Members of the JustFaith community engage spirituality. Photo courtesy of Nick Albares
The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord. (Lk 4:18–19)

In Luke 4:18, Jesus announces the reign of God by re-presenting the words of the prophet Isaiah. As we begin to think about the New Evangelization and social justice, it is important to return to Jesus’ “mission statement.” Jesus’ first proclamation of evangelization was focused on liberation, restoration, freedom, and healing. Our call now is to carry this message to all people.

Since 1891 with Pope Leo XIII’s encyclical Rerum Novarum, the Church has built a body of social doctrine that relates Jesus’ mission statement and Gospel teachings to the concrete signs of the times. Moreover, the sacramental life of the Church animates the Church’s social teaching and action. In the encyclical Deus Caritas Est (2005), Pope Benedict XVI affirms the three-fold responsibility of the Church as preaching the
Gospel, celebrating the sacraments, and practicing charity which flows from justice (§25a). It is the Eucharist – the source and summit of the life of the Church – that connects these elements of the Church’s mission, calling all people to join in the banquet in mutual self-giving love and affection. From this meal flows a Eucharistic vision of society, with all people giving and receiving love, and all working in harmony for the common good. This vision provides the basis for Jesus’ self-identification with those who are hungry, homeless, naked, sick, and imprisoned (Mt 25:31–46). In order for the Eucharistic vision to be realized, we must extend hospitality and welcome to those who are marginalized and oppressed.

Catholic Social Teaching (CST) invites us into relationship both with those who are oppressed and those living on the margins of society. The social teaching of the Church also invites us to transform systems and structures of injustice in order to facilitate the healing of society. The National Directory of Catechesis (NDC, 2005) states that the “New Evangelization” is directed toward three main areas:

1) The New Evangelization is “directed to the Church herself.” This includes those who have been baptized but who never really heard the Gospel message, those who have never made a personal commitment to Christ and the Gospel, those who were formed by values of the secular culture, those who have lost a sense of faith, and those who have in some way been alienated from the Church.

2) The New Evangelization is “directed to all human cultures so that they might be open to the Gospel and live in harmony with Christian values.”

3) The New Evangelization is “aimed at personal transformation,” including personal relationship with God and sacramental worship, maturation of one’s ethical and social conscience and a life-long integration of faith into all aspects of one’s life. (§17A)

We, Nick Albares and Genevieve Jordan, have experienced both professionally and personally how CST brings about these three components of the New Evangelization by renewing the Church herself, upholding the rights of all human cultures, and inspiring personal transformation.
The Church Herself

Catholic Social Teaching, with its particular call to faith in action in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in need, offers a New Evangelization to faithful Catholics. It invites them to make a deep and inconvenient commitment to follow Christ’s demands in the Gospel. It also challenges the values of the secular culture, including a fear of the other that divides us from our oppressed and marginalized brothers and sisters.

I (Genevieve) am the Executive Director of Romero Center Ministries, a Catholic education and retreat center based in Camden, New Jersey. Two years ago, we launched a young adult ministry for people in their 20s and 30s in the suburbs of Camden and Philadelphia, with a particular charism of putting faith into action through service and social justice. I saw the New Evangelization at work through CST even in the first year of our young adult ministry. That year, the diocesan young adult retreat was hosted in collaboration with Romero Center Ministries. The planning committee was made up of young adults who had been actively engaged in leadership in the diocese for several years.

We held our planning meetings at the Romero Center in Camden, a city which always ranks near the top of the poorest American cities, despite its location in one of the richest states per capita in the country. The planning committee resisted venturing into the city for a meeting, fearful of what might happen to them there.
Still more threatening, however, was the idea of hosting the retreat at a social justice education center. With its focus on social justice, Romero Center Ministries was not “Catholic” enough. The planning committee feared a dearth of real prayer and retreat experiences for participants.

Held over Passion Sunday weekend, the retreat was a combination of reflection, community building, and service with our brothers and sisters in the Camden community. The theme was “A Passionate Life: Deepening Relationships with God, Self, and Others,” and it rooted the retreat in the CST principle of solidarity put forth by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, which states: “We are one human family whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. We are our brothers’ and sisters’ keepers, wherever they may be. Loving our neighbor has global dimensions in a shrinking world.”

Participants in the retreat spent a few hours reflecting on these relationships through the spiritual expression that felt most comfortable to them, which included: Taizé prayer, praise and worship, Eucharistic adoration, social justice Stations of the Cross, the Rosary, and even the chance to sit outside, listen, and reflect on the sounds echoing through the Camden streets. The retreat also included a day of service in the city. Retreatants had the opportunity either to spend time with people at a homeless day shelter, assist in a street clean up, or visit the elderly. By the end of the retreat, the committee and participants alike could name people and share stories of those who lived in Camden. They started to voice an awareness that their deepened relationship with God required a deepened solidarity with others—especially others rejected by society.

The retreat ended with Palm Sunday Mass and an open invitation for participants to come back and celebrate the Triduum with the local parish, which is 85% Latino. Every Good Friday, members of that parish process in a live Stations of the Cross. Hundreds of people follow “Jesus” through the streets of Camden. The procession winds its way through drug corners and streets lined with abandoned buildings. As I made my way through the crowd on the Good Friday after the retreat, I spotted one of the members of the retreat planning committee walking by himself. Weeks before, he would not drive himself into Camden for the planning meetings; he would only attend if he could ride with someone else. He had also expressed discomfort with the content of the retreat, voicing concern about whether or not it was Catholic enough. On Good Friday, he had driven into Camden by himself without knowing whether anyone from the retreat would be present. He walked through the streets of the poverty-ridden city amid a sea of people he didn’t know, praying in a language he didn’t speak. Just a few weeks later he told me, “Gen, I think we should do the retreat at the Romero Center again next year. And maybe next time the theme could be about integrating faith, service and justice.”

Catholic Social Teaching offers a New Evangelization to faithful Catholics, by inviting them to commit more deeply to the demands of the Gospel. It also challenges those formed by values of the secular culture to reevaluate their worldview in light of Gospel values.
The National Directory of Catechesis notes that the New Evangelization of the Church herself includes not only those whose values have been formed by secular culture, but also those who have lost a sense of faith or have been alienated from the Church. According to a study by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), 64% of millennial Catholics (ages 18-29) indicated that, aside from weddings and funerals, they attend Mass less than once a month. Only 30% considered themselves practicing Catholics. However, 90% of respondents said that as Catholics, helping the poor is very important to them. The Church has lost her relevance to many young people. And yet service to the poor, a charism highly valued by CST, is very important to 90% of millennial Catholics—even though nearly half of them do not consider themselves to be practicing Catholics. This makes service a crucial locus of the New Evangelization for those who have a thin involvement in the life of the Church.

Chris Haw, a young adult who has been a leader in some of Romero Center Young Adult Ministry’s programming, published a book this past October entitled From Willow Creek to Sacred Heart: Rekindling My Love for Catholicism. Chris has lived for several years in an intentional community at Sacred Heart Church in Camden. His book chronicles his own return to Catholicism after a significant period of absence from the Church. It was the invitation to live in a community of great need that challenged his view of the Church and ultimately led to his conversion. The message of CST invites us out of theory and into relationship with Christ in our brothers and sisters in need. In turn, these relationships shake us up and call us back to the central truths of Catholicism. As we are jolted by this call, we yearn for Church—for a community of believers to support us on the journey of faith.
All Human Cultures

On May 16, 2011, the 50th anniversary of Pope John XXIII’s encyclical *Mater et Magistra* (1961), Pope Benedict XVI addressed participants in a meeting promoted by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. The Pope pronounced:

The social question today is without a doubt one of world social justice… Furthermore, it is a question of the just distribution of material and non-material resources, of the globalization of substantive social and participatory democracy. For this reason, in a context in which a gradual unification of humanity is taking place, it is indispensable that the new evangelization of society highlight the implications of a justice that should be achieved at a universal level.

The corpus of CST is written “for all people of good will” and highlights the need for and congruence of both spiritual renewal and systemic healing. The New Evangelization is needed on a macro-level of social consciousness and ought to inform how we craft our social and economic policies. I (Nick) work with Catholic Charities in the Archdiocese of New Orleans as Parish Social Ministry Coordinator. I seek to inculcate the social teaching of the Church in Catholic parishes through transformative education and formation. I also work with leaders to build programs that carry out the Church’s social mission through direct service, community organizing, and advocacy. Prior to the October 2012 Synod of Bishops, a gathering entitled “The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith,” the Vatican released an *Instrumentum laboris* (working or preparatory document), which states that “parishes have the responsibility to become real centres for propagating and bearing witness to the Christian experience and places for attentively listening to people and ascertaining their needs” (§81). This challenge calls our communities of faith to think globally and act locally in building solidarity and social justice, fruits of the New Evangelization. In order to work toward the thoroughly Catholic vision of social and distributive justice, our parishes, schools, universities, religious orders, and all ministries of the Church ought to see global social justice as an integral part of the New Evangelization.

One way in which I recently saw this principle put into practice was on a two-week trip to Kenya as a member of a Catholic Relief Services (CRS) advocacy delegation. During our time in Kenya, we built relationships with local people while witnessing CRS agricultural, sanitation, and water projects. These projects were all funded by the United States Agency for International Development and implemented by CRS through the framework of integral human development (see fig. 1).
Our purpose in viewing these projects was to return to the United States to advocate for their continued funding. As one leader in the Ghale community of Kenya told us, “The United States has many fruits. Please share your fruits with us.” This is one small example of the Church’s action on behalf of global distributive justice. As outlined in Pope Benedict XVI’s encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* (2009), deeper systemic change is needed with global institutions seeking distributive justice. In each of our localities, however, we can work towards advancing God’s vision and our prayer that God’s “kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.”

On the local level, in New Orleans, we are part of the paradoxes of all human life: devastation and hope, suffering and perseverance, exploitation and partnership, violence and peacemaking, death and life. How does the New Evangelization touch the lives of the child whose father is incarcerated? Or the mother whose seven-year-old was killed by stray gunfire? What does it say to the “pioneer” family in the Lower Ninth Ward who has rebuilt their house but with no nearby neighbors, no grocery store, and no healthcare services? What does it say to the women and men imprisoned by a system that has a profit-motive to incarcerate instead of rehabilitate?

The New Evangelization calls us to bring forward a message of healing. As the Church preaches and lives out this teaching on local and global levels, we advance the New Evangelization. The Catholic social imagination extends to all people and affirms the life and dignity of every human being. It calls us to solidarity, to the realization that we truly are one human family. This compelling vision is important...
to represent as we journey in faith. Through this, we are co-workers in the unification of humanity—not simply through communication and trade—but through deep familial bonds that are at the core of our humanity.

I stand as witness to the Church living out the Good News through parish-based mentoring programs: the Cornerstone prisoner re-entry ministry, and the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, which supports groups bringing services such as grocery stores and health care to underserved communities. By growing in relationship with others, especially people who are oppressed and marginalized, we awaken to the reality that the Church has a special role in facilitating experiences that bring about transformation, build community, and incorporate more people into the salvific mission of the Church.

Personal Transformation

Often, the deepening of relationships with our brothers and sisters who are oppressed provides an experience of metanoia (conversion). Moreover, a disciplined study and reflection on the body of CST will provide a transformational experience in and of itself. Combining experience with theological reflection allows for true growth in solidarity, love, and faith in our communion. We have seen these occur through the immersion experiences at the Romero Center in Camden and those offered through the Office of Justice and Peace in New Orleans.

When I (Nick) started my ministry in 2008, one of my first tasks was to launch the JustFaith program in the Archdiocese of New Orleans. This process of 30 weekly meetings intends to ground participants in a deeper understanding of CST and also offers four opportunities for engagement with the community. In these four immersion experiences, the program challenges participants to leave their comfort zones and form new relationships with oppressed and marginalized people. Among their many experiences, groups have spent time at the local Catholic Worker house, talked with people who are homeless over a meal, stood in vigil with families devastated by the murder of a loved one, traveled to the Lower Ninth Ward to stand witness to the destruction and hope, and celebrated Mass with recent immigrants. Through JustFaith, hearts expand and people express a desire to live the Gospel more authentically in the context of their local community.

In conversing with participants in the program, I have learned that all of them discovered a new and deeper meaning of their faith through their immersion experiences. Some people have left lucrative careers in the private sector to
become volunteers or to work for the Church. One group revitalized the St. Vincent de Paul outreach ministry in their parish. Other participants have become leaders in a community organizing effort supported by the Catholic Campaign for Human Development. The JustFaith graduates of St. Maria Goretti Parish spearheaded an effort to form a solidarity-based partnership with a parish in Haiti, finding common ground not only in their shared faith, but also in their shared experience of natural disaster.

Conclusion

In an oft-misrepresented Gospel passage, we hear Jesus rebuke the disciples when a woman seeks to pour oil on Jesus’ head. The disciples, having taken Jesus’ message to heart, ask Him why the oil should not have been sold to help those in need. Jesus’ reply, “The poor you will always have with you,” (Mk 14:7) ought not be used as an excuse for apathy or a justification for responses to our sisters and brothers that do not look critically upon unjust social structures. No, we are called to see Jesus’ observation as a statement of where our Christian social location should lead us, where our hearts, minds, and feet should be planted. As the Instrumental laboris for the Synod of Bishops states, “The dedication and solidarity of many Christian communities towards the poor, the charitable works in which they are engaged and the simplicity of their life-style in a world which places great emphasis on buying and having, are a particularly beneficial means in proclaiming the Gospel and witnessing to our faith” (§71). This social location and location of consciousness enlivens the CST principle of the preferential option for the poor. This option calls us to make every decision in our lives, both as individuals and as members of a communal society, based upon how those decisions will affect those who are most vulnerable, oppressed, and marginalized. Our evangelization ought to extend to all people, modeling the evangelization of Christ, who sat at table with people who were poor, rich, tax collectors, and prostitutes.

Catholic Social Teaching is an integral element in the New Evangelization. It opens new doors for Catholics to live the faith, challenging us to prioritize those who are most vulnerable in every decision we make. We are called to build God’s kingdom and to work for global social justice. By living out this vision, we further Christ’s Gospel proclamation of liberation, restoration, freedom, and healing to all those oppressed, and in so doing, we “proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.”

†

1 We are indebted to Jack Jezreel, MDiv for this insight in his Louisville, KY speech on August 1, 2012
Liberating Contemplation:
Experiential Learning Analysis—El Salvador

By Pat Reidy, C.S.C.

How do you find hope in darkness? Who shows you beauty in tragedy? Where can you find courage in fear?
If they kill me, I shall arise in the Salvadoran people” – Oscar Romero

Monument to Memory and Truth, San Salvador; Photo courtesy of Pat Reidy, C.S.C.
Less than ten months after returning from the country dedicated to Our Savior, El Salvador, I continue to hold these questions close to my heart, seeking their answer in my prayerful remembrance of realities seen and shared throughout my week-long immersion in the summer of 2011 with the Notre Dame Pastoral Leadership Practicum (PLP). This reflection represents one recollection that furthers my growth as a Christian, as a human person, and (in ways both delightful and terrifying) as a seminarian each moment I remember it: namely, my contemplation of Oscar Romero’s last Sunday homily during our visit to the Metropolitan Cathedral of San Salvador.

The questions I carried with me to and from El Salvador find root in my high school education. Through their lived experience and conviction, our teachers at Regis Jesuit (both lay and religious) offered the Salvadoran martyrs as a model for Christian discipleship, as well as a challenge to the assumption of wealth and status into which most Regis students (including myself) had been born. Words and stories from El Salvador structured our contemplation as we discerned how God called us to be “men for others.” On graduation day, our teachers called us to dwell often on the witness of the martyrs: the witness of Church leaders like Oscar Romero and Rutilio Grande, of parents who sacrificed themselves to keep their children from harm, of farmers and laborers who sought a greater realization of God’s Kingdom here and now. Many of those same teachers also encouraged me to make pilgrimage to El Salvador after I entered religious formation with the Congregation of Holy Cross (whose Constitutions call religious to minister “amid the same sin and pain” that Christ entered by becoming human). The experience of pilgrimage would help open my imaginative contemplation to the humanizing (if bloodstained) truth of the country’s reality, and its embodiment in the lives of the poor majority of Salvadorans.

My current recollection of the upper church in San Salvador’s cathedral bears few marks of the architecture, the artwork, or even the sanctuary space itself. Fixed in my memory remain only the ambo, from which Romero preached, and the presider’s chair, beside which Romero’s seminarian acolytes (or deacons) would have sat – the sanctuary furniture upon which my imagination rested as I knelt in prayer that Sunday afternoon in May of last year. I found myself in a cathedral palpably tenser than my present surroundings, on a different Sunday over twenty years earlier (March 23, 1980), a seminarian in formation for the Archdiocese
of San Salvador serving as acolyte for the episcopal liturgy. Looking out from my elevated seat in the sanctuary, I studied the crowds of people, mostly campesinos (peasant farmers), who had gathered to worship, to find nourishment in the Eucharist, and to hear the words of their fellow Salvadoran and pastor, Archbishop Oscar Romero. Their faces betrayed a weariness and pain wrought by so many months of abuse and oppression; yet despite my beloved archbishop’s encouragement, I struggled to share the suffering of their situation. Like most seminarians for the archdiocese, I came from a family wealthier than the majority of our congregation, one that casually benefited from our country’s current socioeconomic arrangement. The Church’s social teaching seemed (to me) more inconvenient than problematic; as the seminary joke goes, “give me justice, but not yet!”

Listening to Romero preach, I found myself feeling not compassion for the people he loved and defended, but palpable anxiety, even fear. One always heard “God’s offer of love to the poor” and their “aspiration for liberation” in Romero’s preaching, but this Sunday’s homily seemed startlingly critical, much more direct than any he had given before:

I would like to appeal in a special way to the army’s enlisted men and in particular to the ranks of the Guardia Nacional and the police – those in the barracks. Brothers: you are of part of our own people. You kill your own campesino brothers and sisters. Before an order to kill that a man may give, God’s law must prevail: Thou shalt not kill! No soldier is obliged to obey an order against the law of God. No one has to fulfill an immoral law. It is time to take back your consciences and to obey your consciences rather than the orders of sin. The Church, defender of the rights of God, of the law of God, of human dignity, of the person, cannot remain silent before such abominations. We want the government to understand seriously that reforms are worth nothing if they are stained with so much blood. In the name of God, and in the name of this suffering people, whose laments rise to heaven each day more tumultuous, I beg you, I beseech you, I order you in the name of God: Stop the repression!
Panic welled up in my chest. *Does he know what he’s saying?* After all the death threats, all the attacks, all the murders—the government’s going to shoot Romero, and me along with him! I had not entered seminary to be a martyr, nor was I prepared to incur Romero’s fate. With a classmate’s tap on the shoulder, my contemplation ended almost as abruptly as it had begun. I left the cathedral filled with undigested desolation and lingering anxiety about my imagining.

Romero preached “the beautiful but harsh truth” found at the core of Catholic social teaching: namely, that “Christian faith does not cut us off from the world, but immerses us in it.” Drawing on the Second Vatican Council’s *Gaudium et Spes*, Romero claimed that:

> The essence of the Church lies in its mission of service to the world, in its mission to save the world in its totality, and of saving it in history, here and now. The church exists to act in solidarity with the hopes and joys, the anxieties and sorrows, of men and women.

Humanity’s salvation “in history” involves “integral liberation” from sin, both personal and social. Following the teaching of Medellín and Puebla, Romero taught that structural injustice, institutionalized violence, and social sin cannot be eradicated in the absence of personal conversion; indeed, the “roots of this social sin” can be found “in the heart of every human being.” This liberation by Jesus Christ must “envisage the whole man, in all his aspects, right up to and including his openness to the absolute, even the divine Absolute.” Hence, while Romero claimed that “it would be the most profound blasphemy [to the name of Jesus] to forget and to ignore the basic levels of life, the life that begins with bread, a roof, a job,” he continued to teach that “the superabundant fullness of life is to be achieved only in the kingdom of the Father.”

Christians who heed the call of God to “turn away from self-sufficiency to confidence in God and from concern for self to a sincere love of neighbor” discover an interior freedom by which true solidarity—“to give of one’s life, even to give one’s life itself”—becomes possible.

Solidarity undergirds what Romero labeled “the political dimension of the faith,” the Church’s response to “the demands made upon it by the de facto socio-political world in which it exists”:

> Because the Church has opted for the truly poor, not for the fictitiously poor, because it has opted for those who really are oppressed and repressed, the Church lives in a political world, and it fulfills itself as Church also through politics.

And since this “service to,” “siding with,” and “defense of” El Salvador’s poor majority by members of the Church (from priests and religious, to catechists and lay ministers—even other *camposinos*) involved denunciation of “institutionalized violence” and socioeconomic injustice “which cries to the heavens,” the Church’s “taking upon itself the lot of the poor” occasioned its persecution. In a country where fourteen families owned more than sixty percent of the arable farmland, the Church preached a “social mortgage on private property.” On behalf of factory workers “who [had] no labor rights” and farmers who regularly faced “starvation wages” and “job uncertainty,” the Church helped create worker unions (distinct from other voluntary associations, e.g. political parties). The implication of one *camposino* union (FECCAS) in the murder of Eduardo Orellana (a prominent landowner in Aguilares) led to the retributive murder of Fr. Rutilio Grande (along with two *camposinos*); the abduction of Mauricio Borgonovo (El Salvador’s Foreign Minister) was likewise blamed on the Church’s alleged agitation of rural unions,
leading to the abduction and/or murder of “over twenty percent of San Salvador’s presbyterate” in the first year of Romero’s episcopacy. The Church thus “organized and united…around the hopes and anxieties of the poor” must (in Romero’s estimation) be prepared to incur “the same fate as that of Jesus and the poor”: death.

Willingness to die, to give up one’s own life, became for Romero “the greatest sign of faith in a God of life” who has power over “the idols of death” – idols of wealth, of private property, of political power, of personal security (institutionalized in national security regimes). Since these structures of sin “produce the fruits of sin” – namely, “the death of Salvadorans” – neutrality before the preaching of Romero (and the Catholic Social Teaching upon which it builds) must be considered impossible:

“Either we serve the life of Salvadorans, or we are accomplices in their death.”

Yet even Romero would admit that hope in the God of life and courage in the face of death come slowly. Romero’s own ‘evolution in pastoral fortitude’ gives witness to hope “learned daily” by trying to follow, and “in all modesty” living into, Jesus’s own story. For in the “fullness of life” that Christ brings, all people find redemption – through “that difficult combination of cross and victory”: “Behind the Calvary of El Salvador lies our Easter, our resurrection. This is the Christian people’s hope.”
NOTES
1 From Holy Cross Constitution 8 (“The Cross, Our Hope”): “Jesus entered into the pain and death that sin inflicts. He accepted the torment but gave us joy in return. We whom He has sent to minister amid the same sin and pain must know that we too shall find the cross and the hope it promises. The face of every human being who suffers is for us the face of Jesus who mounted the cross to take the sting out of death. Ours must be the same cross and the same hope” (114).

2 Imaginative contemplation (also known as “Ignatian Prayer”) seeks to discern feelings of joy and sorrow, peace and distress (“consolation” and “desolation,” within the writings of St. Ignatius of Loyola) as important indicators of one’s deeper union with God, and one’s path toward fruitful decisions. While one may take structured meditations (e.g. Ignatius’s own Spiritual Exercises) as a guide for imaginative prayer, focusing on scriptural scenes or moral choices, a more general form of this contemplation involves: a) placing oneself within a specific ‘setting’ or ‘place’; b) considering other ‘actors’ in the scene; c) ‘playing’ the scene; d) considering one’s ‘role’ in the scene; e) reflecting on feelings of consolation or desolation felt within the contemplation; and finally f) discerning the significance of such consolation-desolation for one’s relationship with God and neighbor. My contemplation in the San Salvador cathedral presumes this imaginative pattern.

3 Here begins the account of my contemplation.

4 Romero often referred to himself in this way, seeking to unite his “experience as a pastor and as a Salvadoran” with that of “his people,” particularly those “men and women who are poor and oppressed” (“Louvain Address,” 178-179).

5 Msgr. Jesús Delgado (chief postulator for the cause of Romero’s beatification) noted during our visit to San Salvador’s main diocesan seminary (31 May 2011) that most seminarians during Romero’s episcopate came from wealthier families – families that largely disagreed with Romero’s “overturning of the socioeconomic status quo.”

6 While I keep this passage in my personal journal (29 May 2011), the entire homily’s text (translated) may be found at: http://www.romerotrust.org.uk/homilies/162/162_pdf.pdf.

7 Having visited the chapel at Hospital Divina Providencia just days earlier (26 May 2011), I could not avoid returning to images of Romero gunned-down at the altar. Here ends the account of my contemplation.
Upper Church, Metropolitan Cathedral of the Holy Savior, San Salvador.
Photo courtesy of Pat Reidy, C.S.C.
THE “NEW” EVANGELIZATION IN THE AMERICAS

ON THE CATHOLIC ORIGINS OF HUMAN RIGHTS

BY DAVID LANTIGUA, PH.D.
David Lantigua recently earned his Ph.D. in Moral Theology and Christian Ethics at the University of Notre Dame. He currently serves as a member of The Society of Christian Ethics and the American Academy of Religion.

The introduction of human rights language into the social mission of the Catholic Church evident in Pope John XXIII’s encyclical *Pacem in terris* (1963) is often seen as a delayed response to the modern world. From this perspective, Vatican II’s *Declaration on Religious Freedom* rode on the back of America’s centuries-old first freedom. Even the magna carta of the modern social encyclicals, Pope Leo XIII’s *Rerum novarum* (1891), has been characterized by some as a Catholic redaction of liberal theories of individual rights to property.

But the Catholic vision of human rights, in fact, is neither “liberal” nor “American” nor “modern” for that matter. The plausibility of this rather unconventional claim rests on whether or not it can be shown that the commitment to human rights so essential to the social doctrine of the Church today has its roots in a debate internal to the Catholic tradition, rather than developing as a delayed response to a modern political order external to it. A turn to the evangelization of the Americas in the sixteenth century provides a historical standpoint from which to observe the fact that the origins of human rights discourse in the West are firmly located within ecclesial tradition.

The Spanish Catholic mission to the New World began with arrival of Christopher Columbus in 1492. As the Admiral wrote in the first entry to his journal, the purpose of his voyage was to ascertain “the manner which should be used to bring about their conversion to our holy faith.” Ferdinand and Isabella, the Catholic monarchs of Aragon and Castile, had entrusted Columbus with a letter permitting him to travel in order to extend the faith. When the Admiral returned back to the Old World after his first voyage, the crown gave him full support and granted him oversight of island commerce, which would almost immediately begin to traffic slaves.
Before Columbus embarked on his second voyage to the New World, Pope Alexander VI blessed the Spanish mission and conferred to the crown the authority to preach the Gospel to the unbelievers across the Atlantic in the so-called letter of papal donation, *Inter caetera* (1493). The crown already possessed a right of royal patronage over the Spanish Church and with it the power to appoint bishops and construct churches and hospitals. As the monarchy extended its sovereignty, first through the Reconquista of Granada followed by the conquests of the Canaries and the Caribbean, it maintained royal patronage over ecclesiastical matters. Royal administration of the Church may have had the advantage of making important spiritual and moral reforms rapidly, but it necessarily placed clergy in a compromised position of being subordinate to commercial interests. Not unlike the situation of Gregory VII in the Middle Ages, the Spanish Church of the Renaissance struggled to maintain its ecclesiastical freedom.

While secular clergy were in a position of greater passivity to colonial interests, the religious orders were not. Their institutional orientation put them in a position where they could place the spiritual demands of the Gospel above economic and material concerns. In particular, their vow of poverty would provide the most important spiritual lens for not only recognizing the great injustices and abuses unfolding across the Atlantic, but also seeking solidarity with the oppressed Indians. The Spanish Dominicans were the first to speak out in this regard.

The Dominican mission to the New World began when the Master General of the Order of Preachers, Tommaso de Vio Cajetan, mandated the Spanish provincial to send his best friars across the Atlantic under the threat of eternal damnation. Three friars left the Dominican priory of San Esteban from Salamanca, Spain, and arrived on the island of Española in 1510. Their names were Pedro de Córdoba, Antón Montesino, and Bernardo de Santo Domingo.

What these friars witnessed on the island was nothing short of appalling. Rivers of gold were degenerating into rivers of blood and disease. Following the failed governance of Christopher Columbus in the Caribbean, the condition on the islands had quickly devolved into a brutal Spanish colonial system of enslavement. The *encomienda* institution of forced Indian labor justified violence on the basis of the great commission to preach and educate unbelievers. Indians would be required to work and pay tribute to Spain while their local masters focused on their spiritual and physical well-being. In reality, however, the institution failed in every respect. The purportedly “free and servile” Indians, as Queen Isabella once referred to them, were literally worked to death. The Taíno natives neither had their basic needs met, nor did they receive instruction in the faith. But none of this mattered anyhow, according to the Dominican missionaries. In their view, the only justifiable reason for Spanish presence in the New World was to preach the Gospel, not to conquer and exploit the natives and their lands.

For over a year, as more Dominicans arrived from Spain, they patiently learned of the violence perpetrated by Christians on the island. The religious community prayed and fasted while discerning what action to take instead of standing by idly. Their strict ascetical discipline, fostered by a spiritual and intellectual renewal of the Order back in Spain, opened their hearts and eyes to see the painful reality of suffering before them.

The Advent season of 2011 marked the five-hundred year anniversary of a pivotal moment in the pastoral life of the Church with regard to the history of
human rights. On the Fourth Sunday of Advent in 1511, Antón Montesino, the most gifted preacher of the Dominican missionaries, stood before a crowded church in Santo Domingo and spoke the prophetic words of John the Baptist: “I am a voice crying in the desert [Ego vox clamantis in deserto]” (Jn 1:23). He continued preaching:

> I have come here to make you aware. I am the voice of Christ in the desert of this island. It would be wise of you to pay attention and to listen with your whole heart and with every fabric of your being... You are all in mortal sin. You live in it, you die in it. All because of the cruel tyranny you exercise against these innocent peoples. Tell me, by what right and with what justice do you so violently enslave these Indians? By what authority do you wage such hideous wars against these people who peacefully inhabit their lands, killing them by unspeakable means? How can you oppress them, giving neither food nor medicine and by working them to death, all for your insatiable thirst for gold? And what care are you providing them spiritually in teaching them about their God and creator, so they are baptized, hear Mass, and keep holy days? Are they not human beings? Do they not have rational souls? Are you not obligated to love them as you love yourselves? Do you not understand or feel this? How can you remain so profoundly asleep?

Immediately after the liturgy, there was upheaval on the island. Diego Columbus, the current governor and the son of the Admiral, threatened to notify King Ferdinand of this “new” doctrine of evangelization. A mob of angry Spaniards gathered around the Dominican house of prayer and demanded that Montesino recant. Fray Cordóba calmed the crowd and assured everyone that the decision to preach the radical message was unanimous among the missionaries.

The following Sunday, this time before an even larger congregation, the Dominicans repeated their admonishment of slave-holders as mortal sinners. But they also raised the stakes in a way that was as scandalous as it was Christian: anyone who refused to free their laborers and make restitution would be denied absolution in Confession. According to the Order of Preachers on the island, excommunication was the last resort to effectively address such widespread injustice entrenched among members of the Church.

The fruit of the Advent 1511 sermon was nothing short of revolutionary in the religious and political history of the Latin West. The event mobilized a concerted, tireless effort to promote solidarity and a love for the humanity of so-called “infidel” neighbors, not in spite of the Gospel but in genuine service to it. Preaching the Gospel peacefully would become inseparable from defending the freedom and rights of those who received it. Achieving this aim required first the proper evangelization of Christians. The most famous of those converted by the radical message was Bartolomé de las Casas.

Las Casas had come over as a young man on the same fleet as Francisco Pizarro, who would later conquer the Inca Empire. As a secular priest, Las Casas had Indian laborers and participated in the Spanish conquest of Cuba. After witnessing the many horrors on the islands and struggling with the difficult teachings of the Dominicans, his conscience finally awakened. His conversion began during the Feast of Pentecost while reading the divinely-inspired words of Sirach 34:19-22:
The Most High approves not the gifts of the godless, nor for their many sacrifices does he forgive their sins. Like the man who slays a son in his father’s presence is he who offers sacrifice from the possessions of the poor. The bread of charity is life itself for the needy; he who withholds it is a man of blood. To take away another’s living is to commit murder; to deny a laborer wages is to shed blood.

Within a decade, Las Casas professed his vows as a Dominican and would dedicate the rest of his life to defending the natives before the Council of the Indies and the Spanish crown. He became known to friend and foe alike as the “Protector of the Indians.”

The reflexive evangelical message of the Dominicans was “new” in comparison to the preaching that characterized the Latin Christian past. The medieval Crusades and the Iberian conquests of the Canaries and North Africa had linked war and evangelization as complementary procedures of Christian expansion. Popes from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries such as Innocent IV, Eugenius IV, and Nicholas V had provided the theory and practice for consolidating economic, humanitarian, and religious interests into a missionary warfare policy that could subjugate pagan populations to superior Christian rulers for the purpose of converting and civilizing them.

When imperial Spain carried its mission across the Atlantic with the backing of a papal donation, its representatives claimed to offer the cure to Indian depravity in social and religious life—superior Spanish civilization. The popular Spanish chronicles of Bernal Díaz del Castillo and Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo painted the natives as lazy or hostile barbarians naturally prone to abominable evils such as cannibalism and human sacrifice. Amerindian cultures were deemed irrational at best, sub-human at worst. Either way, they needed superior Spanish culture and its true religion because the natives were considered guilty for having committed acts contrary to the natural law that merited punishment and discipline. Evangelization by political conquest or by enslavement became the road most traveled by the civilizing project of the conquistadors and the clergy who served it.

In direct contrast to the civilizing project of the conquistadors, the project of peaceful evangelization promoted by the Dominicans recognized the preacher as the greatest obstacle to conversion, not the unbeliever. They considered a life marked by gentleness, charity, and truth as the only way to evangelize by persuasion and miracles. Christ and the Apostles provided the norm and the method. According to this teaching, the use of war, force, or terror obstructs rather than facilitates the conversion of others. The greed of the Spaniards was by far the worst form of idolatry that brought scandal to the faith.

While this method of preaching was no different from the instruction of the Lord, the Spanish Dominicans were able to extend that original Gospel message of peaceful evangelization through the inculturation of a faith that asked “by what right” and “with what justice”. They asked those questions not on behalf of themselves, but for their persecuted Indian neighbors. The sixteenth-century Spanish Dominicans fused their doctrine of rights for all persons made equally in the image of God with a profound spiritual awareness rooted in works of charity in service to truth and justice. This unprecedented vision for the love of the unbelieving neighbor made in the image of God unsettles the over-simplified portrait of modernity’s universal aspirations breaking free from the parochial shackles.
of Latin Christendom. The doctrine of human rights is therefore not a product of the modern world, but a theological insight that emerged from the spiritual practices of religious orders during the crucible of Spanish conquests.

Sixteenth-century Spanish America was a rights culture in a robust sense even though it was not characteristically modern. The royal court and the Council of the Indies would regularly hold *juntas* (debates) concerning the lawfulness of certain policies, and these *juntas* always included the opinions of theologians and jurists. Historically, the Spanish legal tradition had produced the *Siete Partidas* (*The Seven Divisions* or *The Seven-Part Code*) of King Alfonso “the Wise,” which emerged out of a period of scholastic humanism in theology and canon law in the Middle Ages. During the Renaissance, Spanish scholastic-juristic thought experienced a profound renewal, especially at the famous University of Salamanca, located just steps away from the Dominican priory of San Esteban. Montesino and company brought this scholastic-juristic legacy to bear on their spiritual lives so that they could preach an orthodox message of solidarity, love, and justice for the oppressed. The eyewitness reports of the first Dominicans made it back to Spain and directly contributed to the discourse of Amerindian natural rights and political autonomy expressed through the writings and lectures of Francisco de Vitoria, Domingo de Soto, and Melchor Cano at Salamanca. These brilliant thinkers were the first to identify the image of God imprinted in every individual as the foundation for rights talk in the West.
The interpenetration of mission and theology, and preaching and the defense of rights, is most apparent in the scholarly and administrative life of Las Casas. His combination of deep theological reflection, legal acumen, and missionary experience contributed to voluminous writings and testimonies that deserve to be considered the first thorough articulation of human rights in the Americas. The most important theological treatise he ever wrote promoting the Christian ethic of evangelization inextricable from a doctrine of rights was *De unico vocationis modo (The Only Way)*, dating from 1530. This treatise drew principally upon Scripture, ancient philosophy, patristic sources, canon law, and Thomas Aquinas, to condemn the doctrine of missionary warfare and affirm the natural freedom of all persons to receive or deny the Gospel as well as their political autonomy.

When Las Casas was appointed bishop of Chiapas in the 1540s, he brought a group of Dominicans from Salamanca to peacefully evangelize *La Tierra de Guerra (The Land of War)*, a region in Guatemala notorious for inhospitable natives. It is a testament to their sincerity of faith and discipline that the land came to be known as *Verapaz (True Peace)*, as it is still called today. Eventually, Las Casas was chased out of his bishopric by Spanish colonialists for having implemented that same uncompromising practice of ecclesiastical censure which had transformed his own life. His enemies across New Spain and Peru especially despised him for the major influence he had on the formation of the New Laws in 1542 promulgated by Emperor Carlos V. These laws temporarily abolished the *encomienda* institution and all wars of conquest in an effort to secure Indian rights by making impoverished natives vassals under the direct protection of the crown not subject to tributes and taxation.

The “new” evangelization promoted by the Spanish Dominicans and especially Las Casas not only influenced royal policy, if only for a short while, but it also reached the teaching office of the papacy. Following a series of *juntas* concerning mass baptism, forced labor, and evangelization in Mexico in 1536, the Dominican Bernardino de Minaya went to Rome to speak directly with Pope Paul III concerning the affairs of the Indies. He brought along a *parecer* (document) prompted by Dominicans but also signed by Franciscans condemning religious wars of conquest and enslavement of the Indians. The document further affirmed the spiritual freedom of unbelievers to receive the faith without coercion as well as their political freedom to govern themselves independently of Spain. Las Casas, who was actually present at the Mexico *juntas*, exerted an unmistakable influence on this document. In addition, Minaya purportedly brought an early draft of *The Only Way* as he related to the pope all the injustices that were taking place across the Atlantic.

The pastoral response of Paul III came in the form of three papal letters addressing the issues raised in Mexico that had first been raised by the Dominicans of Española. The most important of these letters, *Sublimis Deus*, was released in 1537. The significance of this papal bull for the history of Catholic Social Teaching is difficult to overestimate. The letter shared three core teachings with Las Casas’ *The Only Way*. *Sublimis Deus* affirmed: (i) the common condition and equal nature of humanity; (ii) the promotion of peaceful evangelization and the condemnation of missionary war; (iii) and the defense of the natural freedom and rights of every human being.
Paul III began the letter with the Christian claim that all human beings were created out of love for the sake of eternal life with God. The Pope then went on to provide a most profound theological insight into the dignity of human nature:

It is necessary to confess that man is of such a condition and nature that he is able to receive the faith of Christ, and whosoever possesses human nature, is himself fit to receive the faith. Neither is it credible that anyone can be so inept as to want to obtain the end of believing and be denied the most essential means of attaining it.

It is the capacity to receive the Gospel that is the greatest mark of the dignity of human nature. Christ’s great commission to “Go teach all nations” (Mt 28:19) is therefore a simultaneous affirmation of the equality of human nature to receive the Gospel. This refers to everyone, no exceptions. And it is Christ, “Truth itself [Veritas ipse],” who provides the form and method of bringing the Gospel to all peoples.

The Pope held that the Gospel could only be genuinely presented to people if their freedom was respected in the first place. This was clearly an insight indebted to the Spanish Dominican experience in the Americas. He then warns of Satan and his satellites, who have invented a method of preaching that denies both equality and natural freedom in order to enslave and subjugate those who are outside the Church. The Pope finally concludes the letter by making a most remarkable claim about human freedom:

Those Indians and all unbelievers who will be discovered by Christians in the future, although they are outside the faith, should neither be deprived of their freedom nor their dominium over things. Indeed, they can use, control, and enjoy their liberty and dominium freely and lawfully, and should not be reduced to slavery.

Three and a half centuries before Rerum novarum and more than four hundred years before Pacem in terris, Sublimis Deus affirmed a universal doctrine of equal freedom and human rights on the basis that every person is capable of receiving the Gospel. This fact challenges the narrative impasse between progressivists and traditionalists within the Church. For progressivist-leaning Catholics, the Church’s language of human rights thoroughly proclaimed at the Second Vatican Council was a welcome reversal of tradition. For traditionalist-leaning Catholics, it was an act of betrayal. Ironically, both share the same narrative that the embracement of human rights, especially religious freedom, was a watershed in Church history.

However, the lesson of the sixteenth-century project of peaceful evangelization demonstrates continuity rather than reversal within the tradition. The modern popes retrieved and developed a tradition of rights that extended back into the sixteenth century, and even further back into the scholastic-juristic thought of the Middle Ages. It would be a dishonor to the history of our faith, a travesty even, to forget what those Dominicans did in 1511 and how their successors such as Las Casas and Paul III carried on in the generations that followed. Their legacy is as important as ever for the Church of the New Evangelization.
When the father of the modern social encyclicals, Pope Leo XIII, wrote his letter *In Plurimis* abolishing the institution of slavery in 1888, he explicitly referred to the human rights legacy of Paul III and the Spanish Dominicans. According to Leo XIII, this ecclesial tradition declared that “all had a just and natural right of a threefold character, namely, that each one of them was a master of his own person, that they could live together under their own laws, and that they could acquire and hold property for themselves” (§16). But Leo notes that Paul III did something more, which was a direct contribution of the “new” evangelization of the first Dominicans in the Americas. Paul III prohibited the sacraments to Christians as a disciplinary measure for those who refused to change their evil ways. From the perspective of Leo XIII, the ecclesial tradition of human rights affirming the liberty of all peoples over themselves, their political order, and their property was supported by the religious orders as much as the papacy in the sixteenth century.

Finally, a grave political temptation of our day is to subordinate the Gospel to a project of human rights or even natural law that can persuade the whole world of its universal message. The Spanish Dominicans and Pope Paul III teach us that the doctrine of human rights, as part of a long tradition of natural law, must always be in service to the Gospel. Furthermore, it is a doctrine directed first and foremost to believers, who must exhibit through their lives the immeasurable worth of every human being made in the image of God and redeemed by the blood of Christ. The defense of human rights or natural law should never become a mechanism for reining in or disciplining individuals and communities outside the Church who do not conform to Gospel values. Respect for human rights may be a requirement for a fuller articulation of Christ’s message in the era of the New Evangelization, but it is certainly not a replacement of the Gospel. Christians can and must demonstrate this truth by following the Lord in being ready and willing to renounce their own freedom and rights, which ultimately belong to God and not to any human authority, in order to express their love toward others, even their enemies. Only then will the Gospel become a source of salvation rather than scandal to unbelievers.
Cloister, Convento de San Esteban; Salamanca, Spain. Photo courtesy of David Lantigua
Migration makes headlines in many newspapers around the world, but in multiple ways it is not a new issue. Since the dawn of humanity people have been on the move. However, the current scope, scale and magnitude of the issue are unprecedented. According to the International Organization for Migration, approximately 214 million people today—or one out of every 33 people around the world—are living away from their homelands. Approximately 42 million are forcibly uprooted, including 16 million refugees and 26 million who are internally displaced.

In many respects migration is a sign of our times, so much so that some scholars refer to this point in history as “the age of migration.” Even though it is interwoven into our biological and spiritual origins, migration is still one of the most complex and controversial issues of our day.

Amidst the incendiary debates, the Church over the years has articulated a consistent position on immigration. The Church has something to say about migration because it goes to the core of her identity and what is most important to her. In this brief essay I would like to highlight some of the rationale behind this teaching and its connections to what we do in the Eucharist. My hope is that it will give us not only more information but also a new imagination about how we think about this issue and especially the people most affected by it.
Notre Dame students interview refugees waiting to receive their asylum papers in South Africa.

Photo courtesy of the Center for Social Concerns

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Migration and Human Dignity

The starting point of the Church’s position about migration is rooted in God’s movement to us in the Incarnation and His journey into the sinful territory of our broken human existence. Jesus’ life, Death and Resurrection in turn make possible our return migration to a homeland, a place where at last we will know what it means to be fully connected to God and reconciled to one another. This perspective takes for granted that this world is not our final destination but a way station that summons us to walk this road as pilgrims in a spirit of faith, hope, and love. Along this road we not only see darkly through a mirror but are also riddled by forces that constantly tear at the fabric that stitches together our human community.

As she grapples with the complex challenges posed by migration, the Church focuses first and foremost on the central human issues at stake. Though the economic costs related to migration need to be addressed, the primary concern is the human costs. When migrants are asked what they find most difficult about their situation, most of them—despite the grueling physical journeys they take—do not talk about the physical hardships but the deeper insults to their human worth. They may go without food as they stow away on trains and buses. They may gasp for air as they hide in cargo containers of ships. They may thirst for water as they cross the vast stretches of desert. They may suffer in the mountains amid cold and snow. But as difficult as these hardships are, many migrants often say that no physical suffering is worse than being treated as if you were a dog, as if you were not even a human being, as if you were no one to anyone. The reason why the Church cares so much about the issue of migration is because migrants are so frequently deprived of their God-given human dignity.

Consequently, the Church invests much of her energy trying to respond to the injustices migrants face. At the central office of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in Washington, D.C., more than one hundred of their three hundred employees work on migration issues. The United States resettles more refugees than any other country in the world. Through various agencies like Catholic Relief Services and Catholic Charities, the Catholic Church resettles more refugees than any other organization in the United States, meaning that the American Catholic Church resettles more refugees than all other world organizations, as many as 20,000 per year.

In addition to resettling refugees, the Church also gives a great deal of attention to the plight of undocumented, economic migrants. In response to the challenge of immigration, the bishops from the United States and Mexico published a joint document in 2003 called “Strangers No Longer: Together on a Journey of Hope,” marking the first time that a Church document was jointly issued by two separate countries. This initiative flowed out of Pope John Paul II’s vision of a “globalized solidarity” manifested through closer ties among the Americas, especially among those left out of the benefits of the current economic order.

The Church recognizes that human dignity is integrally related to work, so as she responds to the personal struggles of migrants, she addresses structural issues that impact their situation. The root causes of economic migration stem principally from underdevelopment and unemployment; thus, part of the Church’s advocacy effort focuses on obtaining more work visas. But more visas are not enough. Because these workers also have families whose welfare depends on their employment status, the issue of migration takes on a social component in addition to the economic considerations, and the Church’s efforts encompass both facets of this complicated issue.
This social consideration is what often drives migrants to leave their home country. Family members need food, clothing, shelter and medicine, and the problems of underdevelopment and unemployment keep workers from finding sufficient employment to make ends meet. Not uncommonly, a member of the family travels north to find work. When they are unable to obtain visas because they are unskilled laborers, they often resort to crossing the borders without official documentation. In the context of my own pastoral work in rural Mexico, I was struck by the number of villages inhabited only by women and children. Most of the men were north, looking for work, while most of the women and children stayed behind. In these villages, migration causes the disintegration of families—the most basic cell of society. It is this social disintegration that greatly concerns the Church, because its costs to the human family are enormous.

Migration and the Incarnation

The Church cares about migration because the issue mirrors its own story. Migration is in our spiritual genes. From the call of Abraham to the Exodus, from Exile to Return, from the birth of Jesus to His Ascension, from Jesus’ call to the disciples to “follow Him,” to His sending them out into all nations, the theme of movement and migration are interwoven into the fabric of our journey with and to God. In fact, the Second Vatican Council refers to the Church’s own self-identity as that of “pilgrims in a strange land” (Lumen Gentium, §7). We come from God and we are called to return to God, and from beginning to end the Scriptures reveal to us a God who migrates to His people, eliciting a response in faith to a homeward journey.

Beyond political pragmatism and economic efficiency, the inspirations for the Church’s teaching come from its awareness of the gratuity of God manifested in His migration to us in the Incarnation. Another way of saying this is the Church’s position is guided by a different notion of the economy. The Church realizes that migration does not have to do principally with a monetary system but fundamentally with how the goods of the earth are arranged. The Greek word *economia* does not refer principally to financial transactions but to how one arranges a household. Subsequently, the Church’s concern is directed towards how the whole household of God is arranged. At the very least, this means that each human being within this planetary household should have the minimum necessary for living a dignified life. This also means that the economic systems of the world should be ordered to the good of all people and not just the benefit of a privileged few. There is much to think about in the current order of things.
and its asymmetry with the designs of a loving Creator. At present, 19 percent of the world’s people live on less than a dollar per day. 48 percent live on less than $2 per day. 75 percent live on less than $10 per day. 95 percent live on less than $50 per day. The top 1 percent has as much wealth as the poorest 57 percent, and the three richest people have as much as the poorest 48 nations.1 These disorders are rooted in unjust structures, but as the Second Vatican Council observed, they are also rooted in the disorders of the human heart (Gaudium et Spes, §10). Migration, rightly understood, is not a problem in itself but a symptom of much deeper imbalances.

Arguments about the economic, political and social implications of migration must first find a reference in the human face of the migrant, or else the core issues at stake become easily become distorted. If we cannot see the human face of the migrant, then nothing else will matter. To put it another way, the bishops have insisted that the economy be made for human beings and not human beings for the economy. The bishops recognize that one of the fundamental ways through which society must be ordered is according to economic justice, which measures the health of an economy not in terms of financial metrics like Gross National Product or stock prices, but in terms of how the economy affects the quality of life in the community as a whole (Economic Justice for All, §14).

One area of migration that people often find problematic is the issue of legality. Not uncommonly people say, “I have no problem with immigrants but just that they have come illegally.” Underneath this objection is a valid concern for the rule of law. When we look at countries in other parts of the world where the judicial systems are corrupt, and violent social upheaval is great, we come to appreciate all the more the necessity of the rule of law. The lawlessness of cartels within Mexico is but one example of what happens when the binding role of a legal system loses its coherence. But when it comes to immigration, it is important to see there is more to the law than a civil ordinance that requires punishment when there is a transgression.
From a theological perspective, different laws are at work in the problem of immigration, and changing enforcement policies alone is not enough to achieve comprehensive immigration reform. Thomas Aquinas distinguished four kinds of laws: 1) natural laws, 2) civil laws, 3) divine laws, and 4) eternal laws. While the political debate deals mostly with civil laws, the Church is concerned with these other laws as well. While the Church has concern for the national common good of respective countries, she is also concerned with the universal common good of all of God’s people. With regard to immigration, natural laws deal with parents needing to feed their families; civil laws pertain to ordinances utilized by society for the common good. Divine laws, known through Scripture, relate to the Gospel imperative to provide for the hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, imprisoned, and estranged; eternal laws deal with how God keeps the universe in motion. When these laws interrelate in such a way that one form of law connects to the other, justice flourishes. However, when civil laws exist that exclude the poor without any regard for issues of natural law like underdevelopment, injustice abounds. In some cases, injustice can become legalized when the structures of society enrich the privileged few and exclude the needy.

To clarify, the Church does not argue for open borders. The social teaching recognizes that there is a need and a duty to protect national borders, but it does not see this as an absolute right. The Church recognizes that the needs of distributive justice must be taken into account as a government formulates its border policies and enacts its laws.

Because we confuse illegality with criminality, we end up wasting the efforts of enforcement officials on those who are looking for work, and prosecuting those whose only crime at its core has to do with providing for their families. It is striking that some who are scandalized by migrants breaking civil laws are not proportionally more scandalized by the living and working conditions in which migrants find themselves. Very often our perspectives about immigration have more to say about us than about migrants.

To be clear, there is a need for enforcement at the border, especially among the cartel violence that has skyrocketed in the last few years. But the tragedy of the border now is that many of our resources are directed toward chasing down those who are simply looking for work. The Church teaches that the ideal arrangement is for migrants to stay in their homeland, but when there are not sufficient conditions for a dignified life, the Church argues that migrants have a right to look for work, even if this search entails crossing borders without official documentation.
Migration and Conversion

When I was about eight years old, I came across a provocatively-titled pamphlet from a Church community. It read: “Did you know that you could miss heaven by eighteen inches?” It went on to say that the distance between the head and the heart of most people is only eighteen inches. The point of the pamphlet was that, more than just a mental concept, God is a mystery who invites us to encounter Him in the depths of our souls as well as our intellect. In a similar way, Native American elders hold that the long journey of life is the one from the head to the heart and back to the head again. I would add that the borders and barriers we erect along the inner road of the heart are more obstinate and difficult than any of those along the borders of nation states. The deeper challenges of the migration issue are rooted not simply in political issues but spiritual ones as well. Since spirituality has to do with what we most value, migration—seen from a spiritual perspective—means moving into a new kind of life and a new way of being in the world, which is the goal of every Christian and the hope of all who believe.

Nothing is more needed in immigration than a new imagination about who we are before God and before the injustices of the modern world. When John the Baptist opened the way for Christ in the desert, he called people to repent because the Kingdom of God is at hand. The word repentance has such heavy overtones today that it is not always easy to grasp its significance. But at its core it calls not only for a change of heart but also a change of thinking, taking on a new vision of life and allowing one’s whole imagination take shape not according to the logic of political pragmatism or economic utilitarianism but according to God’s grace. We might say that repentance means migrating in a new direction with one’s life. Learning to see as God sees and to move over into His way of thinking is one of the most central ways of participating in the life of God and human transformation.

The Church cares about immigration because immigration is central to her own identity. One only need to visit the National Shrine of the Basilica of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception—the Mother Church for U.S. Catholics—to see how much immigration has shaped the Church’s development in the United States and in turn how migrants have shaped the spiritual, devotional, and apostolic life of American Catholics. The Shrine has side altars dedicated to many of the ethnic groups that left their homelands and came to the United States looking for new opportunities.

In the end, the Church’s concern about migrants aims at promoting a Eucharistic community that fosters human solidarity. Since so much of the debate around immigration stems from fear, the Church challenges people not to let themselves be governed by fear, especially fear of those perceived as “the other.” The movement of divine life into a human body is the ultimate migration into the space of “otherness” and one that undergirds many reflections on migration from a theological perspective.
Conclusion: Migration and Christian Solidarity

Thomas Aquinas speaks of *exitus et reditus*, the notion that we come from God and are called to return to God. We believe that in the face of the sinful human condition that road-blocked our return migration, God, in Jesus, so loved the world that He migrated into the far and distant territory of our broken world so that we, in turn, could migrate back to our homeland. This means that migration is not about “us” citizens and “those” foreigners but about all of “us,” who are pilgrims in this world. As St. Paul described it: “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God” (Eph 2:19). Paul urges Christians not to limit their sense of citizenship to the political realm of this world but to see the land that lies beyond us at the end of our earthly migration. Augustine would reiterate that our earthly life is one of “resident aliens” and that we are just passing through this world in route to our true homeland.

Even so, not a few people remain walled in constrictive notions about migration, and it remains one of the fundamental tasks of the Church’s mission to break down the walls that divide, alienate, exclude, discriminate and dehumanize. Some seek to break down these barriers in creative ways along the border. One community decided to have a volleyball game with respective teams on both sides. Another held a picnic and shared food between the holes in the fence. And in various communities, some hold Eucharistic liturgies where the congregation joins the altar together from both sides of the border wall. This Eucharist is not simply a political statement but an eschatological and a social one, stating not only that these walls will come down when Christ comes again but also that we are already united because of who we are as the Body of Christ.

Migration is not simply a social, political and economic matter but a theological and spiritual issue as well. According to professor Bill Ong Hing, we deport something of our souls when we fail to welcome the stranger (see Hing’s *Deporting Our Souls: Values, Morality and Immigration Policy*). Not only do the walls of self-security not keep us truly safe, but in the process of erecting those walls, we lose touch with our own vulnerability in this earthly sojourn and most of all our interconnectedness with the Body of Christ. Our fundamental identity rests not on the creed of a nation but on who we are before God.

The presence of a new wave of immigrants brings new challenges. As a birth process it inevitably brings pain but also it brings new life as well. For example, as Latino immigrants to the United States bring the riches of their culture, they also bring a strong tradition of devotion, faithfulness and family-centeredness that transforms and enriches the Church. In their ability to believe in God despite the unbelievable trials they endure, immigrants hold an important key not only to a nation’s strength but also to the Church’s renewal.

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1 For more on these statistics and their sources, see Daniel G. Groody, “Globalization, Spirituality and Justice: Navigating a Path to Peace,” Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 3-10.
Mystagogy (if it is practiced at all), in the post-conciliar era, has at times been dedicated exclusively to promoting a deeper understanding of the rites of initiation performed at the Easter Vigil. While such an approach is intrinsic to the R.C.I.A., mystagogical catechesis is often lacking for those Catholics who are baptized in their infancy (that is, most of us). Fr. Timothy Radcliffe, O.P.’s *Take the Plunge* is, in some ways, a response to the dearth of mystagogical texts on the sacraments of baptism and confirmation in Catholic liturgical spirituality. Simultaneously, Radcliffe’s robust liturgical spirituality is a model for a renewed approach to mystagogy in the life of the Church.

In some ways, the structure of *Take the Plunge* is traditional to the art of mystagogical catechesis. The seventeen chapters of the text move slowly through the rite of baptism and confirmation, presuming infant initiation as the pastoral norm. While there has been a renaissance in recent years in the liturgical and theological normativity of the rite of infant initiation (see Kimberly Belcher, *Efficacious Engagement: Sacramental Participation in the Trinitarian Mystery*), Fr. Radcliffe’s reflections on this rite are a further contribution to assisting Christians to reflect more deeply upon their own experience of infant initiation. In fact, infant initiation is viewed positively as a response to an individualism that operates in much present religious discourse. Fr. Radcliffe writes in his reflection upon the questions directed to parents at the beginning of the rite:

> It is often asserted that faith is only authentic if it is grasped in a mature, adult...
and individual way. In some traditions, the crucial moment is when you confess Jesus Christ to be your personal saviour. But our appropriation of our faith may take the form of innumerable small decisions to walk in the light of the gospel. My acceptance of divine life may be as gradual and imperceptible as my acceptance of my human life, beginning long before I am mature or adult. My mother was raised in a profoundly Christian home. She never had, to my knowledge, a Damascus experience. That did not make her faith inauthentic. Her ‘Yes’ to God consolidated slowly as she grew in the free atmosphere of a Christian home, beginning even before she could speak a word (11).

Consistently throughout *Take the Plunge*, one’s theological imagination is enriched as poetry, literature, the Scriptures, the experience of liturgical rites shapes one’s understanding of the sacrament as carried out in the context of the modern world.

And this use of poetry and literature is not accidental. Mystagogy is not simply our personal reflection upon the experience of the rites; rather, it is coming to see how the sorrows and joys of the human condition are taken up and transfigured in the context of the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church. The evocative language, the stories interspersed throughout the book, demonstrate the bodily and historical nature of baptism in our lives. Simultaneously, the words and gestures of the rites of initiation through the contemplative eye of Fr. Radcliffe become signs, revealing the depths of divine love to the human person, an invitation to join with the saints in a common pilgrimage toward holiness of life. Fr. Radcliffe, in particular, meditates upon the sacrament of confirmation, not simply as a historical anomaly in which the rite of baptism and confirmation are separated, but as the sacrament of maturity, of growth into the virtues of the saints themselves (261).

*Take the Plunge* should be required reading for all those involved in preparing Christians for initiation; for confirmation students as they move toward receiving the sacrament; for parents of newly-baptized infants; for preachers seeking to practice mystagogy throughout the liturgical year; and for all those Christians in the world whose lives have received a radical re-orientation through the sacramental life of the Church.

**True Reform: Liturgy and Ecclesiology in Sacrosanctum Concilium**

by Massimo Faggioli

In the subsequent years since the Second Vatican Council, interpretations of the four major constitutions have tended to isolate theological treatments of the Church to either *Lumen Gentium* (the Constitution on the Church) or *Gaudium et Spes* (the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World). Such an approach, as Massimo Faggioli (an assistant professor of theology at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul) ably argues, fails to acknowledge the centrality of ecclesiology in the liturgical document *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. Faggioli writes, “only a hermeneutic based on the liturgy
and the Eucharist, as developed in the liturgical constitution, can preserve the riches of the overall ecclesiology of Vatican II without getting lost in the technicalities of a “theological jurisprudence” (16). Sacrosanctum Concilium makes available to the Church a Eucharistic ecclesiology, one that manifests the true genius of the Second Vatican Council.

Faggioli’s unfolding of this argument is a work of solid scholarship, attentive to a vast array of Italian, English, German, and French literature. According to Faggioli, the liturgical reforms enacted by the Council are not simply aesthetic but rather a return to liturgical sources intended “to reset the cultural and ideological garment of Catholicism in the modern world in order to start over from the core essence of Christianitv, closer to the ancient liturgical traditions of the Eastern Churches and of the Roman Church” (57). Sacrosanctum Concilium was fundamentally a “conservative” document, restoring “the simplicity and the splendor of the rites on the basis of a more biblical set of readings and a patristic concept of celebration” (47). The reforms are not antiquarian but instead are an exercise in listening to the Fathers, one that influences the present work of liturgical renewal.

The liturgical reforms enacted by the liturgical constitution also offered a specific theology of the Church. Faggioli comments:

It is therefore clear that the ecclesiology of Sacrosanctum Concilium does not contradict but ushers in and anticipates the communion ecclesiology of Vatican II as a pillar of the liturgical reform: the Church as a communion of life thanks to the grace, the expression of the communion in the life of the Trinity; the power of the grace, received in faith and through the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, that unifies Christians as the people of God and Mystical Body of Christ; a people of God, walking toward the kingdom of God, but also active witnesses of Christ in the world, visible in its ecclesial institutions and led by the bishops in the local churches and the pope (84-85).

Importantly, Sacrosanctum Concilium does not succumb to a stark differentiation between a “people of God” and “mystical Body” ecclesiology, but rather presents a vision of the Church as a sacrament of Christ’s own Eucharistic love for the life of the world, especially within the context of the local Church. Such a liturgical ecclesiology affects the Church’s own understanding of her relationship to the world, ecumenism, and Judaism itself (chapter 3).

Therefore (as Faggioli concludes) the recent arguments against the liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council are not simply aesthetic in structure but an implicit dismissal of the ecclesiology enacted by the Council (chapters 4 and 5 in particular). In some sense, Faggioli is correct. The liturgical rites renewed by the Second Vatican Council offer a performed vision of the Church’s ecclesiology, including “a new life for lay ministers in the Church, a new discovery of the liturgical assembly, concelebration as a sign of unity in the priesthood, the new role for the Word of God in the eucharistic celebration” (143). Those that argue for a reform of the reform, understood as an exclusive restoration of the 1963 Missal of John XXIII at the expense of the Missal of Paul VI, are inattentive to the ecclesiology implicit in the reformed rites. Revisionist narratives of the Council (such as found in Nicola Bux’s Benedict XVI’s Reform: The Liturgy Between Innovation and Tradition) ignore the genuine ecclesial renewal that has occurred in light of the liturgical
rites promulgated through the Second Vatican Council. And such revisionists often employ a naïve use of history itself, whereby the purpose of liturgical reform is to “re-enact” what has occurred in the past, rather than to think with the Fathers about how liturgical prayer can function in the present (see John Baldovin, Reforming the Liturgy: A Response to the Critics, 135).

Yet, is it really the case that many of those attracted to the 1963 Missal of John XVIII (the extraordinary form) are dismissive of the ecclesiology brought about by the Second Vatican Council? Or is it not often true that those fascinated by “the reform of the reform” are disenchanted with certain features of the implementation of the reform itself? Liturgical rites and music, which focus almost exclusively upon the community gathered in a particular space but are blind to the interrupting and transcendent presence of the Triune God. Liturgical spaces that look more like gymnasiums than places of worship. A desperate fear of silence in liturgy, in addition to preaching that focuses almost exclusively upon the priest’s own narrative at the expense of the Gospel. A wide swath of undergraduates at the University of Notre Dame (whose liturgical sensibilities ranged from the now classical repertoire of folk music to Renaissance polyphony) recently expressed to me the fear that Eucharistic celebrations in the dorm are so centered upon the community, upon entertaining music, upon the charism of the priest, upon a sign of peace that lasts ten minutes, that students have grown forgetful about the remarkable encounter with Christ that takes place in receiving the Eucharist itself. Remarking upon this phenomenon, Joseph Ratzinger (Benedict XVI) notes:

True liturgical education cannot consist in learning and experimenting with external activities. Instead one must be led toward the essential actio that makes the liturgy what it is, toward the transforming power of God, who wants, through what happens in the liturgy, to transform us and the world” (The Spirit of the Liturgy, 175).

I have found that undergraduates in particular, who begin to attend the extraordinary form of the Eucharist, do not do so out of a disdain for local councils of bishops, for lay forms of ministry, but rather because they experience within the extraordinary form “the transforming power of God”. Is not such diversity of liturgical rites itself a consequence of the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council? If the extraordinary form of the Eucharist is practiced in a different theological and cultural environment, will it necessarily communicate the same theological vision to the participant as it once did? These are questions which are not treated by Faggioli.

Thus, Faggioli’s work is important for discerning the subtle and theologically pivotal function of the Church in Sacrosanctum Concilium, as well as the manner in which the ecclesiology of this document comes to inform later conciliar developments. Simultaneously, it is an articulate, clear response to those that seek to reject the liturgical renewal of the Council as inauthentic, antiquarian, and modernist. Nonetheless, the work is not always attentive to the various gradations of liturgical critique, and the ecclesiological consequences of these concerns. Despite this gap, Faggioli’s text is a must read for all those seeking a deeper understanding of the Second Vatican Council and the liturgical renewal of the Church.
Christian faith can articulate itself only through an engagement with culture. All God-talk, from formal theology, to the liturgical proclamation of the Word, to the conversations in pubs and cafes, should be apologetic; not in the sense of establishing common neutral foundations for faith, but in setting forth the Christian faith in a way that engages with, criticizes and responds to the other views that are current in our world, and that is attractive and persuasive in itself (10-11).

The project of a culturally sensitive, theologically suasive apologetics is the ribbon that connects each of the essays in this collection. Andrew Davison contributes an essay discerning how Christianity elevates and transfigures human reason, through engagement with the patterns of thought and practices in the Christian community. Alison Milbank situates the imagination in apologetics as that faculty of the human person that awakens her to a religious sensibility, to the wonder proposed by the mysteries of Christian faith. Graham Ward proposes a process of cultural interpretation, intrinsic to the work of apologetics, one that analyzes both popular and intellectual culture as “…systems of interpretable signs, gestures, and behaviours…” (118). Each essay in the volume enables the catechist or preacher to perceive anew how “apologetics” as the shaping of a world view is intrinsic to cultivating Christian faith in a postmodern, post-Christian context.

What makes the volume particularly attractive, beyond the intelligent and clear writing of the authors, is the extensive bibliography provided at the end of the text. Professors looking to teach courses in apologetics would do far worse than beginning with this bibliography, assigning students foundational works, such as Henri de Lubac’s The Drama of Atheist Humanism or Dorothy L. Sayers’ Creed or Chaos. Through this engagement with an imaginative, affective, and reasonable apologetics, one may begin to discern how catechesis in the present is more than an intellectual persuasion toward the particularities of Christian doctrine; it is an act of wooing the imagination to sense the extraordinary gift offered to what it means to be human in the doctrines and practices of Christian faith.
The Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes with inexpressible groanings. (Rom 8:26)

When I read this Scripture passage, I also hear: “for we do not know how to evangelize as we should, but the Spirit himself intercedes in our weakness…” Evangelization is difficult; we often question how even to begin. Furthermore, evangelization requires from us a sizeable amount of both fortitude and humility. Add to this the frequency of our human fumbling, and evangelization almost seems hopeless. Yet – the Spirit comes to our aid! The Catechism of the Catholic Church makes it very clear that the Church does not exist separately from the Holy Spirit: “The Holy Spirit, whom Christ the head pours out on his members, builds, animates, and sanctifies the Church” (§747). In a beautiful phrase used by the Church Fathers: the Church is the place “where the Spirit flourishes” (§749).
I want to share a story, which almost didn’t happen. One fall Sunday as I was strolling the halls of St. Pius X Catholic School during Sunday Religious Education, a catechist on her way to get supplies stopped me outside her room.

“Alexa, I know you work with RCIA, and my daughter Anna is engaged to a young man who is not Catholic. I don’t even think he’s been baptized. Anyway, they were at the parish office last week for marriage preparation, and they asked the receptionist about Justin becoming Catholic. I told Anna to ask for you. Well, apparently she told them: ‘Alexa only works with Catholics.’ So they left. And now I don’t know what to do.”

Speechless. Sputtering. That was my response to this woman. And a wave of relief that the Holy Spirit had planned our encounter that Sunday morning so I could thankfully do damage control. I called her daughter, Anna, the very next day. She was shy, uncertain, and confused, but she seemed glad that I had called. I heard the whole story again, in Anna’s words. As painful as it was to believe, the volunteer receptionist (not our regular secretary) had in fact used that phrase: “Alexa only works with Catholics.” After our phone conversation, Anna and Justin began attending RCIA. Justin, never baptized, never raised with any sort of faith, a child of a split home, simply soaked up the love of God in the Catholic Church. To overuse an analogy, he was a sponge that held much more water than you would expect upon first glance. Living water, at that!

True, that was the easy part. Justin was ready, and once our Church opened the doors, he ran in, and his metanoia (conversion) also brought his cradle-Catholic fiancée with him. This great (now married) couple are stalwarts of young adult ministry in the parish and beyond! They have become good friends to my husband and me, frequently offering to babysit our toddler so we can have a date night.

The tedious part of this situation was in responding to the bigger problem: figuring out how to help the everyday parishioner evangelize. For I never wanted a situation like that to ever happen again! And part of me felt as though I had failed – wasn’t the parish supposed to be our biggest and best RCIA team member?

So with the support and encouragement of our Associate Pastor (my supervisor), we converted the “Faith Formation Commission” into the “Evangelization and Faith Formation Commission.” I felt like a broken record at staff meetings, using the word evangelization whenever and however possible! Our “new” commission spoke at Parish Council meetings, where we realized just how far we had to go – people nearly shuddered at the word evangelization, pigeonholed it as a turn-off, and discouraged us from including it in our commission name. Unfazed, the Evangelization and Faith Formation Commission forged on to teach this new language to the staff and leaders of the parish.

We didn’t feel it taking hold until about six months later, when St. Pius X began a parish strategic planning process. The beginnings of this process involved several parish “retreats” which spent the better part of a day discussing three questions: 1) What is important to you about being Catholic? 2) How do you experience that at St. Pius X parish? 3) What do you wish for St. Pius X in the future?

As responses to these questions poured forth, I began to jump up and down (internally), for they were defining evangelization, straight out of the apostolic exhortation of Pope Paul VI, Evangelii Nuntiandi (EN, 1975): “celebrating the Eucharist…” “passing on the faith…” “living as a Christian…” “having
our children baptized…” “hearing the Word of God…” “bringing new people into our Church…” One of the Evangelization and Faith Formation Commission members caught my eye and mouthed the word “evangelization!” and I knew he realized it too. We must preach Christ, proclaim Christ, bear witness to Christ, teach Christ, and celebrate Christ’s sacraments (EN, §17). These are the essential elements of evangelization – our Church’s identity! The most amazing part was realizing that our parish could already speak the language of evangelization; they had been well equipped by their participation in Church life!

In this experience was the reassurance I so (humanly) needed – God was showing me, “Remember evangelization is a process and my Spirit is in the life of the Church, until the end of the age.” Regardless of a receptionist’s misspeak, or the doubt of parish leaders, or my own lack of faith, the truth of the Church is continuing on, as the breath of the Spirit draws God’s people in, and, exhaling, sends them out as evangelists. The everyday parishioner is already evangelizing – praise God! However imperfect our evangelization efforts may be, we call on the intercession of the Holy Spirit to perfect it. Then we trust. For as we hear in Philippians 1:6, “I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.”