

Faith Works

Our Mother Of Sorrows Catholic Church
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Welcome! Our contributors for this issue of the newsletter of the JustFaith group at OMOS are

- Fr. Joseph Neitlong is our visiting Priest at OMOS for the summer. He is an instructor at Mundelein Seminary and we are honored and value his comments on Solidarity
- Helen DeVries wears many hats in our Parish: from Stephen Ministry to the Christian Life Commission. Helen's thoughts and comments on the Preferential Option for the Poor and Vulnerable gives us food for thought.
- Sr. Jeannette Mariani OSF, is a mainstay at OMOS. She is there in care and prayer through the various ministries she works with in the parish or with individuals. She is a self described "Minister of Mirth" and shares a wonderful reflection on Call to Family, Community and Participation in Society, Seeking the Common Good.

July's Key Theme: To Worship and Welcome Solidarity With All People As One Global Family

By Fr. Joseph Neitlong

I was five years old when the Second Vatican Council convened in 1963 and seven when it closed in 1965. So virtually my whole life's experience of the church is through the prism of Vatican II. Of all the sixteen official texts promulgated by this ecumenical council, my favorite is *Lumen Gentium* meaning "Light of the Nations" –referring to Christ Jesus. Introducing this document, Avery Cardinal Dulles says that because of its central importance and its wealth of doctrine, it deserves to be called the most imposing achievement of Vatican II.

To use a musical analogy, the opening bars of this document announce Christ as the light of all nations, and the church as a kind of Sacrament or sign of intimate union with God and of the unity of all humankind. She is also the instrument for the achievement of such union and unity. The council's observation then, which holds clearer today than when first made, is that more than ever before, humanity is joined together more closely by social, technical, and cultural bonds. These ties are not necessarily contrary to the spiritual solidarity of humankind; rather they lent a very special urgency to the Church's task of working to bringing about the reign of God in our world. Our human solidarity stems from the union that exists between Christ and his Father and the Holy Spirit. This solidarity is given to us in the Church as an infinite and on-going task in the reversal of the condition expressed in Cain's questioning answer to God after murdering his brother Abel: "Am I my brother's keeper?." It is also the project of the on-going reversal of the event at the tower of Babel, a reversal inaugurated at Pentecost to halt the fragmentation of the human family begun at the tower of Babel.

We are called to be holy. What this means exactly is that we have been given the divine invitation to link up with God. Holiness is precisely that fellowship, communion or union with God. We are called and redeemed, not as rugged individuals, lone rangers, regardless of the group, but rather as individuals and members of the group. We are called and invited as a community, and saved as part of that larger community. Consequently, we take responsibility for that community as a whole and for its individual members. Jesus, having taught us to call God: "Father", opens the reality of belonging to the greater and wider family of God. We are henceforth our brothers and sisters keepers. The scripture makes it clear that God will demand of us accounts of our brothers and sisters. It then behooves us to be ready to render such account favorably.

Without community we do not reach our full potential as human beings. Without community we miss that feeling of immediate support in crisis, that sense of being cared for, even when we are down on ourselves. Without community our creative ideas gather dust in the recesses of our heads. Without community we simply wither, and dry.

Each celebration of the Eucharist is at once the inauguration of this community, this family of God. The high point and end of each celebration therefore is a sending forth on a mission of transforming this world into the domain of God's influence, traditionally; the Kingdom of the God who wishes to rule our minds, our hearts and or wills.. *While the first key theme of Catholic Social Teaching – "Life and Dignity of the Human Person" – is viewed as the starting place and foundation for all the themes that follow; the seventh theme of "Care for God's Creation" can be viewed as the theme that brings together all the other themes in an overarching and all-embracing way.*

Prayer/ Reflection

- Is my relationship God one of Father-child or is it more *distant*? Is he within reach? Do I share my day with him?
- Who is my neighbor? Who is my sister or brother? Which of my sisters/brothers are in need?
- Am I in union with Christ the *Light of the Nations*? How committed am I with the work of Christ my brother?

August's Theme: To Reach Out To The Least. Preferential Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

By Helen DeVries

Whatever you do for the least of my people, this you do for me. (Matt 25:40)

In the story of the great judgment from Matthew's gospel, Jesus shows how closely he identifies with the very needy and disadvantaged, who are usually the least valued and visible members of society. Jesus urges us to have special concern for the most poor and vulnerable, because through them we can make the most difference. We can follow the example of the Good Samaritan, who took the time to stop and tend to the wounds of the man beaten and left for dead, although so many "righteous" people had merely looked the other way as they went by.

In our shrinking world, the issues of poverty and injustice seem so overwhelming that we may try to ignore them for our own comfort. These are God-sized problems, and we just wish he would make them go away. We act like the disciples who, faced with 5,000 hungry people in a deserted area, urged Jesus to "send them to the neighboring towns so they can buy themselves something to eat" (and we won't have to deal with them).

We know what Jesus did. His reply was simple and challenging: "Give them some food yourselves. How much do you have? Go and see." But they still argued, "There is a boy here with five loaves of barley and two fish. But what good is that for so many?" That excuse is still around today: *What can I, a single person, do to solve the problems of the poor?* Jesus continued with his plan. He blessed the loaves and fish and gave them to the disciples to distribute to the crowd. All ate their fill and 12 baskets of fragments were left.

What does this story teach me? First I need to pray to see what gifts and resources I have and am willing to share. Then I bring them, meager as they may be, to Jesus and let him bless them and multiply them, as he uses me in his plan to meet the needs of the poor and needy. Even Blessed Teresa of Calcutta's ministry began in a very small way, when she brought just one man to her house and met his need to die in dignity. As she continued her work, God touched people's hearts to provide willing hands, hearts and resources to increase her ability to serve the poor and needy. So may he bless the work of our hands as we share what we have received from his bounty.

Prayer/Reflection:

- Scriptures: Matthew 14: 15-21, Matthew 25: 31-46, Luke 10: 29-37
- What gifts and resources do I have that I am able and willing to offer to those in need?
- How can I apply my gifts and resources to the most effective and loving use?
- Do I take the time to listen to people's needs or just decide that I know best what they require?
- Reflect on Jesus' promise, "*the poor you will always have with you*" and Blessed Teresa's statement, "we need the poor more than they need us". What is God telling me through these words?

Seven Key Themes Of Catholic Social Teaching

1. ***Life and Dignity of the Human Person:*** We believe that every person is precious, that people are more important than things, and that the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person.
2. ***Call to Family, Community, and Participation:*** We believe people have a right and a duty to participate in society, seeking together the common good and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable.
3. ***Rights and Responsibilities:*** Every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to those things required for human decency.
4. ***Option for the Poor and Vulnerable:*** Mt 25:31-46 instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.
5. ***The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers:*** If the dignity of work is to be protected, then the basic rights of workers must be respected.
6. ***Solidarity:*** We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, wherever they live.
7. ***Care for God's Creation:*** We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God's creation.

September's Key Theme: Call to Family, Community and Participation in Society *Seeking together the Common Good*

By Sr. Jeanette Mariani, OSF

What does the Church...what does our faith teach us regarding this topic? First of all, we are called to love one another (Mt 22: 34-40) as God has loved us. This sounds easy but we all know from personal experience how difficult it is to really...actually live this in our daily lives. We are called to live as if there are no strangers among us!

When you speak of 'family', do you think in terms only of your immediate family members, or do you include your civic/neighborhood community, your parish, your work place, the domestic Church? When we fully participate in these communities, we are called to see that all people within these communities have basic justice and are free from violence, and can live in a peace-filled environment.

Catholic Bishops have stated: "In the coming of Jesus Christ, we understand the Trinitarian nature of God's own inner life. Jesus reveals God as Father and sends the Holy Spirit as his gift to us to dwell in our hearts and to form us into community. God's nature is communal and social; therefore, our nature created in His image, is communal and social as well. We are communal and social because of the way we have been created and because of the One who created us." ⁽¹⁾

Our Bishops counsel us that "*We cannot call ourselves Catholic unless we hear and HEED the Church's teaching to serve those in need, to protect human life and dignity and to pursue justice and peace*". ⁽²⁾ On a practical level: when we/you participate in decision making, do we/you take into consideration how the decision affects the financially poor, those in the margins of life, those with no voice, those with no place at the decision making table?

A well known Christian writer, Walter Brueggemann, challenges us to think of the ministry of Moses who made a radical break with the social realities of his time (in Egypt). "We, like many before us, become insensitive to the radical social reality that emerged because of Moses. Moses confronted: *static religion, the economics of exploitation and the politics of oppression*." ⁽³⁾

Hopefully, we worship a God who is free to:

- hear the cries of the exploited
- side with the "have nots" (not with the "haves")
- challenge those in control of society (family member, clergy, local/state/federal politicians)

If we associate with and support decisions made by those who guard only the interests of the "haves", oppression cannot be far behind." ⁽⁴⁾ What a vivid warning this should be to all of us!

I leave you with this scripture to reflect on: "***And the people of Israel groaned under their bondage, and cried out for help, and their cry under bondage came up to God. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant...And God saw the people of Israel, and God knew their condition.***" (Exod 2:23-25)

Prayer/Reflection

- ◆ How do I deal with violence (in my own life, in my family...in the news)?
- ◆ How/when do I see the oneness I share with all of God's people and creation?
- ◆ When I make decisions (at home, at work, at parish activities), do I remember to work for the 'common good'?..for those who have no voice at the table?
- ◆ How do I hear the cries of the poor? (Exod 2:23-25)

References:

(1) USCC, *Sharing Catholic Social Teaching*, 1998, Washington DC

(2) *Ibid.*

(3) Brueggemann, Walter (2001) *Prophetic Imagination*. 2nd Ed. Philadelphia: Fortress Press pp5-7

(4) *Id.* At p21, 24

Consistent Ethic Of Life

"Where life is involved, the service of charity must be profoundly consistent. It cannot tolerate bias and discrimination, for human life is sacred and inviolable at every stage and in every situation; it is an indivisible good." (The Gospel of Life, no. 87 by John Paul II).

Simply put, the teaching of our Catholic faith tells us that all life is sacred and must be protected, from the womb to the tomb. All people have a right to life. Violence against a human life for any reason is not a solution for any of the problems faced by our society.

Cardinal Bernardin stated that capital punishment, for example is not the same as abortion, but the issues are linked by the value and defense of life that is placed on both. "When human life is considered 'cheap' or easily expendable in one area, eventually nothing is held as sacred and all lives are in jeopardy."

Pointers:

- LUMEN GENTIUM
you can search for it at the Vatican's Website http://www.vatican.va/phome_en.htm
- Our Mother of Sorrows Parish (Tucson, AZ) Christian Life Commission (find previous issues here)
<http://omoscl.org/>
- USCCB's Environmental Justice Program
<http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/ejp/background/index.html>
- Pima County Interfaith Council's Information Page
<http://arizonainterfaith.org/pciaff.html>

Calendar:

July/2007

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| 4 Independence Day | 14 Feast Day of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha |
| 11 Anniversary of Srebrenica Slaughter in Bosnia | 18 Birth of Nelson Mandela |
| 22 Feast of Mary of Magdala– Apostle to the Apostles | 31 Feast Day of St. Ignatius of Loyola |

August/2007

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| 6 and 9 Dropping of the Atomic Bombs | 9 International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples |
| 14 Feast of Maximilian Kolbe, priest and martyr | 23 International Day for the Remembrance of Slave Trade and Its Abolition |
| 26 Women's Equality Day | 29 Anniversary of Hurricane Katrina (2005) |

September/2007

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| 3 Labor Day | 6 The Medellín Conference Documents (1968) |
| 11 Anniversary of the Terrorist Attacks of 2001 | 14 Laborem Exercens (1981) |
| 15 (thru Oct/15) National Hispanic Heritage Month | 16 International Day/Preservation of the Ozone Layer |
| 13-14 Rosh Hashana (Jewish) | 13 (thru Oct/13) Ramadan (Islam) |
| 22 Yom Kippur (Jewish) | 27 (thru Oct/4) Sukkot/Jewish Feast of Tabernacles |

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