a public comment period, followed by Commission deliberation.

There are legislators in **Congress** who are looking to model a national Medicaid reform after TennCare, the Tennessee program which is denying eligibility to over 300,000 previous Tennessee recipients. This is being done by limiting eligibility for the program. For instance, non-pregnant adults will no longer qualify in the "Medically Needy" program. Further, it limits the services available. Some may be eligible as "Categorically Needy" due to income below the Federal Poverty Level Income Standard (\$19,350 for a family of 4). Expansion of this type of program would deny many with disabilities and chronic diseases what is necessary for life support.

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## Medicaid Commission

*May 16, 2005*

The 2006 budget mandates a \$10 billion cut to Medicaid over five years. The Senate included a demand for a Commission for the Study of Medicaid, with no cuts to Medicaid until 2007. Secretary of Health and Human Services Mike Leavitt announced last week that his office would appoint commission members within the next two weeks. The commission will have two-tiers, with up to 15 voting and 18 non-voting members. The voting tier will be comprised of: Medicaid officials; "former or current governors"; state Medicaid directors; three health care experts from public policy organizations; and other with expertise in health, finance or administration. The non-voting tier will be comprised of four Republican and four Democratic congressional members and up to 10 representatives of benefit groups such as child survivors, the disabled and widows. Congressional pleas for representation of the Institute of Medicine or the National Academy of Sciences were rejected.

The commission will be seeking answers to about 10 questions concerning such issues as long term care, financing structures and eligibility requirements.

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## Governors' Plan

*July 15, 2005*

A committee of the National Governors' Association (NGA) has developed a plan for reform of Medicaid, which they have presented to the House and the Senate. The governors were asked to appoint non-voting members to the Commission for the Study of Medicaid, but have refused to do so. Nonetheless, they hope to negotiate with the commission on the cost-cutting plan to be presented to Congress. The NGA will be meeting July 15 -18, 2005 in Des Moines, Iowa, where they are expected to formally approve their proposal for Medicaid reform.

NETWORK has deep concerns about the governors' proposal, which includes major increases in cost-sharing for Medicaid recipients. Co-pays would rise to \$10 to \$20 per visit or prescription and for the first time ever, many beneficiaries would pay monthly premiums.

Beneficiaries' total cost-sharing could equal up to 5% of their total annual income, or 7.5% for those making more than 150% of the poverty line ([see note 1](#)). Altogether, many Medicaid beneficiaries could end up paying the equivalent of an entire month's income on health expenses. Over 53 million Americans benefit from Medicaid, including children, people with disabilities, and nursing home patients.

NETWORK strongly opposes the proposed high level of cost-sharing which would adversely impact the neediest families in our nation. Both monthly premiums and co-pays deter those with low income from seeking needed health care, which frequently leads to more serious and expensive conditions and treatments. This is particularly true for persons with chronic health conditions such as cancer, heart conditions, diabetes or mental illness ([see note 2](#)).

As healthcare costs continue to escalate for all Americans, there are no easy solutions to ensuring the availability of health care for all.

Nevertheless, NETWORK continues to support universal healthcare for all, in keeping with the US Catholic Bishops' teaching that "a ffordable and accessible health care is an essential safeguard of human life and a fundamental human right". In the interim, NETWORK supports the preservation of Medicaid as a federally-funded entitlement program, with appropriation levels of funding to meet the needs of all who are eligible for benefits.

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## Tools for Action

**Medicaid Matters to Someone You Know.** "Medicaid Matters" is a toolkit to share information on the value of the Medicaid program, and to help people work to preserve it. Any cuts to the Medicaid program have serious negative impact on State budgets. As the number of beneficiaries steadily rises, states have already been forced to eliminate low-income recipients whose income exceeds the level for "mandatory" coverage, and reduce benefits listed as "optional."

"Optional" benefits include prescription drugs, prosthetics, physical therapy, hospice care, case management and personal care services.

[Click here for more information](#) on *Medicaid's Optional Populations: Coverage and Benefits*.

The [Medicaid Matters website](#) invites you to contact your members of

congress, governor and state legislators to let them know that you care.

**Contact Your Governor:** And let him/her know you oppose the high levels of cost-sharing which would adversely impact the neediest families in our nation. Contact information for governors can be found at <http://www.lib.umich.edu/govdocs/govemail.html> — click on your state, and then on the website of your governor to find a button for *contact*.

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## Notes

**Note 1:** POVERTY THRESHOLD — Sample of threshold set by 2004 Census Bureau statistics:

Size of Family Unit	# of Children Under 18 within this Family Unit			
	None	One	Two	Three
One person – under 65	\$ 9,827			
One person – over 65	\$ 9,060			
Four persons	\$ 19, 484	\$ 19,803	\$ 19,157	\$ 19,223
Six persons	\$ 27,025	\$ 27,133	\$ 26,573	\$ 25,037

**Note 2:** A recent study reported in *Journal of the American Medical Association* on effects of co-payments indicates that low income adults filled fewer prescriptions for essential medications resulting in 78 percent increase in hospitalization, nursing home admissions and even death, and an 88% increase in emergency room visits.

Source: Robyn Tamblyn, et al., "Adverse Events Associated with Prescription Drug Cost-Sharing among Poor and Elderly Persons," *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 285(4): 421-429, January 2001. In this study, the low-income people were adult welfare recipients.

A RAND study showed that lower income persons experienced poorer health when co-payments were imposed than did those in middle and upper income ranges.

Source: J. Newhouse. *Free for All*, 1996 ( RAND Health Insurance Expt.)

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## **Medicaid Cuts Jeopardize Poor Seniors and Children**

*May 9, 2005*

The federal budget for Fiscal Year 2006, approved by Congress, calls for \$10 billion in cuts to Medicaid over the next five years. While the final cuts agreed upon by the budget conference committee are less than the \$15 billion proposed by the House, they will nonetheless have a disastrous impact on the nation's most poor and vulnerable.

### **Who's taking the money away?**

Both the Senate Finance Committee and the House Commerce Committee have jurisdiction over Medicaid. The Senate committee, which also oversees TANF, EITC, SSI and child care spending, must produce at least \$10 billion in cuts, and the House committee \$15 billion.

### **Who loses out?**

Specific policy changes in order to implement the cuts have not yet emerged, but could include: increased co-payments, benefit cuts,



reductions in pharmacy payments, and some changes in how seniors transfer their assets in order to qualify for long-term care under Medicaid. What is certain is that the population eligible for Medicaid will only increase in the years ahead, as more workers enter retirement and as fewer workers receive health care benefits from their employers. Simply put, more Americans will need Medicaid, but less money will be available to go around, which will result in poorer quality care or simply no care at all for the people who need it most. The \$10 billion in Medicaid cuts will undoubtedly increase the financial burden on already cash-strapped states. The projected cuts will likely include \$2.5 billion in cuts to the states by 2007. (To put the numbers into perspective, this same \$2.5 billion, if uncut, could also pay for Medicaid coverage for an additional 1.2 million children, or for 227,300 senior citizens.) In response, state governors and legislators are proposing sweeping changes in the Medicaid program, including limiting services to poor families and the elderly and increasing patients' out-of-pocket costs.

### **Where is Medicaid going from here?**

It is no secret that Medicaid spending has increased dramatically in recent years, due both to the spiraling costs of health care and the increasing number of eligible beneficiaries. In light of this, Congress has agreed to form a Commission for the Study of Medicaid to examine ways to restructure the program. Meanwhile, the cuts outlined in the FY 06 budget will not take effect until 2007.

It is important to keep in mind that Medicaid has done a better job at holding down costs than private insurance.

More information about the likely impact of the cuts on Medicaid beneficiaries is available on the [FamiliesUSA web site](#).

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## **Medicaid**

*March 15, 2005*

Medicaid is an essential component of our nation's health care system, providing health care coverage for poor families, the elderly and disabled, in keeping with the Scriptural mandate to care for the most vulnerable and marginalized.

**NETWORK supports the preservation of Medicaid as a federally-funded entitlement program.** Our basic message is twofold—"no caps, no cuts"

- Do not cut Medicaid funding
- Do not place financial caps on the Medicaid programs

### **Medicaid Facts**

• 53 million people in the United States receive health services through Medicaid, the nation's major public health insurance program for people with low income. This includes:

- 25 million children (one-third of all children in America)
- 13 million low- income parents,
- 5 million elderly and
- 8 million people with disabilities

(Source: Families USA, Coalition on Human Needs)

- Medicaid is the single largest source of funding for nursing home care in the nation.

(Source: Kaiser Family Foundation)

- One in seven Medicaid enrollees receives both Medicare and Medicaid: 71% have annual income below \$10,000, compared to 13% of all Medicare beneficiaries.

(Source: Kaiser Family Foundation)

- President Bush has proposed a net \$45 billion in cuts to the Medicaid program over the next ten years. By the fifth year of these cuts, the funds lost to states would be enough to provide health coverage to 1.8 million children or 345,000 people over 65 nationwide.

(Sources: Coalition on Human Needs, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities,

Georgetown University Health Policy Institute)

### **Dispelling the Myths on Medicaid**

#### **“Medicaid costs are rising so much that we need to curb spending”**

- Increases in Medicaid spending simply reflect overall increases in health care costs. In fact, Medicaid costs have grown more slowly than private insurance costs: since 2000, employer-sponsored insurance premiums have grown by an average of 12.3%, while average acute care Medicaid costs per enrollee have grown by only 6.9%. Instead of disproportionately targeting those who stand to lose the most, we should address the larger issues behind rising health care costs in the United States.

(Source: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities)

#### **“Funding caps and block grants will give the states more flexibility in administering Medicaid”**

- In reality, federal funding caps and block granting will shift the burden of medical costs to the already cash-strapped states. The states will be forced in turn to impose enrollment caps and even terminate people’s benefits. Basically, “flexibility” means that otherwise eligible people will lose out on essential medical care.

#### **“States can save money by eliminating coverage of ‘optional’ medical services.”**

- “Optional” services is a misnomer. The category actually includes essential acute and chronic care services and equipment. Eliminating this coverage would impact 20% of children in Medicaid, and more than 40% of total Medicaid enrolled parents and pregnant women.

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### **NETWORK's Position on Medicaid**

NETWORK supports the preservation of Medicaid as a federally-funded entitlement program, with appropriation levels of funding to meet the needs of all who are eligible for benefits. NETWORK further supports savings to the program through price negotiation for pharmaceuticals, as is currently available to the Veteran’s Administration. Another area of savings to investigate is increased support for home health care for those in need of long term care. NETWORK supports a position of “no caps, no cuts” for Medicaid benefits and opposes block-granting of

services.

The NETWORK position is in accord with that of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops:

*"Affordable and accessible health care is an essential safeguard of human life and a fundamental human right. Any plan to reform the nation's health care system must be rooted in values that respect human dignity, protect human life, and meet the unique needs of the poor. We support health care that is affordable and accessible to all . . . We will support measures to strengthen Medicare and Medicaid."* - Faithful Citizenship: Civic Responsibility for a New Millennium (USCCB).

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### Catholic Social Tradition and Global Issues

For true global solidarity and development to take place, nations must work for the global community. The focus must move from international competition on political and economic levels to an international democracy of nations working together to create a just world. Pope John Paul II said:

"Interdependence must be transformed into solidarity, grounded on the principle that the goods of creation are meant for all. Avoiding every type of imperialism, the stronger nations must feel responsible for the other nations, based on the equality of all peoples and with respect for the differences." (On Social Concern #39)

NETWORK analyzes issues through the lens of the Catholic Social Tradition. Based on the Catholic Social Tradition principle of "Solidarity of the Human Family," we are to see the "other" – any person, people, or nation – as a partner, sharer, and neighbor regardless of race, class, gender, ethnicity, age, political persuasion, sexuality, etc. NETWORK believes that the United States must extend mutual esteem for every nation in the world.

Pope John Paul II, in his message of "Teaching Peace" on World Peace Day 2004, agrees that the international community must be a part of any peacemaking effort:

"States must consider this objective [peace] as a clear moral and political obligation which calls for prudence and determination. Here I would repeat the words of encouragement which I spoke in 1995: 'The United Nations Organization needs to rise more and more above the cold status of an administrative institution to become a moral center where all the nations of the world feel at home and develop a shared awareness of being, as it were, *a family of nations*.'"

This "family of nations" has the potential to achieve peace if the nations of the world would place their faith in it. NETWORK keeps the principle of "Solidarity of the Human Family" in

mind as we work with a coalition of other national organizations on global issues.

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### The Human Needs Deficit

*March 2005*

As Congress considers a budget for fiscal year 2006, the United States currently faces a deficit of \$427 billion for fiscal year 2005. This huge monetary deficit is the topic of much debate. A topic that receives significantly less attention, however, is the incredible **social deficit** facing our nation. Year after year, Congress attempts to offset the rising deficit by slashing human needs programs, leaving hundreds of thousands of people without services that ensure their health, safety and education. NETWORK has compiled the following facts and statistics to give you an idea of the Human Needs deficit in the United States.

#### Child Care

- More than 6 million children go home alone after school each week.
- Only 1 in 7 children eligible for federal child care assistance actually receives it.
- Current funding only allows Head Start to reach about three out of five eligible preschool age children and just 3% of eligible infants and toddlers in Early Head Start.

(All facts from: Children's Defense Fund  
<[http://www.childrensdefense.org/earlychildhood/headstart/head\\_start\\_fact\\_sheet.pdf](http://www.childrensdefense.org/earlychildhood/headstart/head_start_fact_sheet.pdf)>)

#### Food/Hunger

- In 2002, 11% — 12.1 million — of all U.S. households were "food insecure". Of these, 3.8 million suffered from food insecurity that was so severe that the USDA classified them as "hungry."  
(Food Research Action Center  
<[http://www.frac.org/html/hunger\\_in\\_the\\_us/hunger\\_index.html](http://www.frac.org/html/hunger_in_the_us/hunger_index.html)>)
- From 2002 to 2003, requests for food assistance in US cities increased by an average of 17 percent. 40% of US cities surveyed reported an inability to provide an adequate amount of food.  
(U.S. Conference of Mayors:  
<[http://www.usmayors.org/uscm/news/press\\_releases/documents/hunger\\_121803.asp](http://www.usmayors.org/uscm/news/press_releases/documents/hunger_121803.asp)>)

#### Health Care



- 15.6% of the population, or 45 million people, lacked health insurance coverage in 2003, up from 15.2% in 2002.
- 11.4% of all children do not have health care.
- 32.7% of Latinos lack health insurance – the highest rate of any race or ethnic group.
- Children in poverty were more likely to be uninsured in comparison to all children in 2003, 19.2% compared with 11.4%

(All facts from: US Census Bureau  
<<http://www.census.gov/hhes/income/income03/prs04asc.html>>)

## Housing

- Nearly 95 million people in the United States, in cities, suburbs and rural areas — a third of the nation — have housing problems. These problems include: high housing costs relative to income, overcrowding, inadequate living conditions, and homelessness.  
(National Low-Income Housing Coalition  
<<http://www.nlihc.org/research/housingmyths.pdf>>)
- The number one reason people give for being homeless is the lack of affordable housing.  
([http://www.usmayors.org/uscm/us\\_mayor\\_newspaper/documents/01\\_10\\_05/hunger.asp](http://www.usmayors.org/uscm/us_mayor_newspaper/documents/01_10_05/hunger.asp))
- The national Housing Wage for a two bedroom unit is \$15.37 according to the 2004 Out of Reach Report by the National Low Income Housing Coalition.
- 3.5 million people experience homelessness in the United States every year, according to a 2000 Urban Institute study.
- In 2004, requests for emergency shelter assistance increased by an average of 6% for the 27 U.S. cities surveyed in the 2004 U.S. Conference of Mayors–Sodexo USA Hunger and Homelessness Survey.

## Immigration

- Each year about 65,000 U.S.-raised, undocumented students graduate from high school but cannot pursue higher education or work legally in the U.S.  
(National Immigration Law Center  
<[http://www.nilc.org/immlawpolicy/DREAM/DREAM\\_Basic\\_Info\\_11-04.pdf](http://www.nilc.org/immlawpolicy/DREAM/DREAM_Basic_Info_11-04.pdf)>)
- Since 1998, the Border Patrol has documented 1,973 migrant deaths on the US-Mexico border. This does not include bodies that have not been found.  
(Border Working Group <http://www.rtfcam.org/border/deaths061604.pdf>)

## Poverty

- The number in poverty increased by 1.3 million people, to 35.9 million from 2002 to 2003. (The Federal Poverty Level is \$14,776/yr for a family of three.)  
(US Census Bureau <<http://www.census.gov/hhes/income/income03/prs04asc.html>>)



## Social Security

- As of 12/04, approximately 4.98 million children receive Social Security disability and/or survivor benefits – more than the number who benefit from TANF (4.15 million children).  
(Social Security Administration: [http://www.ssa.gov/legislation/2005\\_factsheet.doc](http://www.ssa.gov/legislation/2005_factsheet.doc))  
(US Department of Health and Human Services, Indicators of Welfare Dependence Annual Report to Congress 2004 <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/indicators04/apa-tanf.htm>)
- 37% of Social Security beneficiaries do not receive retirement benefits, but do benefit from disability, SSI and/or survivor benefits.  
(Social Security administration  
<[http://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/quickfacts/stat\\_snapshot/index.html](http://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/quickfacts/stat_snapshot/index.html)>)

## Tax Cuts

- Making permanent the tax cuts enacted in 2001 and 2003 would have a direct cost of \$1.8 trillion through fiscal year 2015. This includes the cost of extending the Alternative Minimum Tax relief associated with these tax cuts.
- Without offsets, the cost of these tax cuts would increase the annual deficit and thus would add to the federal debt. The interest payments associated with this higher level of debt will be nearly \$300 million through 2015. Consequently, the total cost of the tax cuts, including the related interest costs would be \$2.1 trillion over the period.
- Through fiscal year 2005, the Bush tax cuts enacted since 2001 have cost \$819 billion. Before they expire, they will cost another \$1 trillion, for a total cost of \$1.9 trillion.
- If the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts are made permanent, as the Administration has proposed, their cost over the next 75 years [using Congressional Budget Office projections] will be more than five times the Social Security shortfall over this period.

(All facts from: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities <<http://www.cbpp.org/2-2-05tax.htm>>)

## Unemployment

- 8,149,000 people in the United States were unemployed in 2004.  
(<http://www.bls.gov/cps/home.htm#overview>)
- 7.7 million in the U.S. were unemployed in the month of January, 2005.  
(<http://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.nr0.htm>)
- Only 43% of unemployed workers in the U.S. received unemployment insurance in 2001.  
(<http://www.nelp.org/docUploads/pub189%2Epdf>)

## Wages/Income

- In 2003, Women made \$0.76 to every dollar a man makes. This figure is down from \$0.77 in 2002.  
(US Census Bureau <<http://www.census.gov/hhes/income/income03/prs04asc.html>>)
- Between 2002 and 2003, income levels for the lowest 20% of

households decreased 1.9% from \$18,326 to \$17,984 while the income levels for households in top 20% increased 1.1% from \$85,941 to \$86,867.

(<http://www.census.gov/prod/2004pubs/p60-226.pdf>)

- The top 10% of income earners in the United States owns 70% of the wealth.  
([http://www.faireconomy.org/research/wealth\\_charts.html](http://www.faireconomy.org/research/wealth_charts.html))
- From 1979 to 2001, the increase in family income levels for the bottom 20% was 3% yet the top 5% increased income by 81%. You can compare this to another period in U.S. history (1947-79) where the top and bottom income earners increased their wealth by 116% and 86% respectively.  
([http://www.faireconomy.org/research/income\\_charts.html](http://www.faireconomy.org/research/income_charts.html))

## War/Peace

- The War in Iraq has cost the United States \$156.7 billion to date.  
(National Priorities Project, March 17, 2005  
<<http://www.nationalpriorities.org/costofwar/index.html>>)
- Since the invasion of Iraq on March 19, 2003:
  - 1,511 U.S. troops have been killed in Iraq
  - 11,285 Americans have been wounded in Iraq
  - 21,100-39,300 Iraqi civilians have been killed as a result of violence from war and violence from crime(All figures are as of March 20, 2005  
<<http://www.americanprogress.org/site/pp.asp?c=biJRJ8OVF&b=474617>>)

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## Human Rights

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## Appendix F

## Family Income & Jobs



### Child Poverty

In 2003, 12.9 million American children younger than 18 lived below the poverty line and more than one out of every six American children (17.6 percent) was poor. That is more children living in poverty today than 30 or 35 years ago. A child in America is more likely to live in poverty than a child in any of the 18 other wealthy industrialized nations for which data exist.

Child poverty rose for the second year in a row in working families. The number of poor children in working families increased to 8.6 million in 2003, up from 8.3 million in 2001—a rise of 355,000 children—according to an analysis of Census Bureau data by the Children's Defense Fund. Seven out of ten poor children lived in a family where someone worked for at least part of the year and almost one out of three poor children lived in families with full-time year-round workers in 2003.

The number of children in extreme poverty (in families with incomes of one-half of the poverty level or lower) grew at almost twice the rate of increase for child poverty overall from 2002 to 2003 (11.5 percent compared to 6.0 percent). This significantly faster growth in extreme poverty is evidence of a collapse of the social safety net for children at the very bottom of the economic scale.

#### INSIDE FAMILY INCOME

- [Child Poverty](#)
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- [Housing](#)
- [Income Support and Welfare](#)
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[Join the Family Income and Jobs Listserv](#)

### Frequently Asked Questions

- [Basic Facts on Child Poverty](#) *October 2004*  
Get the latest statistics and facts about children in poverty.

### Reports

-  [Food Insecurity 2005: Over 13 Million Children Face Food Insecurity](#)  
*June 2, 2005* (Adobe PDF : 6 pages : 204 KB)
- [Basic Facts on Food Stamps](#)
-  [Defining Poverty and Why It Matters for Children](#)  
This brief explains how poverty is defined and discusses the impact of poverty on children and families in their every day lives.  
*August 2005* (Adobe PDF : 4 pages : 118 KB)
-  [Number of Black Children in Extreme Poverty Hits Record High](#)  
*May 28, 2003* (Adobe PDF : 9 pages : 145 KB)  
Press Release: Tax Cuts for the Rich Will Erode Safety Nets for Children Even Further
-  [How Children Fare in Welfare Experiments Appears to Hinge on Income](#)  
*August 22, 2001* (Adobe PDF : 26 pages : 127 KB)
  -  [Tables](#) (Adobe PDF : 2 pages : 14 KB)
  -  [Appendices](#) (Adobe PDF : 5 pages : 49 KB)Press Release: A recent CDF study finds programs that are most helpful to children are those that raise family income and economic security.
-  [One-Third of a Nation's Future: Children in the South](#)  
*August 2002* (Adobe PDF : 31 pages : 232 KB)
  -  [Fact Sheets](#) (Adobe PDF : 17 pages : 94 KB)Press Release: Marian Wright Edelman Asks Southern Governors to Help Leave No Child Behind®; Children's Defense Fund Releases *One-Third of a Nation's Future: Children in the South* - a report showing that children in the South have the most to gain, or lose, from choices now before Congress.
- [Overall Child Poverty Rate Dropped in 2000 But Poverty Rose for Children in Full-Time Working Families](#)  
Press Release: The number of American children living below the poverty line fell to 11.6 million in the year 2000, the lowest in 20 years, according to data released today by the U.S. Census Bureau. The proportion of children in poverty fell to 16.2 percent, or one in six, reflecting economic prosperity that lifted income and rolled back poverty for most Americans. The poverty rate among adults age 18 to 64 also reached its lowest point in two decades.

### State and Local Facts

# **Justice Theme**

## **Homily Aids**

For Sunday Liturgies

**B Cycle**

**Monsignor William Mehrkens**

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Monsignor William Mehrkens is a retired priest in the Diocese of Crookston, Minnesota, living in Bemidji, Minnesota. In his 54 years in the priesthood he has spent most of his time as a parish and campus ministry pastor, including twelve years as a pastor on the Red Lake Indian Reservation. He is one of the founders of two homeless shelters in Moorhead, Minnesota. With the authorization of Bishop Victor Balke, Monsignor Mehrkens established the Social Justice Commission of the Crookston Diocese and has written most of the articles in the Social Justice Commission column, “Justice Shall Flower.”





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<b>Nonviolence in Families and Other Small Communities</b>	
○ Appendix D Series “Catholic Social Teaching”;	
Part IV “Peace on Earth”	
❖ See A Cycle, Appendix A series: “A Spirituality of Nonviolence”	
<b>ASSUMPTION OF MARY .....</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Magnificat</b> Luke 1:46-55 <i>cf Third Sunday of Advent</i>	
<b>TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME .....</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>Exploitation of ANAWIM</b>	
Psalm 15 The just and the unjust	
James 1:27 Anawim: orphans and widows	
Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23 Jesus in conflict with Pharisees, lawyers and scribes over human traditions that exploit the ordinary people.	
Verses 20-23: Sources of personal violence.	
<b>Exploiting the Little People</b>	
▪ Optional Theme: “The Pledge of Allegiance”	
▪ Optional Theme: “Balancing Budgets”	

## **TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ..... 69**

### **Help for the disabled – *anawim* – Jubilee 2000- -**

Isaiah 35:4-7 The blind, the deaf, the lame and dumb

Psalms 146: The oppressed, the hungry, the captive, the blind,  
strangers, orphans and widows

James 2:1-5 Prejudice: classism and racism

Mark 7:31-37 The deaf and speech impeded

### **The Great Jubilee and Racism**

- Optional Theme: “Ending Racism in the Church”
- Optional Theme: “Racism”
- Optional Theme: “Racism and the Bible”
- Appendix A Series “Christian or American
- Appendix B Series “Human Rights”
- Appendix C Series “Racism”
- Appendix D Series “Catholic Social Teachings”
- Appendix E: Network – A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby:  
[www.networklobby.org](http://www.networklobby.org)
- Appendix F: Children’s Defense Fund: [www.childrensdefense.org](http://www.childrensdefense.org)
- ❖ See A Cycle, Appendix B series: “Compassion”

## **TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ..... 78**

### **We are called to nonviolence**

Isaiah 50:4-9 Nonviolent Suffering Servant.

Psalms 116 Blest are the persecuted

James 2:14-18 Care for people – practice of faith

### **Mark 8:27-35 Jesus is nonviolent Suffering Servant**

#### **Just Wars**

- Optional Theme: “The Gospel According to Matthew--Relating to Violence”
- Optional Theme: “Conclusion to the Scriptural Citations” (previous page)
- Appendix A Series “Christian or American”
- Appendix D Series “Catholic Social Teaching;  
Part IV “Peace on Earth”
- See A Cycle, Appendix A series: “A Spirituality of Nonviolence”
- ❖ See A Cycle, Appendix B series: “Compassion”

## **TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ..... 82**

### **Second Prediction of the Passion and death of Jesus**

#### **The greatest must be servant of all**

Wisdom 2:12, 17-20 The “just one” is nonviolent in the face of persecution

Psalms 54 God uphold us in the face of persecution

Mark 9:30-37 Jesus is the Suffering Servant who offers his life in non-violent love.

Jesus encourages us to become child-like. Humility and gentleness are inner  
sources of nonviolence. Welcoming a child is welcoming Jesus.

- Optional Theme: “Gospel Sources of Nonviolence:

#### **The Suffering Servant**

*Mark’s three Predictions of the Passion”*

- Appendix A Series “Christian or American”
- Appendix D Series “Catholic Social Teaching”;  
Part IV “Peace on Earth”

## **TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ..... 86**

### **Economic injustice – lifestyle – greed**

James 5:1-6 “You rich, weep and wail over your impending miseries.”

### **Consumerism and a Culture of Death**

- Optional Theme: “Arms for the Poor”
- Appendix A Series “Christian or American”
- Appendix D Series “Catholic Social Teaching”;  
Part V: “On the Development of Peoples” VI  
Part VI: “Living Wages”, Part I and Part II

## **TWENTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ..... 92**

### **Injustice of sexual unfaithfulness and the violence of sexual abuse**

Mark 10:2-12 Holiness of married sex, injustice of divorce,  
and sexual abuse

### **Sexual Injustice**

## **TWENTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ..... 94**

### **The spiritual danger of wealth**

Wisdom 7:7-11 “Riches are nothing in comparison with her wisdom”

Mark 10:17-30 The rich young man

### **The Gospel According to Luke relating to Wealth, Money and Life-Style**

- Optional Theme: “Principles for a Christian Economic Lifestyle”
- Optional Theme: “Conclusions”
- ”Appendix A Series “Christian or American”
- Appendix D Series “Catholic Social Teaching”;  
Part V: “On the Development of Peoples”  
Part VI: “Living Wages”, Part I and Part II
- ❖ See A Cycle, Appendix A series: “A Spirituality of Nonviolence”  
Part II “The Domination System” and “The Jesus System”

## **TWENTY-NINTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ..... 98**

### **Domination rather than service leads to violence**

Isaiah 53:10-11 The Suffering Servant suffers nonviolently to save others

Mark 10:35-45 The greatest must serve the rest. Jesus is the  
Suffering Servant who came to serve others.

### **Century of Holocaust**

- Appendix A Series “Christian or American”
- Appendix D Series “Catholic Social Teaching”;  
Part IV “Peace on Earth”

**THIRTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ..... 100**

**Love for God and people: the source of reverence for life**

Deuteronomy 6:2-6 Love

Mark 23:1-12 Love and the reign of God

**A Consistent Ethic of Life**

- Optional Theme: “The Death Penalty”
- Optional Theme: “The Death Penalty or Restorative Justice”
- Appendix A Series “Christian or American
- Appendix B Series “Human Rights”
- Appendix D Series “Catholic Social Teachings  
Part V “On the Development of Peoples”
- Appendix G Data Presented on Capital Punishment in the United States.  
usinfo.state.gov

**THIRTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ..... 106**

Wealth, power and stewardship

Psalms 146 Justice for the oppressed, hungry, handicapped, widows,  
orphans and aliens.

Mark 12:38-44 Exploitation and selfishness of the powerful:  
generosity of the poor

**Money and Power**

- Appendix D Series “Catholic Social Teachings”
- ❖ See A Cycle, Appendix C series: “Money and Power”

**THIRTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ..... 108**

**The End Times**

Daniel 12:1-3 “At that time...”

Mark 13:24-32 The second coming of Christ

**An Eschatological Perspective (*First Sunday of Advent*)**

**THIRTY-FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME. CHRIST THE KING ..... 109**

**.Jesus and Pilot**

John 18:33-39 Two forms of leadership:

irresponsible, violent and unjust;

responsible, just, nonviolent and loving.

**The Crown of Thorns**



## INTRODUCTION

This is the second of a three-part series of homily suggestions entitled Justice Theme Homily Aids for Sunday Liturgies. Even though most of the offerings are for Sunday liturgies, by way of exception we have included a few holy days and weekdays.

The offerings in this series are made up of several formats including sample homilies, homily outlines, quotations from various sources and reprints (with permission) from periodicals and newsletters. It is suggested that these offerings be used not as complete homilies, but as ideas for your homily preparation.

All the pieces in this series flow from the Sacred Scripture readings of the day in some real way. The use of Sacred Scripture for spiritual growth and for preaching must try to answer two questions:

- (3) What did the original author mean by his writing in a different time, place and culture? This exegesis should be done before one deals with the second question.
- (4) (2) What does this particular passage and context have to say to us today in a very different time, place and culture? The answer to this second question could be quite arbitrary and have very little to do with the original meaning of the writing if we neglect the first question, the exegesis.

This series of suggestions for Justice Theme Homily Aids for Sunday Liturgies usually does not develop the exegesis. That is left to each reader, preacher, or teacher with his or her own study resources. Having considered the exegetical meanings, I believe the materials in this book are in harmony with the original meanings offered by Scripture scholars.

Readers will notice that there is only one piece offered for some Sundays and several for other Sundays. There is no particular reason for this other than the author had more relevant material for some days than for others.

This series was originated and is intended as a follow-up to a priests' retreat on "Preaching the Just Word" conducted by Father Walter Burghardt and his team in the Crookston Diocese. Following are Father Burghardt's own words about his project:

“Preaching the just word” is an effort to move the preaching of social issues more effectively into the Catholic pulpits of our country. Not to solve complex social, economic, or political problems; this is not possible even within the very best of homilies. Rather to raise the issues, to raise the Christian conscience, to get our graced faithful thinking, talking, acting.”

“We at the Center are persuaded that such preaching will always be less persuasive than it should be unless sheer skills are integrated with a spirituality. So, time and again we will bring preachers of promise and compassion to a retreat house, where spirituality is the heart and soul of the enterprise, filling not only their minds with information but their bellies with fire, and send them forth to spread the flame in their acre of God’s world.” (When Christ Meets Christ, Homilies on the Just Word), Paulist Press, 1993, page 90).

In this series of homily suggestions we have tried to carry out Walter Burghardt’s insistence that “spirituality be the heart and soul” of homilies on justice and peace.

Many aids in developing homilies on the “Just Word” are available. Some suggested books of homilies are:

Books in the Homilies on the Just Word, Walter J. Burghardt, S.J. (Paulist Press).

John Kavanaugh, Meditation on the Sunday Scriptures, (Orbis books); (three books).

Megan McKenna (Orbis books); presenting liturgical reflections according to the three cycles.

The Good News According to Luke, by Richard Rohr (Crossroad).

The Jerome Bible Commentary (Prentice Hall).

Most readers are also familiar with several homily helps, periodicals and publications. However, not all are helpful in justice/nonviolence themes.

Also included in B Cycle homily suggestions are some relevant quotations from three pastoral letters of the American Bishops: The Challenge of Peace, Economic Justice for All, and To the Ends of the Earth. These were chosen from a series entitled, The Pastorals on Sundays by Jacquelyn S. Graham and Roger LaBonte (Liturgy Training Publications). This series is out of print.

## **FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

### **The End Times - Christ's Second Coming**

Mark 13:33-37 The Second Coming of Christ

### **An Eschatological Perspective**

This time of year—November and early December—the Church reminds us of the end of times, the last things and the end of human history as we know it. Included in the “last things” will be resurrection of the dead, the second coming of Christ, and the Last Judgment. The study of these projected happenings makes up what is known in theology as eschatology. An eschatological perspective means living our lives now in the faith and expectation of the end of the kingdom of this world and the full establishment of the reign of God.

Some Christians are so concentrated on the eschatological perspective of the second coming of Christ that they neglect to take seriously the present life on earth. They seem to see little value in the present, and seem to have little hope in making life in this world a better, less violent, more just experience. This misguided vision of the end times seems to be an escape from responsibility for present reality instead of involvement in the present world and time.

A healthy eschatological perspective can be a source of great wisdom now because such a focus can enable us to discern real values, lasting values and gifts worth cherishing. Such a perspective can help us discern the difference between fools gold and real gold, and aid us in choosing the priorities proclaimed by Christ as the priorities of the reign of God. Such priorities would include love, reverence for life, nonviolence, justice, forgiveness, and perceiving this life as good but leading toward a better life, a lasting life. Such a perspective can help us see the present emphasis on wealth, power, prestige, greed, violence, vengeance and the terrible injustices of current life, as non-values, as evil. Indeed, in the light of an eschatological perspective, violence is seen as the epitome of human stupidity and evil.

If we maintain an eschatological perspective, then in wisdom we can realize beyond any shadow of a doubt that no amount of money, prestige, position or power

can ever come close to the value of life and love. We will then clearly understand that human rights (justice), especially the right to life, merit top priority among our moral values. If we consider abortion, marital unfaithfulness, sexual promiscuity, dishonesty, vengeance, material wealth and violence in the light of our eschatological perspective, then all these things will clearly be seen as serious evils in our value system.

In the broader social scope, war, racism, wealth building, and power seeking are seen as dehumanizing in the light of the eschatological perspective.

An eschatological perspective makes hope possible in hopeless situations and helps us live wisely, justly, and nonviolently in the present. Jesus' parable of the rich fool (Luke 12:16-21) is to the point here. A rich farmer had a most plentiful crop. In order to insure his own security and affluent living he built larger barns and storage bins. Then he said to himself, "now you have so many good things stored up for many years, rest, eat, drink, be merry." But, God told him, "you fool, this night your life will be demanded of you; and the things you have prepared, to whom will they belong?"

A healthy eschatological perspective can make a big difference in how we live this life.

## THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

### THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

#### Liberation of *Anawim*: Jubilee 2000

Isaiah 61:1-2, 10-11 “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me.”

*Anawim*—Jubilee—Messiah

John 1:6-8, 19-28 Exile/Poverty/Liberation “...there is one among you whom you do not recognize...”

- 
- Optional Theme: “They Did Not Recognize Him “
- Optional Theme: “Where is He?”
- Appendix D Series “Catholic Social Teaching;  
Part V: “On the Development of Peoples” VI  
Part VI: “Living Wages”, Part I and Part II
- Appendix E Network – A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby:  
[www.networklobby.org](http://www.networklobby.org)

### A Book Review

“Proclaim Jubilee—A Spirituality for the Twenty-First Century” authored by Maria Harris, (Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky, 1996), is a book about the Sabbath and the Jubilee Year. This was an appropriate reflection for us in preparation for the year 2000 proclaimed by Pope John Paul II as a “Jubilee Year—The Great Jubilee. The meaning of the Jubilee Year remains an important concept for justice spirituality for all times.

What is a Jubilee Year? To answer this question, we need to take a look at the book of Leviticus, Chapter 25 and Luke 4:19.

“You shall hallow the fiftieth year (after every 49 years) and you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants.” Leviticus 25:4 and Luke 4:19.

In every Jubilee Year, the people were to allow the land to lie fallow, forgive debts, free the captives and slaves, return land and property to those who had been deprived of their property and, in general, to proclaim liberation and observe the Sabbath rest. From these prescriptions, it is quite evident that the Jubilee Year was, in a special way, a year of social justice and nonviolence—a time to “repair the world.” It was the hope and prayer of Pope John Paul that the year 2000 would be a year of spiritual renewal, a year for a new start for the world, a year to “repair the world” and replenish the earth.

The year 2000 hopefully was a year of forgiveness and reconciliation, both personal and social. Indeed, it will always be in keeping with Sabbath/jubilee for developed nations to even pardon the oppressive debts that the poor nations could not repay without seriously further depriving their own poverty-stricken people. In preparation for, and in light of Sabbath/jubilee, Bishop Balke proclaimed years 1999 and 2000 as a special time for forgiving and reconciling in the Diocese of Crookston.

Forgiving people who have harmed us, and reconciling ourselves with persons from whom we have been alienated is an absolutely necessary first step in living the justice and nonviolent prescriptions of the Jubilee Year. Forgiveness and reconciliation are usually processes that take time, courage and effort, but the good to be accomplished is so important that we cannot afford to put off the process. As long as hard feelings, grudges, prejudices, anger and our hatreds continue to contaminate human relationships, there will be no end to violence and injustice. We need to start the process now by seeking God's forgiveness for ourselves and by praying for the grace to forgive others. We also need to pray for the good of those whom we perceive to be our enemies. For the Jubilee Year to be a time of jubilation and spiritual growth, we need to wind down our hostilities and gear up our forgiveness and compassion.

“Advent is a good time to talk jubilee, a new start for this old world now winding down the most violent century in human history.”

Maria Harris adds that “it can be argued that the dominant motif of biblical jubilee is liberation.”

“You shall have the trumpet sounded throughout all your land. And you shall hallow the fiftieth year and you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you: you shall return every one of you to your property and every one of you to your family. For it is a jubilee: it shall be holy to you.”  
(Leviticus 25:9b- 10, 12a)

The author then enlarges on the jubilee liberation theme by emphasizing five freedoms: the freedom to go home, the freedom to remember, the freedom for re-creation in community, the freedom for prisoners, and the freedom for children. I offer here a little reflection on three of the freedoms: re-creation, prisoners and children.

Under re-creation, Maria Harris stresses the growth and the value of creation theology in the United States. As a part of re-creation or creation theology, she mentions that “all are related”, a tradition of Native Americans that we are not only related to all human beings but also to the whole of creation, “that we create new relationships to soil and water and air and all living things, relations that liberate them, too.”

When she writes about freedom for prisoners, she writes about freedom from the death penalty, freedom from prison abuses, freedom from modern forms of slavery and apartheid, and freedom from violations of human rights around the world. Freedom from the death penalty, political imprisonment, and torture are forms of freedom that Amnesty International has been working on for several decades. At the present time, Amnesty International is challenging the United States for our abuses of human rights, especially police brutality, prison brutality, racial discrimination, violation of women and children held in adult U.S. prisons and jails, racist and juvenile death penalties, and violation of human rights by the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

When the author writes about freedom for children, she is aware that abuse, and even slavery of children still exists on our planet, sometimes in our home towns and sometimes by U.S. corporations in the third world. Children are sold into prostitution in Cuba to help out destitute families. Children in the Philippines are held in bonded servitude and in the U.S. Children need to be freed through liberation.

In a statement of Pope John Paul II in his Apostolic Letter, *On the Coming of the Third Millennium*, 1994, he wrote:

“The Jubilee Year was meant to restore social justice. The social doctrine of the Church...is rooted in the tradition of The Jubilee Year.” (This Apostolic Letter is available from the United States Catholic Conference, Washington D.C.)

“The fiftieth year you shall make sacred by proclaiming liberty in the land for all its inhabitants.” (Leviticus 25:10).

Liberation of captives, prisoners, and debtors is an important justice concern. Amnesty International has reported political imprisonments in over 80 countries. Amnesty has also investigated abuse, violation of human rights, and torture as practiced in many countries today.

Amnesty International is in the process of investigating human rights abuses in the United States. Already, in a preliminary report, Amnesty has pointed out some of these abuses in our treatment of arrestees and prisoners by law enforcement and prison personnel. It was especially noted that women and children are violated in our own country—a nation that “preaches” human rights to other countries.

A reader might respond that this tradition of Jubilee is no longer relevant since slavery ended in the United States with the Emancipation Proclamation of 1862. In reality, we still have various forms of slavery in the modern world. Today we have violation of the rights of children in many nations: Bangladesh, Guatemala, Honduras, Haiti, Nicaragua, China, and even in the United States. Many of these children work 12 to 15 hours a day for a few cents an hour. Part of the scandal is the fact that U. S. corporations are involved in these sweatshop factories. Among these corporations are Gulf Western, Wal-Mart, Nike, J.C. Penney and Disney. (Information drawn from “Catholic Peace,” Fall 1998, Pax Christi, U.S.A.) In the Dominican Republic, Haitian children are held captive and forced to work in the sugarcane fields. This industry is largely operated by U. S. Corporations. U. S. citizens who buy low-cost cane sugar are benefiting by the slave labor of Haitian children. Other forms of slavery, especially of women and children, still exist around our modern world. Even in the U. S., there are forms of sexual slavery of children and women.

Certainly, jubilee liberation may be extended to all people and especially people of color who suffer the violence of the “terrible sin” of racism. Jubilee time is a good time, especially in this country, to bring an end to the pervasive evil that prohibits some people from the privilege of enjoying full humanity and citizenship. African Americans, Native Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Asian Americans have been dehumanized in this land for too many centuries by Euro-Americans who consider themselves a superior race.

Maria Harris reminds us that “liberty in the land for all its “Inhabitants” and liberation for “the land” itself is part of Jubilee liberation. After recommending thoughts of Thomas Berry, the creation theologian, she writes:

“Such a theology would demand—and Berry’s own work embodies this—that we create new relations to soil and water and air and all living things, relations that liberate them



too. It would apply also to North Americans joining, for example, the northern Indian women who hug the trees to save them: the Kenyans who are part of the Green Belt movement to plant new trees.”

As this violent millennium came to an end, and as the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the most violent in human history, wound down, our world certainly needed and still needs mention of forgiveness, reconciliation, prayer and hope; a new start for the earth and its people. We, the people of the past 2000 Year Jubilee need reminding of jubilee years’ biblical values.

\* \* \* \* \*

“The obligation to provide justice for all means that the poor have the single most urgent economic claim on the conscience of the nation. Poverty can take many forms, spiritual as well as material. All people face struggles of the spirit as they ask deep questions about their purpose in life. Many have serious problems in marriage and family life at some time in their lives, and all of us face the certain reality of sickness and death. The Gospel of Christ proclaims that God’s love is stronger than all these forms of diminishment. Material deprivation, however, seriously compounds such sufferings of the spirit and heart. To see a loved one sick is bad enough, but to have no possibility of obtaining health care is worse. To face family problems, such as the death of a spouse or a divorce, can be devastating, but to have these lead to the loss of one’s home and end with living on the streets is something no one should have to endure in a country as rich as ours. In developing countries these human problems are even more greatly intensified by extreme material deprivation. This form of human suffering can be reduced if our own country, so rich in resources, chooses to increase its assistance.

ECONOMIC JUSTICE 86

**Optional Theme:**  
**“They Did Not Recognize Him”**

Gospel: John 1:6-8, 19-28 Exile/Poverty/Liberation

“...there is one among you whom you do not recognize.”

“I did not recognize Him” – John the Baptist

“She did not recognize Him” – Mary Magdalene

“They did not recognize Him...” – disciples on the way to Emmaus.

This litany of lack of recognition is repeated many times in the Gospels, especially in the gospel according to John. In the Christmas season it comes up several times. In the prologue to John’s Gospel we read:

“He was in the world and through Him the world was made, yet the world did not know who He was.” (John 1:10).

In the same Gospel (John 1:26), John the Baptist tells the people:

“There is one among you whom you do not recognize—the one who is to come after me...”

John the Baptist admits that even he did not recognize Him at first:

“I confess I did not recognize Him, though the very reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel. (John 1:31)

Recognizing the identity of Jesus was and is fundamental for the authenticity of our faith. Jesus himself was concerned about people recognizing Him. He asked his disciples two questions; “Who do people say that the son of man is?” Who do you say that I am?” (Matthew 16). The disciples’ answer to the first question included four possibilities: “John the Baptist, or Elijah, or Jeremiah, or some other prophet.” Peter’s answers to the second question was, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” Even with Peter’s correct answer, his recognition was only partial for in the very next paragraph Peter rejected the “Suffering Servant” dimension of Jesus’ Messiahship. At this point in their lives, Peter and the other disciples did not recognize “The Christ of the Cross.”

I think that our answers today indicate that there are many different answers to the question: “Who do you say that I am?” Some of the answers, even among Christians, seem to indicate that our recognitions of Him are varied, and sometimes contradictory. Do we recognize Him as the Christ of Black Theology, the Christ of Liberation Theology, the Christ of Native Americans, the White Affluent Christ, the Christ of the World’s *anawim*, or some other Christ?’

How do we search out our answer to this fundamental question: “Who do you say that I am?” I have three suggestions;

4. Openly, humbly, prayerfully and regularly searching the gospel and the Church.
5. Praying regularly to the Holy Spirit for wisdom, understanding and knowledge.
6. Consulting wise persons through reading and personal conversations.

No matter what answers people come to, we will not have the whole Christ unless we accept the difficult Christ of the Cross, the weak and humble Christ, the Christ of the Suffering Servant, the Christ of the *anawim*—the poor and the powerless, and the nonviolent Christ.

Certainly, one will not recognize him if we do not recognize him in disguise—in the poor, the oppressed, and the handicapped, as well as in the persons we live with and work with.

**Optional Theme:**  
**“Where is He?”**

Is He in the crib at Christmas?

Is He in the Church on Sunday?

Do we find Him in the Bible, the parish, the Sacraments?

Yes, maybe, but only if we recognize Him in his many disguises?

He’s a man of color beaten on a city street - -

He’s a lonely old woman living over a store in a small town - -

He’s a “welfare case” in a rural countryside - -

He’s an unknown baby whom the mother doesn’t want - -

He’s a frightened girl, pregnant and alienated from her parents - -

He’s a passionate teenager groping his way to understand love and sex - -

He’s a husband torn between faithfulness to his wife and, unfortunately, his attraction to another woman - -

He’s a soldier separated from family while at war - -

He’s an agnostic searching for faith - -

He’s a wife trying to be dealing with her alcoholic husband - -

He’s all the confused sinners and criminals that fascinate readers of newspapers, and viewers of TV news programs.

He’s a student I know, a priest I don’t like, - -a doctor, a teacher

He’s a homeless person - -

He’s mother, dad, sister, brother, neighbor, friend, enemy - -

He’s each person I love - - or find hard to love - -

Maybe I’ve been looking for Jesus in all the wrong places. I can’t find him in the Church unless I find him in people. The Church is the people, and the people are the Body of Christ - -Christ in disguise.

P.S. I discovered this piece about 35 years ago. I have lost track of the author, or I would have given him/her credit.

## Christmas Season Themes

December 28 – Matthew 2:13-18 Holy Innocents--Violence against Children

December 29 – Luke 2:33-35 Presentation of Jesus in the Temple

December 30 – I John 2:12-17 *Sixth Day in the Christmas Octave*

“The World...”

- Appendix A Series “Christian or American”
- Appendix D Series “Catholic Social Teaching;  
Part IV “*Peace on Earth*”

December 28th gives us the downside of the Christmas story, the conflict, violence and death of the Infancy narratives. These are the foreshadowing of the final conflict, passion and death of Jesus.

The Feast of the Holy Innocents (Matthew 2:13-18) pictures the evil violence of King Herod, a jealous, conniving, murderous man who kills children in order to maintain his own power structure.

Today, the children still die by abortion, poverty, forced labor and enslavement, neglect and abuse in families in the U.S. and world and by inadequate welfare and congressional denial of health insurance for millions of U.S. children. Causes for today’s abuse and killing of children are still abusive domination, greed and other adult sins and sicknesses.

The proclamation of Christmas begins with these words at the Midnight Mass:

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light:  
upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has  
shone.” (Isaiah 9:1).

We still have the option of choosing Christ, the suffering, loving servant “Light of the World.” We still have the option of finding this saving Light by following the Magi’s star of faith. If we do not choose this option, the children will continue to die.

December 29<sup>th</sup>, the fourth day in the Octave of Christmas, gives us Luke’s conflict and death dimension of the Christmas story in Simeon’s prophecy.

“This child is destined to be the downfall and the rise of  
many in Israel, a sign that will be opposed—and you  
yourself, shall be pierced with a sword...” (Luke 2:33-35).

Jesus is a sign that is still opposed and mothers' hearts are still being pierced with sorrow. Just in our country alone, Jesus is a sign of contradiction in matters of greed and compulsive consumption, poverty and homelessness, war and capital punishment, abortion, racism, sexism, environmental destruction and abuse of power.

The killing of their children in crime is still piercing mothers' hearts, and by the reality that one in every six children in America is born into poverty—and poverty destroys - - “Poverty is a weapon of mass destruction”. (James Forbes)

On December 30<sup>th</sup>, the sixth day in the Christmas Octave, we read the first reading:

“Do not love the world or the things of the world. If anyone loves the world the love of the Father is not in him (or her). For all that is in the world, sensual lust, enticement for the eyes, and a pretentious life, is not from the Father but is from the world.” (1 John 2:15-17)

In John's Gospel, the author uses the word, “world,” often. It usually carries a very negative connotation, standing in contrast with a universe of good, of faith, of light, of love and eternal life. For John, “world” means the power and influence of evil, sin, darkness and absence of God. In this reading for December 30<sup>th</sup>, John indicates three kinds of evil: “sensual lusts, enticements for the eye, and a pretentious life”. These certainly are not an inclusive listing of influences of “the world” but they do point out several of the priorities of “the world:” irresponsible sex, greed, the celebration of power, popularity, vain, glory and shallow values (*cf Jerome Commentary* for more complete analysis).

We are called to separate ourselves from these empty values of “the world” but not from the secular world itself. As followers of Christ, we are also called to transform ourselves. Church history and current social analysis indicates that the Church itself has often accommodated itself to “the world.” If we view the Church as “the people,” we know that it is still a great struggle for us to unhook from “the world's” values and influence and to give ourselves to Christ and His values. St. Paul puts it this way;

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

I find it interesting that commercial television proclaims “the world’s” values by exalting irresponsible sex, consumerism, and by the celebration of life of “the rich and the famous.” TV is an immensely powerful influence on the values of the people—an influence backed by hundreds of billions of dollars. It is difficult for the Church to compete with TV. Sometimes, it appears to be a losing battle for the Church. Indeed, I would consider the battle a losing one for the church if I did not have faith in God’s power and the reality that the Reign of God will eventually be victorious.

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“Present in the beginning as the word of the Father, present in history as the word incarnate, and with us today in his word, sacraments, and spirit, he is the reason for our hope and faith.”

CHALLENGE OF PEACE, 339

“In worship and in deeds for justice, the church becomes a ‘sacrament’, a visible sign of that unity in justice and peace that God wills for the whole of humanity.”

ECONOMIC JUSTICE, 331

“In prayer we join Mary in her Magnificat, and show ourselves to be a people of hope, confident that God’s promises will be fulfilled. With Mary and the apostles and disciples, we pray to be empowered by the strength of the Holy Spirit as we pursue the Church’s mission to all nations.

TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH, 60

## EPIPHANY

### 2000--The Great Jubilee and Racism

Isaiah 60: 1-6 Darkness and light

Psalm 72 Justice and peace

Matthew 2:1-12 Conflict between darkness and light

- Appendix A Series "Christian or American"
- Appendix C Series "Racism"

"Rise up in splendor, Jerusalem! Your light has come the glory of the Lord shines upon you. See darkness covers the earth, and thick clouds cover the peoples; but upon you the Lord shines...Nations shall walk by your light...."(Isaiah 60:1-3)

Epiphany readings, like Pentecost, are concerned with all nations. The light of Christ shines through the "darkness that covers the earth." Part of this "darkness" and these "thick clouds" is prejudice/racism that excludes some nations and peoples. All nations and peoples are called to walk by the light of Christ.

"All Nations shall serve him." (Psalm 72)

As I have written above, the jubilee year was established (Leviticus 25, Isaiah 61:1-2, and Luke 4:18-19) as a special year of liberation of the poverty stricken, slaves and other captives. In this article, I will limit my remarks to the new slavery, the new imprisonment—racism. Racism imprisons both the victims of racism as well as racists themselves. The victims of racism in the United States, the people of color, are dehumanized and are often reduced to poverty and imprisonment in ghettos, reservations and literally, within prison walls. White racists imprison themselves in white suburbs and especially within their myopic minds and constricted hearts. Both need a Jubilee year of awareness and liberation. We all need this Jubilee year for the liberation of the secular world and the church. A large segment of the Church is mired in racism, buried under the debris of complacency that impedes spiritual growth.

Joseph Barndt in his book entitled Dismantling Racism (Augsburg, Minneapolis 1991), writes that our nation, the world and the church need a "kairos moment," a special time of crisis and opportunity to confront racism in our world. He writes:

"Perhaps the single most vivid symbol of this kairos moment is the rapidly approaching turn of the millennium—a promise



of new beginnings. The final decade of the old millennium should be a time of anticipation and planning for that opportunity. As the time draws closer; there will be a sense of urgency and resolve the world over to enter the new century with a commitment to achieve national and world unity and community and to live in justice and peace. It is an opportunity for us as a nation to leave behind our tragic heritage of racism and enter a new millennium of racial and ethnic pluralism.”

Finally Barndt, in the same book, quotes the Road to Damascus,

Kairos and Conversion (Center of Concern Publishing, 1989):

“All of us who profess to be followers of Jesus of Nazareth are in continuous need of conversion. While we see clearly the idolatry, the heresy, the hypocrisy and the blasphemy of others, we ourselves need to search our own hearts for remnants of the same sins and for signs of triumphalism, self-righteousness, dogmatism, rigidity, intolerance and sectarianism. There should be no place in our hearts for any kind of complacency.”

Isaiah beautifully states liberation from the darkness of racism and from other expressions of violence in our “culture of death”:

“I, the Lord, have called you for the victory of justice...I formed you and set you as a covenant of the people, a light for the nations, to open the eyes of the blind, to bring out prisoners from confinement, and from the dungeon those who live in darkness.” (Isaiah 42:6-7)

Jubilee 2000 is not passé. The spiritual social justice thrust must be kept alive in our pulpits to years to come.

## JANUARY 8, TUESDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

I John 4:7-10    God is love  
Psalm 72    Justice shall flower  
Mark 6:34-44..you feed them

- Appendix E: Network – A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby:  
[www.networklobby.org](http://www.networklobby.org)
- Appendix F: Children’s Defense Fund: [www.childrensdefense.org](http://www.childrensdefense.org)

I John 4:        “The person without love has known nothing of  
                         God.”

The virtue of justice is the minimum level of the virtue of love. Love for God is impossible without love for people—a love that includes justice.

Psalm 72:        “He shall defend the afflicted among the  
                         people, save the children of the poor.”

Mark 6:34-44: “You give them something to eat.”

Jesus broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to distribute. It seems that the plan of Jesus is to involve us as his instruments of service and his instruments of peace. Our prayer in the spirit of the gospel might be:

“Lord make me an instrument of your peace.”

Make me a servant of your people.

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“People are summoned to be “just,” that is, to be in a proper relation to God, by observing God’s laws, which form them into a faithful community. Biblical justice is more comprehensive than subsequent philosophical definitions. It is not concerned with a strict definition of rights and duties, but with the rightness of the human condition before God and within society. Nor is justice opposed to love; rather, it is both a manifestation of love and a condition for love to grow. Because God loves Israel, he rescues them from oppression and summons them to be a people that “does justice” and loves kindness. The quest for justice arises from loving gratitude for the saving acts of God and manifests itself in wholehearted love of God and neighbor.”

ECONOMIC JUSTICE, 39

## SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – REVERENCE FOR LIFE

### Nonviolence

1 Corinthians 6:13-15, 17-20 “Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. so glorify God in your body.” Jesus said:

“This is an evil age. It seeks a sign, but no sign will be given it except the sign of Jonah. Just as Jonah was a sign for the Ninevites, so will the Son of Man be a sign for the present age.” (Luke 11:30)

- Appendix A Series “Christian or American”
- Appendix E: Network – A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby: [www.networklobby.org](http://www.networklobby.org)
- Appendix F: Children’s Defense Fund: [www.childrensdefense.org](http://www.childrensdefense.org)

### Jesus, The Sign of Life in A Culture of Death

Jesus is a sign of contradiction and THE sign of hope in a wasteland of violence and injustice. He is a sign of new life in a “culture of death.” He is a sign of contradiction insofar as his values are rejected by a majority of the citizens of the wasteland, many of whom are “church-going” Christians who do not even recognize that many of their strongly held values and convictions are in conflict with those of Jesus and the Church. National patriotism/nationalism is often a stronger loyalty than their religious faith even though such persons claim to be followers of Christ. As St. John wrote: “He came to his own and his own received him not.” Many of his own today are not receiving him.

What kind of sign was Jonah?

“Just as Jonah was in the belly of the whale three days and three nights, so will the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights.” (Matthew 11:40)

Jesus is a sign of hope and new life after his saving death and resurrection.

In our age, an age of poverty and hunger for millions, Jesus is a sign of justice, a sign that stands for feeding the hungry. We have plenty of resources for sharing but not enough willingness.

In an age of violence (war, capital punishment, abortion, poverty), Jesus is a sign of nonviolence.

In an age of racism and sexism, Jesus is a sign of equality of rights, a sign of open fellowship.

In an age of greed, Jesus is a sign of generous sharing—indeed of a simplified lifestyle on the part of the affluent.

In an age of exploitation of workers (minimum wages), Jesus is a sign of a living wage.

In an age of power seeking, Jesus is a sign of shared power and governance—a sign of servanthood on the part of leaders.

In an age of refugees and other homeless people, Jesus is a sign of hospitality.

In an age when millions of people cannot afford adequate health care, Jesus is a sign of healing.

In an age when nationalists choose—sometimes want—war, Jesus is a sign of nonviolence.

In an age of environmental destruction and pollution of the earth, Jesus is a sign of reverence for the sacred, for creation.

In an age of hate and revenge, Jesus is a sign of love and forgiveness.

Do we dare to take Jesus seriously? Can we say with Him: “Not my will but yours be done?” “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.” Whom will I trust? Whom will I follow through the wasteland in the face of temptation? Do we listen? His words and way and life lead to a new life.

“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.” (1 Corinthians 1:18)

## FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

### **Harden not your hearts**

Psalm 95: "If today you hear his voice harden not your hearts."

Oh, that you would hear his voice, harden not your hearts  
as at Meribah, as in the day of Massah in the desert, when  
your fathers tempted me..." (Psalm 95:7-9)

In the desert during the Exodus from Egypt, the Israelites quarreled with God and complained ungratefully at a place called Meribah.

We should not be too quick to judge that we have open, compassionate hearts and not hard hearts. St. Mark in his Gospel is quite definite in sharing that the disciples of Jesus were hard-hearted and had blind eyes and deaf ears until they matured spiritually between Easter and Pentecost. (Mark 4:1-34; 5:1-6; 6:7-5; 8:1-21; 7:32-37; 8:22-26; 9:30-41; 10:32-41; 10:46-52)

A few questions about our possible hardness of heart:

5. Are we sometimes so anxiously concerned that we shut out others consciously or unconsciously?
6. Do I use the excuse that there is no point to helping feed the hungry because the problem is too big to handle?
7. Do I allow my fears or my economic selfishness to close my hands and my heart? Do I avoid contact with poor people, homeless people, sick people, handicapped people?
8. Am I unwilling to look at some change in lifestyle to free up my personal resources with which to help people?

In the Divine Office, the daily official public prayer of the Church, prayed by priests and religious communities, there is a simple but profound prayer response in the Office of Readings:

"When we listen to your word our minds are filled with light It  
is the lowly heart that understands."

It is my experience that reading sacred scripture, praying and having personal contact with people who are hurting—the sick, the homeless, the oppressed—are three good ways of getting a "new heart"—exchanging a hard heart for a compassionate heart.

“I will give you a new heart and place a new spirit within you taking from your bodies your stony hearts and giving you natural hearts...you shall live in the land I gave your fathers; you shall be my people, and I will be your God.”  
(Ezekiel 36:26 and 28)

Furthermore, it is my experience that often the *anawim*—the poor, the mentally ill, the handicapped, the homeless persons—have a “lowly heart that understands” more readily the suffering of others than do many of us who are healthy, well-educated, sophisticated and well-positioned.

Marvin, a mentally ill man was the one who noticed John, a developmentally handicapped middle-aged man, at Hardees in downtown Fargo. He brought John to me. John needed food, housing and counseling. The middle-class Catholics having breakfast at Hardees after Mass were not the ones who noticed the hurting John, nor were they the ones that John felt comfortable approaching. Too many of us have not developed a “lowly heart.” Jesus had this kind of heart, “meek and humble” understanding the needs and feelings of the *anawim*—the little people, the powerless ones.

*Oh, God, grant me a “lowly heart” that I may understand.*

(Some of the ideas and terminology in this article were borrowed from Robert C. Tannehill. A Mirror for Disciples, Discipleship Resources, 1977)

Political Postscript: Some political actions of Congress sound a bit “hard hearted.” On subjects such as Medicare, minimum wage, and health care for the uninsured this is especially so. Will millionaire members of Congress and tax avoiding corporations again try to balance the budget on the backs of the poor and the lower middle class people? Let’s balance the budget on the backs of the still exorbitant defense budget, the large corporations, and the very affluent Americans, including most Congress men and women who are shamefully overpaid and under-taxed.

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“Jesus also described God’s reign as one in which love is an active, life-giving inclusive force. He called for a love, which went beyond family ties and bonds of friendship to reach even those who were enemies. (Matthew 5:44-48; Luke 6:27-28). Such a love does not seek revenge but rather is merciful in the face of threat and opposition. (Matthew 5:39-42; Luke 6:29-31). Disciples are to love one another as Jesus has loved them. (John 15:12).”

CHALLENGE OF PEACE, 47

“The commandments to love God with all one’s heart and to love one’s neighbor as oneself are the heart and soul of Christian morality. Jesus offers himself as the model of this all-inclusive love: ‘love one another as I have loved you’ (John 15:12). These commands point out the path toward true human fulfillment and happiness. They are not arbitrary restrictions on human freedom.”

ECONOMIC JUSTICE, 64

## SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

### Health Care

Reading 1 Leviticus 13:1-2, 44-46 Leprosy

Reading 3 Mark 1:40-45 Jesus cures a leper

- Appendix A Series “Christian or American”
- Appendix B Series “Human Rights”

### Health Care - - A Right or only a privilege?

Health care, by Catholic teaching, is a human right. The social concerns documents of the Church are clear that all human beings have the human right to whatever is necessary for physical survival and/or development of human potential. Adequate health care is a human right along with food, clothing, shelter, education, and other needs. Pope John XXIII, in “Peace on Earth”, wrote:

“Beginning our discussion of human rights, we see that every human being has the right to life, to bodily integrity, and to the means which are necessary and suitable for the proper development of life. These means are primarily food, clothing, shelter, rest, medical care, and finally the necessary social services. Therefore, a human being also has the right to security in cases of sickness, inability to work, widowhood, old age, unemployment, or in any other case in which one is deprived of the means of subsistence through no fault of his/her own.”

It is ironic that people with the best of insured health care (people in Congress, The American Medical Association, and in business endeavors) are the ones erecting the roadblocks to this human right of health care. This is not too surprising when we consider another human right – a living wage for laborers—that is blocked by affluent employers by holding minimum wage to a level that prevents full-time workers from climbing out of poverty. Of course, legally depriving workers of fair wages enables employers to receive exceptionally high salaries.

To hear some members of Congress, American Medical Association, and U.S. businesses whine about our country not being able to afford universal health care for all, one would conclude that this must be a very poverty stricken country. It is interesting that less affluent nations seem to be able to afford health care for all.



Furthermore, one who hears opponents of adequate health-care reform argue that proposed reforms would diminish the quality of health care in the U.S. when they say we have the best health care in the world. We may have the best for those who are adequately insured, but we definitely do not have the best for over 40,000,000 people uninsured or underinsured. Our infant mortality rate is higher than 20 other countries.

I am not pushing any one of the complicated plans. However, any plan that I would vote for would have two provisions: accepting of adequate coverage for all persons and rejection of coverage for abortion. Abortion is not part of my definition of health care.

From a Christian perspective, healing has been a high priority of both Jesus and the Church -- especially for the poor and other powerless people.

When we say "with liberty and justice for all" we will be speaking with a forked tongue until all Americans have health care, since health care is a human right and not just a privilege.

## LENT

- (1) Forgiving, reconciling and being reconciled with God and human persons is a fundamental Lenten theme. These are also foundations for the virtue of nonviolence.
- (2) Penance is related to justice. Self-denial can be practiced in order to enable us to share more with people in need. The "Rice Bowl" concept is a good example.
- (3) Almsgiving is one of the essential Lenten practices (Ash Wednesday Gospel). Generosity in participating in the Catholic Relief Service Collection is not only charity but also justice.
- (4) Fasting is usually related to food, and food is a powerful symbol of exploitation or social justice. People have the right to eat.
- (5) Jesus is the nonviolent Suffering Servant of the people.

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"The example of Jesus poses a number of challenges to the contemporary church. It imposes a prophetic mandate to speak for those who have no one to speak for them, to be a defender of the defenseless, which in biblical terms is the poor. It also demands a compassionate vision that enables the church to see things from the side of the poor and powerless and to assess lifestyle, policies, and social institutions in terms of their impact on the poor. It summons the church also to be an instrument in assisting people to experience the liberating power of God in their own lives so that they may respond to the Gospel in freedom and in dignity. Finally, and most radically, it calls for an emptying of self, both individually and corporately, that allows the church to experience the power of God in the midst of poverty and powerlessness."

ECONOMIC JUSTICE, 52

"Jesus came to bring good news to the poor, proclaim liberty to captives, give sight to the blind and release prisoners. His mission became that of the church, and it is now ours."

TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH, 47

## LENT

### The Cross and Power

St. Paul expresses the meaning of the cross in several places:

Philippians 2:5-8

1 Corinthians 1:18-25

1 Corinthians 26-31

Part of the meaning of the cross is the paradox that power very often is weakness, and powerlessness has its own strength. The cross is a “folly” and a “scandal” to those who do not understand the cross and Jesus’ relinquishment of power except the power to teach, heal, serve and save.

We should be slow to criticize people who do not grasp the meaning of the cross. It is difficult for most of us, including leaders in the church, to understand the obedience and emptying process expressed in Philippians 2:18 ff. It is also difficult for us to understand the spiritual reality of the power of powerlessness and the wealth of poverty and the poverty of wealth.

I mentioned above that Church leaders often miss the point of the cross when they allow themselves to get trapped in power struggles, in personal greed and in the practice of dominating others rather than serving them. It is quite human to slip into an authoritarian role using an authority of power rather than an authority of compassion.

With St. Paul, “I must preach Christ and him crucified.” With St. Paul, I must remember that “the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.”

One further reflection for Good Friday: Our Christian world can commemorate the ritualized crucifixion of Jesus in Good Friday liturgies, but we do all we can to conceal the Good Friday of the ongoing crucifixion of his people.

During the Gulf War, television showed the spectacular fireworks of the nightly bombing raids over Iraq but it did not show the thousands of victims of those raids. Clean, sterile action of war—war at a distance—is easier to accept than the bloody reality of human slaughter close up. The nation and the world do not want to look at the crucified people. However, if we do not look at the reality of violence today, there may

be little point commemorating the historical crucifixion of Jesus. The real victims of violence today make up part of the Body of Christ in our time. The crucified people of our time and the place are the Suffering Servant of Yahweh today.

Other crucified people today making up the Body of Christ are children suffering hunger and other abuses. Wherever people are suffering abuse, violence and injustice, Jesus is crucified in and through the people that constitute the Mystical Body of Christ.

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“Because prevention of nuclear war appears from several perspectives, to be not only the surest but only way to limit its destructive potential we see that our role as moral teachers precisely in terms of helping to form public opinion with a clear determination to resist resort to nuclear war as an instrument of national policy. If ‘prevention is the only cure,’ then there are diverse tasks to be performed in preventing what should never occur. As bishops, we see a specific task defined for us in Pope John Paul II’s, *World Day of Peace Message 1982*.”

‘Peace cannot be built by the power of rulers alone. Peace can be firmly constructed only if it corresponds to the resolute determination of all people of good will. Rulers must be supported and enlightened by a public opinion that encourages them or, where necessary, expresses disapproval.’”

CHALLENGE OF PEACE, 139

## **The Cross --The Most Subversive Power in the World**

Steeped in the Domination System of this sinful world for thousands of years, can we human beings even understand the meaning and positive subversive power of Jesus' emptying himself (Phil. 2:58)? How difficult it is for us to grasp the great power of powerlessness and the weakness of power misused? This is the wisdom of foolishness that St. Paul wrote about in 1 Corinthians: 1

“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 Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom but we proclaim Christ crucified... for the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.”

For eons of history we, as a race of people, as nations, as human communities, as a church have believed strongly in the power of domination. By this historical and current reality of domination I am referring to the fact of nations dominating nations, races crushing races, rich exploiting the poor, family fighting family, men dominating women--a Domination System of governance and power over the earth.

In this Domination System, deeply rooted and widely exercised, we have believed in wealth as the foundation of human power and in “redemptive violence” as the solution of problems on planet earth. Yes, we have believed that the sought-after power to dominate is funded in material wealth- -wealth to produce the weapons that can hold others under dominating suppression.

Our nation is the most affluent and powerful nation on this planet. We can as a nation and often do dominate the rest of the people on earth and we try to convince others that our dominating power is caring for and protecting others, a caring that in reality is very paternalistic and sometimes violent. This is part of the meaning of “redemptive violence”, a violence that is thought to redeem as it destroys.

But, of course, we Americans believe that we are the most trustworthy nation in the world, so we do our best to prevent other nations from developing weapons of mass destruction, and we try to convince others that our form of democracy is far superior

than that of other nations. However, we will keep nuclear weapons in order to police the rest of the untrustworthy nations.

The subversive power of the cross is the only effective power capable of dealing with the destructive power of the Domination System. Walter Wink\* has expressed this subversive power of the cross in the following way in his book: Engaging The Powers:

“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 a 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. They nailed him to the cross, not realizing that with each hammer’s blow they were nailing up, for the whole world to see, the MENE, MENE, TEKEL, and PARSIN by which the Domination System would be numbered, weighed in the balances, found wanting, and finally terminated (Dan.5:25-28).

What killed Jesus was not irreligion, but religion itself; not lawlessness, but precisely the law; not anarchy, but the upholders of order. It was not the bestial but those considered best who crucified the one in whom the divine Wisdom was visibly incarnate.

To understand and appreciate the unconventional wisdom of Jesus and the subversive power of his cross, I’ll end pointing out a few people who have walked in his footsteps. It was the martyrs of ancient Rome who prevailed and presided over the burial of the empire. It was Gandhi, a Hindu who had great respect for the crucified Christ, who prevailed over the exit of the British Empire in India. It was Archbishop Oscar Romero whose life is remembered and honored in El Salvador. It was Martin Luther King, Jr. who died in Memphis so that all Americans could be freed of domination of race over love. It was John the Baptist, an absurd desert figure who prepared the way for the Messiah and prevailed over King Herod. It was Jesus, Son of Man, and Son of God born in a barn and executed on the cross, who rose again and will prevail and preside over

all the kingdoms of this world. Jesus the Christ became, in His Resurrection, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. But he never wore a crown of gold; he preferred a crown of thorns.

\*Walter Wink, Engaging the Powers, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, MN 1992

The non-biblical quotations and most of the ideas in this article are from Wink's book.

## GOOD FRIDAY

Philippians 2:5-8

1 Corinthians 1:18-25

1 Corinthians 1:26-31

- Optional Theme: “Where Is God?”

### **The Cross, Creation and Violence**

The cross of wood is placed on Jesus’ shoulders. He is to carry it through the streets of Jerusalem to the garbage hill called Golgotha. The Roman Empire used wooden crosses as instruments of execution, instruments of complete dehumanization, humiliation and excruciating pain. Jesus accepted this instrument of domination by the Roman Empire. Jesus, with the Father and the Holy Spirit created the tree--gave it life—the tree out of which this cross and all the trees out of which all crosses are made. Several times he fell under the weight of this tree-cross, fell to the earth that he also created when the Spirit of God moved over the waters in the beginning.

Jesus embraced the cross lovingly and probably kissed it with reverence as part of sacred creation and as the altar of his sacrifice. Jesus knew that people would abuse the forests of trees out of which crosses and houses are built for reasons of greed even though greedy deforestation would deeply injure the earth and the health of the people.

Along with embracing the cross, did he also kiss the earth as the weight of the cross pushed his face into the earth’s dust? He knew that the whole earth is sacred and the source of nourishment of the trees and of all living things—the earth we continue to damage and destroy and desecrate in our day. All creation continues to weep in its own way as the blood of God’s people continues to seep into the dust of earth. Blood is spilled by crime, wars, abortion and all violence on the planet earth.

Jesus was nailed to his cross with iron nails pounded through his hands and feet into the wood with an iron hammer. Both nails and hammers are made from iron deposits in the earth’s crust, deposited there by geological evolution under the creating influence of God. The metal deposits in the earth are important gifts of the Creator for our use, resources that we continually turn into weapons with which we kill one another and shed more blood.



As Jesus hangs on the cross the leaders of his own people, whom he created, are satisfied that he is now completely dominated by them, rendered powerless and, as they think, unable to challenge them to a better life than they were living. They mocked him shouting, "You who claimed to be the Son of God, come down off that cross if you can and we will believe you." Jesus only response to this was, "Father, forgive them, they don't know who I am. They don't understand what they're doing. Forgive them Father."

*Loving Lord, we know who you are. You're the beloved Son of the Father, you are God, You are our Savior, our brother, and our friend. You could have come down from that cross. Your Father chose otherwise and you "came to do his will." For thousands of years people and nations have chosen to solve human problems by dominating one another, and domination is violence and the greatest cause of other forms of continuing violence. Nations crush nations, white people crush people of color, men crush women, the rich crush the poor, and so violence, stupid as it is, often prevails in human relations—all wars are stupid power struggles. You told us, your followers, "it shall not be that way with you."*

The way of the cross and the crucifixion are Jesus' ways to live non-violently, to suffer with those who suffer rather than violently crush the oppressors. The crucifixion was Jesus' supreme act of nonviolence—responding nonviolently and compassionately when treated most violently.

*Lord when I dominate others in my arrogance, I deprive them of their freedom and dignity. I become the weight of the cross that pushes their faces into the dust of the earth. When I do this, I also do it to you, who said, "I assure you as often as you did it to one of these, my least brothers or sisters, you did it to me." Forgive us, Lord, and help us to lift up again those whom we pushed down.*

*Lord, our Creator, help us also to grow into a sense of reverence, for trees and for all of creation.*

**Optional Theme:**  
**“Where is God?”**

**Earthquakes, Terrorism, Barbarity and Hope**

A book review of a book by Jon Sobrino, Orbis Press 2004.

Along with earthquakes, terrorism, barbarity and hope I would add hurricane Katrina to the disasters listed in this subtitle, and its terrible after effects. (September 2005)

Great catastrophes, especially natural disasters do raise questions about God. Nothing shakes up the faith of good people, as does the question: Can there be a good God in the face of evils and sufferings in our world, especially natural disasters.

The author describes this problem with the following quotation of Lactantius:

“Either God does not want to eliminate evil, or he cannot:  
Either he can but does not want to:  
Or he cannot and does not want to:  
Or he wants to and can.  
If he can and does not want to, then he is evil, which must  
be against God’s nature.  
If he does not want to and cannot, then he is evil and weak  
and therefore he is no God.  
If he can and wants to, which can only be true of God, then  
where does evil come from and why does he not eliminate  
it?”

Sobrino comments:

“There is something in innocent suffering that reason cannot grasp. It is a scandal, pure and simple. Our only choice, I believe, is to live with a theodicy (an indication of the goodness of God in the face of great evil), unresolved in theory, and with a practice that goes on opening a pathway with God walking it beside us throughout the history of suffering.” Page 142

Our author suggests that we not trivialize this problem about God to find a simple answer to a profound question. To only say “God brings good out of evil” is not enough.

Sobrino’s answer follows:

“The problem must be faced humbly and soberly. Triumphalism is also out of place for a Christian believer”. Page 143

The author then proposes that a realistic answer “might include indignation in response to human suffering... against what human beings have done or what God has failed to do”.

Even in natural disasters the poor people suffer the most. Remember pictures of the after effects of Katrina. Poverty is not God’s doing—the selfishness of human beings is to blame.

We cannot stop all natural catastrophes but we can do something about the poor people who suffer the most. However, the present administration will still not challenge the very rich people of the nation to do their part in rebuilding the cities and states after Katrina. There will be no tax increases for the rich but there will be more cuts in national programs that help the poor in order to pay for Katrina’s damage.

To Jon Sobrino’s incomplete answers to the most difficult questions about God’s presence in the face of terrible evil and suffering, I have a personal response of my own.

Even though I do not have a simple satisfying answer to this question, I am confident that we can and must do what we can to alleviate poverty and suffering. The United States answer tries to ignore poverty. We Americans like to throw token aids at major suffering—or just ignore it. I don’t have an easy answer to the question of God’s presence nor to the terrible unjust dehumanizing reality of poverty. However, I do believe in a compassionate God in spite of the lack of satisfying answers to our questions. I would consider my struggling faith as unauthentic unless, for the rest of my short life, I would do all I can to alleviate suffering and bring about justice in any small way I can. This I hope to do from within my faith in God.

The highest priority of Jesus in his ministry was the powerless, sick and poor, especially those who are suffering the most. These are the people Jon Sobrino calls the “crucified ones” today. These are the ones Jesus seems to be especially fond of. These are the ones that we must also be willing to associate with.

I will conclude with one more quote from this book:

“To relate God to suffering, helplessness and vulnerability can bring on metaphysical dizziness. At the very least it forces us to look beyond what is rational and verifiable. Some theologians are reluctant to speak of God as suffering; others are not.”

Sobrino believes God is present through Jesus, with the people who are the “crucified ones” today.

## **EASTER – Justice Themes**

(1) Easter is about new life—not only about the new life of final resurrection, but also about new life now to change the “culture of death” into a culture of life. New life now would mean raising our world, our nation, our church, our families from injustice to justice, from violence to nonviolence, from poverty to fulfillment of human needs, from racism to equality of rights, from exploitation of workers to a living wage, from violence of all kinds to a consistent ethic of life, from sexism to gender equality, and from earth-pollution and destruction to earth-care and from war to negotiation, cooperation and peace.

(2) The Gospel of the Second Sunday of Easter has the theme of forgiveness. Forgiveness and reconciliation are essential elements of nonviolence and peaceful relationships.

(3) Jesus’ most frequent greeting in the Easter narratives is “peace be with you.” “Shalom” is a term with deep meaning. It merits some exposition.

(4) On the fifth Sunday of Easter the Gospel reading from John is Jesus’ metaphor of vine and branches. Several themes may sprout from this narrative.

I. Unity in Church community, the Body of Christ.

II. We are all related to one another and the earth and its life forms.

III. Care for the earth

(5) In the Sixth Sunday of Easter, the theme of racial and gender equality flow easily from the first reading. The theme of readings I and II is love. Nonviolence and justice are two of the fruits of love and compassion.

(6) *cf Page 19.* “Jesus the Sign of Life in a Culture of Death” is also relevant for the Easter Season.

## PENTECOST VIGIL

### **Dry Bones, Spirit and Life**

Ezekiel 37:1-14

About the year 600 B.C.E. (before the Christian Era) Ezekiel was a prophet of Israel in exile in Babylon when the Israelites, disheartened were saying, “our bones are dried up, our hope is lost, and we are cut off.” In the Book of Ezekiel, Chapter 37, the prophet tells the story of his vision of dry bones, and how the Spirit of the Lord brought them back to life.

“Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! Thus says the Lord God to these bones: See! I will bring spirit into you that you may come to life.” (Ezekiel 37:5)

The dry bones are symbolic of the walking death-like experience of the people in exile.

This vision of the dry bones (Ezekiel 37:1-14) is a viable parable for today, for each of us as individuals, for our church, and for our nation. In significant ways we are in exile from the “American Dream” and from the Gospel. Our living plain is strewn with dry bones, with priorities that are more death dealing than life giving. I will limit my reflections here to just four kinds of dry bones that strew our present way of life:

(1) callously refusing health care to low-income people, especially mothers and children,

(2) balancing the national budget by depriving the poor while offering tax-perks to those who do not need the help, and by insisting on (3) self-interest as the bottom line in almost all foreign policy decisions. Many Americans live under the false impression that we are a generous people when it comes to aiding destitute nations. (4) The United States ranks 19<sup>th</sup> proportionately among the nations in humanitarian aid to other countries. We are the wealthiest and we share less than 1% of our wealth with others who are in great need.

We seem to be so addicted to wealth that wealth makes up the highest single priority in our western culture and life.

Self interest--a euphemism for selfishness at the expense of others--guides our politics, our industry, our corporate agriculture, our business and, to a large extent, even our education and religion.

These four expressions of our dry bones are probably as difficult for us to rise out of as it was for the Israelites to rise up from their disheartening, demoralizing conditions in exile. They needed "spirit" from God. We need the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit to turn around our dry bones priorities--our death dealing ways.

"Then He (the Lord God) said to me: Prophecy to the spirit....and say to the spirit: Thus says the Lord God: From the four winds come, O spirit, and breathe into these slain that they may come to life....The spirit came into them; they came alive." (Ezekiel 37:9-16)

Is it possible to convert the dry bones of our nation and culture into the fruits of the Spirit? Yes! But only by the power of the Spirit within us. These deeply rooted dry bones of our violence and selfishness could rise to the new life of kindness, patience, gentleness and peace. Our addiction to the dry bones of greed and power could be converted to generosity and self-control and our death-dealing dry bones priority of self-interest could change to the new life of love and faithfulness. Maybe this is what the building of the reign of God means today--the dry bones of society coming to new life- - a life of grace, faith, justice, and peace through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

## TENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

### Beelzebub and other demons

Mark 3:23-30

“...while the scribes who arrived from Jerusalem asserted, ‘He is possessed by Beelzebub...He expels demons with the help of the prince of demons.’ Jesus answered. ‘How can Satan expel Satan? If a kingdom is torn by civil strife, that kingdom cannot last.’”

### Something Demonic

An evil spirit is a part of the gospel reading for this Sunday. The introduction of evil spirits in the Bible raises several questions. Is Satan an impersonal evil force? Is Satan a symbol of evil or is Satan a spirit person? How seriously are we to take the stories of evil spirits in the Bible? Do evil spirits (devils, demons, fallen angels) have an influence in our lives or in human communities? The answer of sacred scripture and the Church (note the new Catholic Catechism) is that Satan and other evil spirits are personal and, yes they do have influence in our world.

What do these conclusions have to do with justice and nonviolence? Sojourners magazine, one of the most significant periodicals concerned with social justice and nonviolence, states that racism is a result of a demonic force in our society. Racism is too persistent, so intractable, and so pervasive that Sojourners attributes its force to human sin and demonic influence.

I have believed for over two decades now that another situation in our world has been and is so egregiously evil that it also can hardly be explained by human sin alone. It is estimated about 40,000 people (including a large proportion of children) die daily from the results of poverty, malnutrition, contaminated water and inadequate health care. Nations could prevent much of this human holocaust with just a portion of the funds spent on weapons and other military endeavors, euphemistically called defense budget. This seems demonic to me.

One other uniquely American U.S. situation I consider demonic in its malevolence and far-reaching evil would be the U.S. armament sales. Since the demise of the Soviet Union, the U.S. has become the biggest weapons sale country in the world. We sell weapons for profit and for political advantage to almost any nation on earth. These



weapons sales shows are paid for by our taxes. Furthermore, our own weapons, sold to Iraq in the past, were probably used against us in Gulf War I and have probably killed our soldiers. These weapons sales projects border on self-destruction and hence, insanity. To anthropomorphize the demons for a moment, I think that Satan and his legions laugh with glee about our worship of blood money in wanton and stupid destruction of human beings that our weapons, including landmines bring about in our world. How about the abortion holocaust? Might not this also rate being called demonic? It is not an exaggeration when Pope John Paul II calls our culture a “culture of death.”

Maybe it's time to pray to God to help us fight this sort of evil by activating the role of St. Michael the Archangel who scripturally vanquished Satan.

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“The hundreds of billions of dollars spent by our nation each year on the arms race create a massive drain on the U.S. economy as well as a very serious ‘brain drain.’ Such spending on the arms race means a net loss in the number of jobs created in the economy, because defense industries are less labor-intensive than other major sectors of the economy. Moreover, nearly half of the American scientific and engineering force works in defense-related programs and over 60 percent of the entire federal research and development budget goes to the military. We must ask whether our nation will ever be able to modernize our economy and achieve full employment if we continue to devote so much of our financial and human resources to defense-related activities.”

ECONOMIC JUSTICE, 148

## ELEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Ezekiel 17:22-24 Cedars of Lebanon

Psalm 92 Palm trees and cedars

Mark 4:26-34 Parable of the mustard seed

- Optional Theme: The Mustard Seed - -"Small is Beautiful"
- Optional Theme: "Who owns the Universe?"
- Appendix A Series "Christian or American"
- Appendix B Series "Human Rights"
- ❖ See A Cycle Appendix F Series: "Land and People"

### Earth Care and Environmental Spirituality

Here are biblical principles that are fundamental for earth care.

#### (10) EARTH IS OUR HOME

We have no other home (unless we believe that eternal life is elsewhere)

Home is where we belong.

Earth is gift (for use and care).

#### (11) GOD MADE EARTH/GOD OWNS EARTH:

Earth is sacred.

We are stewards not owners.

"The Lord God placed the man in the garden to till and care for it." (Genesis 2:15)

"The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the earth and those who dwell in it. For he has formed it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers." (Psalm 24:1)

"Know that he, the Lord is God;" He made us, we belong to him. We are his people. (Psalm 100)

"I own all the beasts of the forests, beasts in there thousands on my hills...all that moves in the fields belong to me...I own the world and all it holds." (Psalm 50)

"For the Lord is a 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)

In our Western culture we assume that we can own property, land, water, etc., absolutely. Biblical understanding of ownership is simply the right to use and the

responsibility of stewardship. Until we realize that human beings do not have unlimited rights to control nature, good environmental care probably will not take place.

(12) EARTH IS FOR ALL PEOPLE AND ALL CREATURES

Hoarding stuff (land, water, food, animals, etc.) molds the stuff hoarded. The “manna” becomes wormy and rotten (cf Exodus 16:16-20).

In the U.S. (6% of world population) hoards and controls about 30% of the world’s wealth, land, water, energy food, etc. 20% of the earth’s population controls and uses about 80% of the world’s wealth and resources.

Does the U.S. or any nation have the moral right to prevent destitute people from immigrating and enjoying some of “our” part of God’s earth?

Do the rich have the moral right to gain, keep and use more than they need while millions are destitute? Some would answer, “Yes! I earned it!” What do you think about that?

(13) ALL ARE CALLED TO CARE FOR THE EARTH

This call exists by virtue of each one’s creation, Baptism and Confirmation.

CARE means:     PROTECT THE EARTH  
                     PREVENT HARM  
                     REPAIR DAMAGE

HOW??

- “Careful” responsible living and using (lifestyle)
- Learning / teaching earth knowledge
- Healing damage
- Recycling
- Advocacy (through education and public political advocacy)

(14) NEGLECT / ABUSE OF EARTH = SIN

Abuse of the sacred is desecration/sacrilege. Compare defacing/abusively damaging a Church, a crucifix, and a U.S. flag, with doing the same to the earth.

I find it interesting that in my experience of hearing confessions for over 50 years, I do not remember one instance of a person confessing the sin of environmental desecration. (Regarding the terrible sin of “racism”, I could count the number of times this sin has been confessed to me on one hand.)

(15) ALL ARE RELATED

This is part of Native American tradition. If we recognized that each of us is related to all people, all life forms, all earth elements, we might have more respect for our “relatives.”

(16) WORSHIP DEMANDS EARTH CARE

Earth care/environmental responsibility is a part of spiritual and moral integrity.

(17) JESUS IS AN ENVIRONMENTALIST

The Cosmic Christ “fills the universe in all of its parts.”

(cf Colossians 1:15-17, Romans 8:19-22, Ephesians 1:3)

(18) EARTH CARE IS LOVE FOR PEOPLE

Without earth care people suffer.

(Recommended reading: Renewing the Earth, The United States Catholic Conference).

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“Our Christian faith calls us to contemplate God’s creative and sustaining action and to measure our own collaboration with the Creator in using the earth’s resources to meet human needs. While Catholic social teaching on the care of the environment and the management of natural resources is still in the process of development, a Christian moral perspective clearly gives weight and urgency to their use in meeting human needs.”

ECONOMIC JUSTICE, 216

“We are concerned that the nation’s food system may be in jeopardy as increasing numbers of farm bankruptcies and foreclosures result in increased concentration of land ownership. We are likewise concerned about the increasing damage to natural resources resulting from many modern agricultural practices: the over consumption of water, the depletion of topsoil, and the pollution of land and water. Finally, we are concerned about the stark reality of world hunger in spite of food surpluses. Our food production system is clearly in need of evaluation and reform.”

ECONOMIC JUSTICE, 217

**Optional Theme:**  
**The Mustard Seed—“Small is Beautiful”**

The Kingdom of God “is like a mustard seed which, when it is sown in the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on the earth. But once it is sown, it springs up and becomes the largest of plants and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the sky can dwell in its shade.” (Mark 4:30-32)

“Small is Beautiful” This is the title of a significant book on environmental and economic responsibility written by E. F. Schumacher.

We live in a culture of death that exalts bigness, power and greed. The bigness is destroying the environment and exploiting the *anawim*, the little ones, the powerless ones, the poor. Unless people begin to relinquish the obsession with bigness, the lust for power and greed for wealth and the stuff money can buy, we will continue to destroy the environment and exploit the little, powerless ones.

Jesus taught and showed us how to live. He was all-powerful. However, he relinquished all power except the power to heal, serve, teach and save. He created all wealth; he owns the universe. However, he relinquished our human wealth. “The Son of Man has not a place of his own to lay his head.” He was certainly a paradoxical Messiah. He was born in a barn, became a homeless refugee in Egypt, grew up in an inconspicuous, unpretentious village, was arrested as a criminal, executed on a garbage dump, buried in another man’s grave. However, he rose from the dead and sits at the right hand of the Father. In his teaching, he made the *anawim* his highest priority. St. Paul wrote:

“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 and 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.

Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every other name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee must bend, in the heavens, on the earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that

Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”  
(Philippians 2:5-11)

A few among us who walked in his footsteps relinquishing bigness, power and wealth were John the Baptist, Archbishop Romero, Mother Teresa and Dorothy Day.

As Jesus is a paradoxical Messiah so is the reign of God that he proclaims, a paradoxical reign. This world’s bigness, power and wealth are not assets for spiritual growth but violent hindrances that destroy life on the earth.

Exploitation and greedy lifestyle are two of the main causes of earth pollution and destruction. These kill life on earth. “Small is beautiful because smallness in size, power and wealth are life giving. These are antidotes to the sicknesses and violence of our culture of death.

A postscript to these reflections: Does the U.S. have the moral right to keep the poor and the people of color out of our land? After all, God made the earth, God owns it, and he made it for all the people.

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“Moved by the example of Jesus’ life and by his teaching, some Christians have from the earliest days of the church committed themselves to a nonviolent lifestyle. Some understood the gospel of Jesus to prohibit all killing. Some affirmed the use of prayer and other spiritual methods as means of responding to enmity and hostility.”

CHALLENGE OF PEACE, 111

**Optional Theme:**  
**“Who owns the Universe?”**

12. “The Lord God placed the man in the garden to till and care for it.” (Genesis 2:15)
13. “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)
14. “The land shall not be sold in perpetuity for the land is mine and you are but aliens who have become my tenants. (Leviticus 25:23)
15. “To the Lord belong even the highest heavens; the earth is his also, and everything on it. (Deuteronomy 10:14)
16. “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)
17. “The Lord’s is the earth and the 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)
18. “I own the beasts of the forests, beasts in there 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)
19. “Yours are the heavens, yours the earth; you founded the world and everything in it.” (Psalm 89:12)
20. “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)
21. “Know that he, the Lord is God. He made us, we belong to him. We are his people...” (Psalm 100)

22. “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)

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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: A Common Responsibility, No. 1, 15, 1990

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

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. Page 13.



## FIFTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

### Justice and peace go together

Psalm 85: Justice and peace are inseparable

If you want peace, work for justice.” Pope Paul VI

Mark 6:7-13 A just economic lifestyle is important for effective ministry.

### Why the Church is “Political?”

December 1998 marked the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the United Nation’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

“The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a sweeping and visionary statement encompassing not only protections from political repression but also ‘the right to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being,’ the right to education, to work and join unions, to enjoy the arts and to have leisure. It consists of a preamble and 30 articles that put forth basic human rights to which all women, men and children are entitled without discrimination. The Declaration continues to be proclaimed as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, and its goal include teaching people to promote respect for human rights everywhere.” Mary Elizabeth Clark, SSJ, & Kathy Thornton, R.S.M. Network Connection, July/August 1998.

Is the Church involved in political issues? Yes!

Should the Church be so involved? Yes!

Why, because the Church, as Church must be involved with HUMAN RIGHTS. This is a matter of the Church’s very nature and charter from Jesus.

Yes! The Church always has been, is, and will be involved with political, moral issues because human rights make up an essential part of both politics and religion. The World Synod of Catholic Bishops in 1971, with Pope Paul VI, issued an official document entitled: Justice in the World. In this document we read:

“Action on behalf of justice and transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church’ mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.”

The purpose of government is the common good of the people, and absolutely fundamental to the common good of the people are human rights. The very mission of the church and the mission of the state necessarily overlap and are inter-dependent in matters of human rights—of social justice.

In his encyclical letter to the people of the world entitled: “Peace on Earth” (1963), Pope John XXIII took the space to specifically list the human rights that the Church is particularly concerned about. Among the human rights listed are the following: “life, bodily integrity and the means which are necessary...for the proper development of life.” These are food, clothing, housing, medical care, social services, freedom in search for the truth, freedom of expression, and the right to be informed truthfully about public events. Also included are the rights to worship, to seek an education, to work, and to choose one’s state or vocation in life. People also have the right to a just wage, decent working conditions, and the right of assembly. These are among the rights due each person, not by legal grant or privilege, but by simply being human persons.

The Catholic Church’s involvement with Human Rights has been more intense, conscious and conspicuous in modern times since 1891 when Pope Leo XIII issued his social justice encyclical letter: “Rerum Novarum.” This was the beginning of over a century of the Church’s conscious development of a modern social teaching tradition that reached a climax in the Second Vatican Council and the years since.

Because the church is necessarily concerned about human rights, the Church is involved with politics. Because the Church is the people, the Christian people must be responsibly involved in politics. Knowledgeable voting is an important part of this political responsibility.

The church always has been and always will be involved with social justice (human rights are a part of social justice), and social justice often has an overlap with politics. The Church would be unfaithful to its call as a teacher of morals and a conscience voice for society if it did not concern itself with social justice issues, since justice is a matter of morality. Many Catholics see no problem with the Church involved in justice-related politics, over abortion and parochial school aid, but object to the

politically related involvement of the church in matters of economic justice, hunger and disarmament. We do need a consistent ethic of justice.

Vatican II The Church in the Modern World and the 1971 Bishop's Synod in Rome, Justice in the World, placed the church officially in the very center of the world's arena in the struggle for justice and peace.

This means that social justice ministry is one of the dimensions of life that makes the Church the Church, along with worship, proclamation of the Gospel and community building. This principle certainly has implications for diocesan policy, parish liturgy and education, as well as personal holiness and prayer.

We are in the midst of a worldwide movement in the Church toward more and more awareness throughout the world about the essential nature of the social justice ministry.

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“Distributive justice requires that the allocation of income, wealth and power in society be evaluated in light of its effects on persons whose basic material needs are unmet. The Second Vatican Council stated: “The right to have a share of earthly goods sufficient for oneself and one’s family belongs to everyone. The fathers and doctors of the church held this view, teaching that we are obliged to come to the relief of the poor and to do so not merely out of our superfluous goods.’ Minimum material resources are an absolute necessity for human life. If persons are to be recognized as members of the human community, then the community has an obligation to help fulfill these basic needs unless scarcity of resources makes this strictly impossible. No such scarcity exists in the United States today.”

ECONOMIC JUSTICE, 70

## SIXTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

### Nonviolence and Unity

Ephesians 2:13-18      Nonviolence through the blood of Christ

- ❖ See A Cycle, Appendix A series: “A Spirituality of Nonviolence”
- ❖ See A Cycle, Appendix D series: “Eucharist and Nonviolence”

“Take this all of you, and drink from it; this is the cup of my blood, the blood of the new and everlasting covenant. It will be shed for you and for all...do this in memory of me.”  
(From the Mass Sacramentary)

### Blood and the Eucharist

Blood is a symbol of life. Blood is more than a symbol; blood is absolutely necessary for human life. The loss of blood brings death. Because of the prevalence of violence in our world, we live, to quote Pope John Paul II, “...in a culture of violence, a culture of death, a massive shedding of blood.” In spite of the demonic shedding of blood in the Twentieth Century, the most violent century in history, there is too little awareness of this violence, in the Eucharistic celebration. The celebration of the Eucharist is often a celebration separated from real life. As such, the participation of the people does little to change the “culture of death,” lived out in everyday life of the people. Our Mass needs more remembrance of the blood of Christ shed for us and more awareness of the blood of the violated people, members of the body of Christ, mingled with the blood of Christ. In our mind’s eye, with aid of a little imagination, we need to recognize the mingled blood and water in the cup, the Christ-blood of the covenant and the blood of all the people of the covenant. When the shed blood of people is seen as mingled with the shed blood of Jesus, it is more likely that we will begin to view the Eucharist as a powerful force to stop the violence in our “culture of death” that keeps needlessly spilling the precious blood of people in the world.

When Cain spilled the blood of his brother, Abel, God said to Cain, “What have you done? Listen, your brother’s blood cries out to me from the soil.” Violently spilled blood cries out to God, not only from the soil of the earth, but especially from the center of worship, the Eucharist. It is our responsibility to hear that cry, to magnify the volume of that cry in our world, and to begin to make reparation for the spilled blood by stopping

the violence. When we hold out our hands to receive “THE BODY OF CHRIST” and take in our hands the cup to receive “THE BLOOD OF CHRIST” our AMEN is the accepting commitment, the responsibility and the privilege to do our best to heal the wounds of the whole Christ for which the blood continues to flow. (We might be more specific about wounds to be healed and the blood that continues to flow.)

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“Under the rubric, ‘curbing the savagery of war.’ The Second Vatican Council contemplates the ‘melancholy state of humanity.’ It looks at this world as it is, not simply as we would want it to be. The view is stark: ferocious new means of warfare threatening savagery surpassing that of the past, deceit, subversion, terrorism, and genocide. This last crime, in particular, is vehemently condemned as horrendous, but all activities, which deliberately conflict with the all-embracing principles of universal natural law, which is permanently binding, are criminal, as are all orders commanding such action. Supreme commendation is due the courage of those who openly and fearlessly resist those who issue such commands. All individuals, especially government officials and experts are bound to honor and improve upon agreements which are ‘aimed at making military activity and its consequences less inhumane’ and which ‘better and more workably lead to restraining the frightfulness of war.’”

CHALLENGE OF PEACE, 71

## SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

### **Hungry people have the right to eat**

2 Kings 4:42-44 "Feed the hungry

Psalm 145 Food is from God

John 6:1-15 Jesus feeds the hungry

Ephesians 4:1-6 The virtues that are the sources of love, compassion, and justice

- Appendix E Network – A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby:  
[www.network.org](http://www.network.org)
- ❖ See A Cycle, Appendix E series: "*Eucharist and Economic Justice*"
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### **Poverty Amid Plenty:**

#### **The Unfinished Business of Welfare Reform**

This title is the name of NETWORK'S new report about the so-called "welfare reforms." The report is the result of a two-year survey of thousands of clients of Catholic social service agencies.

The main conclusion of this report is that welfare rolls are drastically diminishing and severe poverty is on the increase. Following are other conclusions of this report. When Congress passed and Clinton signed the Reconciliation Act of 1996, more and more poor people were placed at risk in the U.S.

- (1) Entitlement to government assistance by women and children who are poor was gone.
- (2) This Act "instituted a five-year accumulative lifetime cap on benefits.
- (3) Help for immigrants were significantly restricted.
- (4) Access to health care became more limited.
- (5) The law mandated workfare—moving from welfare to jobs even though low-paying jobs were the only jobs available for most welfare recipients. It is impossible for full-time workers to move out of poverty with minimum wage jobs.
- (6) "Several other safety-net programs including food stamps were significantly diminished. Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Medicaid were also scaled back by the new welfare reform law.

Quotations in the article were taken from an article that summarizes “Networks” 28-page report NETWORK CONNECTIONS, Kathy Thornton, May-June 1999. Since 1999 some details of the welfare laws have changed, but not the basic reality of the welfare injustice as of 2005.

A copy of the complete report, POVERTY AND PLENTY, is available from NETWORK, 801 Pennsylvania Avenue SE, Suite 460, Washington, D.C. 20003-2167 or [www.networklobby.org](http://www.networklobby.org).

#### **MORE ON WELFARE REFORM NETWORK**

SOLUTIONS TO POVERTY, Kathy Thornton,  
“CONNECTIONS” May-June 1999 page 5 printed with permission.  
WELFARE REFORM: “Don’t Blame the Hype” Lucy Mayo,  
NETWORK CONNECTIONS July-Aug. 1999, page 6.

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“Catholic social teaching spells out the basic demands of justice in greater detail in the human rights of every person. These fundamental rights are prerequisites for a dignified life in community. The Bible vigorously affirms the sacredness of every person as a creature formed in the image and likeness of God. The biblical emphasis on covenant and community also shows that human dignity can only be realized and protected in solidarity with others. In Catholic social thought, therefore, respect for human rights and a strong sense of both personal and community responsibility are linked, not opposed.”

ECONOMIC JUSTICE, 9

## EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

### **Bread and the right to eat**

Exodus 16:2-4, 12-15 Manna, bread from heaven

Psalm 78: Bread from heaven"

John 6:24-35 Bread of life"

- Appendix A Series "Christian or American"

### **"Bread Blessed, Broken and Shared"**

Gospel quotes for comment:

5. "Where shall we buy bread for those to eat?"
6. "Philip replied, 'Not even with two-hundred days wages could we buy loaves enough to give each of them a mouthful.'"
7. "There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and a couple of dried fish, but what good is that for so many?"
8. "Jesus took the loaves of bread, gave thanks, and passed them around..."

In Matthew's Gospel, this same story is more 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:

- (5) Jesus expects us (the Church) to be involved in the service of love and justice for the people.
- (6) Jesus has already given us more "bread" than we need. He expects us to share it. One in every six children born in the U.S. today is born into poverty. The right to eat is one of the basic human rights.
- (7) 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.,” that you would give us peace, and bring about justice for the poor.”

(8) 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 Eucharist. 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)

P.S. 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.

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“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

## NINETEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

### Personal nonviolence

Ephesians 4:30, 5:2 Sources of violence; Sources of nonviolence

“All bitterness, fury, anger, shouting, and reviling must be removed from you, along with all malice. And be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another as God has forgiven you in Christ.” (Ephesians 4:31-32)

“Put on then, as God’s chosen ones...heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another...as the Lord has forgiven you...And over all those put on love...And let the peace of Christ control your hearts...” (Colossians 3:12-15)

- Appendix D Series “Catholic Social Teaching”;  
Part IV “Peace on Earth”
- ❖ See A Cycle, Appendix A series: “A Spirituality of Nonviolence”

### Nonviolence in Families and Other Small Communities

Our dominant culture considers the above virtues recommended by Saint Paul to be the weak virtues. I consider them to be the strong virtues, absolutely necessary for nonviolence in human relations. In this nation, families are the center of more violence than any other small community.

In family and other small communities, conflicts will almost inevitably turn into abuse and hurt—violence in action or word—unless these strong virtues are practiced. Without patience, anger takes over and without gentleness and kindness, hurt and harshness rule the day. Without humility, arrogance and domination contaminate the relationships and without compassion, selfishness leads to hurt and harm. Without these “strong” virtues, war usually ensues—either hot or cold war.

I am very acutely aware that consistent nonviolence is very difficult. I have been around long enough to realize that there are a lot of “difficult” people and that each of us is capable of being “difficult.”

Some defend themselves by saying, I’m not violent, I don’t hit people.” Such persons sometimes forget that words and attitudes can be as destructive as actions.

A friend of mine once asked: “Father Bill, how can you love someone you can’t stand?” It’s helpful to remember that Saint Paul is talking about Gospel love called agape. Agape is more of a decision than a feeling. This kind of love does not demand that we like difficult people. It does demand that we abstain from hurting and continue to forgive and respect even people whom we do not particularly like. Agape calls us to serve and help persons, even when we do not particularly like them. It also calls us to avoid hurting and to keep forgiving people. I suspect that Jesus did not like the people who crucified Him, but he did forgive them. That’s agape.

Following are a few hints for avoiding violence in families and other face-to-face communities:

13. Face it! Negotiate.
14. Forgive and forgive and forgive...
15. Remember, the only person that I can change is myself
16. Win/lose equals all lose. Win/win equals all win
17. Give people the benefit of the doubt.
18. Think! Do I have the same faults?
19. Learn a safe, fair way to unload anger.
20. If you fight, fight fair—to express but not to hurt.
21. Laugh! A sense of humor gives perspective.
22. Pray, pray, pray...for self and people that I find it hard to accept.
23. Remember! Violence is not only evil it’s also stupid. The violator hurts him/herself.
24. Live humbly, compassionately, patiently, kindly, gently, and forgive, forgive, forgive.

I call these my twelve steps for recovering from violence in small communities.

## ASSUMPTION OF MARY

### Magnificat

Luke 1:46-55

“He has scattered the proud in their conceit. He has cast down the mighty from their thrones and has lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. (Luke 1:51-53).

*Cf Third Sunday of Advent*

These are startling words from a teenage mother. Mary, like Jesus her son, identifies with the *anawim* of Israel. She praises God for liberating the powerless ones—the lowly and the hungry. She exalts God for protecting the humble ones and the oppressed. She exalts God for protecting the humble ones from the exploitation of the proud, the mighty and the rich. Jesus, her son, will choose the little ones, the powerless ones as the highest priority of his Messianic mission. (Luke 4:16-19).

Gustavo Gutierrez comments on the Magnificat:

“Preference for the poor and the oppressed runs through the entire Bible. Mary’s song powerfully recalls this preference...the text simply states what we read here in the whole Bible. Attempts to soften it and to take away its historical bite simply ignores the biblical promises. Once again we are in the presence of what is called a messianic inversion. (Gustavo Gutierrez, Sharing the Word Through the Liturgical Year. Orbis, page 275.)

In 1531, Mary appeared to a peasant of Indian blood, Juan Diego, on the mountain of Tepayoc, Mexico outside of Mexico City. The picture of herself as Our Lady of Guadalupe on Juan’s outer garment is the picture of a woman of mixed blood—Aztec Indian and Spanish. Mary again identifies with the lowly, with persons considered inferior by the racists.

Mary is a “Christopher”—a Christ Bearer. She brought Jesus the Messiah to our world. We are also called to be “Christophers,” bringing Christ to our world by the way that we live and by the way we love and identify with the *anawim*.

## TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

### Exploitation of *ANAWIM*

Psalm 15 The just and the unjust

James 1:27 *Anawim*: orphans and widows

Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23 Jesus in conflict with Pharisees, lawyers and scribes over human traditions that exploit the ordinary people.

Verses 20-23: Sources of personal violence.

- Optional Theme: “The Pledge of Allegiance”
- Optional Theme: “Balancing Budgets”

### Exploiting the Little People

In the 32<sup>nd</sup> Chapter of the Book of Exodus, we find the story of the golden calf. Having left Egypt, the Hebrews were wandering through the desert on their way to the Promised Land. Moses was delayed on the mountain where he received the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments. The people were fearful and restless at the base of Mount Sinai. They collected the gold jewelry of the people and constrained Aaron to make a gold calf, which they acknowledged as their God, and they worshipped this image in an idolatrous way. God said to Moses:

“Go down at once to your people...for they have become depraved. They have soon turned away from the way I pointed out to them.” (Exodus 32:7)

We might be inclined to judge this incident in the desert as a quaint expression of a naïve people. However, the golden calf is still going strong today.

Whenever people give their hearts to money, power, popularity, or pleasure rather than to God, they are worshipping the golden calf.

The increasing gap between the haves and the have-nots in the United States is a form of golden-calf worship because the rich are unwilling to share with people trapped in poverty.

Whenever the U.S. exploits poor nations, making exorbitant profits on weapon sales, cuts welfare for the poor while cutting taxes for the rich; whenever employers pay ridiculously low minimum wages to increase their own income; whenever a nation

leaves its homeless on the streets to save public money, the golden calf is being worshipped. “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be.” (Matthew 6:21)

Whenever the church makes buildings, especially expensively conspicuous monuments, a greater priority than the poor, the golden calf is still around.

In a second reading for the Fifth Sunday of Lent, C Cycle, St. Paul writes:

“I have come to rate all as lost in the light of the surpassing knowledge of the Lord, Jesus Christ. For his sake I have forfeited everything; I have accounted all else rubbish so that Christ may be my wealth...” (Philippians 3:8)

When we choose the “rubbish” in preference to Christ as our wealth, we are choosing the golden calf and not even recognizing that we are as naïve and depraved as the people in the desert at the foot of Mount Sinai. Whenever a country like the U.S. or a state like Minnesota debates what to do with surplus funds without even considering relief of the most destitute citizens—the homeless and hungry people—the golden calf is very much alive. Whenever we cut human services to balance the budgets, the Golden Calf is still with us.

Jesus and St. Paul recognize the danger of “rubbish” worship. Jesus warned, “you cannot serve God and money.” St. Paul stated... “the love of money is the root of all evil.”

St. Paul’s priority of giving our hearts to Christ instead of to “rubbish” is also emphasized in his letter to the Romans 8:35 and 37.

“What will separate us from the love of Christ? Will anguish, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril or the sword? ...no, in all these things we conquer overwhelmingly through him who loved us.”

\* \* \* \* \*

“The fulfillment of the basic needs of the poor is of the highest priority. Their effects on those who lack the minimum necessities of nutrition, housing, education and health care must evaluate all personal decisions, policies of private and public bodies, and power relationships. In particular, this principle recognizes that meeting fundamental human needs must come before the fulfillment of desires for luxury consumer goods.

ECONOMIC JUSTICE, 90

## **“THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE”**

For the past two years the Pledge of Allegiance has been back in the news about the name of “God” being included in the text. I have another problem with the pledge in the phrase: “with liberty and justice for all.” Here the words and the grammar assume that we as a nation believe and live the words: “with liberty and justice for all.” As a nation we do not believe nor live these words very well.

Following are some of my reasons for stating that we do not, as a nation, believe in “liberty and justice for all”:

17. One in every six children in the U.S. is still born into poverty.
18. The gap between the rich and the poor is still increasing.
19. Over 43,000,000 people in the U.S. still cannot afford health insurance.  
These people do not receive equal health care.
20. Efforts to relieve the plight of millions of homeless people in our land have been mere tokenism measures.
21. Racism is deeply rooted and widespread throughout our nation, racists give lip service to “with liberty and justice for all.”
22. Government budget deficits are being corrected not by the resources of the rich whose taxes are being cut but by the vulnerable citizens whose services are being cut.
23. Women are still paid lower wages than men for equal services rendered.
24. Corporations and private businesses through minimum wages exploit workers.
25. Amnesty International attests to human rights brutality in law enforcement in the U.S.
26. We continue to pollute and destroy the natural resources of the earth for economic gains.
27. We continue to erode democracy through legal, corrupt campaign and election finance practices.

28. Self-interest dominates our foreign policies, while about 40,000 people die daily in the world from poverty causes: malnutrition, polluted water, and very inadequate health care.
29. Unbridled market economy aids us and other rich nations and exploits the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> world poverty nations.
30. Selfish, luxurious lifestyle of many of the economically affluent Americans deprives many on the other side of the economic spectrum who lack the necessities of life
31. Intended abortion deprives millions of unborn lives of the right to life.
32. We are wasting huge amounts of natural resources and human lives on wars considered unjust by most churches and theologians, including the late Pope John Paul II and the American Bishops.

So, instead of “one nation indivisible, with liberty and justice for all” we have a nation divided between rich and poor, white and colored, the powerful and the vulnerable; a nation “with liberty and justice for” some, especially the rich, the white and the powerful, the well-fed and the well-cared for in matters of health.

From my experience in studying the Bible, I believe that God is less concerned about the name of God included in the Pledge text than about “liberty and justice for all” not being carried out. “This amounts to a serious neglect of the least brothers (and sisters)” of Jesus. (Matthew, Chapter 25: 31-45)

The answer is not to discard the Pledge but, as a nation of citizens, to begin to live the text, to take it seriously. We preach human rights to other nations but we have a long ways to go in practicing what we preach. I’m not looking for a perfect democracy. However, “all” could and should have the necessities for dignified lives. We have the resources to do something significant about the injustices listed above. In the meantime maybe we should not expect our children to give lip service to a Pledge that we adults do not intend to keep.

When Dr. Bellamy wrote the text of the Pledge in 1894, the original words would have included “equality”. The text would have read: “with liberty, justice and equality for all.” At that time the nation was not ready to accept the equality of African Americans and Native Americans. So “equality” was deleted. I think that we should reinstate



“equality” now and reevaluate our national priorities according to what we profess in the Pledge.

## **“Balancing Budgets”**

*“By Exploiting the Poor and Subsidizing the Rich”*

A quote from the Book of Wisdom 6: 1-6 New American Bible

Exhortation to Seek Wisdom

“Hear, therefore, kings, and understand;  
learn, you magistrates of the earth’s expanse!

Harken, you who are in power over the multitude and lord it  
over throngs of peoples!

Because authority was given you by the Lord and  
sovereignty by the Most High, who shall probe your works  
and scrutinize your counsels!

Because, though you were ministers of his kingdom, you  
judged not rightly, and did not keep the law, nor walk  
according to the will of God,

Terribly and swiftly shall he come against you, because  
judgment is stern for the exalted - -

For the lowly may be pardoned out of mercy but the mighty  
shall be mightily put to the test.”

January 2004 is Poverty Awareness Month.

President Bush is taking credit for the very recent economic surge of over 7% by attributing the rise to his recent tax cuts for the rich. He may or may not be correct. Some economists and politicians disagree that the tax cut is the cause of the surge. However, it is quite clear that the tax cut and the surge have benefited those who are economically comfortable and not the low-income people. The tax cut widened the gap between the rich and the poor. The statistics have also pointed out that the economic surge has had little if anything to do with solving the unemployment problem.

As most Americans will remember, the budget deficits, national and state, including Minnesota, were attacked by cutting the taxes of the rich (national) and not raising taxes of the rich (Minnesota). Instead, President Bush and Governor Pawlenty decided to exploit the low-income citizens by cutting human services significantly (increasing poverty) and by maintaining or increasing the wealth of the wealthy.

To put some flesh and blood on my statement I'll do a true story. I'll change the names and places to protect the privacy of the exploited family.

In the early winter of 2003 a family of seven (children range in age from 6 months to nine years) requested financial help for food, clothing, medicines, transportation and heating fuel (before fuel assistance was distributed). Over a period of time the local church helped this family. One parent was working part time for minimum wage and they were also helped by inadequate welfare aid. It was assumed that medical assistance would pay for medical prescriptions. We discovered that medical assistance does not cover all medications and that co-payments for medications must also be made before receiving the medicine. Some of these problems were the result of cut-backs in human services in 2003. There are many situations arising in the poverty population for which there is neither government nor private agency solutions to family needs.

This story is not an exception to situations of people in poverty. There are no sufficient assistance programs for the needs of millions of people. This story is dealing with the tip of the iceberg of people falling through the cracks. It is being enacted by hundreds of thousands of households of people in the US, a nation that claims to offer "liberty and justice for all". Many churches are paying the taxes that the rich should be

paying if these taxes were not being cut. This whole process is a legal way for the government, wealthy people, and corporations, especially those receiving corporate welfare, to work together in exploiting people of low or no income. Jesus had a strong word for this kind of injustice: "This is an evil generation." As I read history and the Gospels we are no better than Jesus' generation. In fact I think that we have exacerbated the selfishness and injustice that Jesus condemned.

A quote from The Church in the Modern World, (Paragraph 69)

"For the rest, the right to have a share of earthly goods sufficient for oneself and one's family belongs to everyone. The Fathers and Doctors of the Church held this view, teaching that men are obliged to come to the relief of the poor, and to do so not merely out of their superfluous goods. If a person is in extreme necessity, he has the right to take from the riches of others what he himself needs. Since there are so many people in this world afflicted with hunger, this sacred Council urges all, both individuals and governments, to remember the saying of the Fathers: "Feed the man dying of hunger, because if you have not fed him you have killed him." (II Vatican Council)

I return to my opening quotation from the Book of Wisdom. It is irresponsible for leaders of the people, especially political leaders to forget that they are elected or appointed to serve the people and not to be served by the people.

P.S. War is a horrendous waste and drain of resources. The poor are the ones left holding the empty bag.

## TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

### Help for the disabled – *anawim*

Isaiah 35:4-7 The blind, the deaf, the lame and dumb

Psalm 146: The oppressed, the hungry, the captive, the blind, strangers, orphans and widows

James 2:1-5 Prejudice: classism and racism

Mark 7:31-37 The deaf and speech impeded

“I, the Lord, have called you for the victory of justice...I formed you and set you as a covenant of the people, a light for the nations, to open the eyes of the blind, to bring out prisoners from confinement and from the dungeon, those who live in darkness.” (Isaiah 42:6-7)

- Optional Theme: “Ending Racism in the Church”
- Optional Theme: “*Racism*”
- Optional Theme: “Racism and the Bible”
  - Appendix A Series “Christian or American”
  - Appendix B Series “Human Rights”
  - Appendix C Series “Racism”
  - Appendix D Series “Catholic Social Teachings”
  - Appendix E: Network – A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby:  
[www.networklobby.org](http://www.networklobby.org)
  - Appendix F: Children’s Defense Fund: [www.childrensdefense.org](http://www.childrensdefense.org)  
U.S. Newswire: <http://releases.usnewswire.com>
- ❖ See A Cycle, Appendix B series: “*Compassion*”

### Jubilee 2000 The Great Jubilee and Racism

As I have written recently, the Jubilee Year was established (Leviticus 25, Isaiah 61:1-2, and Luke 4:18-19) as a special year of liberation of the poverty stricken, slaves and other captives. In this article I will limit my remarks to the new slavery, the new imprisoning-racism. Racism imprisons both the victims of racism as well as racists themselves. The victims of racism in the United States, the people of color, are dehumanized and are often reduced to poverty and imprisonment in ghettos, reservations, and, literally, within prison walls. White racists imprison themselves in white suburbs and especially their own myopic minds and constricted hearts. Both need a Jubilee year of awareness and liberation. We all need this Jubilee year for the

liberation of the secular world and the Church. A large segment of the church is mired in racism, buried under the debris of complacency and, hence, is spiritually impeded.

Joseph Barndt in his book Dismantling Racism, (Augsburg, Minneapolis, 1991), writes that our nation, the world, and the Church need a “Kairos Moment,” a special time of crisis and opportunity to confront racism in our world. He writes:

“Perhaps the single most vivid symbol of this kairos moment is the rapidly approaching turn of the millennium—a promise of new beginnings. The final decade of the old millennium should be a time of anticipation and planning for that opportunity. As the time draws closer, there will be a sense of urgency and resolve the world over to enter the new century with a commitment to achieve national and world unity and community and to live in justice and peace. It is an opportunity for us as a nation to leave behind our tragic heritage of racism and enter a new millennium of racial and ethnic pluralism.”

Finally Barndt in the same book quotes the Road to Damascus, Kairos and Conversion (Center of Concern Publishing 1989):

“All of us who profess to be followers of Jesus of Nazareth are in continuous need of conversion. While we see clearly the idolatry, the heresy, the hypocrisy and the blasphemy of others, we ourselves need to search our own hearts for remnants of the same sins and for signs of triumphalism, self-righteousness, dogmatism, rigidity, intolerance and sectarianism. There should be no place in our hearts for any kind of complacency.”

It will take at least the whole of the 21<sup>st</sup> century to erase racism from our country and world. The world will need many “Kairos Moments” beyond the Jubilee Year.

**Optional Theme:**  
**“Ending Racism in the Church”**

James 2:1-5

This is the title of a relatively new book edited by Susan E. Davies and Sister Paul Teresa Hennessee, S.A., published in 1998 by the United Church Press, Cleveland Ohio.

This book is a collection of essays authored by black and white religious leaders of several Christian denominations. These authors all recognize the serious evil of racism, and the serious contradiction between racism in the Church and the teachings of Jesus. These authors offer suggestions and plans for “ending racism in the Church.”

I will quote several of these essays that I believe would be appropriate for a homily about the contradiction between racism and Christian faith and practice.

Chapter 7: “Ending Racism in Society Through the Church.” By Alonzo Johnson.

“The most basic component of the structure of human meaning centers on the recognition of the true spiritual kinship between all persons and things in the cosmos. In his 1971 text The Search for Common Ground, by Howard Thurman, he spells out the dimensions of this kinship in clear terms. Directly related to this is the human sense of infinite worth of oneself and of all other human beings. When the individual human being is religious, especially a true Christian, she or he is especially called to nurture this insight. The very essence of being human is to ‘experience’ the kinship with other humans.” (Page 60)

Chapter 8: Baptism as Sacrament of Struggle and Rite of Resistance by Deborah Flemister Mullen.

“The call to discipleship consists of two parts—an invitation and a response. For Christians, it is the most important invitation we will ever receive. Each person must respond for herself or himself in light of the many and different ways this most awesome call comes. Christian tradition considers baptism to be a fundamental response of discipleship, whether administered as an initiation rite to infants and young people or later in life upon the profession of one’s

more mature faith. In either case, it is rightly understood as an act of faith community in covenant relationship with God. Therefore, whatever form the baptismal ritual takes...baptism is a sign and universal symbol to the world that the one baptized is on a faith journey rooted in the ministry of reconciliation, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth."

"This chapter is concerned with the question of what it means to follow Jesus and be his disciple today. How do we sort out the meaning of Christian discipleship in an increasingly secularized world, in which the relevance of the church and its ministry is under serious attack, not the least, because of racial divisions among Christians? What role, if any, does or should baptism (as sacrament, ritual practice or ordinance) play in the lives of those who are seeking the visible unity of the church?"

"Finally, as disciples of Christ, how do we measure faithfulness to our baptismal vows and renew the commitment to unity as our calling in the midst of a world that has little regard either for what we believe or for the unity we seek?" These questions beg our serious attention and thoughtful response if we truly believe that 'in sovereign love God created the world good and makes everyone equal in God's image, male and female, of every race and people, to live as one community.'" (Page 66)

"Racism must not be tolerated in the body of Christ because it clearly violates our unity in Christ given to us in baptism. This biblical interpretation of our unity thus forms the basis for the ethical mandate of the churches to eradicate racism." (Page 67)

"Is not baptism compromised, as a sign of visible unity and proclamation of faith, as long as racism is practiced in the church? Put another way, if baptism is the basis of our unity in Jesus Christ; are not racist beliefs and practices among baptized Christians a scandal within the community of believers? Does not the presence of racism and the Christian family pose a stumbling block to those for whom the church's witness is intended to reveal God's unconditional love and justice for all?" (Page 68)



## Chapter 9: “The Eucharist and Racism,” by Tee Garlington

“In 1 Corinthians 11:17-34, the Apostle Paul gives instructions about the proper attitude and conduct that believers should have in sharing the Eucharist. The key verse in this passage is verse 29: ‘For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body.’ This verse is not only the key to understanding the whole passage: it is also the central concept in understanding why racism cannot exist alongside the Eucharist. To understand this verse, however, we need to look at several other passages also penned by the Apostle Paul.” (Page 76)

I Corinthians 10:16-17 1 Corinthians 12:12  
Ephesians 1:22-23 Colossians 1:18  
Romans 12:4-5

“Therefore, Paul’s warning in I Corinthians 11:29—‘he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body’—becomes clear. ‘Discerning the Lord’s body’ means accepting and receiving all brothers and sisters on an equal basis, not withholding community from some because of racial prejudice. Clearly, the Christian goodwill that we experience in our local church setting will likely be the most personal and intense. But we cannot, we must not, refuse community with any believer on the basis of racial or national origin. To do so would be to violate the warning of ‘not discerning the Lord’s body.’” (Page 79)

## Chapter 10: “Violence in the Household,” by Sister Paul Teresa Hennessee, S.A.

“Racism is a form of violence, a violation deeper than any of the horrors about which we read in our daily news, and these are legion. Racism not only harms a person’s physical being; it does violence to the human soul.”

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“To share in Christ’s glory, each person must be willing to be baptized in Christ’s passion and drink his cup of suffering. That is Jesus’ message to his disciples. By this willingness to suffer with Christ and with one another in him, we commit ourselves to the new covenant, to new relationships which transcend every consideration of race, sex, family, nationality, economic or social standing.”

TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH, 57

**Optional Theme:**  
**“Racism”**

- (10) Racism is a serious attitude and belief that one race is superior to other races of people. Racism is prejudice with power—power to control, exploit and harm persons of other races.
- (11) Racism is pervasive, persistent, deeply rooted in American Society.
- (12) Racism did not end with the Civil Rights Movement and laws of the 1960's.
- (13) Racism in the United States is mainly a white problem, and all of us white people—people of Euro-American roots—are touched by and involved in racism. We are the people of privilege and power while people of color are usually under-privileged and relatively powerless.
- (14) Dismantling racism calls for a change in attitude of individual white persons (unconditional love) and for a change in U.S. social and political structures.
- (15) Racism is a psychological and spiritual prison for both racists and victims. Often racism causes physical imprisonment for its victims.
- (16) Spiritual antidotes to the sin of racism are the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist, the process of forgiveness, and prayer for self and for the people of color.
- (17) “Racism is a sin that contradicts both the Bible and the Church. Therefore, let the church proclaim for all to hear that the sin of racism defiles the image of God and degrades the sacred dignity of humankind, which has been revealed by the mystery of the Incarnation. Let all know that it is a terrible sin that mocks the cross of Christ and ridicules the Incarnation. For the brother and sister of our Brother Jesus Christ are brother and sister to us.” (American Bishops)
- (18) Racism may be intentional or unintentional, conscious or unconscious.
- (10) Racism is deeply rooted among people of our U.S. Churches.
- (11) “Racism obscures the evils of the past and denies the burdens that history has placed upon the shoulders of our Black, Hispanic, Native American, and Asian brothers and sisters. An honest look at the past makes plain the need for restitution wherever possible—makes evident the justice of restoration and redistribution.” (American Bishops)
- (12) “For through faith you are all children of God in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew

nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:26-28)

(Most of the ideas above are taken from the American Bishops’ Pastoral Lesson on Racism and Joseph Barndt’s book, Dismantling Racism, Augsburg Press, 1991)

## Optional Theme

### “Racism and the Bible”

- |     |   |   |
|-----|---|---|
| 1.  | Genesis 1:27  | Image of God  |
| 2.  | Psalms 8:5-7  | Crowned with glory and honor  |
| 3.  | Matthew 5:1-12<br>Matthew 25:31-46                      | Blessed are the <i>anawim</i><br>Jesus and the <i>anawim</i>                                  |
| 4.  | Luke 4:17-21<br>Luke 10:25-37<br>Luke 14:12-14          | Jesus' Priorities— <i>anawim</i><br>Love and the Samaritan<br>Unclean, outcast fringe folk    |
| 5.  | John 14:23 and 27<br>John 15:1-12                       | Indwelling: Skin color irrelevant<br>Vine and branches: Skin color irrelevant                 |
| 6.  | Acts 2:1-11<br>Acts 10:ff<br>Acts 10:43<br>Acts 11:1 ff | Pentecost<br>Vision of Peter<br>Forgiveness for all<br>Gentiles accepted; especially verse 17 |
| 7.  | Romans 12<br>Whole chapter                              | Love, Body of Christ and nonviolence  |
| 8.  | 1 Corinthians 12<br>Whole chapter                       | Body of Christ  |
| 9.  | Galatians 3:26-28                                       | Jew or Greek, slave or free   |
| 10. | James 2:1   | Partiality  |
| 11. | 1 John 3:17   | Compassion for a brother: Skin color irrelevant   |
| 12. | Revelation 7:9-10                                       | All Saints' Day   |

## TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

### We are called to nonviolence

Isaiah 50:4-9 Nonviolent Suffering Servant.

Psalm 116 Blest are the persecuted

James 2:14-18 Care for people – practice of faith

Mark 8:27-35 Jesus is nonviolent Suffering Servant

- Optional Theme: “The Gospel According to Matthew – Relating to Violence”
- Optional Theme: “Conclusion to the Scriptural Citations” (previous page)
- Appendix A Series “Christian or American”
- Appendix D Series “Catholic Social Teaching”;  
Part IV *“Peace on Earth”*
- ❖ See A Cycle, Appendix A series: *“A Spirituality of Nonviolence”*
- ❖ See A Cycle, Appendix B series: *“Compassion”*

### Just Wars

In my lifetime the United States has been involved in two world wars and many regional wars, euphemistically called low-intensity conflicts. We need to struggle with life and death issues in our own consciences. The Church’s most commonly held teaching about the moral justification of killing in war is the age-old “just war teaching.” This 1700 year-old teaching is held not only by the Catholic Church, but also by most mainline Protestant churches. In its simplest form, the “just war teaching” states the following conditions for moral participation of Christians in war:

- (8) A war must have serious and just cause.
- (9) The war must be defensive—never offensive
- (10) Legitimate government authority must declare the war.
- (11) War must be the last resort after all reasonable negotiations have failed.
- (12) No intentional killing of non-combatants (those not involved directly in the war effort) is allowed.
- (13) There must be some reasonable hope of achieving the defensive goals--something good.

- (14) The means of conducting the war must not cause more harm than good. The means must be appropriate for achieving the goals—no overkill.

St. Augustine, who initiated this teaching in the church, also stated that if one killed another in war, it must not be out of vengeance or hatred.

I encourage my readers to evaluate prayerfully every military conflict that our nation becomes involved in. I also encourage my readers to pray daily in church and home for a nonviolent solution to our personal and national conflicts.

In this article, I am stating the Church's minimum conditions for participating in war. The church also accepts a pacifist moral conviction—the rejection of all violence in our relationships, whether personal or national.

In my personal conviction, I believe that both Gulf Wars (1991 and 2003)--did not satisfy all the conditions for a just war on the part of the U.S., nor did the recent war in Afghanistan, which began the war on terrorism following 9/11.

\* \* \* \* \*

“The moral theory of the ‘just-war’ or ‘limited-war’ doctrine begins with the presumption, which binds all Christians: we should not harm our neighbors; how we treat our enemy is the key test of whether we love our neighbor; and the possibility of taking even one human life is a prospect we should consider in fear and trembling.”

CHALLENGE OF PEACE, 80

**Optional Theme:**

**“The Gospel According to Matthew Relating to Violence”**

Matthew 5:1-12    Beatitudes  
Matthew 5:21-24    Killing and Anger  
Matthew 5:38-42    Non-retaliation  
Matthew 5:43-46    Love Enemies  
Matthew 6:25-34    Self-interest and Security  
Matthew 15:17-20    Inner Sources of Violence  
Matthew 16:24-25    Doctrine of the Cross  
Matthew 22:34-40    Love  
Matthew 25:31-46    Last Judgment  
Matthew 26:51-53    The Sword  
Matthew 26:36-75 and Chapter 27:1-66    Passion and Crucifixion

**EPISTLES AND NON-VIOLENCE**

Romans 12:17-21    “Never re-pay injury with injury”  
1 Corinthians 1:17-25    Absurdity of Gospel and Cross  
1 Corinthians 13:4-7    Love  
Ephesians 2:13-18    Reconciliation  
Ephesians 4:1-6    Unity and Peace  
Philippians 2:5-11    Suffering Servant  
Colossians 1:20-24    Hostility and Reconciliation  
Colossians 3:12-17    Christ’s Peace  
I Peter 2:20-24    Suffering Servant



**Optional Theme:**

**“Conclusion to the Scriptural Citations”** (previous page)

10. Jesus taught and lived nonviolence.
11. If we cannot conclude the above from the New Testament, then we can know very little about Jesus.
12. Nonviolence is an essential dimension of the proclamation of the Gospel and the Kingdom.
13. Gospel teachings on nonviolence are a consistent part of the broader Gospel presentation of LOVE (AGAPE), and reconciliation and community (Body of Christ).
14. The church, to be faithful to its evangelical mission, must proclaim nonviolence.
15. Personal violence is usually sin and, hence, must be dealt with through repentance.
16. Social 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.
17. The Doctrine of the Cross is the only adequate way for a Christian to cope with personal and social violence.
18. Jesus’ teachings on nonviolence make up the most practical plan for peace.

## TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

### Second Prediction of the Passion and death of Jesus

#### The greatest must be servant of all

Wisdom 2:12, 17-20 The “just one” is nonviolent in the face of persecution

Psalm 54 God upholds us in the face of persecution

Mark 9:30-37 Jesus is the Suffering Servant who offers his life in nonviolent love. Jesus encourages us to become child-like. Humility and gentleness are inner sources of nonviolence.

- Optional Theme: “Gospel Sources of Nonviolence: Mark’s three Predictions of The Passion”
- Appendix A Series “*Christian or American*”
- Appendix D Series “*Catholic Social Teaching*”; Part IV “Peace on Earth”

### The Suffering Servant

“Then he sat down, called the Twelve, and said to them, “if anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all. Jesus said to them (the twelve): ‘If anyone wishes to be first, he/she will be the last of all.’ Taking a child he placed it in their midst, and putting his arms around it he said to them, ‘whoever receives one child such as this in my name, receives me: and whoever receives me, receives not but the one who sent me.’” (Mark 9:35-37)

In the very next chapter of Mark, Jesus re-emphasizes his statement about the “first,” the “last” and the child. In the context of his third prediction of his Passion, Jesus said:

“You know that those who are recognized as rulers over the Gentiles, lord it over them and their great ones make their authority over them felt. But it shall not be so among you. Rather, whoever wishes to be great 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)

This statement of Jesus makes up, in my opinion, the most revolutionary teaching of all the sayings of Jesus. Far back in history, at least 5,000 years, domination of people by people, nation over nation, government over subjects, rich over poor, adults over children, and men over women have been the persistent form of governance in human

society. So pervasive has this system prevailed that the Church itself easily falls into the domination system rather than give witness to the Jesus system of governance.

About this domination system, Walter Wink writes:

“Breaking with domination means ending the economic exploitations of the many by the few. Since the powerful are not likely to relinquish wealth, the poor must find ways of transcending the Domination Epoch while still in it.” (Walter Wink, Engaging the Powers, page 114)

**Optional Theme:**

**“Gospel Sources of Nonviolence: Mark’s three Predictions of the Passion”**

Mark 9:30-37 “Jesus is the Suffering Servant who offers his life in nonviolent love. Jesus encourages us to become child-like. Humility and gentleness are inner sources of nonviolence. Welcoming a child is welcoming Jesus. “He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer greatly and be rejected by the elders, the Chief Priests, and the scribes.” (Mark 8:31-37)

In his passion and death, Jesus lived nonviolence. He possessed divine power but he relinquished his power to protect himself, and the power to harm anyone else, even in violent self-defense. He had the power to vanquish his enemies, but he chose to accept on himself the violence worked against him by others. When Jesus predicted his arrest and execution, he was also predicting that he would allow the violence against him rather than retaliate and defend himself through violence against others.

In predicting his unjust arrest and gross mistreatment, he also followed the prediction with the statement that his followers must act as he would--to take up their cross and follow him.

Jesus then re-emphasizes his teaching about the nonviolent cross by saying that “whoever wishes to save one’s life must lose it, but whoever loses one’s life for his sake will save it.” One might save one’s biological life through violence against others, while losing one’s life of grace and eternal life by living unjustly, unlovingly and violently.

Jesus, speaking about the sources of nonviolence said: “What profit is there for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his/her life?” In other words, one might lose grace-life by seeking material gain at the same time.

These sayings and statements are about the sources of nonviolence, in so far as greed feeds into power, and any abuse of power is a form of violence. Persons in possession of authority/power easily become violent unless such persons exercise their power to serve others. Jesus relinquished all power except the power to heal, to serve, and to save people.

This whole section is sometimes called the Doctrine of the Cross. It seems quite alien to people playing power games of this world which usually lead to violence. St. Paul said that the Cross is absurd in the light of the conventional wisdom of this world.

\* \* \* \* \*

“All of the values we are promoting in this letter rest ultimately in the disarmament of the human heart and the conversion of the human spirit to God who alone can give authentic peace. Indeed, to have peace in our world, we must first have peace within ourselves. As Pope John Paul II reminded us in his *1982 World Day of Peace* message, world peace will always elude us unless peace becomes a reality for each of us personally. ‘It springs from the dynamism of free wills guided by reason towards the common good that is to be attained in truth, justice and love.’ Interior peace becomes possible only when we have a conversion of spirit. We cannot have peace with hate in our hearts.”

CHALLENGE OF PEACE, 284

“In a world which is not yet the fulfillment of God’s kingdom, a world where both personal actions and social forces manifest the continuing influence of sin and disorder among us, consistent attention must be paid to preventing and limiting the violence of war.”

CHALLENGE OF PEACE, 200

## TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

### Economic injustice – lifestyle – greed

James 5:1-6 “You rich, weep and wail over your impending miseries.”

- Optional Theme: “Arms for the Poor”
  - Appendix A Series “Christian or American”
  - Appendix D Series “Catholic Social Teaching
  - Part V: “On the Development of Peoples
  - Part VI: “Living Wages”, Parts I and II

### Consumerism and a Culture of Death

Following are quotes of two authors from two books: Brian Swimme, The Hidden Heart of the Cosmos, Orbis Books, 1996; and Jim Wallis, The Best Preaching on Earth, Judson Press, Valley Forge, 1996. This second book is a collection of sermons and homilies about environmental issues. Jim Wallis’ contribution is “I Shop, Therefore I am.”

“Where are we initiated into the universe? To answer we need to reflect on what our children experience over and over again, at night, in a setting similar to those children in the past who gathered in the caves and listened to the chant of the elders. If we think in terms of pure quantities of time the answer is immediate: the cave has been replaced with the television room and chant with the advertisement. One could say that the chant has been replaced with the television show, but at the core of each show, driving the action, and determining whether or not the show will survive the season is the advertisement. That is the essential message that will be there night after night and season after season. Television’s *Bonanza*, *Cheers*, and *Cosby* shows all come and go; the advertisement endures through every change.” (Swimme, Page 13)

“The time our teenagers spend absorbing ads is more than their total stay in high school.” (Swimme, Page 13)

“The fact that consumerism has become the dominant world-faith is largely invisible to us, so it is helpful to understand clearly that to hand our children over to the consumer culture is to place them in the care of the planet’s most sophisticated religious preachers.” (Swimme, Page 14)

“We parents demand that our children’s teachers, to take just one example, should have our children’s best interests foremost in mind. Such teachers will shape our children when they are young and vulnerable, so of course we want this shaping to be done only by people who care. So to hand over so much of our children’s young lives to people who obviously do not have our children’s well-being foremost in mind is at the very least questionable.” (Swimme, Page 15)

“Put it all together and you can see why it’s not a great mystery that consumerism has become the dominant world faith of every continent of the planet today.” (Swimme, Page 17)

“The point I wish to focus on here has to do with the question of how we are initiated into the world. Advertisements are where our children receive their cosmology, their basic grasp of the world’s meaning, which amounts to their primary religious faith, though unrecognized as such. I use the word ‘faith’ here to mean cosmology on the personal level. Faith is that which a person holds to be the hard-boiled truth about reality. The advertisement is our culture’s primary vehicle for providing our children with their personal cosmologies. As this awful fact sinks into awareness, the first healthy response is one of denial. It is just too horrible to think that we live in a culture that has replaced authentic spiritual development with the advertisement’s crass materialism.” (Swimme, Page 17)

“But eventually we all get the message, it’s simple cosmology, told with great effect and delivered a billion times each day not only to Americans of course, but to nearly everyone in the planetary reach of the ad: *humans exist to work at job, to earn money, to get stuff.*” (Swimme, Page 18)

“The ultimate meaning for human existence is getting all this stuff. That’s paradise, and the meaning of the earth? Remanufactured consumer stuff.” (Swimme, Page 18)

“To wade into a fuller awareness we need bring to mind our roadside billboards, the backs of cereal boxes, the fifty thousand magazines crammed with glossy pictures, the lunch boxes wrapped with toy advertisements, the trillion radio commercials...” (Swimme, Page 18)

“Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet their heavenly Father feeds them.

Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?

And why, do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying 'what shall we eat?' or 'what shall we drink?' or 'what shall we wear?'" (Matthew 6:25-33)

"Not only does consumption define the culture; materialism has become the culture in America. Our possessions have come to possess us." (Wallis, Page 198)

"The problem is not that the young people haven't learned our values: it's that they have. They can see beneath our social and religious platitudes to what we care about most. Our great cultural message comes through loud and clear. It is an affluent lifestyle that counts for success and happiness." (Wallis, Page 198)

"That addiction--the addiction to materialism--is fed every hour of every day in this society. And it is not only legal to feed that addiction; it is the whole purpose of the system. It is our reason for being as a people--to possess and consume."

(Wallis, Page 198)

"The images dance before us every waking moment. They attract, allure and create desire; they awaken the greed and covetousness of our worst selves. Our children are glued to the television screen, and the beat of incessant consumption pounds in their ears. At every level of the life cycle our hopes and fears, vanities and insecurities, aspirations and appetites are carefully researched and mercilessly exploited. Our many addictions are systematically created, creatively cultivated and constantly manipulated." (Wallis, Page 199)

Our shopping malls have become the temples, shrines and communal centers of modern America." (Wallis, Page 199)

The issue here is deeper than greed and selfishness. Material consumption--buying and possessing things--has become the primary way of belonging in America and around the world. If we can't buy, if we can't consume, we simply can't belong." (Wallis, Page 200)



“Television rules the popular culture and advertising dominates television. Television has become the principal vehicle for promoting consumerism. It is the message of the medium. Consumption has become our highest social value and purpose.” (Wallis, Page 200)

Farmer and poet, Wendell Berry reflected at the end of the Gulf War:

“If we want to be at peace, we will have to waste less, spend less, use less, want less, need less. The most alarming sign of the state of our society now is that our leaders have the courage to sacrifice the lives of our young people in war, but have not the courage to tell us that we must be less greedy and less wasteful.” (Wallis, page 206)

“Underneath the noisy chaos of our consumer culture, the constant thrust of medial images that define our reality, and the relentless pressure of a lifestyle that demands our very souls, do we even hear the cry of the poor? Beneath their cry, can we hear the cry of creation itself?” (Wallis, page 206)

\* \* \* \* \*

“Renouncing self-centered desires, bearing one’s daily cross, and imitating Christ’s compassion all involve a personal struggle to control greed and selfishness, a personal commitment to reverence one’s own human dignity and the dignity of others by avoiding self-indulgence and those attachments that make us insensitive to the conditions of others and that erode social solidarity. Christ warned us against attachments to material things, against total self-reliance, against the idolatry of accumulating material goods and seeking safety in them.”

ECONOMIC JUSTICE, 328

**Optional Theme:**  
**“Arms for the Poor”**

*(Written in 1999, this situation hasn't changed much up to the present, 2005).*

“Arms for the Poor” is a new video produced by Maryknoll World Productions. This article is a summary and review of this video available at the Crookston Diocese Resource Library, Crookston, MN.

The U.S. today is the largest weapons selling nation in the world. We sell mostly for profit and political advantage. Eighty percent of our arms sales are to non-democratic countries that violate the human rights of their own people.

We have forgotten the advice of General President Dwight D. Eisenhower in his “Farewell to the American People.” January 17, 1960

“We must guard against the unwarranted influence by a military industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous use of misplaced power exists and will persist.”

During the Cold War, the U. S. sold weapons to any country that might be an ally of the U.S. and/or an adversary of the Soviet Union even if the “ally” violated human rights more flagrantly than the Soviet Union. Our nation has greatly increased its arms sales in spite of the demise of communist power in the world. In 1999, I suspect that the U.S. weapons sold to Indonesia years ago were used again against the people of East Timor where the UN tried to stop the slaughter of the people who voted for independence. Are some of our soldiers in Iraq being killed by U.S. weapons sold to Iraq in the past?

Suharto's Indonesia is an example of how one of many nations has used U.S. weapons to practically destroy another tiny country--East Timor. The U.S. during the Ford Administration raised no objection to Indonesia's immoral use of American weapons. In fact, U.S. dollars, as well as weapons, helped carry out the bloody work of the Suharto regime.

Recently the U.S. refused to sign an international agreement outlawing the use of landmines. In Vietnam, 64 American service personnel were killed or maimed by landmines. 90% of which were made in the U.S. The video failed to mention that

weapons used against our servicemen and women in the recent Gulf War were sold to Iraq by the U.S. prior to the war.

The U.S. will sell weapons to almost anyone who will buy, and the weapons- shows produced around the globe are paid for by tax money of American citizens. We also pay through taxes a large amount of the weapons sales procedures on which the arms-producing corporations make big profits.

When we sell F15 and F22 fighter planes to other countries, we then need to develop better fighter planes so that we can defend ourselves from the planes we sold to other countries. This borders on insanity. Our government does stress the jobs that this policy produces. I would not deny that jobs are produced, but the wages become “blood money.” There are better ways to produce jobs, especially through investing our exorbitant military expenditures (our taxes) in peaceful, needed infrastructure development.

Among 18 industrial nations, the U.S. is number one in military power. We are also number one in the number of children living in poverty among those nations. Furthermore, as our sale of weapons to poor countries (“developing countries” is a euphemism”), the poor get poorer because the U.S. receives the money that should be used by our customer-nations for their own people.

In my personal opinion beyond the presentation of this video, I consider our sale of arms sales for profit to be so egregiously evil that it is demonic. This practice destroys the bodies of people and the souls of the nations who sell and buy. This is the Judas syndrome--betraying Jesus for money. St. John says of Judas: “Satan entered him.” (John 13:27)

## **TWENTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**

Injustice of sexual unfaithfulness and the violence of sexual abuse

Mark 10:2-12 Holiness of married sex, injustice of adultery, sexual abuse and some divorces

### **Sexual Injustice**

Today, the first reading from the Book of Genesis is about the creation of woman and part of the meaning of sexuality: the suitability of men and women as compatible companions, both similar in nature. This reading from Genesis, referred to by Mark in today's Gospel, ends with the beautiful and intimate partnership expressed in this way: "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate." Having been asked by some Pharisees about divorce Jesus enlarges upon his statement about separating what God has joined.

Later, in the presence of his disciples, Jesus introduces the sin and the injustice of adultery of both a separated man and a separated woman having sex with a partner other than his or her spouse. This teaching of Jesus is a departure from the double standard of sex when the adultery of the man was condoned but not the adultery of the woman.

The church has consistently taught that adultery is an injustice against one's married partner. This Gospel points out the equality of the sin and the injustice--the injustice of the former inequality of the double standard as well as the injustice of the adultery itself.

Adultery and divorce are also dealt with by Jesus in the Gospel according to Matthew in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:27-32) where Jesus again departs from the double standard. It is interesting that the Sermon on the Mount sandwiches Jesus' saying about adultery and divorce between two passages: the violence of killing on one side and the passage about relationships and love of enemies on the other side. The Church considers adultery to be a form of injustice.

Expressions of sexual violence would certainly be sexual abuse, against anyone, whether in the family or outside the family. Rape would seem to be the most egregious

form of sexual violence. The sins of sexual abuse imposed on people constitute psychological violence as well as physical violence. Such abuse is dehumanizing of the victim of the abuse--one of the egregious, barbarous expressions of forced domination on a human person. As most forms of violence, sexual violence is unjust.

Lest I give the wrong impression about sexuality by over emphasizing the injustice and violence of bad sex, we need to also emphasize the goodness, the justice and the human fulfillment of good sex. By good sex I mean sex in the context of marriage that is expressed and enjoyed with mutual love, honesty, and with tenderness, understanding and justice.

## **TWENTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**

### **The spiritual danger of wealth**

Wisdom 7:7-11     “Riches are nothing in comparison with her wisdom”  
Mark 10:17-30     The rich young man

- Optional Theme: “Principles for a Christian Economic Lifestyle”
- Optional Theme: “Conclusions” to Luke’s Bible Study on Wealthy, Money and Lifestyle
  - Appendix A Series “Christian or American”
  - Appendix D Series “Catholic Social Teaching”;  
Part V “On the Development of Peoples”  
Part VI: “Living Wages”, Parts I and II
- ❖ See A Cycle, Appendix C series: “Money and Power”

### **The Gospel According to Luke relating to Wealth, Money and Life-Style**

Luke 4:14-21     Mission of the Messiah  
Luke 7:18-23     Mission of the Messiah  
Luke 3:10-14     John the Baptizer  
Luke 5:27-28     Matthew’s call  
Luke 6:20-26     Luke’s Beatitudes and oracles of woe  
Luke 6:35         Lending  
Luke 6:38         Giving  
Luke 8:14         Seed among the briars  
Luke 9:2-3         Take nothing for the journey  
Luke 9:25         “What does it profit a man...”  
Luke 9:58         Poverty and Jesus  
Luke 10:35         Good Samaritan pays  
Luke 12:15-21     Greed: Parable of the rich fool  
Luke 12:22-31     God will provide  
Luke 12:32-34     Treasure  
Luke 14:12-14     Guess who’s invited to dinner  
Luke 16:1-14     Parable of unjust steward  
Luke 16:13-14     Avarice: God and money  
Luke 16:19-31     Parable of the rich man and Lazarus  
Luke 18:18-23     Jesus and the rich man

Luke 18:24-25	About camels and needles
Luke 18:28	“left all”
Luke 19:8-9	Zacchaeus
Luke 20:47	The scribes and exploitation
Luke 21:1-4	The widow’s mite
Luke 22:5	Judas: the price of betrayal

## **Optional Theme**

### **“Principles for a Christian Economic Lifestyle”**

(From two of Father Bill’s homilies)

8. Wealth is spiritually dangerous; selfish use of wealth can be spiritually fatal.  
Luke 16:19-31  
Mark 10:17-27  
Matthew 25:31-45
9. In the Bible, ownership of property is stewardship; what we have is on loan from God who is the owner of the universe.  
Leviticus 15:23  
Psalm 14:1  
1 Corinthians 6:19-20
10. The gospel demands generous sharing of wealth; my surplus wealth (beyond my necessities) belongs to those who lack the necessities of life.  
Mark 10:17-27  
Luke 3:10-14  
Luke 19:8-9  
1 Timothy 6:6-10
11. Poverty is violent and vicious; poverty kills more people than war. Over 40,000 people die daily as a result of poverty.  
Matthew 22:34-40  
Matthew 25:31
12. Apathy in the face of relievable human misery is damnable (mortal sin).  
Luke 16:19-31  
Matthew 25:31-45
13. My attitude toward wealth is critical for my spiritual life; my attitude to the *anawim* (poor, sick, powerless, oppressed) is crucial for my relationship with Jesus.  
Luke 6:13-14  
Luke 12:15-21  
Mark 10:17-27  
Matthew 25:21-45
14. Consumerism gluts the consumer and wastes the earth.  
James 5:1-6  
1 Timothy 6:3-10  
Luke 12:15-21



## TWENTY-NINTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

### Domination rather than service leads to violence

Isaiah 53:10-11    The Suffering Servant suffers nonviolently to save others  
Mark 10:35-45    The greatest must serve the rest. Jesus is the Suffering Servant who came to serve others.

- Appendix A Series “Christian or American”
- Appendix D Series Catholic Social Teachings, Part IV: “Peace on Earth”
- ❖ See A Cycle, Appendix A series: “A Spirituality of Nonviolence” Part II The Domination System and the Jesus System

### Century of Holocaust

The twentieth century was a century of phenomenal progress and unbelievable violence. In that century we moved swiftly from horses to spacecraft; from slow traveling letters to sophisticated radio, television and computers; and to medical technology undreamed of in 1900. The twentieth century was also a century of massive slaughter and vast environmental destruction.

October is the month during which we remember in a special way the importance of reverence for life--all life. Consistent reverence for life is synonymous with the virtue of nonviolence.

In the rest of this article, the ideas and phraseology will be a combination of my thinking and that of Marc Ellis, Director of the Institute for Justice and Peace at the Maryknoll School of Theology. Marc authored a significant book entitled, Faithfulness in an Age of Holocaust, (1980, Amity House Inc.)

Ellis' book develops the historical record that the 20<sup>th</sup> century was an age of incredible technological progress and a time of great violence. A few of the holocausts in that century were the Nazi holocaust of the Jews, the multimillion deaths of two world wars (about 50 million in WWII), plus hundreds of regional wars, killing and displacing millions more people. That was also the century of countless deaths of children resulting from poverty, malnutrition, inadequate health care, and polluted water--about 40,000 daily in recent years. That was the century of racially motivated killings in South Africa, the U.S. and other places. If we were to include the past 500 years, the

holocaust of the indigenous people of the Americas would be the worst racial genocide in human history (estimates range from 50 million to 74 million).

In the above perspective of a century of holocaust, I would interject the reality of the body count resulting from abortion in our world as the most massive slaughter of human beings ever known (1 ½ million annually in the U.S. alone).

The holocausts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the vast replay of these holocausts in the media have benumbed the sensitivities of people worldwide to the terrible suffering of vast and cruel violence.

Pope John Paul responds to such holocausts is his 1995 encyclical letter. *The Gospel of Life*. He writes:

“We are facing an enormous and dramatic clash between good and evil, death and life, the culture of death and the culture of life. We find ourselves not only faced with but necessarily in the midst of this conflict: we are all involved and we all share in it, with inescapable responsibility of choosing to be unconditionally pro-life.”

This month is a time for remembering the holocausts, for forgiving injustices, and for renewing our commitment to Jesus’ teachings of consistent nonviolence, of a consistent ethic of life.

Hopefully, the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be a more life-giving century. We need to pray and work for this hope. The first five years of the twenty-first century have not given much hope for improvement as yet.

## THIRTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

### Love for God and people: the source of reverence for life

Deuteronomy 6:2-6 Love

Mark 23:1-12 Love and the reign of God

- Optional Theme: “The Death Penalty”
- Optional Theme: “The Death Penalty or Restorative justice”
  - Appendix A Series “Christian or American” “
  - Appendix B Series “Human Rights”
  - Appendix D Series “Catholic Social Teachings, *Part V*”, On the Development of Peoples”
  - Appendix G: Data Presented on Capital Punishment in the United States. [usinfo.state.gov](http://usinfo.state.gov)

### A Consistent Ethic of Life

In reflecting for many years on the varied faces of violence and injustice in our world, I have come to the conclusion that the forms of violence are inter-related and are forming a perceptible pattern. In my opinion, some of the significant kinds of violence forming this pattern are war, hunger, abortion, racism, sexism, crime, environmental destruction and capital punishment. This pattern includes the following dimensions of the violence pattern.

- 9) Depersonalizing and hence de-valuing of life;
- 10) Institutionalizing (legalizing) of violence;
- 11) Maximizing of profits (personal and corporate greed);
- 12) Denial of personal and corporate responsibility;
- 13) Euphemizing the language of violence
- 14) Seeking instant solutions--quick fixes for complex human problems;
- 15) A mind set of domination; person over person, race over race, class over class, gender over gender and nation over nation.
- 16) Seeking a hedonistic way of life that necessarily excludes the way and the meaning of the cross.

Institutionalized (legal) violence is the most likely kind of violence to influence people to condone violence because legal violence gives the false impression that it's

morally okay if it's legal. Capital punishment shares the stage of legal violence with war, exploitation of the poor, abortion and environmental pollution and destruction.

As long as large numbers of people perceive the killing of criminals and even innocent people in war, abortion, and in poverty as morally permissible for human problem solving, then the violence-virus will continue to spread.

Pope John Paul II calls the present reality of violence a "culture of death." My hope and prayer is that we can convert the "culture of death" into a culture of life.

**Optional Theme:**  
**“The Death Penalty”**

The author of this book is opposed to the death penalty for the following reasons:

12. Capital punishment is sometimes mistakenly applied to innocent persons whose innocence has been discovered after the execution.
13. The death penalty does not deter crime any more than does imprisonment.
14. There is a strong racist dimension to legal execution. In proportion to population, significantly higher numbers of persons of color are executed in the U.S., even though there are in absolute numbers, more murders by white offenders than by black.
15. The economics of the death penalty indicate that most criminals on death row are from poor or low-income segments of our society who cannot hire highly competent attorneys of their choice.
16. I believe in a consistent ethic of life. Most violence is morally evil. Evil reinforces evil. One form of violence can cause a spiritual and moral callousness in individuals and society that makes other forms of violence easier to condone (violence especially appears to be condoned when legalized, institutionalized violence is initiated and increased).
17. The execution of criminals does not bring closure, healing or peace to those who grieve for the victims.
18. There is injustice, and indeed, a level of depravity in any society that executes persons who are mentally ill or mentally handicapped. This takes place in the United States.
19. Revenge is usually one of the motives for the death penalty. Revenge is never a morally acceptable motive for any human behavior.
20. Criminals on death row may receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Communion if there is real repentance for their crimes. I think that human beings need to struggle with the process of forgiving no matter how long the process may take. If God has forgiven the criminal, why should not society do the same? By forgiving a criminal, I do not imply release from

prison. Imprisonment protects innocent people from violence by the same violators.

21. If the victim who is killed, is with God in heaven, that victim has already forgiven his or her violator. Surviving family members would best honor their beloved victim by following suit in the difficult process of forgiving.
22. We need to be careful lest we assume to ourselves the prerogatives of God. The criminal is a creation of God--indeed a son or daughter of God albeit unfaithful. Some things we need to leave in God's hands, remembering that God does not take killing lightly.

**Optional Theme:**  
**“The Death Penalty or Restorative Justice”**

As a nation, we are still locked into an ancient kind of retaliation known as “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” However, we call it “a life for a life.”

A relatively new approach in the United States is what is named “restorative justice.” This is an approach to help victims, if still alive, and victims’ families to heal, to find inner peace, and even to begin a process of forgiving. Professional facilitators carry out the restorative process in sessions, even with the perpetrators of a crime, if possible. Sometimes restorative justice is the goal of a therapeutic support group of persons suffering from similar kinds of grief resulting from great harm. A part of restorative justice is also a continuing process to “restore” criminals involved in the crimes.

One publicized effort in Minnesota in recent years is the process of restorative justice that has been carried out by Don and Mary Streufert of Grand Rapids, Minnesota with the help of Mark Umbreit of the University of Minnesota. Don and Mary are the parents of Carin Streufert, a young woman who was kidnapped, raped and murdered in Grand Rapids several years ago. This restorative justice process included meetings with James Swanson and Gary Sullivan who were convicted and imprisoned for the murder of Carin Streufert. Both Don and Mary are dedicated to fighting violence in rural areas. They have both testified in the Minnesota Legislature against the death penalty. This restorative justice story was published in the “Minneapolis Star Tribune,” October 26, 1997 under the byline of Robert Franklin. When asked if there has been forgiveness in this experience, Don and Mary answered in the following manner.

“If it means a diminished animosity, Don said, ‘I believe I am experiencing it and benefiting from it on a personal level’. But he does not pardon, condone, excuse, rationalize or forget their actions, he said.

Said Mary, ‘If forgiveness is defined as letting go of the anger and not...letting the bitterness and anger and grief define me, then indeed I have forgiven them. I don’t spend a lot of time thinking about it, or them.’”

Execution of the offender will not bring peace of mind and inner healing to members of a victim's family members. Nothing will heal and bring peace without at least the beginning of the process of forgiving. The process may take a lifetime, but it is possible.

Jesus was given the death penalty unjustly. His response was not revenge. He forgave his killers for their crime, as did Pope John Paul II when he was severely wounded a few years ago.

The process of forgiveness is one of the most difficult human endeavors but one of the most rewarding for the person who forgives. Usually forgiving for great hurt requires the help of a spiritual advisor or a therapist.

Bishop Skylstad has recently written that we need to "break the culture of violence that grips our society."



## THIRTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

### Wealth, power and stewardship

Psalm 146 Justice for the oppressed, hungry handicapped widows, orphans and aliens.

Mark 12:38-44 Exploitation and selfishness by the powerful: generosity of the poor

- Appendix D Series “Catholic Social Teachings”
- ❖ See A Cycle, Appendix C series: “Money and Power”

### Money and Power

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 towards 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 seldom 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.”

“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, and into many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge them into ruin and destruction. (1 Timothy 6:6-9)

Money and wealth in the broader sense, is the highest value-priority in our western society and culture (golden calf?) Money has superseded other values such as truth, honesty, love and even life itself. 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 wishes to go, 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 for 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 to create economic resources to help people who are living below the level of 'sufficiency.' --indeed some relinquishing of wealth may be necessary to maintain one's spiritual balance.

"Among the actions and attitudes 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.

## **THIRTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**

### **The End Times**

Daniel 12:1-3 “At that time...”

Mark 13:24-32 The second coming of Christ

### **An Eschatological Perspective** (*First Sunday of Advent*)

## THIRTY-FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME - CHRIST THE KING

### Jesus and Pilot

John 18:33-39 Two forms of leadership:

- 3) Irresponsible, violent, unjust, and dominating
- 4) Responsible, just, nonviolent and loving

“The soldiers led him away inside the palace...they clothed him in purple and, weaving a crown of thorns, placed it on him. They began to salute him with ‘Hail King of the Jews,’ and kept striking his head with a reed and spitting upon him. They knelt before him in homage.” (Mark 15:16-19)

- Optional Theme: Possible Justice/Nonviolence Themes for Christ the King

### The Crown of Thorns

Purple, crown, king, and homage--all words designating kingship. These were all words of mockery applied to Jesus whom the Roman dominators considered to be a man without power, wearing not a regal robe but a purple rag, wearing not a gold crown but a crown of thorns. How wrong were the mockers whom Jesus came to save? His kingdom would eventually dwarf the Romans and all empires of this world.

The crown of thorns has accomplished far more for the good of the world than all the tons of gold crowns that have tried to dominate the world down through time.

The gold crowns have symbolized brute power, military might, human arrogance, crushing oppression, despotic control, greedy exploitation of people, environmental destruction and often a hedonistic way of life. Rarely has the gold crown been concerned about the little people, the powerless ones. Even the presidents and prime ministers of democratic countries have leaned more on the power of gold than on the power of thorns.

“Jesus summoned them and said, ‘You know that those who are recognized as rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones make their authority over them felt, 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)

The crown of thorns symbolizes the opposite of governance through domination. The crown of thorns expresses the kind of governance that emphasizes loving, teaching, serving, saving and sharing authority. Possibly this was what was meant when people said that Jesus spoke “as one having authority and not as the scribes.” (Mark 1:22)

The sinfulness of human beings is especially evident and dangerous in persons of authority who stress law without love and who seek “to be served rather than serve.”

Each time that I pray the third sorrowful mystery of the Rosary--“Jesus is crowned with thorns”--I pray for Pope Benedict XVI, for Bishop Balke and other bishops, for myself and for all the leaders in the Church. Secular government leaders are almost hopelessly locked into the dominating power mystique of the crown of gold, even though Church leaders are very vulnerable to the temptation of the golden crown.

**Optional Theme:**

## Possible Justice/Nonviolence Themes for Feast of Christ the King

1. What kind of King? Contrast Christ's kind of governance with that of conventional kings, emperors and other political leaders.
2. What kind of kingdom/reign of God did Jesus proclaim? The Gospel is quite clear about this. Note especially the parables, the Sermon on the Mount and on the Plain, Beatitudes, Passion and Crucifixion.
3. What kind of authority did Jesus propose and exemplify? Note especially the three predictions of the Passion in Mark, Chapters 8, 9 and 10 with context of each. Contrast the "domination system" with the Jesus system." (*cf. the suggested pieces for the Twenty Fourth Sunday in this series*)
4. Comment on the Preface for the Mass of Christ the King. "As King, He proclaims dominance over all creatures that he may present to you, his almighty Father or eternal and universal kingdom; a kingdom of truth and life; a kingdom of holiness and grace; a kingdom of justice, love and peace."
5. What did Jesus mean when he told Pilot, "my kingdom is not of this world?"
6. Why were Herod and Pilot afraid of Jesus?
7. What does Luke 4 and 7 tell us about the Messiah King and the priorities of his messiahship?
8. Do you see signs of the Messiah King in the world today?
9. Does this festival suggest hope for the new century? New millennium? Jubilee? Might not this new century be perceived as an auspicious time for spiritual renewal, environmental concern and the dismantling of racism and domination?
10. A growing number of theologians and political commentators perceive that the United States is appearing more and more as a growing "empire". What do you think?

## APPENDICES

These appendices include four series of articles written by Monsignor Mehrkens. Also included in this B Cycle are three suggested readings from the Internet. These series and readings are about some of the social justice issues that are appropriate as an enlargement of the themes included in Cycle B

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**E** Network – A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby: [www.networklobby.org](http://www.networklobby.org)

**F** Children's Defense Fund: [www.childrensdefense.org](http://www.childrensdefense.org)

**G** Data Presented on Capital Punishment in the United States  
usinfo.state.gov

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Also mentioned in this B Cycle are a series of articles ( A through F) written by Monsignor Mehrkens about social justice issues that are also appropriate as an enlargement of the themes and are available in A Cycle published in 2004.

<b>CYCLE A</b>	<b>SERIES</b>	<b>TITLE</b>
Eleventh Sunday In Ordinary Time	F Series:	Land and People
Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time	F Series:	Land and People
Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time	A Series:	A Spirituality of Nonviolence
	D Series:	Eucharist and Nonviolence
Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time	E Series	Eucharist and Economic Justice
Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time	A Series	A Spirituality of Nonviolence
Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time	B Series	Compassion
Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time	A Series	A Spirituality of Nonviolence
	B Series	Compassion
Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time	A Series	A Spirituality of Nonviolence
Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time	C Series	Money and Power Part II The Domination System and the Jesus System



## Appendix A

### CHRISTIAN OR AMERICAN –Part I

“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)

An ironic dichotomous reality has developed in the U.S. It is becoming more and more difficult to be both Christian and American—as our strong nationalists define “American.” National loyalties and values rather than Christian loyalties and values are becoming primary in the lives of a large segment of our population who claim to be Christian people. This is a problem because the dominant values of the U.S. population are often in conflict with the gospels and the Church’s stated values and teachings.

The Catholic Church has produced a significant library of documents on matters of social justice and peace over the past century since *Rerum Novarum* (*On the Condition of Laboring Man*) by Pope Leo XIII in 1891). Besides these documents of the Church, regional bishops conferences throughout the world have added to the libraries of Catholic social teaching by issuing pastoral letters on important social issues.

To be more specific, an increasing number of U.S. Catholics find themselves in conflict with the teachings of the Church in matters of poverty, welfare, homelessness, and abortion. Large numbers of Catholic people also disagree with Church teachings about health care, Medicaid, minimum wage, taxes, affirmative action, environmental responsibility, war, nuclear weapons (including the Hiroshima/Nagasaki events), and capital punishment. Many are racist in varying degrees without fully realizing it or admitting it. The Church’s documents, both papal and the U.S. Bishops’ documents do have statements and principles that have some strong stated and implied positions on these issues. For Instance, starting with *Rerum Novarum* in 1891 and up to the present, the Church has many times stated the importance of fair wages for working people. The present minimum wage is obviously unfair—not a living wage according to the teaching tradition. Consistently the Church has stated that governments have a moral responsibility of special care for the most vulnerable of citizens. When welfare, health care, Medicare and Medicaid are inadequate to deal with the poverty of millions

of Americans there certainly is an implied discrepancy between the Church's teachings and governmental practice.

My objection, and the objection of the U.S. bishops, to the present thrust of Congress to balance the budget by cutting human services across the board is not a political partisan opposition. I am neither Republican nor Democrat. My convictions stem from the gospel and the Church's social teaching.

Too many Christians have "conformed to this age" and now need to "be transformed by the renewal of mind" and heart "so that they may judge what is God's will, what is good..." I am far more concerned about "what is God's will" than I am about the will of the Republicans or the Democrats of Congress or of the White House. As I read the Bible and the social concerns documents of the Church it seems obvious and clear that *anawim*—the little ones, the powerless ones, the most vulnerable—should be the highest priority for both Church and state. In the present time, *anawim* are the least our national Congressional and presidential priorities. I suggest that Congress may be a real hazard to the health, safety, and environment and even to the life of vulnerable U.S. citizens.

The Church is concerned about pick-and-choose cafeteria Catholics. Some have judged that the cafeteria- Catholics are the "liberal" Catholics. It is my observation that "liberal" Catholics more often tend to pick-and-choose among the sexually related and gender related teachings of the Church, including abortion, celibate priesthood, ordination of women, divorce, premarital sex, and birth control. "Conservative" Catholics have their own cafeteria choices. Most of the nonviolence, social justice, and economic related offerings of the Church are not to the liking of many "conservative" Catholics. So, we have our cafeteria patrons on both sides of the aisle.

## Appendix A

### CHRISTIAN OR AMERICAN—Part II

“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, the people, often accommodate our values to those of our culture, repressing some elements of the gospel and, hence, rendering the gospel compromised. Jesus was usually counter-cultural in his teaching and acting. The Church, in its tradition of social teaching is still counter-cultural in most areas of life. This social teaching, however, is “one of the best kept secrets of the Church’s teaching.” Lay members of the Church are mostly unaware of these teachings. (The next article in this series will outline more specifically these social teachings of the Church).

The Church today is strongly influenced by the values of our dominant secular society as it has been through most of its history. The Church of the fourth century, the Church of St. Augustine was influenced in its theology of war by the Roman Empire, particularly by Cicero. Today, in Europe and the U.S., the people of the Church often conform to the attitudes of the dominant society in matters of economic justice, war, position of women, and governance by domination rather than by the authority of compassion and servanthood.

In my analysis of the social scene, acquisition and possession of wealth is the highest priority of a majority of citizens of the U.S. including segments of the membership of the Church. Most of our homegrown violence is done to acquire or protect our material assets. Our security and self-worth search has an economic base. We live in what Eric Fromm calls the “having” mentality rather than the “being” mentality. Or, 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 hooked into the commodity form in many ways. Instead of really making the poor the highest priority, we spend unnecessarily great amounts of money on Church buildings, furniture, decorations, altar vessels, vestments, etc. Some of these expenditures seem close to what we might consider “conspicuous consumption” in our secular life-style.

When we look intensely and prayerfully at the gospel it becomes crystal clear that Jesus was radically counter-culture in Galilee and Judea in the First Century and the people of the Church should be counter-culture. in every time and place.

Some would say: "Father Bill, you are being unrealistic and impractical." That's right. To "succeed" in this world we need to compromise with the "powers" of this world. But Jesus did not accommodate Himself to the world of his day. True, He ended up on the cross. Maybe we need to recommit ourselves to a way of faith rather than the "ethics of survival" in this world. Jesus was unrealistic and impractical. Consider the counter-cultural Beatitudes, and the rest of the Sermon on the Mount. Consider Jesus' radical teaching about money and serving the *anawim*. Consider Jesus' nonviolent teaching and behavior. St. Paul understood this quite well when he wrote in 1 Corinthians:

"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 18 and 25)

I have come to believe that the "foolishness" of God and the absurdity of Jesus' teachings are practical and realistic. It is obvious enough in history and current events that "human wisdom" has not and is not working very well.

## **Appendix A**

### **CHRISTIAN OR AMERICAN—Part III**

Compassion is a necessary approach to life if human life and society is to be civil, humane, just and nonviolent. Without the dimension of compassion in human relations, human life becomes cold, callous, and barbarous. Compassion is important, not only in individuals and small group relationships, but also in public relations, on a large scale, such as politics and government.

If political and governmental leaders and voters were to take seriously the life and teachings of Jesus, along with the past century of the Church's social teachings, we would have a "politics of compassion." Most of what follows below would also be in harmony with the teachings of the Christian Churches as well as with the other great religions of the world. The rest of this article will be a brief summary of some of these teachings just mentioned, and often referred to in general in my articles—values and teachings that are more and more ignored or rejected in the U.S. life and politics.

#### **GOSPEL:**

"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."  
(Matthew 7:12)

"Love your neighbor as yourself." Matthew 22:34)

Feed the hungry. (Matthew 25:35)

Give drink to the thirsty. (Matthew 25:35)

Clothe the naked. (Matthew 25:36)

Visit the sick and the imprisoned. (Matthew 25:36)

Welcome strangers. (Matthew 25:35)

"When you hold a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind." (Luke 14:13)

"Sell what you have and give to the poor." (Luke 18:22)

"Take care and guard against all greed." (Luke 12:15)

## Appendix A

### VALUES-CONFLICT BETWEEN CATHOLIC CHURCH AND U.S. GOVERNMENT AND SOCIETY

U. S. Government	1) Death Penalty		
U. S. Government	2) War		
U.S. Government	3) Poverty / Economic Justice	)	<u>Deficit Recovery</u>
	• Taxes (of rich)	)	↓
	• Welfare	)	↓
			<u>Human Rights</u>
	• 40,000 Deaths Daily	)	↓
	• Living Wage/Minimum Wage	)	↓
	• Hunger	)	↓
	• Homelessness	)	↓
	• Preferential Option	)	↓
	• Campaign Finance Corruption	)	↓
	• Health Care	)	↓
U. S. Government	4) Racism		
U. S. Government	5) Use Nuclear Weapons		
U. S. Government	6) Weapons Sales		
U. S. Government	7) Self Interest in Foreign Policies		
U.S. Government	8) Refugees		
U.S. Government	9) Environmental Issues		
U. S. Government	10) Domination / Power Abuse / Greed		

## **Appendix B**

### **HUMAN RIGHTS, THE CHURCH, AND POLITICS - - Part I**

Should the Church be involved in any way in political issues? If so, why and how?

The American Bishops are currently and have been recently deeply involved in political dialogue with the government on the issues of abortion, peace, disarmament, and economics. The Church, leaders and lay people, have been and are deeply involved in the political process in matters pertaining to private schools and environmental responsibility. The Churches, individually and ecumenically are involved significantly in the politics of food as this relates to hungry people. The U.S. church as well as the Latin American Church has been and are politically concerned and active in the face of the terrible violation of human rights in Central America and elsewhere.

Why? Because the Church must be concerned that human rights be established, implemented, and protected in the world. This is the meaning of the virtue of justice. This is also the work of government. In his encyclical letter to the people of the world entitled: "Peace on Earth," (1963) Pope John XXIII took the space to specifically list the human rights that the Church is particularly concerned about. Among the human rights listed are the following: life, bodily integrity and the means, which are necessary for the proper development of life. These are food, medical care, social services, freedom in search for the truth, freedom of expression, and the right to be informed truthfully about public events. Also the right to worship, to seek an education, to work, and to choose one's state or vocation in life are considered human rights by the Church. People also have the right to a just wage, decent working conditions, and the rights of assembly. These are among the rights due each person, not by legal grant or privilege, but by simply being human persons.

As individual human rights become intertwined with the structures of society the issues become matters of social justice. Concern for social justice is an essential dimension of the very mission of the Church.

In 1971, the World Synod of Catholic Bishops, with Pope Paul VI issued an official document entitled: "Justice in the World." In this document it is stated:

“Action on behalf of justice and transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel.”

The purpose of government is the common good of the people, and absolutely fundamental to the common good of the people are human rights. The very mission of the Church and the mission of the state necessarily overlap and are inter-dependent in matters of human rights- -of social justice.

Furthermore, in a democracy, what my government does, I do. If I take seriously- -and I do- -the description of democracy as “government of the people, by the people, and for the people,” then I share responsibility for my government. If my government sins, then I share the guilt if I condone my country’s sin by my silence in the face of evil. In other words, my very personal integrity, my very Christian spiritual life sometimes demands that I be, as a Christian, involved in political issues and processes.

How should the Church be involved in and with politics?

Not by endorsing a particular candidate nor political party.

-BUT especially preaching and teaching from “the fabric of the faith” about human rights and nonviolence even though there usually are political implications and ramifications.

-By conscience formation in society.

-By also COOPERATING with significant movements and organizations working for Social Justice such as:

c) Bread for the world

d) Amnesty International

-By voting in elections.

-By expressing moral convictions to political representatives.

Underlying all that I have said above are the three following principles of faith:

- ❖ God is Creator of all beings.
- ❖ Jesus Christ is Lord of the universe.
- ❖ Christians require profound reverence for all life, and for the earth.



## Appendix B

### HUMAN RIGHTS – Part II

#### Why the Church is “Political”

December 1998 marked the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the United Nation’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

“The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a sweeping and visionary statement, encompassing not only protections from political repression, but also the ‘right to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being,’ the right to education, to work and join unions, to enjoy the arts and to have leisure. It consists of a preamble and 30 articles, which put forth basic human rights to which all women; men and children are entitled without discrimination. The Declaration continues to be proclaimed as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, and its goals include teaching people to promote respect for human rights everywhere.” Mary Elizabeth Clark, SSJ, & Kathy Thornton, RSM, Network Connection July/August 1998.

Is the Church involved in political issues? Yes!

Should the Church be so involved? Yes!

Why? Because the Church, as Church, must be involved with HUMAN RIGHTS.

This is a matter of the Church’s very nature and charter from Jesus.

Yes! The Church always has been, is, and will be involved with political, moral issues because human rights make up an essential part of both politics and religion.

The World Synod of Catholic Bishops, in 1971, with Pope Paul VI, issued an official document entitled: *Justice in the World*. In this document we read:

“Action on behalf of justice and transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church’s mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.”

The purpose of government is the common good of the people, and absolutely fundamental to the common good of the people are human rights. The very mission of

the Church and the mission of the state necessarily overlap and are inter-dependent in matters of human rights--social justice.

In his encyclical letter to the people of the world entitled, "*Peace on Earth*", (1963), Pope John XXIII took the space to specifically list the human rights that the Church is particularly concerned about. Among the human rights listed are the following: "bodily integrity and the means which are necessary...for the proper development of life." These are food, clothing, housing, medical care, social services, freedom in search for the truth, freedom of expression, and the right to be informed truthfully about public events; also, the right to worship, to seek an education, to work, and to choose one's state or vocation in life. People also have the right to a just wage, decent working conditions, and the right of assembly. These are among the rights due each person, not by legal grant or privilege, but by simply being human persons.

The Catholic Churches' involvement with Human Rights has been more intense, conscious, and conspicuous in modern times since 1891 when Pope Leo XIII issued his social justice encyclical letter: "*Rerum Novarum*." This was the beginning of almost a century of the Church's conscious development of a modern social teaching tradition that reached a climax in the II Vatican Council and the years since.

Because of the Church's increasing concern about human rights, the Church is involved with politics. Because the Church is the people, the Christian people must be responsibly involved in politics. Knowledgeable voting is an important part of this political responsibility.

## Appendix B

### HUMAN RIGHTS - Part III

In my last article, I reflected on our strengths in political human rights and our weaknesses in economic human rights. The Bill of Rights amending the U.S. Constitution is a strong statement about political rights. We are in need of a strong economic bill of rights to compliment the original Bill of Rights.

In last fall's edition of the Catholic Peace Voice, a publication of Pax Christi, USA, Holly Sklar's article, "We need an Economic Bill of Rights," is significant. This kind of proposal has been floating around since 1944 when President Roosevelt suggested such a bill of rights. Holly Sklar lists the following as important possible inclusions in an economic bill of rights.

- ◇ The right to a job at a living wage.
- ◇ The right to equal pay for equal or comparable work.
- ◇ The right of workers to organize and bargain collectively.
- ◇ The right to decent adequate health care.
- ◇ The right to a decent home...
- ◇ The right to paid leave for the care of newborns and sick family members...
- ◇ The right to national and international regulations ensuring fair labor practices, environmental sustainability and worker/consumer health and safety."

Another publication *Center Focus*, December 1997, a publication of the Center of Concern, included an article on "*Wages or Wealth?*" by Thomas J. Harvey. This article presents one of the main reasons why an economic bill of rights is needed: the rich have been and are getting richer and richer, and the poor are getting poor and poorer (in purchasing power), and the gap between the two is getting bigger and bigger. This means that the human rights (necessities for a quality human life) of the poor are being violated more and more.

To again quote Holly Sklar - -

"Only with an Economic Bill of Rights will Americans be able to realize the rights to equality, life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness promised in the Declaration of Independence."

\* \* \* \* \*

P. S. I find it interesting that, at both Minnesota state level and at the U.S. federal level, most recommendations about surplus tax funds (billions) are to refund the money to the taxpayers. This means that we will probably recycle funds mainly to the rich, funds that could be used to lessen the gap between the rich and poor and restore a little of the economic human rights to the poor.

## Appendix B

### HUMAN RIGHTS - Part IV

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## **Appendix B**

### **HUMAN RIGHTS--Part V**

#### **The Right to Life**

In the last article, I focused on economic human rights. This time, it will be the most fundamental of all rights, the right to life. In a sense, all human rights are a part of the right to life, indeed the right to develop and live a decent quality life.

The right to life includes all the human rights that engender and protect human life and all levels and in all human diversities and unique nesses. I am speaking here of a consistent ethic of life including concern for the unborn and the elderly, the poor and the rich, the healthy and the health impaired, children and adults, white people and people of color, the powerful and the powerless. Our concern must be for people of both genders, different sexual orientations, and varying Ethnic roots, the free and the imprisoned (convicted criminals lose some civil rights, but not fundamental human rights). As a part of the right to life, we also include a healthful, natural environment, adequate health care for all, decent housing and sufficient nourishing food, bodily integrity and freedom from violence.

As we consider the varied human rights to life, we necessarily also insist on a living wage, a wage that supports a decent life (not necessarily an affluent life) rather than a wage that simply maintains poverty, the poverty of the working poor rather than a wage that supports quality living conditions. For the rest of this article, I will focus on a “living wage” without which other human rights to life are difficult or impossible to achieve or protect.

A “living wage,” or a wage for human life, must include the ability to afford the basic human rights that we have been considering in this series of articles. The present federal level minimum wage and the various level minimum wage levels are immoral because they are inadequate to maintain a level of life beyond poverty. It is impossible for a person receiving minimum wage to gain and protect his or her (including family) basic human rights. A living wage, to be “living” must also be sufficient to prepare for a decent retirement and for health care throughout life.

At the present time, in the United States, there is no moral justification for the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few while millions of citizens cannot enjoy their own human rights. Exorbitant “luxury wages” of the “rich and shameless” make up a sinful situation that principles of justice and Christian spirituality cannot condone.

I end with a quote from Manning Marable:

“Unfortunately, despite the billions of dollars generated on Wall Street, the capitalist economy has conspicuously failed to produce living wage jobs for millions of Americans... All over the country, more than a dozen cities have passed ‘living wage ordinances.’ We must support state referenda that would raise the minimum wage. But perhaps the most important reform would be to close the vast gap between the salaries of the corporate elite vs. most working people. Blue Print for Social Justice, February 1999

Reverencing the right to live is THE antidote to a “culture of violence” and death. Respecting the right to life could be a great first step to new life in the new millennium.



## **Appendix B**

### **HUMAN RIGHTS – Part**

#### **Double Talk about Double Standards**

In this land of ours, we have been listening to much double talk about the double standards. In this article, I am doing some political, ethical analysis, but from the perspective of the New Testament and Catholic social teachings.

We need to face the reality that the double standard is pervasive in Congress and throughout our country in matters of human rights, law enforcement and judicial practice, and in the injustices in farm economy. In these areas of government, the double standard exists between people of privilege (Euro-Americans) and the underprivileged people of color: African Americans, Native Americans, Hispanic Americans and Asian Americans. This is Racism. We also have a double standard of treatment for affluent Americans as contrasted with poverty-stricken Americans. This is classism. The initial report of Amnesty International about human rights in the U.S. supports the above statements. Much of the self-righteous talk about double standards is “double talk.”

Our U.S. preaching about human rights to other nations forgets that of eighteen industrial nations, we have the greatest incidence of poverty among children - 1 in 6 in the U.S. This is a scandalous reality considering that we are the richest of the eighteen nations. We could be the best of the eighteen countries if we were not so concerned about protecting the affluence of well-off Americans and so willing to waste billions of dollars on military budget overkill. We continue to be willing to sacrifice of the poor for the good of the rich and powerful.

Other double standards about which we double-talk are the following. We insisted, with sanctions and bombings and war, that Iraq rid itself of weapons of mass destruction, while we refuse to rid ourselves of nuclear weapons. We insist now that North Korea give up their plans for nuclear weapons. Also, we give special treatment to China, one of the world's most irresponsible violators of human rights, while we maintain sanctions against Cuba and Iraq for the same kinds of human rights violations.

If we would take seriously the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag - - to say nothing of Christian commitment to Jesus' teaching - -we would end much of our double talk about double standards, for then we would really believe in "liberty and justice for all." It would also be good if all politicians were to take their oath of office more seriously, to say nothing of living up to the spirit of the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution:

"We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common Defense, promote the general Welfare and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this CONSTITUTION for the United States of America." (The underlined phrases in the Preamble are the emphasis of the author of this article).

I am fully aware that the Church is also vulnerable in double standards and double talk, especially when the Church says one thing about justice in its teaching traditions and then does another in its daily life when it does not practice what it teaches and preaches about racism, salaries, lifestyle, and the use of wealth. We in the Church must work hard to clean up our own act.

## **Appendix B**

### **HUMAN RIGHTS--Part VII**

#### **Human Rights in the U.S.**

It is often assumed that our nation is the best in the world in respecting the human rights of the people. This assumption is definitely debatable. The lack of knowledge about human rights in the U.S. and our frequent violation of human rights make this series an important one for us. It is true that we have an outstanding system for political human rights. However, our failure in a system of economic, judicial and law-enforcement human rights leaves much to be desired. In some ways, this nation is quite primitive when it comes to human rights. Some more obvious examples would be hunger, homelessness, abortion, capital punishment.

As of now, the United States has signed the United Nation's Declaration of Human Rights and two added covenants (conventions or agreements) but not the ICCPR (International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights). One of the amendments of the ICCPR is the abolition of the death penalty. The U.S. has not, as yet, achieved a sufficiently sophisticated and humane level of behavior in order to give up the practice of executions.

In our misconstrued assumptions that we are the world's leaders in human rights, we often criticize the abuses of human rights in other countries. In our own abuses of human rights, we sometimes fall into the situation of the hypocrite in the Gospel who did not see the plank in his own eye while trying to remove the speck in his brother's eye.

Besides abuses in human rights in our land, there are very serious - -even barbarous abuses elsewhere.

“In many nations, people are tortured, discriminated against, imprisoned and killed for publicly expressing ideas counter to their repressive governments. Women are denied the right to marry according to their own choice. Girls receive little or no education in some societies. Some very young children are forced to work.” Mary Elizabeth Clark, SSJ and Kathy Thornton, RSM, Network Connection July/August 1998.

Human rights issues are important not only for our nation, but also for each of us personally as citizens and as Christians.

In a democracy, what my government does, I do. If I take seriously, and I do, the description of democracy as “government of the people, by the people, and for the people,” then I share responsibility for my government’s decision. If my government sins, then I sin, if I condone my country’s sin - - and silence in the face of evil is usually interpreted as condonation. In other words, my very personal integrity, my very Christian spiritual life demands that I be involved in political issues and processes.

“The Church has rejected the totalitarian and atheistic ideologies associated in modern times with ‘communism’ or ‘socialism.’ She has likewise refused to accept, in the practice of ‘capitalism,’ individualism and the absolute primacy of the law of the marketplace over human labor. Regulating the economy solely by centralized planning perverts the basis of social bonds; regulating it solely by the law of the marketplace fails social justice, for there are many human needs which cannot be satisfied by the market.”  
(Catechism of the Catholic Church)

## **Appendix B**

### **HUMAN RIGHTS – USA – Part VIII**

I wrote an article recently on honesty in government. We should be honest with one another about who we are and what we are as Americans. We like to think about ourselves as a nation with a great history of human rights. In reality, we have at times failed dismally in our example to the world on human rights. Human rights are the rights that are necessary for fulfillment of human potential.

For the first three hundred and fifty years of our history we depended largely on slavery for our nation's economic growth. We ended our era of slavery only at the cost of a bloody war. We still suffer from the leftovers of slavery, although racist behavior is no longer legal. Racist behavior is a gross violation of human rights.

I think that we should not be so surprised at the recent human rights abuses by some of our military personnel in Iraqi prisons. We have been drifting down the stream away from our traditional human rights sources, although we still consider ourselves a highly civilized society when it comes to human rights.

I can understand the violent abuses of some of our soldiers, considering our national sins of legal violence and human rights abuses that our people have grown up with through the years. Certainly the prison abuses in Iraq are gross and deplorable violations of human rights that are sometimes taken for granted. I am not thinking of any one brand of human rights violations in our history, past and current. No one political party has caused all the violations. It is a national social sin. I am convinced that the perpetrators of recent violations in Iraq were thought to be condoned by those involved because of the very negative language and behavior that was used against Arab people in recent history and because of our present attitudes. Our people, including our military personnel are aware of the U.S. mistreatment of the prisoners in Guantanamo Bay in Cuba. For the sake of U.S. security we consistently ignored some of our principles of civil and human rights.

I am in no way condoning the terrible human rights abuses of Saddam Hussein or other dictatorial leaders in the Middle East, Africa or Asia.

Furthermore, it is important for us that to realize that war almost always slips out of control. History seems to remind us that those men and women who are trained to kill and destroy sometimes find it difficult to realize “when it is inappropriate to kill” and when killing and violence are criminal acts.

What, more specifically, do I mean when I speak of the U.S. drifting away from our human rights tradition? I have already mentioned slavery but I have not sufficiently emphasized the racist leftovers of slavery in our nation. We still sometimes consciously and sometimes unconsciously, treat people of darker color as inferior human beings. I am also thinking of economic injustices toward our people in poverty in the U.S. and overseas. Food and the other necessities of human life are human rights. I am remembering a phrase of Rev. James Forbes that, “poverty is a weapon of mass destruction”. I am very concerned about the thousands of people in the poorest countries of the world who die daily from malnutrition, polluted water and lack of adequate health care. I am also very concerned about the 43,000,000 people in the U. S. without health care insurance. Health care is a basic human right. I repeat from past articles, we do not really believe in “liberty and justice for all” even though we still recite the Pledge of Allegiance. We rank about 19<sup>th</sup> among the industrial nations in our proportionate humanitarian aid to developing countries.

There are many more examples of our national drift from our human rights traditions-- many others that I have written about in the past in this column. Following are some of the human rights violations in the United States as found by Amnesty International: police brutality, electric shock treatment, stun guns, pepper spray, permanent isolation in prisons, mentally ill in inhuman restraint systems, and children held in adult prisons with the risk of physical and/ or sexual abuse. Women especially are vulnerable to rape and assault. Young blacks, Latinos and Asian males are unjustly targeted in law enforcement, while juveniles and mentally handicapped are inhumanely treated by immigration officials.

I certainly am not forgetting that abortion is a violation of the human right to life. The greatest right is the right to life itself. I believe that the widespread acceptance of abortion also makes us calloused in our sensitivity to the violation of human life.

The common good of the people must be a priority concern of governance. More specifically, justice is the heart of the common good and human rights are synonymous with justice.

So, - - I believe that the Iraqi prison human rights' abuses are influenced by the human rights deterioration in our national life.

## **Appendix C**

### **RACISM--Part I**

This is the first article in a series on racism. By racism, I mean a deeply rooted racial prejudice that is combined with power--power to dominate and harm victims of racism. I would also consider an attitude to be racist if a person's prejudice amounts to a firm belief that people are really inferior because of their race.

The poison of racism contaminates almost every segment of American society, possibly every institution in the United States. This is true of government at all levels, business, education at all levels, churches, health care, and recreational programs. Racism is deep, pervasive, persistent, and often unconscious since it colors almost every phase of life in our land.

Many citizens are under the impression that the Civil Rights Movement and laws of the 1960's ended most racism in the United States. This is an illusion. Racism became less politically socially acceptable, but it was not ended. It went underground for a while and now has been re-surfacing for about the past 15 years throughout the land as a more subtle but nevertheless very real part of U.S. life.

It is also important to realize that racism in the U.S. is mainly a matter of white people against people of color, especially African Americans, Hispanic people, Native Americans, Asians and Polynesian people, practice racism. This is not to say that people of color are without racial prejudice. It is to say that power to harm, hate and dominate others is almost exclusively in the hands of white people. The Kerner Commission of 1968, a presidential commission of President Lyndon Johnson, stated that the United States was moving toward two nations, one white and the other colored. That same commission also wrote about the reality that racism was, even then, a white people's problem.

“What white Americans have never fully understood - -but what the Negro can never forget - -is that the white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain it and white society condones it. White racism is essentially responsible for the explosive mixture which has accumulated in our cities since the end of World War II.”



“Amistad,” a movie in our recent past, was in my opinion, one of the finest movies produced in the past ten years. It was poorly attended, and almost ignored by Academy Awards judges. I suggest that this movie was too threatening for a white American audience to face. We would prefer to live under our comfortable illusion that we are a just and open-minded people. The whole context of “Amistad” is racism - -a matter of slavery, freedom, life and death in the United States.

\* \* \* \* \*

The ideas in this series on racism are drawn from many sources including the experience of the author. Other main sources are

Joseph Barndt, Dismantling Racism Augsburg Press  
Ian F. Haney Lopez, White by Law; New York University Press;  
U.S. Bishops, Brothers and Sisters to us: A Pastoral Letter on Racism USCC;  
Sojourners Magazine, March / April 1998.

## **Appendix C**

### **RACISM--Part II**

An overview of the Bible leads us to the following conclusions about Jesus and racism.

(10) God created all people in the divine image. All are God's children. (Genesis 1:27). Therefore, all are brothers and sisters of Jesus.

(11) Jesus' basic ethical teaching is love (agape) for all people. We have no right to make exception because of race, religion, gender or economic class. (Matthew 25:31-46, Luke 10:25-37, John 15:12)

(12) Jesus died for all. Salvation is open to all. All people have the same basic human rights. (Revelation 7:9, Galatians 3:26-28)

(13) Jesus' teachings and behavior showed him to be very impatient with behavior that excludes people and to be very insistent upon inclusive behavior. The Synoptic Gospels show the great concern of Jesus to eliminate those elements of society that exclude people by virtue of race, religion, gender and class. The underprivileged, the outcasts, become the specially privileged in God's kingdom. (Mark 7:1-27, Luke 14:12-14, Luke 15:1-2)

(14) "Now you are Christ's body, and individually, parts of it...if one part suffers, all the parts suffer." Some parts are of a darker color and some lighter, but all are one in Christ. To reject or put down any member is to reject Christ. "I assure you, whatsoever you do to the least of my brothers and sisters, you do to me." Racist behavior is violence, violence against Jesus as well as against people that we victimize. Our Native American brothers and sisters have a saying that summarizes this quite well: "All are related." (1 Corinthians 12:12-27, Romans 12:1-21, Matthew 23:37 ff.)

(15)“The Word was made flesh.” The incarnation, the Son of God becoming human, is the Divine affirmation, the making sacred of all human beings. The color of the skin has nothing to do with this sacredness. In this context racism is the desecration of the sacred and the ridicule of the Incarnation of Jesus. (Luke & Matthew Infancy Narratives, John 1:1-14.)

(16)Jesus is the Good Shepherd. He excludes nobody from the flock because of color difference. He shows special concern for the lost, vulnerable lamb. (John 10, Matthew 18:10-14)

(17)The Holy Eucharist is THE sign, symbol and energizing power for love and unity among the people. We are not properly disposed to receive Holy Communion if we knowingly and willfully reject some of God’s people from our life and love and respect. (Matthew 5:23-24, 1 Corinthians 11:17-34). Once we begin the process of recovering from racism, we need Holy Communion to energize the continuing of the reconciliation process.

(18)Jesus’ main teaching was the proclamation of the Reign of God. The preface for the festival of Christ the King summarizes the biblical meaning of the Reign of God with these words:

“...an eternal and universal kingdom; a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace.”

There is not room for racism in the reign of God. Racism is part of the wasteland of the kingdoms of this world. (Matthew 5:1-12, Luke 4: `16-21)

Considering inclusive unity throughout the gospel and the other New Testament books, racism, sexism, divisions according to economic class and other forms of exclusion of people must be considered anti-Christian-with no loopholes to excuse prejudice and racism.

**Appendix C**  
**RACISM—Part III**  
**A PRISON**

Racism is a prison for the victims of racism, the powerless people of color as well as the racists, people of power who control the powerless. The places of imprisonment are ghettos, reservations and wherever victims of racism are gathered to live. White suburbs are also places of imprisonment where white folks confine themselves and their lives—voluntarily separate from the rest of human life.

At first sight, the white suburb (same for small towns and rural communities) does not appear to be a prison since it is filled with people of the three P's—position, privilege and power. But it is a prison nevertheless—a prison that restricts personal freedom to grow spiritually and psychologically. The suburb prisons cut people off from the riches of other races and cultures and tend to develop the malady of myopic vision about people, priorities and meaning of life. The psychological imprisonment is a more dangerous and destructive impairment than the geographical restriction of people according to racial groups.

The protected, restricted life of the suburbs can easily lead one to accept the false indoctrination that the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States is true—“one nation indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.” In reality, we have, “a nation divided, without liberty and justice for all.”

The victims of racism will not readily become free unless the racist people first free themselves from their own imprisonment. Unless the persons of position, privilege and power begin to voluntarily dismantle racism, the suppressed, oppressed powerless ones may be tempted to dismantle racism violently. However, all will be losers if it comes to this because physical violence destroys the souls of the violators as well as the bodies of the victims. In short, the sin of racism is not only demonically evil, it is simply stupid.

As we will develop in a later article in this series, dismantling racism involves two main thrusts: personal conversion in the direction of open inclusive, unconditional love for people, and the social racial integration of institutions in the sharing of power.

Isaiah may not have had the imprisonment of racism in mind, but his words in Chapter 42:6-7 fit the blindness and confinement of deep prejudice. Writing about the suffering servant he wrote:

“I formed you, and set you...as a light for the nations, to open the eyes of the blind to bring out prisoners from confinement and from the dungeon, those who live in darkness.”

Racism is so deeply entrenched in our culture and institutions that we probably will never dismantle racism and free ourselves from the darkness and confinement of this evil force by our own power. I know of no other evil force so resistant to merely human power. We need the help of the Holy Spirit, our advocate, our truth and our life—the One who has the power “to renew the face of the earth.”

## Appendix C

### RACISM AND DOMINATION—PART IV

“Jesus said to them, ‘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.’”

Racism will continue to be a “terrible sin” in our lives as long as domination of the less powerful people by those with power remains the demonic foundation of divisions among people and nations. Instead, we will not recover from racism as long as the violence of domination of people continues to spawn exclusion of people according to class, gender, religion and race. Walter Wink has stated that “inequality can only be maintained by violence. The root of violence, moreover, is domination.” Wink continues:

“Only when we see the Domination system as the context to which the gospel was addressed do we begin to grasp something of the context of what Jesus meant by the reign of God... The failure of the Church to continue Jesus’ struggle to overcome domination is one of the most damning apostasies in its history. With some thrilling exceptions, the churches of the world have never yet decided that domination is wrong.” “Engaging the Powers”

It is difficult for the churches to recognize that domination is the parent of other forms of violence, including racism, it is not likely that nations will easily recognize the connection between domination and racism.

It is my conviction that domination of people by people and domination’s offspring, racism, will not be dismantled and overcome by human efforts alone. I believe that this demonic evil will be driven out only the power of the Holy Spirit, symbolized on Pentecost as the “driving wind” the “breath of God” the non-consuming “fire” of light, truth and love. In short, prayer must be our main means of dismantling the sickness and evil of racism or racist domination will dismantle our society.

Racism will not be dismantled in our land until people in power (usually white people) are willing to share the power and the wealth that maintains power. This will probably not happen until our institutions, including the Church, make every effort at racial integration of membership and especially leadership.

“The structures of our society are subtly racist, for these structures reflect the values which society upholds. They are geared to the success of the majority and the failure of the minority.” *A Pastoral Letter on Racism* by U.S. Bishops.

**Appendix C**  
**RACISM—Part V**  
**RECOVERY**

Recovery from prejudice and racism is a spiritual process that takes time. Like the recovery from an addiction, the process of recovery from prejudice and racism calls for admitting our spiritual weaknesses and psychological illusions, recognizing our need for a “higher power,” confessing our sin, and making amends. Indeed the 12-step program for recovery might be very appropriate in recovery from racism.

As Christians, we recognize God as our higher power. We need God’s grace to recover from racism. This spiritual process from within the Church calls for:

- (5) Renewing our baptismal vows;
- (6) Confessing our sins of prejudice and racism;
- (7) Receiving Holy Communion for growth in love and compassion
- (8) Prayer for our own recovery and prayer for the welfare of the victims of our racism.

We need to renew our baptismal vows, remembering that we are all related and one in Christ. St. Paul wrote:

“For through faith you are all children of God in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

(Galatians 3:26-27)

For recovering, we need to admit our sins of prejudice and racism and begin the process of reconciliation with all of God’s children. This whole process calls for prayer “in season or out of season.” Demonic powers are not overcome by our efforts alone. We need the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the power of grace.

In the Book of Revelation, Jesus says:

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will enter his/her house and dine with that person.”



If we open the door to Jesus, we must also open the door to Jesus' "least brothers and sisters" and to all God's children.

We need Holy Communion because the very meaning of the Eucharist is loving unity. When we say "Amen" to "the Body of Christ," we are saying that all people are our sisters and brothers.

New life now and here is an Easter grace. The process of recovery from racism includes the removal of the boulders that block access to Christ, and to freedom.

I want to conclude with another quote from our American Bishops Pastoral Letter on Racism:

"Racism is not merely one sin among many. It is the radical evil dividing the human family and denying the new creation of a redeemed world. To struggle against it demands an equally radical transformation in our minds and hearts as well as in the structure of our society." *Brothers and Sisters, It's Us: A Pastoral Letter on Racism by U. S. Bishops, 1979.*

## **Appendix C**

### **RACISM—PART VI**

#### **MISSIONARY CONQUEST A Book Review**

The title above is the title of a book written by George E. Tinker and published by Fortress Press in 1993. The sub-title is “The Gospel and Native American Genocide.” Following is an evaluation of this book by “The Christian Century” periodical.

“In a time of both strong interest in and questioning of cross-cultural ministries, George Tinker provides a fascinating, disturbing probe into missionary history... This is a refreshing addition to a growing literature on cross-cultural ministry. Tinker’s command of his material is impressive and appropriately supports his arguments. His book helps us better to own our past and to ask how contemporary missionaries and their supporters can avoid duplicating an earlier generation’s blindness.”

I would summarize the basic thesis of this book with the following statements: Christian missionaries, both Catholic and Protestant, were participants in the cultural genocide of American Indian People. This violence was sometimes intentional, but more often unintentional. This cultural destruction was done by the most famous of missionaries, such as John Eliot, Junipero Serra, Pierre Jean De Smet and Henry Benjamin Whipple.

Manifest Destiny is the belief of Euro-Americans that the people of the United States were especially chosen by God to lead the world. Missionaries brought into this mythology as reason enough to cooperate with secular goals of expansion of land and domination of Native people.

The author makes a believable case, through historical investigation, that the Churches that participated in Indian mission work were the willing partners of invading countries (Spain, France, England and of the United States Government after the War of Independence) in the invasion of indigenous people of North, Central and South Americas. The missionaries themselves, thoroughly immersed in their own renaissance understanding of the superiority of European culture and religion, believed that Christian conversion of aboriginal peoples necessitated a drastic conversion in culture as well. In

fact, the invading nations, including the religious leaders were unconsciously racist in their attitudes about the people they were ministering to. The author writes:

“Cultural genocide is more subtle than overt military extermination yet it is no less devastating to the people...The Native American population of coastal California was reduced by some 90 percent during seventy years under the sole proprietorship of Serra’s mission system. (1769-1834). (Page5)

Both secular and religious authorities considered the inferiority of native cultures and religion to be good reason to control, exploit (land), and even enslave the indigenous people. This attitude was rationalized as something for the good of the people who were exploited. In reality, it was for the economic aggrandizement of the invaders.

One of the ironies and tragedies of the combined secular and religious indoctrination of the aboriginal people was that many of the Indians themselves came to accept their own inferiority and to “look up” to the Euro-Americans who were oppressing them because of the technological advances of the Europeans.

Just as our nation has not faced up to its long history of genocide, neither has the Church adequately recognized its deep involvement in racism and cooperation in the sin of genocide. Both need to face the responsibility of restitution and restoration.

The author of this significant study raises two important, practical questions: How is our ministry among the Indian people influenced today by the “system whole,” the Euro-American culture from which we have emerged? How can we distance ourselves today from our own culture in ministry to people of cultures other than Euro-American without our cultural roots contaminating our attitude toward the people we try to serve? I know that the answers to these questions are of great importance and I know that the answers are not easy to come by, having lived for over seven years with the Ojibwa people at Red Lake, Minnesota.

The successors of our Euro-American ancestors working among and ministering to Native American communities today need the benefit of prayer and guidance of the Holy Spirit to avoid the same pitfalls that former missionaries fell into, mistakes that were racist in nature, and that blocked the very fruitfulness of their ministry.

George Tinker, the author of Missionary Conquest is a careful scholar, an associate professor of Cross-Cultural Ministries at Iliff School of Theology and Pastor of Living Waters Episcopal/Lutheran Indian Ministry in Denver. I am convinced that he is sensitive to both the traditional Indian way and the Christian way. In his book he goes out of his way to face the realities of history without engaging in missionary bashing.

## Appendix D

### CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING- - A RICH HERITAGE OF DOCUMENTS – Part I

This rich heritage has been relatively unknown to most Catholic people. I have decided to make this heritage better known to our OND readers.

All through history the church has preached and written her teachings, mostly from sacred scripture, applying these social teachings to the problems of each age of history.

Beginning in 1891 Pope Leo XIII wrote an encyclical letter\* to the church and the world entitled, On the Condition of Labor. This was the beginning of a more organized library of church documents on social justice issues over more than a century of time. Other documents on social justice are called Pastoral Letters published by national groups of bishops. These documents have been clarifications of Bible and church teachings intended for the guidance of bishops, priests and people of our times.

For the past 19 years I have been drawing heavily from this Catholic Social Tradition for this column.

The church's competency in Catholic social issues rests on the fact that these issues are moral issues as well as social, political and economic issues. Even though the church has no particular competency in politics, sociology and economics, the church does have competency in matters of morality, and these issues are serious moral issues. Social justice is an essential part of the church's mission and teaching authority since these issues are a matter of morality. In one of the documents in this heritage, the church has spoken officially in these words:

“Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us (pope and bishops) as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the gospel, or in other words, of the church's mission of the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.” (Justice in the World, Synod of Bishops, 1971.)

Conflicts over these issues often arise between church and state in the life of nations and cultures. At the present time, for instance, the U. S. government and/or the culture are in definite conflict with the church over several social justice issues. Some

of the issues in which the Catholic Church and government and/or culture are in definite conflict are listed below.

15. Abortion
16. Capital punishment
17. Unjust wars and neglect of U.S. veterans
18. Injustice in the U.S. prison system
19. Liberal market capitalism
20. Neglect of people in poverty  
(Inadequate welfare, homelessness, hunger, and health care insurance)
21. Injustice in matters of taxes
22. Environmental deterioration and destruction.
23. Racism
24. Need for economic reform in political campaigns and elections
25. Minimum wages vs. living wages
26. Consumerism
27. Abuse in civil rights All through history the church has preached and written her teachings, mostly from sacred scripture, applying these social teachings to the problems of each age of history.
28. Excessive national self-interest in foreign policies

These issues have been, are, and probably will be issues dealt with in Catholic social teachings. Indeed, the church must deal with these issues in her teaching to be faithful to the church's mission and development of moral theology. We will continue to reflect on these conflicts in this series.

Most of these social/political issues are not only matters of civil rights but also of basic human rights. Basic human rights are necessary for the very development of human beings. One of the more complete listings of basic human rights can be found in the catholic heritage document entitled Peace on Earth written by Pope John XXIII in 1963. When governments and agencies of government cross the moral line and violate such rights, the church does and must speak out. This is one of the situations in which people criticize pastors and writers for preaching "politics in the pulpit". I am aware of a situation where a priest was accused of "politics in the pulpit" by simply preaching the

content of the encyclical letter Peace in the World by Pope John XXIII. Recently, I have been criticized for reviewing a book about the Bush administration's harmful policies on environmental issues. The church will continue to challenge government on such issues.

Some people prefer that religion teachers, preachers and writers stick to generalities and general principles from the Bible and church teachings. When we apply these teachings and principles to the real problems of everyday life, some people get upset because now they feel that they have to do something about these problems. Most of us would rather coast along and not be too much challenged in our real life.

In my next article in this series I will review and comment on the social document of the Second Vatican Council entitled "The Church in the Modern World. (1965), Vatican I

I\*\*\*A Papal Encyclical is a worldwide letter by one of the popes about religious matters. Many modern encyclicals have been written about social and political problems.

\*\*Vatican II: The Second Vatican Council (1961-1965), Catholic World Council of all Bishops and the Pope. On the average such councils have been held about once a century through church history.

## **Appendix D**

### **CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING – A RICH HERITAGE OF DOCUMENTS - Part II**

#### **The Church in the Modern World**

This is the second article in a series in the Rich Heritage of the Catholic Social Teaching. This is one of the major documents of the Second Vatican Council\* held in the 1960s. The fact that this document is named “A Pastoral Constitution” designates it as a major document of the council.

The purpose of this document, representing the official teaching of the church is to explain the relationship of the church to the changing world of today. This is the Vatican II document that deals most directly with some major social justice issues. Three of these major issues in this document are: “The Life of the Political Community”, “The Principles of Socioeconomic Life” and “Fostering of Peace”. In this article we will deal only with “The Life of the Political community”.

According to this teaching of the church the basic concern of politics is the COMMON GOOD of all the people. The COMMON GOOD is the shared responsibility of both the government and the church. Neither the state nor the church may responsibly ignore the COMMON GOOD. The COMMON GOOD spans the responsibility of both church and state. The COMMON GOOD is involved with the development of just law for the welfare of the people. Sometimes civil law conflicts with the divine law. When this happens a Catholic person, must, in conscience, try to change or improve the civil law.

\*\* Such a person must obey the divine law even to the point of disobeying the civil law if the civil law conflicts with God’s law. However, Christian people are obliged to obey civil law when there is no conflict with the laws of God.

I would like to quote from the document “The Church in the Modern World”:

“The political community exists for that common good in which the community finds its full justification and meaning, and from which it derives its pristine and proper right. Now, the common good embraces the sum of those conditions of social life by which individuals, families and groups can



achieve their own fulfillment in a relatively thorough and ready way....”

“It also follows that political authority whether in the community as such or in institutions representing the state, must always be exercised within the limits of morality and on behalf of the dynamically conceived common good, - - - When such is the case citizens are conscience-bound to obey...”

“Where public authority oversteps its competence and oppresses the people, these people should nevertheless obey to the extent that the objective common good demands. Still it is lawful for them to defend their own rights and those of their fellow citizens against any abuse of this authority, provided that in so doing they observe the limits imposed by the natural law\*\*\* and the gospel.”

\*The Church also insists that the GOOD of the most vulnerable citizens is a high priority.

To state the church’s rights in political issues, the document says:

“It is always and everywhere legitimate for her (the church) to preach the faith with true freedom, to teach her social doctrine and to discharge her duty among people without hindrance. She also has the right to pass moral judgments even on matters touching the political order whenever basic personal rights or the salvation of souls makes such judgments necessary. In so doing, she may use only those helps which accord with the Gospel and with the general welfare as it changes according to time and circumstance.”

Furthermore, the Church considers participation in politics to be morally responsible for Catholic persons, according to each one’s ability. This responsibility stems from the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation. The layperson’s mission and competence is to give witness to Christ in the public sector of one’s life. \* \* \* \*

\*The Second Vatican Council, usually referred to as Vatican II, was the world meeting of the bishops and the pope, in the first half of the 1960s. These world councils, named Ecumenical Councils, are called to clarify the church’s teachings and to fulfill the needs of the people.

\*\*Conflicts: In Part I of this series I listed some of the conflicts between civil law and divine law.

\*\*\*Natural laws are moral principles of right living that can be discovered by reason itself with reflection and study. Some examples would be the moral obligations to speak the truth, avoid harm to people and to encourage whatever is for the moral and spiritual good of the people.

\* \* \* \*Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, Vatican Council II, 1965

## Appendix D

### **CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING - - A RICH HERITAGE OF DOCUMENTS – Part III The Church in the Modern World**

In my last article, Part II of this series, I wrote about the “*Church in the Modern World*”: The Life of the Political Community. This article is about this same document’s section called, Principles of the Socioeconomic Life.

In this article I will present seven principles on economic justice as presented in this document.

- 8) Living wage
- 9) Globalization
- 10) Unions
- 11) The common good of all
- 12) Ownership
- 13) Economic generosity
- 14) Greed

- 8) Living Wage. Employers are required by justice to pay a living wage. A living wage is a wage that empowers a worker to cover at least the basic human needs of each worker and his or her family. This is a matter of justice to be fulfilled by the employer.

“Finally, payment for labor must be such as to furnish a man with the means to cultivate his own material, social, cultural, and spiritual life worthily, and that of his dependents. What this payment should be will vary according to each man’s assignment and productivity, the conditions of his place of employment, and the common good.”  
(Ch. 3, Section 2, Par. 67)

- 9) Globalization. Globalization policies that favor the good of rich people to the detriment of low or no income people is unjust. The same for nations. The

present forms and policies of globalization are immoral and unjust. They definitely enhance the rich and exploit the poor.

“Economic development must be kept under the control of mankind. It must not be left to the sole judgment of a few men or groups possessing excessive economic power, or of the political community alone, or of certain especially powerful nations.” (Ch. 3, Section 1, Par 65)

3) Unions. Employees have the right to organize and even strike non-violently to achieve and maintain their human and civil rights.

“Among the basic rights of the human person must be counted the right of freely founding labor unions. These unions should be truly able to represent the workers and to contribute to the proper arrangement of economic life. (Ch. 3, Section 2, Par. 68)

10) The Common Good of All. At the present time in the United States concern for the economic common good of the economically comfortable people is the priority. The common good of low income and no income people is seriously neglected and hence, unjust. Society that lives according to the gospel and Christian principles must make the most vulnerable citizens the first economic priority.

11) Ownership. Ownership of Property and wealth is never absolute ownership for human beings. The only absolute ownership is the ownership of God, the Creator. Human ownership is really the right of stewardship of property and wealth under God’s absolute ownership. This principle is clear in both the Jewish scriptures and the Christian scriptures. Furthermore, in the Church’s social teaching, all the earth and its resources are for the use and benefit of all human beings on planet Earth.

“God intended the earth and all that it contains for the use of every human being. Thus, as all men follow justice and unite in charity, created good should abound for them on a reasonable basis; attention must always be paid to the universal purpose for which created goods are meant. In using them, therefore, a man should regard his lawful possessions not merely as his own but also as common property in the sense that they should accrue to the benefit of not only himself but of others.”

(Ch 2, Section 2, Par. 64)

- 12)Economic Generosity. Generosity in the use and sharing of property/wealth is a basic teaching of Jesus and the Church. This is a basic moral requirement for spiritual growth and discipleship with Jesus.

“For the rest, the right to have a share of earthly goods sufficient for oneself and one’s family belongs to everyone. The Fathers and Doctors of the Church held this view, teaching that men are obliged to come to the relief of the poor, and to do so not merely out of their superfluous goods. If a person is in extreme necessity, he has the right to take from the riches of others what he himself needs. Since there are so many people in this world afflicted with hunger, this sacred Council urges all, both individuals and governments to remember the saying of the Fathers: “Feed the man dying of hunger, because if you have not fed him you have killed him.”

(Ch 2, Section 2, Par 69)

- 13)Greed. Greed is one of the seven capital sins. Generosity with one’s wealth is clearly a major part of Jesus’ teachings. In my opinion, greed is the major cause of immorality and evil in the United States. Greed is a major cause of much of our violence. St. Paul wrote, “The love of money is the root of all evil.”

“The fundamental purpose of this productivity must not be the mere multiplication of products. It must not be profit or domination. Rather, it must be the service of man, and indeed of the whole man, viewed in terms of his material needs and the demands of his intellectual, moral, spiritual, and religious life. And when we say man, we mean every man whatsoever and every group of men, of whatever race and from whatever part of the world.”\*

(Ch. 3, Section 1, Para 64)

\*I realize that the language of these documents is sexist, written in the early 60’s. I did not change the wording to inclusive language.

Suggested Reading for This Series:

Catholic Social Thought, David O’Brien, and Thomas Shannon, Orbis Press, 2003

Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church,

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Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church,

Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace

U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

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## **Appendix D**

### **CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHINGS – A RICH HERITAGE OF DOCUMENTS - Part IV**

#### **The Church in the Modern World (Vatican II) Peace on Earth (Pope John XXIII)**

Peace is not only the absence of war but also a living of nonviolence, individually and nationally. Peace is a matter of working for justice, of development of poverty-stricken nations, of love among people who differ from one another, of a gospel way of life through Jesus “The way, the truth and the life”. After this introduction the bishops and the pope in the Second Vatican Council wrote:

“All these considerations compel us to undertake an evaluation of war with an entirely new attitude. The men of our time must realize that they will have to give a somber reckoning for their deeds of war. For the course of the future will depend largely on the decisions they make today.” Ch. 5, Section I, Par. 80.

In the very next paragraph the document continues:

“Any act of war aimed indiscriminately at the destruction of entire cities or of extensive areas along with their population is a crime against God and man himself. It merits unequivocal and unhesitating condemnation.” Ch. 5, Section 1, Par. 80

To apply these words of the Second Vatican Council to nuclear war, the bishops and Pope John XXIII are telling the church and the modern world that nuclear weapons have changed the very nature of war. They are telling us that the use of such weapons as used by the United States in Hiroshima and Nagasaki are immoral. This is “Total War”, where all are in danger of destruction. They are saying that “An entirely new attitude toward war” is now called for.

Since this document of Vatican II and the Papal Encyclical Peace on Earth the Catholic Church has begun a new theological journey toward becoming a church of peace in the modern world. That journey as yet, is not complete.



This new vision continues on the next page of the document: The Church in the Modern World.

“Therefore, it must be said again: the arms race is an utterly treacherous trap for humanity, and one which injures the poor to an intolerable degree. It is much to be feared that if this race persists, it will eventually spawn all the lethal ruin whose path it is now making ready....” (Ch 5, Section 1, Par.8)

The arms race is not just a problem of the past; today the arms race includes North Korea and Iran as well as Russia and the U.S. To strengthen this resolve of Vatican Council II and Pope John’s Encyclical, both documents speak of a “universal public authority” to make peace possible throughout the world.

“It is our clear duty, then, to strain every muscle as we work for this time when all war can be completely outlawed by international consent. This goal undoubtedly requires the establishment of some universal public authority acknowledged as such by all, and endowed with effective power to safeguard, on the behalf of all, security, regard for justice, and respect for rights.” Ch 5, Section 1, Par 82.

This document then goes on to a general vision of what the United Nations could be and do for a new vision of peace in the world. After spending five more paragraphs outlining United Nations and the need for Christians to support a world authority, the document states:

“An outstanding form of international activity on the part of Christians undoubtedly consists in the cooperative effort which, as individuals and in groups, they make to institutes established for the encouragement of cooperation among nations. The same is true of their efforts to establish such agencies. These deserve to be strengthened by an increase in the number of well-qualified associates and in the needed resources.” Ch. 5, Section 2, Par 90.

The United States could make or break the development of the United Nations. IN recent decades the United States has not given the potential of the U.N. sufficient support. Rather, our nation has hindered the potential of the U.N. In recent history the U.S. has tended to denigrate the U.N. rather than work to build it up.

The final words of these documents on peace emphasize the role of the churches in supporting the United Nations. However, “peace begins with me” in following the nonviolent Christ.

My own conclusion to this article on peace is scriptural. It is quite clear in the gospels that Jesus taught non-violence, Jesus lived non-violence and Jesus expects us to be non-violent.

P.S. President Bush has stated that he would authorize the use of nuclear weapons if necessary. This is a dangerous intention and the Catholic Church and most theologians would consider such use immoral.

**CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING - -**  
**A RICH HERITAGE OF DOCUMENTS – Part V**  
**On the Development of Peoples**

With this article I will review On the Development of Peoples by Pope Paul VI, 1967, in no way out of date today.

This document expresses the concern of Pope Paul VI and the Catholic Church about the needs of the Third World, the less developed part of our planet. In Pope Paul's own words:

“There can be no progress toward the development of the peoples of the earth without the simultaneous development of all humanity in the spirit of solidarity. This duty must be the concern especially of better-off nations.” Par 43 and 44.

The document continues:

“The same duty of solidarity that rests on individuals exists also for nations: advanced nations have a heavy obligation to help the developing peoples. ...we must repeat once more that the superfluous wealth of rich countries should be placed at the service of poor nations. Par 48

This is an official teaching of the Catholic Church. The U.S. for decades has given only a token nod to this teaching. Our nation, the richest in the world, ranks only 19 in comparison with other industrial nations in giving financial humanitarian aid to nations in need.

In the section of this document entitled: “The Universal Purpose of Created Things” we read:

God intended the earth and all it contains for the use of every human being and people. Par. 22

In paragraph 23, this document quotes St. Ambrose:

“You are not making a gift of your possessions to the poor person. You are handing over to him what is his for what has been given in common for the use of all, you have arrogated to yourself. The world is given to all, not only to the rich.

To most people in the United States, this statement of St. Ambrose sounds quite radical. Actually this teaching has been part of the church's teaching for many centuries. St. Ambrose lived in the fifth century. I believe that not many Christians and not many modern nations believe in this official teaching of the Catholic Church.

Pope Paul continues to write:

"It is unfortunate that on these new conditions of society our system has been constructed which considers profit as the key motive for economic progress, competition as the supreme law of economics and private ownership as the means of production as an absolute right that has no limits and carries no corresponding social obligation. This unchecked liberalism tends to...produce the international imperialism of money.  
Paragraph 26

When we ignore the principals stated in this document, The Development of Peoples, we slide into personal and national greed that is contrary to the Gospel of Christ and perpetuates the modern condoning of the evil of poverty, " a weapon of mass destruction." (Rev. James Forbes)

This document of Pope Paul VI (1967) does not make much sense to a nation whose main foreign policy is our own national self-interest.

**CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING –  
A RICH HERITAGE OF DOCUMENTS  
On the Condition of Labor, Pope Leo XIII, 1891  
Economic Justice for All by U.S. Bishops, 1980 - - Part VI  
**Living Wages - *Part I*****

As I continue my series on Catholic Social Teaching, I am writing this article on living wages on Labor Day, 2005. Wages are certainly a key issue in the justice of human labor. Unjust, non-living wages are quite common, almost the rule of the day, especially when it comes to the minimum wage, a wage that keeps most workers locked in poverty.

Great concern for just remuneration for work has been a constant theme in the social justice documents of the Church since 1891. Pope Leo writes:

“To the State, the interests of all are equaled whether high or low. The poor are members of the national communities equally with the rich; they are real component parts, living parts, which make up, through the family, the living body; and it may hardly have been said that they are by far the majority. It would be irrational to neglect one portion of the citizens and to favor another; and therefore the public administration must duly and solicitously provide for the welfare and the comfort of the working people, or else that law of justice will be violated which ordains that each shall have his or her due. (On the Condition of Labor, Par 27)

In the United States and in most other nations the poor are not considered “members of the national community equally with the rich.” In most nations, including our own, the poor, are not considered a high priority.

In the same document Pope Leo adds:

“The preservation of life is the bounden duty of each and all, and to fail therein is a crime. It follows that each has a right to procure what is required in order to live; and the poor can procure it in no other way than by work and wages... The remuneration must be enough to support the wage earner in reasonable and frugal comfort. If through necessity or fear of the worst evil, the workman accepts harder conditions because an employer or contractor will give him no better he is the victim of force and injustice. Par 34

In this quotation Pope Leo gives a beginning definition of a living wage- - a wage sufficient for a worker to take care of all of the necessities of life for self and family, and to procure what is needed to live decently in frugal comfort. Poverty allows neither the procurement of necessities nor frugal comfort.

In the United States Bishops' Pastoral Letter of 1986, Economic Justice for All, the Bishops write:

“The commandments to love God with all one’s heart and to love one’s neighbor as oneself are the heart and soul of Christian morality.” Para 64

This love, the foundation of Biblical morality, applies to employers employees and to the question of wages for labor. The bishops continue in paragraph 70:

“Distributive justice requires that the allocation of income, wealth, and power in society be evaluated in light of its effect on persons whose basic material needs are unmet.”

The Second Vatican Council stated:

“The right to have a share of earthly goods sufficient for one’s self and one’s family belongs to everyone.”

To support their stand on living wages the U. S. Bishops mention almost 20 citations from the Bible about wages and care for the poor. (Paragraphs 48, 49, 50, 51 and 52). The Bible is quite clear that unjust wages would be cheating employees in remuneration for work.

The only moral excuse for paying workers less than a living wage would be the willingness of a worker to work for less because the employer could not pay a living wage without real economic harm to himself and his business. This certainly is not the case of a corporation that can pay exorbitant salaries to CEO’s and upper level administrators while cheating workers legally with legal minimum wages. Our national condoning of greed does not excuse employers from the responsibility of giving living wages.

## **Appendix D**

### **Catholic Social Teaching – A Rich Heritage of Documents**

#### **Living Wages – *Part II***

This article on “Living Wages” is a practical application about living wages for our time. The ideas in this article are from a book entitled “Nickle and Dimed” by Barbara Ehrenrich. She reports on the Economic Policy Institutes recent statements about a living wage

Following are the main elements of this report:

- The average annual wage required for a “living wage” would be \$30,000 for a family of one adult and two children. This would amount to a wage of at least \$14.00 an hour.
- The budget includes health insurance, a telephone and child care at a licensed center.
- This wage does not include restaurant meals, video rentals, internet access, wine and liquor, cigarettes and lottery tickets, or even very much meat.
- About 60% of American workers make less than \$14.00 an hour.
- A \$30,000 wage is at least twice what entry-level workers make today. (This wage is about five times larger than the minimum wage.)
- The Catholic Bishops of Minnesota have written that we should “establish a just minimum wage at a level high enough for people to exercise economic control over their lives. With this statement of our bishops in mind as well as the Church’s century old teaching about a “living wage,” I think that the Church should take the lead in this matter of working for a minimum wage increase. This century-old commitment to a “living wage” includes a wage that can provide a humane way of life for working people, enough for the necessities of life which include medical care, education, and reasonable recreation, as well as decent food, clothing and housing according to the needs of individuals and families.
- About a quarter of all minimum wage workers are heads of families. I would find it very depressing to work full-time for years and know all the time that I would never get my family out of poverty.

- With recent welfare changes (reform?), most single parents would be forced to take a job that pays only minimum wages and so remain poor after working full-time.
- Members of Congress like to preach family values. Many of these “preachers” are willing to deprive low-income families of the ability to climb out of poverty by refusing to raise the minimum wage. One of the criteria of a truly civilized society is that its most vulnerable members are given “preferential option.” Minimum wage has never been a “living wage.” To legislatively hold people in poverty is irresponsible governance.

Pope John Paul II reinforced the Church’s century old development of a living wage when he wrote:

“Just remuneration for the work of an adult who is responsible for a family, means remuneration which will suffice for establishing and properly maintaining a family and for providing security for its future.” (On Human Work, by Pope John Paul II, 1981, Para 19.

In an article by our own Bishop Balke, 1990 he wrote:

“The temptation to exploit workers is certainly not new. In the Bible, letter of James, Chapter 5, we read: ‘Here, crying out are the wages you withheld from the farmhands who harvest your fields. The shouts of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of Hosts’”



## SUMMARY

In 1891 Pope Leo XIII published the first modern encyclicals (Papal document to the whole Church) on social issues. In 1991 the Catholic Church celebrated one hundred years of social teaching. The U.S. Bishops published a book entitled, A Century of Social Teaching, briefly summarizing the basic themes of social teachings since 1891. Following is a brief summary of A Century of Social Teaching:

### VIII. THE LIFE AND DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON

“Each person possesses a basic dignity that comes from God, not from any human quality or accomplishment, not from race or gender, age or economic status.”

### IX. THE RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE HUMAN PERSON

“People have a fundamental right to life and to those things that make life truly human: food, clothing, housing, health care, education, security, social services, and employment.”

### X. THE CALL TO FAMILY, COMMUNITY, AND PARTICIPATION

“The human person is not only sacred, but social. We realize our dignity and rights in relationship with others, in community. No community is more central than the family; it needs to be supported not undermined. It is the basic cell of society, and the state has an obligation to support the family.”

### XI. DIGNITY OF WORK AND RIGHT OF WORKERS

“Work is more than a way to make a living: it is an expression of our dignity and a form of continuing participation in God’s creation. People have the right to decent and productive work, to decent and fair wages, to private property and economic initiative.”

### XII. THE OPTION FOR THE POOR AND THE VULNERABLE

“Poor and vulnerable people have a special place in Catholic social teaching. A basic moral test of a society is how its most vulnerable members are faring.”

### XIII. SOLIDARITY

We are one human family, whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic and ideological differences. We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers. " (cf. Genesis 4:9)


### XIV. JUSTICE AND NONVIOLENCE ARE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF THE CHURCH'S MISSION

"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, or, in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation." SYNOD 1971: Justice in the World

If the above social priorities of the Bible and the Church were also priorities of our nation, the United States would be a more just and nonviolent society. I do not expect the U.S. government to implement or even agree with, the teachings of the Catholic Church. However, I would expect Catholic Christian people to make Catholic teachings and principals a higher priority when political policies contradict the religious teachings.


## Appendix E

### NETWORK – A National Catholic Social Lobby




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# NETWORK

A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby



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### Medicaid

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*September 20, 2005*

#### Emergency Health Care Relief in Katrina's Wake

NETWORK supports the Emergency Health Care Relief Act of 2005 (S. 1716), bipartisan legislation proposed by Senators Chuck Grassley (R-IA) and Max Baucus (D-MT). The bill would provide disaster-relief Medicaid to the hundreds of thousands of people left displaced and jobless by the hurricane. The bill would also streamline eligibility and application processes, eliminate the usual documentation requirements and provide full federal funding for Medicaid to the affected states. [Families USA](#) has provided a toll free number through Friday, September 23: 1-800-828-0498. NETWORK urges our members to call their senators this week and urge them to support this legislation. A Sept. 20 opinion column in the [Washington Post](#) by former Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna E. Shalala succinctly highlights the need for federally-funded emergency Medicaid assistance.

#### New Census Data Reveals Greater Need for Medicaid

According to the latest [Census Data](#) released in August, the number of uninsured Americans rose by 800,000 from 2003 to 2004. While fewer Americans received insurance from their employers during this period, 2.3 million *more* people came to rely on government-sponsored health insurance. The majority of these – 1.9 million – were new Medicaid enrollees. Hurricane Katrina and the new census data both show us that now, more than ever, our nation needs the Medicaid program to remain strong and ensure basic care for the most sick and vulnerable among us.

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*July 29, 2005*

July 30, 2005 marks the Fortieth Anniversary of Medicaid and Medicare.

The timing seems significant as the **National Governors' Association**, the **Commission for the Study of Medicaid** and the **Congress** vie for leadership in Medicaid's reform.

The **National Governors' Association** (NGA) passed its Medicaid Reform Policy (EC-16) during the annual meeting, July 15 – 18, 2005. ([more on the Governors' Plan below](#)) Their attempt to slow the growing cost of Medicaid would allow states to demand co-payments, which according to Ron Pollack of Families USA will, "merely have people covered on paper. But in reality, they won't truly have health coverage because they can't afford it." Some governors are in agreement, stating that they will decline some provisions of the policy, particularly co-pays. The **Commission for the Study of Medicaid** held its first session on July 27th. Congress has given the Commission an early September deadline to recommend means of cutting \$10 billion over five years from the Medicaid budget. Commission meetings are open, having a public comment period, followed by Commission deliberation.

There are legislators in **Congress** who are looking to model a national Medicaid reform after TennCare, the Tennessee program which is denying eligibility to over 300,000 previous Tennessee recipients. This is being done by limiting eligibility for the program. For instance, non-pregnant adults will no longer qualify in the "Medically Needy" program. Further, it limits the services available. Some may be eligible as "Categorically Needy" due to income below the Federal Poverty Level Income Standard (\$19,350 for a family of 4). Expansion of this type of program would deny many with disabilities and chronic diseases what is necessary for life support.

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### Medicaid Commission

*May 16, 2005*

The 2006 budget mandates a \$10 billion cut to Medicaid over five years. The Senate included a demand for a Commission for the Study of Medicaid, with no cuts to Medicaid until 2007. Secretary of Health and Human Services Mike Leavitt announced last week that his office would appoint commission members within the next two weeks. The commission will have two-tiers, with up to 15 voting and 18 non-voting members. The voting tier will be comprised of: Medicaid officials; "former or current governors"; state Medicaid directors; three health care experts from public policy organizations; and other with expertise in health, finance or administration. The non-voting tier will be comprised of four Republican and four Democratic congressional members and up to 10 representatives of benefit groups such as child survivors, the disabled and widows. Congressional pleas for representation of the Institute of Medicine or the National Academy of Sciences were rejected.

The commission will be seeking answers to about 10 questions concerning such issues as long term care, financing structures and eligibility requirements.

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### Governors' Plan

*July 15, 2005*

A committee of the National Governors' Association (NGA) has developed a plan for reform of Medicaid, which they have presented to

the House and the Senate. The governors were asked to appoint non-voting members to the Commission for the Study of Medicaid, but have refused to do so. Nonetheless, they hope to negotiate with the commission on the cost-cutting plan to be presented to Congress. The NGA will be meeting July 15 -18, 2005 in Des Moines, Iowa, where they are expected to formally approve their proposal for Medicaid reform.

**NETWORK** has deep concerns about the governors' proposal, which includes major increases in cost-sharing for Medicaid recipients. Co-pays would rise to \$10 to \$20 per visit or prescription and for the first time ever, many beneficiaries would pay monthly premiums. Beneficiaries' total cost-sharing could equal up to 5% of their total annual income, or 7.5% for those making more than 150% of the poverty line ([see note 1](#)). Altogether, many Medicaid beneficiaries could end up paying the equivalent of an entire month's income on health expenses. Over 53 million Americans benefit from Medicaid, including children, people with disabilities, and nursing home patients.

NETWORK strongly opposes the proposed high level of cost-sharing which would adversely impact the neediest families in our nation. Both monthly premiums and co-pays deter those with low income from seeking needed health care, which frequently leads to more serious and expensive conditions and treatments. This is particularly true for persons with chronic health conditions such as cancer, heart conditions, diabetes or mental illness ([see note 2](#)).

As healthcare costs continue to escalate for all Americans, there are no easy solutions to ensuring the availability of health care for all.

Nevertheless, NETWORK continues to support universal healthcare for all, in keeping with the US Catholic Bishops' teaching that "a ffordable and accessible health care is an essential safeguard of human life and a fundamental human right". In the interim, NETWORK supports the preservation of Medicaid as a federally-funded entitlement program, with appropriation levels of funding to meet the needs of all who are eligible for benefits.

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### Tools for Action

**Medicaid Matters to Someone You Know.** "Medicaid Matters" is a toolkit to share information on the value of the Medicaid program, and to help people work to preserve it. Any cuts to the Medicaid program have serious negative impact on State budgets. As the number of beneficiaries steadily rises, states have already been forced to eliminate low-income recipients whose income exceeds the level for "mandatory" coverage, and reduce benefits listed as "optional."

"Optional" benefits include prescription drugs, prosthetics, physical therapy, hospice care, case management and personal care services.

[Click here for more information](#) on *Medicaid's Optional Populations: Coverage and Benefits*.

The [Medicaid Matters website](#) invites you to contact your members of congress, governor and state legislators to let them know that you care.

**Contact Your Governor:** And let him/her know you oppose the high levels of cost-sharing which would adversely impact the neediest families in our nation. Contact information for governors can be found at <http://www.lib.umich.edu/govdocs/govemail.html> — click on your state, and then on the website of your governor to find a button for *contact*.

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### Notes

**Note 1:** POVERTY THRESHOLD — Sample of threshold set by 2004 Census Bureau statistics:

Size of Family Unit	# of Children Under 18 within this Family Unit			
	None	One	Two	Three
One person – under 65	\$ 9,827			
One person – over 65	\$ 9,060			
Four persons	\$ 19, 484	\$ 19,803	\$ 19,157	\$ 19,223
Six persons	\$ 27,025	\$ 27,133	\$ 26,573	\$ 25,037

**Note 2:** A recent study reported in *Journal of the American Medical Association* on effects of co-payments indicates that low income adults filled fewer prescriptions for essential medications resulting in 78 percent increase in hospitalization, nursing home admissions and even death, and an 88% increase in emergency room visits.

Source: Robyn Tamblyn, et al., "Adverse Events Associated with Prescription Drug Cost-Sharing among Poor and Elderly Persons," *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 285(4): 421-429, January 2001. In this study, the low-income people were adult welfare recipients.

A RAND study showed that lower income persons experienced poorer health when co-payments were imposed than did those in middle and upper income ranges.

Source: J. Newhouse. *Free for All*, 1996 ( RAND Health Insurance Expt.)

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## **Medicaid Cuts Jeopardize Poor Seniors and Children**

*May 9, 2005*

The federal budget for Fiscal Year 2006, approved by Congress, calls for \$10 billion in cuts to Medicaid over the next five years. While the final cuts agreed upon by the budget conference committee are less than the \$15 billion proposed by the House, they will nonetheless have a disastrous impact on the nation's most poor and vulnerable.

### **Who's taking the money away?**

Both the Senate Finance Committee and the House Commerce Committee have jurisdiction over Medicaid. The Senate committee, which also oversees TANF, EITC, SSI and child care spending, must produce at least \$10 billion in cuts, and the House committee \$15 billion.

### **Who loses out?**

Specific policy changes in order to implement the cuts have not yet emerged, but could include: increased co-payments, benefit cuts, reductions in pharmacy payments, and some changes in how seniors transfer their assets in order to qualify for long-term care under Medicaid. What is certain is that the population eligible for Medicaid will only increase in the years ahead, as more workers enter retirement and as fewer workers receive health care benefits from their employers. Simply put, more Americans will need Medicaid, but less money will be available to go around, which will result in poorer quality care or simply no care at all for the people who need it most.

The \$10 billion in Medicaid cuts will undoubtedly increase the financial burden on already cash-strapped states. The projected cuts will likely include \$2.5 billion in cuts to the states by 2007. (To put the numbers into perspective, this same \$2.5 billion, if uncut, could also pay for

Medicaid coverage for an additional 1.2 million children, or for 227,300 senior citizens.) In response, state governors and legislators are proposing sweeping changes in the Medicaid program, including limiting services to poor families and the elderly and increasing patients' out-of-pocket costs.

### Where is Medicaid going from here?

It is no secret that Medicaid spending has increased dramatically in recent years, due both to the spiraling costs of health care and the increasing number of eligible beneficiaries. In light of this, Congress has agreed to form a Commission for the Study of Medicaid to examine ways to restructure the program. Meanwhile, the cuts outlined in the FY 06 budget will not take effect until 2007.

It is important to keep in mind that Medicaid has done a better job at holding down costs than private insurance.

More information about the likely impact of the cuts on Medicaid beneficiaries is available on the [FamiliesUSA web site](#).

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### **Medicaid**

*March 15, 2005*

Medicaid is an essential component of our nation's health care system, providing health care coverage for poor families, the elderly and disabled, in keeping with the Scriptural mandate to care for the most vulnerable and marginalized.

**NETWORK supports the preservation of Medicaid as a federally-funded entitlement program.** Our basic message is twofold—"no caps, no cuts"

- Do not cut Medicaid funding
- Do not place financial caps on the Medicaid programs

### **Medicaid Facts**

- 53 million people in the United States receive health services through Medicaid, the nation's major public health insurance program for people with low income. This includes:

- 25 million children (one-third of all children in America)
- 13 million low- income parents,
- 5 million elderly and
- 8 million people with disabilities

(Source: Families USA, Coalition on Human Needs)

- Medicaid is the single largest source of funding for nursing home care in the nation.

(Source: Kaiser Family Foundation)

- One in seven Medicaid enrollees receives both Medicare and Medicaid: 71% have annual income below \$10,000, compared to 13% of all Medicare beneficiaries.

(Source: Kaiser Family Foundation)

- President Bush has proposed a net \$45 billion in cuts to the Medicaid program over the next ten years. By the fifth year of these cuts, the funds lost to states would be enough to provide health coverage to 1.8 million children or 345,000 people over 65 nationwide.

(Sources: Coalition on Human Needs, Center on Budget and Policy



Priorities,  
Georgetown University Health Policy Institute)

### **Dispelling the Myths on Medicaid**

#### **“Medicaid costs are rising so much that we need to curb spending”**

- Increases in Medicaid spending simply reflect overall increases in health care costs. In fact, Medicaid costs have grown more slowly than private insurance costs: since 2000, employer-sponsored insurance premiums have grown by an average of 12.3%, while average acute care Medicaid costs per enrollee have grown by only 6.9%. Instead of disproportionately targeting those who stand to lose the most, we should address the larger issues behind rising health care costs in the United States.

(Source: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities)

#### **“Funding caps and block grants will give the states more flexibility in administering Medicaid”**

- In reality, federal funding caps and block granting will shift the burden of medical costs to the already cash-strapped states. The states will be forced in turn to impose enrollment caps and even terminate people’s benefits. Basically, “flexibility” means that otherwise eligible people will lose out on essential medical care.

#### **“States can save money by eliminating coverage of ‘optional’ medical services.”**

- “Optional” services is a misnomer. The category actually includes essential acute and chronic care services and equipment. Eliminating this coverage would impact 20% of children in Medicaid, and more than 40% of total Medicaid enrolled parents and pregnant women.

---

### **NETWORK's Position on Medicaid**

NETWORK supports the preservation of Medicaid as a federally-funded entitlement program, with appropriation levels of funding to meet the needs of all who are eligible for benefits. NETWORK further supports savings to the program through price negotiation for pharmaceuticals, as is currently available to the Veteran’s Administration. Another area of savings to investigate is increased support for home health care for those in need of long term care. NETWORK supports a position of “no caps, no cuts” for Medicaid benefits and opposes block-granting of services.

The NETWORK position is in accord with that of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops:

*“Affordable and accessible health care is an essential safeguard of human life and a fundamental human right. Any plan to reform the nation’s health care system must be rooted in values that respect human dignity, protect human life, and meet the unique needs of the poor. We support health care that is affordable and accessible to all . . . We will support measures to strengthen Medicare and Medicaid.”* - Faithful Citizenship: Civic Responsibility for a New Millennium (USCCB).

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### **Catholic Social Tradition and Global Issues**

For true global solidarity and development to take place, nations must work for the global community. The focus must move from international competition on political and economic levels to an international democracy of nations working together to create a just world. Pope John Paul II said:

"Interdependence must be transformed into solidarity, grounded on the principle that the goods of creation are meant for all. Avoiding every type of imperialism, the stronger nations must feel responsible for the other nations, based on the equality of all peoples and with respect for the differences." (On Social Concern #39)

NETWORK analyzes issues through the lens of the Catholic Social Tradition. Based on the Catholic Social Tradition principle of "Solidarity of the Human Family," we are to see the "other" – any person, people, or nation – as a partner, sharer, and neighbor regardless of race, class, gender, ethnicity, age, political persuasion, sexuality, etc. NETWORK believes that the United States must extend mutual esteem for every nation in the world.

Pope John Paul II, in his message of "Teaching Peace" on World Peace Day 2004, agrees that the international community must be a part of any peacemaking effort:

"States must consider this objective [peace] as a clear moral and political obligation which calls for prudence and determination. Here I would repeat the words of encouragement which I spoke in 1995: 'The United Nations Organization needs to rise more and more above the cold status of an administrative institution to become a moral center where all the nations of the world feel at home and develop a shared awareness of being, as it were, *a family of nations*.'"

This "family of nations" has the potential to achieve peace if the nations of the world would place their faith in it. NETWORK keeps the principle of "Solidarity of the Human Family" in mind as we work with a coalition of other national organizations on global issues.

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## The Human Needs Deficit

*March 2005*

As Congress considers a budget for fiscal year 2006, the United States currently faces a deficit of \$427 billion for fiscal year 2005. This huge monetary deficit is the topic of much debate. A topic that receives significantly less attention, however, is the incredible **social deficit** facing our nation. Year after year, Congress attempts to offset the rising deficit by slashing human needs programs, leaving hundreds of thousands of people without services that ensure their health, safety and education. NETWORK has compiled the following facts and statistics to give you an idea of the Human Needs deficit in the United States.

### Child Care

- More than 6 million children go home alone after school each week.
- Only 1 in 7 children eligible for federal child care assistance actually receives it.
- Current funding only allows Head Start to reach about three out of five eligible preschool age children and just 3% of eligible infants and toddlers in Early Head Start.

(All facts from: Children's Defense Fund  
<[http://www.childrensdefense.org/earlychildhood/headstart/head\\_start\\_fact\\_sheet.pdf](http://www.childrensdefense.org/earlychildhood/headstart/head_start_fact_sheet.pdf)>)

### Food/Hunger

- In 2002, 11% — 12.1 million — of all U.S. households were "food insecure". Of these, 3.8 million suffered from food insecurity that was so severe that the USDA classified them as "hungry."  
(Food Research Action Center  
<[http://www.frac.org/html/hunger\\_in\\_the\\_us/hunger\\_index.html](http://www.frac.org/html/hunger_in_the_us/hunger_index.html)>)
- From 2002 to 2003, requests for food assistance in US cities increased by an average of 17 percent. 40% of US cities surveyed reported an inability to provide an adequate amount of food.  
(U.S. Conference of Mayors:  
<[http://www.usmayors.org/uscm/news/press\\_releases/documents/hunger\\_121803.asp](http://www.usmayors.org/uscm/news/press_releases/documents/hunger_121803.asp)>)

### Health Care

- 15.6% of the population, or 45 million people, lacked health insurance coverage in 2003, up from 15.2% in 2002.
- 11.4% of all children do not have health care.
- 32.7% of Latinos lack health insurance – the highest rate of any race or ethnic group.
- Children in poverty were more likely to be uninsured in comparison to all children in 2003, 19.2% compared with 11.4%

(All facts from: US Census Bureau  
<<http://www.census.gov/hhes/income/income03/prs04asc.html>>)

## Housing

- Nearly 95 million people in the United States, in cities, suburbs and rural areas — a third of the nation — have housing problems. These problems include: high housing costs relative to income, overcrowding, inadequate living conditions, and homelessness.  
(National Low-Income Housing Coalition  
<<http://www.nlihc.org/research/housingmyths.pdf>>)
- The number one reason people give for being homeless is the lack of affordable housing.  
([http://www.usmayors.org/uscm/us\\_mayor\\_newspaper/documents/01\\_10\\_05/hunger.asp](http://www.usmayors.org/uscm/us_mayor_newspaper/documents/01_10_05/hunger.asp))
- The national Housing Wage for a two bedroom unit is \$15.37 according to the 2004 Out of Reach Report by the National Low Income Housing Coalition.
- 3.5 million people experience homelessness in the United States every year, according to a 2000 Urban Institute study.
- In 2004, requests for emergency shelter assistance increased by an average of 6% for the 27 U.S. cities surveyed in the 2004 U.S. Conference of Mayors–Sodexo USA Hunger and Homelessness Survey.

## Immigration

- Each year about 65,000 U.S.-raised, undocumented students graduate from high school but cannot pursue higher education or work legally in the U.S.  
(National Immigration Law Center  
<[http://www.nilc.org/immlawpolicy/DREAM/DREAM\\_Basic\\_Info\\_11-04.pdf](http://www.nilc.org/immlawpolicy/DREAM/DREAM_Basic_Info_11-04.pdf)>)
- Since 1998, the Border Patrol has documented 1,973 migrant deaths on the US-Mexico border. This does not include bodies that have not been found.  
(Border Working Group <http://www.rtfcam.org/border/deaths061604.pdf>)

## Poverty

- The number in poverty increased by 1.3 million people, to 35.9 million from 2002 to 2003. (The Federal Poverty Level is \$14,776/yr for a family of three.)  
(US Census Bureau <<http://www.census.gov/hhes/income/income03/prs04asc.html>>)

## Social Security

- As of 12/04, approximately 4.98 million children receive Social Security disability and/or survivor benefits – more than the number who benefit from TANF (4.15 million children).  
(Social Security Administration: [http://www.ssa.gov/legislation/2005\\_factsheet.doc](http://www.ssa.gov/legislation/2005_factsheet.doc))  
(US Department of Health and Human Services, Indicators of Welfare Dependence Annual Report to Congress 2004 <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/indicators04/apa-tanf.htm>)
- 37% of Social Security beneficiaries do not receive retirement benefits, but do benefit from disability, SSI and/or survivor benefits.  
(Social Security administration  
<[http://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/quickfacts/stat\\_snapshot/index.html](http://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/quickfacts/stat_snapshot/index.html)>)

## Tax Cuts

- Making permanent the tax cuts enacted in 2001 and 2003 would have a direct cost of \$1.8 trillion through fiscal year 2015. This includes the cost of extending the Alternative Minimum Tax relief associated with these tax cuts.
- Without offsets, the cost of these tax cuts would increase the annual deficit and thus would add to the federal debt. The interest payments associated with this higher level of debt will be nearly \$300 million through 2015. Consequently, the total cost of the tax cuts, including the related interest costs would be \$2.1 trillion over the period.
- Through fiscal year 2005, the Bush tax cuts enacted since 2001 have cost \$819 billion. Before they expire, they will cost another \$1 trillion, for a total cost of \$1.9 trillion.
- If the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts are made permanent, as the Administration has proposed, their cost over the next 75 years [using Congressional Budget Office projections] will be more than five times the Social Security shortfall over this period.

(All facts from: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities <<http://www.cbpp.org/2-2-05tax.htm>>)

## Unemployment

- 8,149,000 people in the United States were unemployed in 2004.  
(<http://www.bls.gov/cps/home.htm#overview>)
- 7.7 million in the U.S. were unemployed in the month of January, 2005.  
(<http://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.nr0.htm>)
- Only 43% of unemployed workers in the U.S. received unemployment insurance in 2001.  
(<http://www.nelp.org/docUploads/pub189%2Epdf>)

## Wages/Income

- In 2003, Women made \$0.76 to every dollar a man makes. This figure is down from \$0.77 in 2002.  
(US Census Bureau <<http://www.census.gov/hhes/income/income03/prs04asc.html>>)
- Between 2002 and 2003, income levels for the lowest 20% of households decreased 1.9% from \$18,326 to \$17,984 while the income levels for households in top 20% increased 1.1% from \$85,941 to \$86,867.  
(<http://www.census.gov/prod/2004pubs/p60-226.pdf>)

- The top 10% of income earners in the United States owns 70% of the wealth.  
([http://www.faireconomy.org/research/wealth\\_charts.html](http://www.faireconomy.org/research/wealth_charts.html))
- From 1979 to 2001, the increase in family income levels for the bottom 20% was 3% yet the top 5% increased income by 81%. You can compare this to another period in U.S. history (1947-79) where the top and bottom income earners increased their wealth by 116% and 86% respectively.  
([http://www.faireconomy.org/research/income\\_charts.html](http://www.faireconomy.org/research/income_charts.html))

## War/Peace

- The War in Iraq has cost the United States \$156.7 billion to date.  
(National Priorities Project, March 17, 2005  
<<http://www.nationalpriorities.org/costofwar/index.html>>)
- Since the invasion of Iraq on March 19, 2003:
  - 1,511 U.S. troops have been killed in Iraq
  - 11,285 Americans have been wounded in Iraq
  - 21,100-39,300 Iraqi civilians have been killed as a result of violence from war and violence from crime
 (All figures are as of March 20, 2005  
<<http://www.americanprogress.org/site/pp.asp?c=biJRJ8OVF&b=474617>>)

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