

# **Justice and Peace**

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# Introduction to the Papers

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The topic of Justice and Peace in the Carmelite Spiritual Directory Project is being covered by two articles. The first comes from the pen of Tracy O’Sullivan of the North American province of the Most Pure Heart of Mary. It explains the development of the Carmelite Order’s commitment to the work of Justice and Peace since the years following the Vatican Council, paralleling the development of the commitment of the whole church to the same cause.

The second article comes from Indonesia and reflects the conditions of life in Indonesia in this present time, so marked by unrest and the emergence of the people’s reaction to years of dictatorship. For Carmelites, it helps us to see how God made his identity known to the people. Contemplatives encounter this God when they contemplate. There is no other. The article is written by Berthold Pareira of the province of Indonesia.

## NOTES

# Justice and Peace and the Integrity of Creation

## 1 Introduction

In the new Constitutions of the Carmelite Order (1995), Chapter Six is “Our Apostolic Mission - General Considerations”. The following criteria are proposed for orienting and discerning our mission as Carmelites:

- a life of brotherhood and prayer in the midst of the people;
  - a response to the needs of the local and universal Church;
  - a preferential service to the poor and marginalized;
  - a special attention to issues concerning women;
  - a commitment to justice and peace;
  - a care for those who show an interest in the spirit, the spiritual heritage, and the life of Carmel.
- (Constitutions: Part TWO, Ch.VI, 93).

In Chapter IX on Justice and Peace, the main thrust of the statement is about the preferential option for the poor. We are called to search for the causes of injustice to the poor and marginalized, to be in sympathy with the suffering and involved in the struggle for justice and peace. This means working for a liberation from all that denies and oppresses the human dignity of the “minores.”

For Carmelites, this openness and solidarity for and with the “mi-

nores” of history will draw us into our prophetic charism after the fashion of Elijah. We are called to a three-step process:

1. the way of justice: our true and authentic experience of God leads us to confront the false ideologies of our day;
2. the mystic way: our encounter with God leads us to proclaim the wonder of God’s presence to the poor and to help them be aware of the power and gift they have by God’s special presence and preference for them;
3. the way of solidarity: we are urged to have concrete involvement for the right and causes of the victims of injustice (Constitutions: Part TWO, Ch. IX, 115).

The vision of this perspective on justice and peace is dramatically developed and fleshed out from the few insights in this direction in the 1971 Constitutions of the Carmelite Order. In working out the incipient theology from Vatican II, the 1971 Constitutions called us to a concern for the world and history. But this was done in a very broad and almost ethereal language.

Today with the human race entering a new age in history, we Carmelites, impelled by the Spirit at work in the Church, are very busy adapting our function to new conditions; as we strive to recognize the signs of the times, we are examining it in light of the Gospel and of our own heritage...By taking our place in the “poor and servant Church” we desire to offer the service of true brotherhood in order to break down the barriers that often separate and divide people; we know that the ef-

fectiveness of our apostolic endeavors consists in acting and teaching in the testimony of a living awareness of God present and acting (Part I, Ch. 1, #13).

In the chapter on the active apostolate, one is hard pressed to discern even the most generic concern for justice and peace. The thrust is toward the traditional sense of ministry with an emphasis on the spiritual.

This essay will attempt to lay out the theological and pastoral developments that are the source of this dramatic entry of justice and peace to center stage in the two plus decades since 1971. The seeds of change planted in Vatican II continue to nourish revolutionary insights into the Gospel. The role of justice and peace has been central to this revolution for the Church, for religious orders and for the Carmelites in particular.

Why justice and peace? Where does this new emphasis come from in our tradition? What are the implications for our ministry, for our spirituality and for our self-understanding as Carmelites? This essay on the Carmelites and the priority of justice and peace will strive to elaborate a theological and practical explanation of this rich and creative maturation of our Carmelite tradition. It will be shown that this new concern is not something extraneous to our tradition nor a passing fad of our times. Rather, it is something fundamental to our Carmelite experience, another significant step in the eight-hundred year pilgrimage in search of God.

## 2

# Justice and peace: roots in Vatican II

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The social teachings of the Church in modern times generally recognize *Rerum Novarum* of Leo XIII as the beginning statement. Through Pius XI up to John XXIII's *Pacem in Terris* and *Mater et Magistra* this tradition of the social teachings continued to be developed. However, it was the theological insights of Vatican II that really supplied the intellectual and spiritual freedom to make the Church deeply committed in a new and radical way to the world and history.

In the final document, *The Church in the Modern World*, the Council proclaimed a foundational statement for this new development: "A new humanism is emerging in the world in which men and women are primarily defined by their responsibility toward their brothers and sisters and toward history" (#55). This was a call to reform our basic religious experience, to a new and radical openness to this world as a source of authentic religious experience.

Basically, it was a call to refocus our religion, to direct our attention to this world. Previous to the Council, the central faith project was envisioned as saving one's soul. Attention was focused on the "spiritual", "the other worldly". Events in this world formed the context for this most fundamental personal religious endeavor. Part of the upheaval since Vatican II has been the struggle to

understand what this new thrust means in the life of faith. Slowly it has emerged in our communal understanding that Jesus did not preach an exclusive message of saving one's soul but that he proclaimed the coming of the Kingdom. Concern for this world and its history and the struggle for a just society are becoming more central to living out our faith.

To many Catholics, this new emphasis on concern for the world and for those outside the Church has been a cause for deep anxiety. They have felt a loss of focus in what they perceived as an excessive emphasis on the horizontal rather than the traditional vertical approach to God.

This tension led to a clarification of what the Council had to say about its new insights about God. Implied in the call for the new humanism and universal solidarity is the affirmation that God is graciously present to the whole of humanity. Whenever people are struggling with the meaningful issues of life, God is present to them. The Council pointed out the simple truth of the universality of grace, a truth that shattered the distortion that saw grace as confined in the Church. All people are touched by the Spirit and in a manner known only to God, enabled to share in the redemption made visible in Jesus Christ.

This startling new point of emphasis has consequences that tended to shatter a long held world view that divided reality into two orders, the natural and supernatural. The natural order, the realm of the world, was defined by divine creation and human sin. The supernatural order, the realm of the Church, was defined by divine redemption. This distinction had justified the Church's separation from the world. Church-related activities were re-

garded in this vision of reality as belonging to the higher order, while secular activities such as social, economic and political involvement, were perceived as belonging to the natural order.

Vatican II transformed this theological perspective. The locus of God's redemption is not simply the Church but human history itself. God is present among us. God is the hidden presence who makes humanity possible. This insight ushered in ever so slowly at the beginning of the call to justice and peace.

It was only after the Council that Paul VI really brought the term "justice and peace" to the forefront of Catholic consciousness. Following the mandate of the Council, he established the Pontifical Commission on Justice and Peace "to arouse the People of God to the full awareness of its role at the present time ... to promote the development of poor nations and to encourage international social justice" (*Motu Proprio*, January 6, 1967).

Thus the term, justice and peace, entered the arena of Catholic thought and consciousness in a very explicit and soon to be very forceful way.

## 2.1 Justice and Peace: Scriptural Roots

The Council could begin the theological development that prepared the way for meaningful justice and peace ministry because of the roots of these concepts in Scripture. The total messianic hope and complete revelation in Jesus Christ can be synthesized in the words *shalom* (peace) and *dikaiosyne* (justice). This is truly the center of the Good News.

*Shalom* can be received and recognized for what it is - the free gift of God - only in faith, that is, in the humble prayer of supplication and thanksgiving. But it is important to note that peace, *shalom*, is not closed up in one single prospect: it is peace at all levels. In the first place, it is peace with God; God communicates his peace to humankind through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit as gift. This gift cannot be received without one becoming a messenger and instrument for it on all levels of life. Peace is not something that is static; it finds us in a world loaded with tensions and full of sin. Peace therefore communicates itself as reconciliation: to accept it with gratitude means to become ambassadors for it. God, who in Christ has reconciled us to the Godhead, has confided to the entire Church the ministry of reconciliation.

A central concept of Pauline theology is that of *dikaiosyne* (righteousness), justification. In a mysterious solidarity Jesus Christ willed to carry the burden of our sins and has justified humankind by pure grace. This is an invitation to all to become in him the justice of God. (2 Cor 5:21). Like the concept of *shalom*, so also that of justification expressed in the first place, the gratuity of the gift of God, and it is precisely this gratuity, which united to the totality of the gift, became the most urgent appeal; it transforms the person into an instrument of justice on all levels.

In his life and in his ministry Jesus incarnated these concepts of justice and peace that were so deeply rooted in the Scripture He loved. He brought the glad tidings to the poor and liberty to the captives. (Lk 4:18) With Jesus' arrival "the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear" (Mt. 11:5). The excluded are welcomed home (Mk 2:16). With Jesus justice is affirmed (Mt 5:10-20);

truth is announced (Jn 8:46). Barriers are brought down and people unite and love is a new reality for many (Jn 13:34-35; Mt 11:28-30). Justice and peace is foundational to the Reign of God that Jesus proclaims.

## 2.2 The Synod on Justice: Roots of Justice Turbulence

In Karl Rahner's view, the Second Vatican Council was of great significance as the first ecumenical Council in the sense of a universal representation that went beyond Europe.

This new ecumenical voice continued to be heard in the gathering of the Bishops at Medellin in 1968. This session brought concern for the poor to new heights of awareness. The official Church began the journey to a new recognition that the poor are the majority of humankind.

In *Octogesima Adveniens*, Paul VI gave this new situation further definition and clarification. He pointed the Church in a new direction:

*It is to all Christians we address a fresh and insistent call to action.... It is not enough to recall principles, state intentions, point out crying injustices and utter prophetic denunciations; these words will lack real weight unless accompanied for each individual by a livelier awareness of personal responsibility and effective action.... The Christians' hope comes primarily from the fact that he/she knows the Lord is working with us in the world continuing...the Redemption (#48).*

The first post-Vatican II synod of Bishops gathered in the Fall of 1971. The consciousness of the division of the world between rich and poor, between capitalism and communism took further clarity with the use of new labels: First World, Second World and Third World. The Bish-

ops of the Synod reflected these worlds as did no other gathering of the hierarchy up to that time. The topic of the session was justice, and the result of the session was a profound impact on the consciousness and ministry of the Church.

The Bishops attempted to read the signs of the times. Their conclusion was the perception that there was a network of domination, oppression and abuses, which stifled freedom and kept the better part of humanity from a fair and equitable sharing in the gifts of God's creation. The Bishops saw new social consequences to sin in these evolving structures of injustice. This social sin demanded more than personal conversion of heart.

This insight led the prelates to proclaim what has become a central and foundational clarion call of the justice ministry in the Church:

*"Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation" (Justice in the World, #6).*

The Synod went on to talk about the rights of people, the concern for migrants and refugees, the treatment of workers, the need for uplifting of women, racism, the arms race, and, especially international structures that were most responsible for the escalating poverty of most of the world. But it came back again and again to the need to see in the Word of God the source of life and liberation that held the ultimate answer to injustice in all its manifestations. While it never once uses the word Evangelization, at least twenty times it calls the faithful to proclaim the Gospel as the ultimate response to sin, both personal and social,

which is the source of humankind's division and oppression.

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### *2.2.1 Response of Activism*

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In both the First and Third Worlds, the call to justice was heard and responded to with much more force than the Synod's call to return to the Gospel.

In the First World there was a broad-ranged surfacing of a multiplicity of issues. The early justice and peace movement lacked a focus and was often competing within itself for the same audience and resources. Only a limited number of Christians saw justice as central to their faith. For the most part, justice and peace were seen as the concern of a select few in any given parish, seminary, religious order or other types of groups doing Christian ministry. Likewise, the style of implementing justice and peace surfaced a whole new range of problems. It was a painful process of maturing for the justice and peace movement. It would be fair to say that in these years of the late sixties to the late seventies activism was the main characteristic of the movement. A lack of direction, minimal connection to spirituality, an exaggerated emphasis on this world and a very shallow analysis held sway.

As the movement for justice and peace began to mature, it did so by moving to integrate the activities with a faith dimension of people's lives. While this movement has always been slow and partial, its growing awareness that this ministry must be rooted in a deeper understanding of Evangelization has been a source of strength.

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### *2.2.2 Third World Liberation Movement*

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In the Third World, the experience was quite different. Following Medellín's call for the preferential option for the poor and immersed in the depths of a new and painful and expansive poverty, Christians in the Third World moved much more forcefully to involve the Church with the poor.

The turmoil in Latin America in particular, and the rest of the Third World in general, came from a people seeking a new political voice after centuries of subjection. The period of supposed development in the Fifties led to a further dependence on the center of wealth in the North and especially in the United States. The gap between the rich and the poor was gradually structured to become all but irreversible in its pattern of growth.

The call for change slowly emerged in Latin America. People began to see that the economic system was fundamentally unjust. A call for more self-reliant economy was put forth. Food and goods needed by the people and not products for export must be the priority. Labor-intensive technology must replace the high technology that was eliminating jobs. This was the beginning of the liberation movement.

Liberation movements sprung up all throughout Latin America and throughout much of the Third World. Base communities soon emerged and in some of these the Bible began to be a new and dramatic source of inspiration. While the struggle for justice had its political, economic and cultural complexities, the faith dimension became increasingly important for many Christian groups.

They grasped in a new way that the God of the Bible was on their side, the side of the poor. The story of the Exodus became a source of great comfort and challenge. They saw the need to move out of their subservience, their “Egypt”. Likewise, the Old Testament Prophets spoke to them with a fresh energy and dynamism. They saw that even the worship of God was null and void unless the people of faith were committed to a transforming justice.

New insights came when they brought their struggles to the message of Jesus in the New Testament. He called the poor blessed (Lk 6:20) and castigated the rich and powerful (Lk 6:25-26). In his eyes the poor were blessed not because misery was a good thing, but because the Kingdom was coming and with it a radical transformation. Jesus was seen as a threat to the established order. In him the final word was not rejection, defeat and death but victory and justice and life. This nourished their hope in the midst of the struggle against the overwhelming power of the system of injustice.

As these base communities and the movement for liberation continued to grow, there was clearly a need to give it direction and explanation from a theological perspective. This led to liberation theology.

Among the many new insights of this indigenous theological venture was the inclusion of the social dimension of salvation. The liberation theologians pointed out the political thrust of the Gospel. It condemned injustice in a very specific and concrete way and called for a social order in tune with God’s plan for humankind. In this new light the subversive aspect of the Gospel rose to new prominence.

The message of Medellin, the preferential option for the poor, was

given special consideration in the development of liberation theology. First and foremost, this option must lead one to see the world from the underside, from the vantage point of the victims. What the option for the poor asks of middle-class people is to give up the perspective of their own class with its own interests and privileges and to read society from below through the eyes of the people at the bottom and in the margin.

The second phase of this option calls for action. It includes solidarity with the poor and their struggle for justice. It calls for action and public witness. This presupposes that the poor are ultimately going to be the agents of their own liberation. All who love justice of whatever position in society need to support this struggle for liberation. The Church itself, the Puebla Document declared, must be in solidarity with the struggle.

This preferential option for the poor and the social analysis stemming from the liberation movement and liberation theology brought a new maturity to the justice movement in the First World. In the Seventies, returning Third World missionaries began to bring back new insights. These were followed by the translated works of the theologians of liberation. The marvelously rich intellectual insights of Vatican II began to become the incarnational stuff of liberation struggles in all societies and all nations.

**2.3** The three major components of liberation theology were embraced by the advocates of justice and peace in the first world. These elements were the preferential option for the poor, social analysis especially leading to an understanding of so-

**Maturing of the Justice and Peace Movement**

cial sin, and praxis. These factors contributed to the next stage of growth and development.

Justice and peace in all its varied manifestations began to be part of the normal patterns of ministry and teaching even while still remaining the domain of a small but growing group of Christians. It began to take on more concrete pastoral expressions and its theoretical base became more clear.

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### 2.3.1 Social Analysis

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This process is a four-step program for any group wishing to bring their faith to bear on the concrete situation in which they live.

The first step is experience. People have to name all the factors contributing to their life situation. The more elaborate, the better are the results.

Secondly, there is the actual social analysis which tries to name the historical and structural elements of the reality. What are the causes of the experience? What issues surface? What are the policies that address the issues? What are the structures behind the experience?

These structures are economic, political and cultural. Through these structures the goods of society are delivered or hindered for the people. Justice or injustice has its roots in structures that any given segment of society experiences. In the ability to name and grasp the structures people begin to own their reality and more importantly they are on the road to meaningful change in their reality.

The third step in social analysis is theological reflection. In the context of prayer and reading the Scripture people begin to name what

faith has to say about their situation. New themes rise to the surface; avenues of action come to the fore.

This leads to the fourth step, pastoral planning. Goals and objectives are incorporated into a plan of action. Here justice and peace become very central to the faith experience and praxis of the particular Christian community.

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### 2.3.2 Preferential Option for the Poor

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Experience has shown that this option is a complex process of varied dimensions. It is a series of conscious choices both personal and communal. It is an effort to move away from the norm to serve those at the top of society and to move to seek the interests of those at the bottom of society. This may be detailed in the following steps:

#### (i) Compassion for the Poor:

The poor would include primarily those who are materially poor but also those discriminated against or marginalized in any way by the structures of society.

The process begins with compassion for all the poor. This compassion means first and foremost reaching out in love as the God of the Bible reaches out in love to the poor not, because they are better than others, but simply because they are poor. The arguments of how they got that way or how they can help themselves is not the issue in this first step of the process.

In many ways the first step of compassion in attitude and action toward the poor is one of the most problematic dimensions of justice and peace ministry. Many consider any ministry to the poor as the work of justice and peace. While, in fact, much ministry to the poor and the

oppressed is done in a way that is contrary to the ultimate goals of justice and peace which is a transformation of society which changes the structures of injustice. Often service to the poor is done in such a way that it protects the status quo. It keeps the sources of injustice hidden and the poor powerless and locked into their position of helplessness. One must see the equation as one of both/and, and not either/or when it comes to service to the poor and work for justice and peace that leads to structural change. The style of these two manners of ministry may vary enormously, but they must be open to each other. This distinction has very significant pastoral consequences.

#### (ii) Recognition of Human Rights

This means to simply recognize that the poor have the same basic rights as everyone else. Then the movement is to raise this awareness with the poor, to proclaim their basic dignity. This tends to draw one into the causes of their poverty and the lack of dignity. More often than not this new consciousness is a threat to those benefiting from the poverty of the poor.

#### (iii) Structures of Injustice

This phase comes from social analysis and surfaces with relative clarity the structures that lock the poor into their situation. A call for change results. Here one begins to see the poverty as the Bible sees poverty: people are poor because others are rich, and their wealth has come at the expense of the poor. Sides are chosen and a pastoral strategy of action is put in place.

#### (iv) The Experience of the Poor

Somewhere in this process one must come to the realization that the poor must ultimately be the agents of their own liberation. This means

that one needs to work **with** the poor and not **for** the poor. They have a wealth of insight and wisdom to bring to the struggle. This realization comes slowly to those in the transition of working **for** the poor to working **with** the poor. This, in fact, becomes a process of accompanying the poor in their journey to liberation.

#### (v) Solidarity

Solidarity is the result of the transition of one working **for** the poor to one working **with** the poor. One discovers unending ways of lending support to the cause of liberation. A critical component of the dimension of solidarity is the process of consciousness raising. In this way people begin to unveil the hidden ideologies, stereotypes and patterns of lifestyle and consumption that contribute to the injustice. This is better understood if one sees how social sin functions in the consciousness of individuals.

Social sin is characterized by a collective blindness, group egotism, and lack of awareness of the evil involved. In the first stages there is no personal guilt involved. Here sin is understood as infidelity to God and destructive communal action, which is largely due to false consciousness. This sin is like an illness. It destroys us while we are unable to recognize its features and escape its power.

The first level of social sin is made up of the injustices and dehumanizing trends built into the various institutions and structures - political, social, economic, religious, and others - which embodies people's collective lives.

A second level of sin is made up of the cultural and religious symbols, operative in the imagination and fostered by society that legitimize and reinforce the unjust institutions

and structures and thus intensify the harm done to a growing number of people.

On a third level, social sin refers to the false consciousness created by these institutions, structures and the ideologies through which people involve themselves collectively in destructive action as if they were doing the right thing.

It is on this level that the struggle against social sin begins. People open to the Spirit, are able to become aware of and turn away from, the taken-for-granted injustices built into their society. They begin to recognize their own “ideological captivities”. This is the level where the conversion takes place through consciousness raising. As we are confronted with the demands of minorities, refugees, migrants, women and “minores” of whatever status; as we are challenged to look at the horror of the arms race, at the growing gap between the rich and poor among nations and within nations, we have to confront the status quo. We have to grapple with the urgency of taking a more critical view of our society. This is the heart of the battle - to break out of our “ideological captivity”. This reflection leads to action, to taking a stand against perceived injustice. This is how the liberation from “ideological captivity” begins.

The fourth level of social sin is made up of collective decisions, generated by the distorted consciousness, which increases the injustices in society and intensifies the power of the dehumanizing trends. These decisions are usually made by an elite decision making body.

Some very obvious examples of social sin are racism, sexism, consumerism, ageism, nationalism, militarism, and the other “isms” that are part of our lives. If you consider the

liberation movements any society which aim at ridding us of these institutionalized injustices and the false mindsets they produce, the four levels of social sin are always central to the strategy of liberation. Consciousness raising is always one of the essential elements of any of the movements for social change.

In the process of social change, a prophet, whether personal or corporate, arises to name the dehumanizing trends. The prophet’s power comes from the clarity of the proclamation of the inhumanity of the situation. Then the struggle with language and other deep-rooted cultural and religious symbols begins to call into question our stereotypes and prejudices. Confronted with the truth, our false consciousness is challenged. We must make a decision to choose justice, to choose life and to express that choice in social, political and economic action for change. This is one of the most authentic expressions of justice and peace ministry.

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### 2.3.3 Praxis

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Praxis is a process of engagement with reality to change it and to make it more just and equitable, more expressive and supportive of the dignity of all people. Praxis is a movement against social sin and all its consequences.

Liberation theologians have shown the connection of praxis and the historical Jesus. Jesus was about the Kingdom of God. In his praxis, Jesus brought his activity to bear upon the reality around him in order to transform it in a determined direction, the direction of the Kingdom. He invited his followers to continue this action for the Kingdom. This was his invitation to discipleship.

Jesus' action for the Kingdom shows him as a partisan for the poor. He addresses the poor in a special way. It was for them that he performed the signs of the coming Kingdom - miracles, the expulsion of demons, and food and drink in a wondrous fashion. It is from this basic starting point among the poor that he denounces the basic sin and tears away the mask from the rationalizations of that sin. He calls for the conversion of his followers to see this reality and to change it. Discipleship demands action.

# NOTES

# 3

## Justice and peace: integration with evangelization

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### 3.1 Re-focusing Justice and Peace with the Gospel

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In the years following the 1971 Synod on justice, the foundational statement of the Synod was the driving force of the justice and peace efforts in the Christian community. “Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world **fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel**, in other words, the Church’s mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.”

For many years in justice and peace ministry the emphasis was almost exclusively on the beginning and end of that foundational statement: “Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world...in other words, the Church’s mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.”

The call was to action, to get involved in the wide range of issues as they evolved in almost overwhelming intensity. This led to some widespread ministries of great im-

portance and at times to effective transformation of structures. It helped bring new consciousness in all forms of ministry and it influenced the Church’s articulation for her mission at every level.

However, as with any new development, it had its distortion and misdirection. It often led to division and conflict within the community that was more destructive than prophetic.

The majority of people still did not grasp the theological, pastoral, and spiritual significance of justice and peace within their understanding of the Gospel. Even more consequential, this new development was foreign to most people’s religious experience. It was seen as the choice for some and indeed worthy of admiration for the most part but just not essential in the search for God.

Over the past several years this majority viewpoint has been in the process of a gradual transformation. Yet the majority of persons within the Church and the Carmelite Order still fail to grasp justice and peace as a constitutive dimension of the Gospel.

It is not seen as part of their religious experience even less as their search for God.

The change that has come and will continue to come has to do with the integration contained in the foundational statement. Justice and peace ministry, and more importantly the justice and peace perspective, as the quest for an authentic faith expression, must bring the Gospel into the central position as it is in the foundational statement. In other words, evangelization has to be the context, the focus and the funding power of justice and peace ministry. It is only when evangelization

is the center that all the distortions, exaggerations and misdirections of justice and peace ministry fall by the wayside and the true experience of the faith shines forth in this activity. When explained in the context of evangelization, justice and peace is clearly not an option for a ministry, but indeed a constitutive dimension of preaching the Gospel.

This insight is at the heart of the transition of the maturing of justice and peace ministry of the last two decades. While all that has gone under the banner of justice and peace has not been of the Gospel, any true preaching and living of the Gospel is going to embrace the ministry of justice and peace as a non-negotiable element of walking in the footsteps of Jesus.

It was no accident that the Synod that followed the Justice Synod was on Evangelization. This Synod in 1974 led to the publication of one of the most influential Church documents the following year, Paul VI's *Evangelii Nuntiandi*.

## 3.2 Development of Catholic Evangelization

“Evangelization” is a term that is relatively new and generally not familiar in Catholic circles. Pope Paul VI has been the source of a crescendoing force that is bringing evangelization out of the shadows of obscurity to a position of prominence in Catholic thought and experience.

### 3.2.1 Synod 1974: *Evangelization in the Modern World*

In 1973, Paul VI discerned a need for a greater spiritual renewal in the midst of the wide ranging changes flowing from Vatican II. In this vein, he chose the theme “Evan-

gelization in the Modern World” for the Third Synod of Bishops in 1974.

As the Synod on Justice, this Synod was marked by powerful presence and input of the bishops from the Second and Third Worlds. The new diversity was startling. In the end, the prelates chose not to draw premature closure to the richness of their exchanges. They called upon Paul VI to give further reflection to the topic of evangelization which they began to see was more profound and challenging than their initial insights had inclined them to perceive. They concluded with a very brief summary statement.

The Synod did move forward with some very important considerations in their final statement. It affirmed the responsibility of every Christian to actively participate in the mission to evangelize. Likewise it declared, “We wish to confirm anew the mandate to evangelize all people constitutes the essential mission of the Church”. It also pointed out that the Church is simultaneously both the object and subject of the evangelizing effort:

*In fact this work demands incessant interior conversion on the part of the individual Christians and continuing renewal of our communities and institutions. In this way, faith will become stronger, purer and more intimate and we will become better fit and more credible as witnesses of the faith through the coherence of our individual and social life with the Gospel which we must preach.*

In one of its strongest statements, the Synod put great emphasis and further clarity on the relationship of human development and evangelization:

*Prompted by the love of Christ and illumined by the light of the Gospel, let us nurture the hope that the Church, in more faithfully fulfilling the work of evangelization, will announce the total salvation of all people or rather their*

*complete liberation, and from now on will start to bring this about... Faithful to her evangelizing mission, the Church as a truly poor, praying and fraternal community can do much to bring about the integral salvation or the full liberation of men and women. She can draw from the Gospel the most profound reasons and ever new incentives to promote generous dedication to the service of all - the poor, especially, the weak and the oppressed - and to eliminate the social consequences of sin which are translated into unjust social and political structures.*

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### 3.2.2 *Evangelii Nuntiandi*

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A year after the close of the Synod, Paul VI issued his classic Apostolic Exhortation, *On Evangelization in the Modern World* on December 8, 1975. This document has been rightfully called the Magna Carta of Catholic Evangelization. In the Pope's view, a renewed effort at evangelization was a natural consequence of the Church's maturing grasp of Vatican II. Paul VI opens his statement with three fundamental questions:

1. *In our day, what has happened to that hidden energy of the Good News, which is able to have a powerful effect on man's conscience?*
2. *To what extent and in what way is that evangelical force capable of really transforming the people of this century?*
3. *What methods should be followed in order that the power of the Gospel may have its effect? (EN #4)*

In EN #15, Paul VI points out the reciprocal links between the Church and evangelization. He states: "The Church is born of the evangelizing activity of Jesus and the Twelve... And it is above all his mission and his condition of being an evangelizer that she is called upon to continue".

It is the mission of evangelization, therefore, that has the Church, not the Church that has the mission. So within the Church every ministry, whether it be pastoral care or explicitly missionary, whether outreach to the unchurched and inactive or dealing with the spiritual growth of the faithful, whether justice and peace concerns or family service - all ministries converge to serve the primary and essential mission of evangelization.

In EN #17, Paul VI continues to point out the depth of meaning of evangelization:

*Any partial and fragmentary definition which attempts to render the reality of evangelization in all its richness, complexity and dynamism does so only at the risk of impoverishing it. It is impossible to grasp the concept of evangelization unless one tries to view all its essential elements.*

Paul VI sees evangelization is much more than one form of the ministry of the Word. It includes all the pastoral activity of the Church in the effort to give birth to a new age and a new world.

*For the Church, evangelizing means bringing the Good News into all strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new... The Church evangelizes when she seeks to convert, solely through the divine power of the message she proclaims, both the personal and collective consciences of people, the activities in which they engage, and the lives and concrete milieux which are theirs (EN #18).*

Paul VI's understanding of evangelization then is very grand indeed! It involves the transformation of humanity and the whole world from within. So discipleship is a call to responsibility for the world, to bring the light and truth of Jesus

into all its dimensions. To evangelize is to become instrumental in facilitating and continuing God's self-revelation to our world. Jesus, the fullness of God's self-disclosure, is the Message. It is much more than passing on doctrine, tradition, memorized passages from Scripture or creating religious peak experiences.

To evangelize is to touch someone's heart, mind, and imagination with the Risen Lord. The encounter becomes so significant that the person begins to reinterpret and redirect his or her whole life around Jesus. To evangelize is to help another person pay attention to, celebrate, and live in terms of the living God, revealed fully by Jesus and present in our human experiences.

In pointing out the essential content of evangelization in Chapter III, Paul VI brings into focus some basic elements that are too often overlooked:

- To evangelize is first of all to bear witness in a simple and direct way to God revealed by Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit; to bear witness that in His Son God has loved the world - that in his Incarnate Word he has given being to all things and has called all people to eternal life (EN #26).
- At the center of the message: Salvation in Jesus Christ (EN #27).
- The interplay of the Gospel and concrete life, an explicit message of liberation from all dehumanizing forces in the world (EN # 29 & 30).
- liberation from sin (EN #36).
- happiness in God, humankind's final goal (EN #35).

It is here that Paul VI adds his insights into one of the most difficult theological concepts in the era after the Council, the nature of sal-

vation. It is especially here that the intimate connection between justice and peace and evangelization is clearly established. He significantly develops the statement of the bishops in the Third Synod. His reflection shows a sense of balance and a sense of openness. The meaning of salvation is a very fertile area of theological and pastoral creativity in recent times. EN has made an important contribution to the enrichment of the idea of salvation.

Balancing the traditional aspects of the spiritual and extra-historical dimension of salvation with the recently expounded concept of intra-historical liberation of all people, the arena of justice and peace, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, presents a balanced view of salvation. It declares that there is "need to restate clearly the specifically religious finality of evangelization" (EN #32). Likewise, the liberation which evangelization proclaims "cannot be contained in the simple and restricted dimensions of politics, economics, social or cultural life; it must envisage the whole person... including one's openness to the absolute, even the divine absolute" (EN # 33).

Yet, Paul VI is adamant in his insistence that salvation begins within history. He adds that the proclamation of the Good News demands a call for liberation of all that prevents our full humanity. "The Church ... has the duty of assisting the birth of this liberation, of giving witness to it, of ensuring that it is complete. This is not foreign to evangelization" (EN # 30).

The language of the document often interchanges the words salvation and liberation or talks of "liberating salvation": "Between evangelization and human advancement - development and liberation - there are in fact profound links" (EN #31). Maintaining the creative ten-

sion, he repeats, “Nevertheless the Church re-affirms the primacy of her spiritual vocation and refuses to replace the proclamation of the Kingdom by proclamation of forms of human liberation; she even states that her contribution to liberation is incomplete if she neglects to proclaim salvation in Jesus Christ” (EN #34). The reign of God in Jesus, and conversion thereto, demands both on-going and radical commitment to the transformation of individuals and social structures toward God’s plan of justice and peace, love and full integrity for all humankind.

Paul VI goes on to point out that the Church has the firm conviction that all temporal and political liberation, no matter how strong its claim of theological depth for its foundation, risks massive self-deception without authentic spirituality as its driving force. “It carries within itself the germ of its own negation and fails to reach the ideal that it proposes for itself, whenever its profound motives are not those of justice in charity, whenever its zeal lacks a truly spiritual dimension and whenever its final goal is not salvation and happiness in God” (EN #35).

In Chapter Four on methods, Paul VI lists expansive ways to carry out evangelization. At the top of the list is witnessing. “Modern man and woman listen more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if they do listen to teachers, it is because the teachers are witnesses.” (EN # 41)

The Church evangelizes, then, by becoming an ever more credible sign or “sacrament” of God’s love in the world. Through our active participation in Christ’s paschal mystery, the transforming power of a healing, reconciling and faithful love continues to be revealed to all the world. Without such a concrete, practical

expression in love and fellowship, the verbal proclamation of the Word would remain empty, ineffective, and even, in a very real sense, incredible. The evangelizing value of Christian life genuinely lived is enormous, for it truly makes present and incarnates the Gospel mystery in the here-and-now situation.

Chapter Seven is on “The Spirit of Evangelization”. The role of the Holy Spirit is highlighted. “Techniques of evangelization are good but even the most advanced ones could not replace the Holy Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit the most convincing dialectic has no power over the heart of men and women... It is in the Church’s evangelizing mission that the Spirit is most active” (EN #75).

Again the Pope returns to the importance of Christian witness as essential to the evangelizing mission. This joyful spirit must be nourished by an authentic spirituality.

And may the world of our time, which is searching sometimes with anguish, sometimes with hope, be enabled to receive the Good News not from evangelizers who are dejected, discouraged, impotent or anxious, but from ministers of the Gospel whose lives grow with fervor, who have first received the joy of Christ, and who are willing to risk their lives so that the Kingdom may be proclaimed and the Church established in the midst of the world (EN #80).

## NOTES

# 4

## Integration of justice and peace: Carmelites today

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### 4.1 Carmelite Renewal: The Documents

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In the post Vatican II era of renewal of religious orders, the Carmelites have developed a series of documents expressing this renewal experience. This includes statements from the Council of Provinces, the General Congregations, and the General Chapters along with some statements from the leadership of the Order. The declarations are an effort by the Carmelites to express their most cherished values and deepest insights into the ongoing search for self-understanding. The statements are about the effort by the Order to repossess the charism of the Order with new fervor and enthusiasm in our present day reality.

In this field of literature there is a good deal declared about justice and peace. Of particular importance are the 1975 statement, “In the Midst of the People”, the 1980 document, “Called to Account by the Poor”, and the message of the 1987 Council of Provinces on justice and peace. However, there is practically no mention of evangelization until 1992 when there were two very significant pronouncements on the topic. The first was a joint letter of

the two Generals, John Malley, O.Carm. and Camilo Maccise, O.C.D. on the occasion of the Fifth Centenary of Evangelization in America. The second was the message of the General Congregation on evangelization.

Both documents show how the Order has grasped the connection between justice and peace and evangelization. This relationship leads to deep insight into Carmelite charism for our day.

### 4.2 The Letter of the Two Generals: A New Spirituality

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The joint letter by the Prior General and Prepositus Prior General’s, *A Praying Community at the Service of the People*, states, “The way we interpret our charism and renew our commitment to it today must begin from our reading of the signs of the times and of the great challenges of the New Evangelization” (#16).

Pope John Paul II first used the term “New Evangelization” in Haiti in 1983 to call for a new effort to bring the Gospel to Latin America in the midst of its suffering, poverty and spiritual crisis. In his encyclical *Christifideles Laici* (1988), the New Evangelization was put forth as an organic pastoral plan for the whole Church. It is a call not for a new Gospel but for a new enthusiasm, new methods and new expression in proclaiming Jesus and his message to those who have supposedly heard it already.

The Generals go on to say: *A New Evangelization will be new only if it comes from a new spirituality... As in the case of Mary, Elijah, St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross, this new spirituality must begin from a new experience of the living God in whose presence we stand constantly. As in the case of Jesus, it*

*must begin with a passionate love for the Father which in turn must become a passionate love for the poor and marginalized.” (#17)*

Ultimately, if justice and peace as an openness to reality is going to enter into the deepest fibres of our Carmelite life, it must be experienced in the context of this new spirituality that will fund the New Evangelization. Our Carmelite spirituality has always been about the experience of God. Justice and peace must be encountered in the midst of this experience of God if they are going to be integral to our Carmelite life. This is stated in the letter. They point out that recalling the past mistakes in evangelization helps in not repeating them.

*Moreover, it will help us to be more open to what is new in what we see appearing on the margins of history, as a sign of God seeking to be more present in our lives as individuals and communities (#13).*

In listing what is new in our lives and where God is seeking to be more present, the letter goes on to list the major components of a justice and peace perspective in our day: option for the poor, prophetic nature of our consecrated life, our welcome for the marginalized and our search for a spirituality that is more inserted in the reality of people’s lives (#13).

The same point was made in the Tenth Council of Provinces (1987) on justice and peace. In the Message to the Order, the Council states: “We were aware that our contemplative tradition challenges us ‘to find the face of God’ in the face of the poor (Puebla) and that those who wish to see God must act with justice (Jer 22:16)”.

The richest source of understanding the place of justice and peace in the new spirituality that the

Generals talk about is to probe into the depths of evangelization. This reflection will gradually unfold the new directions: for justice and peace, for evangelization and for a new spirituality. This search will be a very fruitful contribution to our continuing quest for the renewal of our Carmelite life.

### 4.3 General Congregation on Evangelization

At the General Congregation of 1992, John Malley, Prior General, had several important insights to share in his opening address on the theme of evangelization. Speaking of the New Evangelization in the context of our Carmelite life today, the General pointed out that for eight-hundred years there has been a basic Gospel commitment expressed by three points of emphasis in the relentless and often elusive attempt to live out our charism:

1. to live in allegiance to Jesus Christ and to seek the living God by prayer and by meditating on the Word.
2. to grow in community and fraternity by mutual respect, dialogue and cooperation.
3. to serve the people of God in imitation of Elijah the Prophet and Mary our Mother.

In this way, our approach to the Church and religious life and hopefully to justice and peace in the larger mission of evangelization will always express the basic values of our heritage: contemplation, community and prophecy.

These traditional values will have an impact on our ministry of evangelization according to John Malley. Certain themes will consequently get more emphasis:

*The Word of God, fraternity and community, Elijah/prophetic dimension, the practice of the presence of God, the ‘listen-*

*ing posture and prayer of Mary’, justice and peace, solidarity and service.*

Recognizing the centrality of Jesus to evangelization, the General asks the question of major significance: “What Jesus do we follow? Not every Jesus is reconcilable with the historical Jesus of the Gospels or with his words and message about the reign of God”.

In the presentation to the members of the Congregation, Camilo Maccise, O.C.D., the Prior General of the Discalced Carmelites answers the question. He outlined three models of evangelization: the traditional, the modern and the liberating. In his view the most authentic encounter with the historical Jesus and his message of the Kingdom is in the liberating model of evangelization.

Here are the characteristics of the liberating model of evangelization:

- Kerygma is not just an announcement, but an event which touches all aspects of the human being and society;
- evangelization must liberate from all forms of slavery resulting from personal and social sin;
- the practical truth of evangelization is verified in its expectation; liberation is part of the evangelizing process;
- the subject to be evangelized is dialectic: the poor evangelize us and we evangelize them;
- the evangelizer is seen to be poor and thus gives credence to his hope;
- the poor are the privileged receivers of evangelization;
- the form that dialogue has taken is solidarity;
- “Kairos” is present when the Gospel is announced to those who are last;

- when an option is taken for the poor, conflict occurs:
  - with those states which will not allow just change in society;
  - with institutions which defend the interests of the dominant classes;
  - with current rationale.

In this mode of liberating evangelization, the connection with justice and peace is brought to a mature development. Justice and peace as words are hardly mentioned but the justice and peace perspective is like the leaven that permeates and supports the whole process. When the Gospel is preached in this paradigm of the faith, liberation is the goal at the deepest spiritual center as well as in the very harsh concrete reality most people endure in this sinful world. All dehumanizing forces are attacked with the power of the liberating message of Jesus in its full integrity. This proclamation engenders a liberation both within history, in the broken world of the not-yet, the world of hunger, violence, drugs, escalated infant mortality and abortion. Likewise, there is a liberation that opens people to the unfathomable riches of the Spirit that are present when Jesus is embraced with a hunger for full discipleship.

It is a liberating message that calls for transformation of all aspects of the human experience: political, economic, social, cultural, and indeed, all human relationships. This is where justice and peace are experienced as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel.

In their message to the Order, the General Congregation called for a decisive embrace of the New Evangelization. This will mean re-evaluating many of our present, more traditional ministries. They see the call of Carmelites to set out on new paths, a new style of life,

which is more inserted in the lived reality of the people and more committed to that reality. They call for a more incarnated, prophetic and communitarian spirituality. This spirituality must focus on liberating people from all consequences of sin in the realm of the personal and in the realm of the flawed structures and institutions of society that often both hide and protect the multiple patterns of injustice.

This path of liberating evangelization demands a constant obedience to the Word of God, continual conversion and a true inculturation. In light of the option taken at Manila (1987) for the materially poor, and recognizing that when we evangelize we are also evangelized ourselves, we press on toward a future salvation known only to God “rejoicing in hope, patient in suffering, persevering in prayer, caring for the needs of our brothers and sisters, showing hospitality to strangers” (Rom 12:12-13).

The integral connection between the ministry of Justice and Peace and Evangelization has been coming into the consciousness of our Order. It shines out in the points of similarity in the Message to the Order addressed from Manila in 1987 on justice and peace and the Message to the Order from Caracas in 1992 on Evangelization.

# 5 Justice and peace in the Elijahan tradition

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Our brother, Carlos Mesters, made a presentation to the 1983 General Chapter entitled, “Walking in the Presence of the Lord in the Spirit of Elijah”. The content of this talk has worked its way into several of our documents of Renewal including our proposed Constitutions. In Chapter IX, “The Apostolic Mission on behalf of Justice and Peace in the World” the three ways of Elijah are cited. They are “the way of justice,” “the way of solidarity,” and “the mystic way”. In the three ways, these fundamental insights into the mission and self-understanding of Elijah portrayed in the Scriptures, Carlos Mesters offers a marvelous synthesis of justice and peace and our Carmelite tradition.

## 1. The Path of Justice: an attack on the causes of poverty and injustice.

Elijah spoke out of his experience of God. He spoke as a prophet. His understanding of the Covenant let him see with clarity the evil imbedded in the actions of King Ahab and Jezebel. His denunciation of the economic, social, political, and religious situation is direct and to the point. He could not stand the lie of the false prophets trying to use a distorted view of God to prop up the injustices of Ahab.

Elijah called the King and the people to turn to the true God, Yahweh. He did not ask for charity or philanthropy. He called for justice, the basis of the Covenant.

*In the Bible justice appears when the people and things acquire their proper place in God's plan. There **just order** appears. Elijah took a stance for justice based in the Covenant. He imitated God; he heard the cry of the poor and began to act (Mesters, 1983, #53).*

Ultimately, it was the people who perceived the righteousness of Elijah and his cause when they proclaimed, “It is Yahweh who is God! It is Yahweh who is God!” (I Kings 18:39)

## 2. The Path of Solidarity: Fighting poverty and injustice by the renewal of the community

Elijah knew that just denouncing injustice was not enough. For poverty is not always caused by injustice but often by natural disasters, calamities, illness and death. These sources of human suffering are not perceived in the Bible as the ultimate problem. Rather it is the community's indifference in the midst of injustice, natural disasters, illness and death that is the most significant contributing cause to human despair.

It is the community that should be God's covenant with humanity against misfortune whether through fate or injustice. This is the root cause of solidarity and sharing in the message of the Bible. The community should give expression to God's plan, a plan of divine solidarity in the midst of human suffering. “The community's influence in the world does not rest on weaponry or technology, nor in the might of wealth, but rather in the power of service and testimony: the service of solidarity which welcomes the poor; the testimony of effective solidarity

which has managed to share wealth and eliminate poverty from its midst. (Deut. 15:4)” (Mesters, 1983, #56).

### **3. The Path of Mysticism: to fight poverty and injustice through renewal of conscience**

The greatest injustice to the poor is the theft of their self-worth, the ideological distortion that robs them of the self-esteem as children of God.

Any work for justice and solidarity that is not rooted in the returning to the poor this inestimable gift of true appreciation of their human dignity, their awareness of God’s infinite love and involvement in their cause, will always be inadequate. “Every effort made will be nothing more than plastic surgery on a cadaver, a transplant on a dead rooster, a touch of plaster on a shattered wall.” (Mesters, 1983, #59)

The strangling and death-dealing roots of injustice can only be eliminated if there is transforming social change but also renewal of the poor’s basic embrace of their self-worth as children of God. They must receive the Good News of God’s approaching Reign in which the poor are truly blessed. This truth is at the heart of the ever so necessary transition from working for the poor to being in solidarity and accompanying and working with the poor in the cause of justice and peace. In the final analysis, true liberation for the poor will come only from self-help and dependence on God. They must know that they have not been abandoned. God is in their midst.

By his life, Elijah was a living testimony of God’s presence in the midst of the people. His entire life was a service to Yahweh, the God of the people (1 Kings 17: 1, 15). The people knew this, as Elijah was

known to be a person completely available and open to the unforeseen action of God’s Spirit (1 Kings 18: 12; 2 Kings 2:3). To the poor he was a “man of God” who spoke the words of God (1 Kings 1:9), he dressed in rough clothing (1 Kings 1:8), nourished himself on what nature offered him (1 Kings 17:4) or on what the poor shared with him (1 Kings 17:5). Elijah’s cause was God’s cause: *Zelo zelatus sum pro Domino Deo Exercituum* (1 Kings 17:15). Elijah’s prayer activated God’s power in favor of the people: he made fire come down from heaven (1 Kings 18:36-38; 2 Kings 1:10-12), brought rain after a long drought (1 Kings 18:42; James 5:18), brought the widow’s son back to life (1 Kings 17:21-22). The very name “Elijah” is a summary of his faith and his witness: “My God is Yahweh!” (Mesters, 1983, #62)

Elijah walked the mystic way but it did not deliver him from the path of fear and self-doubt, from anxiety and confusion. He fled from Jezebel and wanted to die (1 Kings 19:1-4). In his weakness and darkness Elijah again sought God. To his shock and wonderment, he did not find God in the traditional signs of Moses’ experience on Mt. Horeb, in the tempest, lightning and earthquake. It was, however, in the silent breeze that he found God (1 Kings 10-14). In the midst of his anxiety he learned to his surprise, that God’s cause did not depend on him. Quite the contrary, he learned his prophetic task was totally dependent on God. It is God who defends Elijah, not Elijah God!

Elijah had to be open to a transformation of consciousness. He had to adjust his old vision to a new reality. He had to be open to conversion. Even in his old age and supported by his many victories in God’s cause, he was not ashamed to open himself up to a new and more transforming experience of his God, ever new and

ever full of surprise. Elijah had to learn that God was not with him only in his victories, but also in his repression, anguish and flight. (Mesters, 1983, #66)

## NOTES

# Biblical Spirituality the Struggle for Justice and Peace

## 1 Introduction

The whole church is called to struggle for justice and peace. This is one of its essential tasks. The church must become a Church for others, a Church for the “oppressed”.<sup>1</sup> This means that the Church must become a church which brings peace.

The work for justice and peace is a burdensome struggle and one full of challenges. The challenges come not only from humankind, but also from impersonal forces within a system which has their own impulses and dynamics. One system is the so-called neo-liberal consumerist system. Within this system, politics and economics dominate everything. Like any other system it is based on the assumption of certain values. There is competition, but not all have equal opportunities. The system is designed with profit in mind. The system is gigantic and swallows people for the sake of the desired profit. The system is the master, which must be obeyed.<sup>2</sup> It is not surprising that in such a situation the rich become richer and the poor become poorer. Those who have less are always on the losing side because they do not have the opportunity of competing.

Another challenge comes from those who possess sophisticated policies and means of oppression. Examples of this today are the way trade, professional education, the concept of national security are used to justify the actions of oppressive regimes. Keeping all those things in mind the following question comes to mind: can we oppose so much injustice?

Can we struggle for justice and peace? From where do we start? Does our struggle have any meaning? What can we do? Will not our struggle for justice and peace endanger the tranquillity of the Church?

As we look at these questions we come face to face with ourselves. Thoughts occur, such as, You cannot change the world. There is no hope. Oppression is part of the culture. It is easier said than done. We must be practical and realistic. Careful, you might endanger the Church!

Then what? What must we do? Faith’s greatest enemy is fear, an attitude of giving in before even trying, a belief in nothing greater than one’s own power and the inability of making decisions. What we are talking about is a lack of faith. What we need most in the struggle for justice and peace is faith. Faith renders the impossible possible (Mk 11:23-24; Lk17:6; Mt 17:19-20). Faith is a radical reversal of one’s life which leaves no room for half measures. We need

<sup>1</sup> See *Concilium*, 198(4/1988) with the theme “Diakonia: Church for Others”.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. A.Nolan, *Yesus sebelum Agama Kristen* (Yogyakarta, Kanisius, 1991) 15-17.

conversion, and we need grace. Conversion means to be on the side of the kingdom of God (Mt 6:33) and to really have faith in the truth of what we hope for.

We need a spirituality or spirit and enthusiasm to move us. Hence we need to examine the Scriptures in order to understand the reasons for our struggle and to receive the water of life which Christ himself offers us. Our desire for justice and our willingness to spend ourselves in the struggle to bring peace and justice is founded on our encounter with God, the very heart of contemplation.

## **2** God defends the oppressed

The first truth of faith which has to underlie our struggle is that the Lord is the God who hears the cry of the oppressed.<sup>3</sup> His name is YAHWEH which means God who frees the oppressed. That is his name and his designation from age to age and for ever (Ex 3:15).

God is “Father of orphans and protector of widows” (Ps 68:6). This means that God defends the oppressed because in Scripture “orphans and widows” represent all marginalised people. Thus, He will certainly punish oppressors (Ex 22:21-23) and will not listen to their prayers when they lift up their voices to him (Prov 21:13). Blessings and curses depend on a person’s attitude towards the poor and marginalised (Num 15:7-11).

The consequences of this truth are very deep. Anyone who sees his neighbour oppressed and remains silent, does not have the love of God in him (1 Jn 3:7). He does not live

by his faith in God (cf Jm 2:1-13). Only one who is inspired by a deep belief in this truth of the faith will be urged to make a decision in faith. Such a person will act like Nehemiah when he saw his brother oppressed (cf. Neh 5:1-13).

## **3** God is angry and sad at the sight of oppression

The second element in the spirituality of the struggle for justice and peace is faith in the anger and suffering of God who is not pleased at the sight of the oppression of the poor.

This image of the “anger and suffering” of God is highly anthropomorphic, nevertheless, it cannot be avoided when speaking of God. Humankind can speak of God because “He clothed them with strength like his own, and made them in his own image” (Sir 17:3). We speak about God as if He were human and indeed this is all we can do. Such talk is not false because humankind was created in God’s image.<sup>4</sup>

This revelation concerning God’s anger and suffering at the sight of oppression of the poor is most evident in the preaching of the prophets. Not only do the prophets of the eighth century before Christ, such as Amos, Micah and Isaiah, make social criticism, but also the prophets of the seventh and sixth centuries such as Zephaniah (3:1-8), Jeremiah (5:26-29; 9:2-6:11-12; 22:1-8, 13-19) and Ezekiel (22:1-16). They say that God cannot remain silent at the sight of the oppression, extortion and injustice carried out against the poor. He punishes oppressors (Isa 1:24). He suffers along with the oppressed (Isa 3:12).

<sup>3</sup> R. Burns, “The Book of Exodus”, in *Concilium*, 198(1/1987), 11-12. See p.16.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. G. de Geerrardon, “L’homme a l’image de dieu”, *Nouvelle Revue Theologique*, 11(1958), 683-695.

How must we understand these emotions in God? The anger of God is not the anger of hatred and self-satisfaction, but the anger of mercy. God is truly angry at oppressors because he is full of mercy towards the poor who are trodden upon. This anger is born of love. And who ever loved without at least once being angry?<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps someone will ask why were the prophets so daring as to cast social criticism? Did people stand in awe of them? Or was it because the people were homogeneous? These are not the reasons at all. Their courage came from God. They were filled with God: “I am full of strength, of the breath of Yahweh, of justice and courage, to declare Jacob’s crime to his face and Israel’s to his” (Mic 3:8). Therefore, they could not hide the anger and suffering of God. They had to preach these (Am 3:8; cf. Paul’s question concerning his calling in 1 Cor 9:6). We need to reflect deeply on this truth.

The theology of the prophets concerning the sin of social injustice could also urge us to struggle for justice and peace in our day.<sup>6</sup> According to Amos, where the poor are neglected or where injustice prevails, praying and worshipping are sinful actions. The more the oppressor prays, the greater his sins (Am 4:4 also cf. 5:21-24). According to Isaiah, all that God wants of the people he loves are justice and integrity (Isa 5:1-7). According to Micah, the building of temples is no sign or guarantee that God approves of Israel (cf. Mic 3:11).

<sup>5</sup> B.A. Pareira, “2Keibuan dan heerahiman Allah Bapa kita”, *rohani* 41(4/1994) 121-127. See p.125.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, “Kitab suci dan keadilan sosial”, a paper presented during a one-day seminar of the Catholic Union of members of the IKIP Malang, on 21 October 1991. This paper may be found in a brochure titled “Keadilan sosial dalam Pendidikan Katolik”, pp.7-18.

## 4 Jesus died because he preached the Good News to the poor

The third element in the spirituality of the struggle for justice and peace is to believe in the cross of Jesus. This cross must be placed within the context of its

true history. We need to deepen our understanding of its historical reasons. This is not an easy task but one that cannot be avoided. Jesus was an ordinary man (Phil 2:5-11) and he was also crucified as a man by the Roman colonisers. Is it not true that he was crucified mainly because of the hatred and envy of the religious leaders? Why? Because he changed the people’s understanding of God. He defended the oppressed and was full of mercy towards them. The Good News he preached to them had to be paid for dearly with his own life.<sup>7</sup> Jesus once said, “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (Jn 15:13), and his friends were the oppressed. He lived for others. Because of this he also died for others. His death was a service. Jesus was conscious that by giving his life for the oppressed he would be giving them greater service than by living. His death constantly gives rise to faith.

There is an opinion that limits the reasons for the crucifixion of Jesus to the question of the purification of the temple (Mk 11:15-19). According to this opinion, Jesus died on the cross because “he did wrong (causing civil disorder), in the wrong place (in the temple) and at the wrong time of year (just before the paschal celebrations)”.<sup>8</sup> This, at best, is the last of all reasons. The

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, a more complete explanation may be found in my paper “Jesus and Politiccs” given during a seminar titled “Yesus dan zamanNya” (Jesus and His Times) in Girisonta, on May 11-14, 1994.

<sup>8</sup> G. Vernes, *The Religion of Jesus the Jew*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993.

problem goes deeper than that: it is a question of Jesus' whole attitude, his style of life and his teaching.

To believe in the cross of Jesus is also to believe in his teaching especially concerning the manner of becoming His disciple. One of the most basic conditions for becoming a disciple is an attitude of sacrifice and knowing how to share what one has with those who suffer (Mk 10:17-27). No one can become His disciple unless he or she has this spirit. One's attitude towards the suffering is the measure and proof of one's true love (cf. Mt 25:31-46; Lk 10:25.37). Jesus proved this in His life.

**5** The Bible repeatedly states quite clearly that peace begins and grows only if there is truth and justice (cf. Isa 11:1.10; 32:15-20; 59:1-8; Ps 85). The very foundation of the earth will shake if there is no justice. Justice is the soul of peace. One who struggles for justice and peace must really be convinced of this truth.

Peace is a process and not a state; peace is a struggle and not a given. Peace is not the same as tranquillity. If everything is safe and no one has the courage to protest, this does not mean that there is peace. Justice may not be simply formulated as an idea, but as an ideal. Where there is injustice, violence, fear, the use of power and force, then justice means to side with the poor, the oppressed, the repressed, those living in fear and those persecuted.<sup>9</sup>

Peace is the fruit of truth: "Where there is truth (zedaqā) there peace will grow, and the fruit of truth is quietness and trust (hashqet

wabetaqkh) for ever" (Isa 32:17 cf. also 59:1-8,9-11).

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## **6** The cry of appeal and protest

The Bible is full of paradoxes. On the one hand this book testifies that God is the defender of the oppressed, that God is angry and suffers because of the agony of the poor. On the other hand the Bible also testifies that God is a God who is slow to hear the cries of the oppressed. It seems that God remains silent in the face of oppression and injustice suffered by the poor. The Book of Psalms testifies again and again to this fact. In that book we often hear the cries of those who can no longer wait for God's answer to free them from oppression (cf. e.g. Ps 94). The earth is in the hands of the oppressors, but God, the just judge, remains silent and does nothing. Job (9:23-24; 24:1-5), Jeremiah and Habakkuk protest strongly to God. So also does Moses (Ex 5:22;6:1). What then does all this mean for us who have the same experience?

One possible explanation is that the struggle for justice and peace must also be supported by persevering diligent prayer. The parable of the widow and the unjust judge emphasises this idea: "And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night, even when he delays to help them?" (Lk 18:7; cf. also Sir 35:9-24). Prayer and protest addressed to God are also means of obtaining the Spirit of truth, and of declaring that one does not agree with all the tyranny that one sees.

<sup>9</sup> J. Moltman, "Peace, the Fruit of Justice", *Concilium*, 195(1/1988)109-120, see pp. 115-116.

## **7** The politics of oppression and the strength of the poor

When Jesus sent his disciples, among other things he told them: “Remember, I am sending you out like sheep among wolves; so be cunning as serpents and yet harmless as doves (Mt 10:16). What does this message mean? The disciples will experience many challenges. Therefore, they must be “wise in what is good, and innocent in what is bad” (Rom 16:19). This also means that those who struggle for justice and peace must understand this life well, understand the crooked politics of oppression and the hearts of the poor. Exodus 1:1-12 and 36 may make a valuable contribution towards an understanding of this problem.<sup>10</sup>

Pharaoh was afraid of the strength of the poor (Israel) and saw it as a threat to his power. Because he was afraid, he carried out a policy which made others afraid and foolish (Ex 1:8-10). He acted wisely in his oppression, that is, by using others (Ex 1:11-22). Israel was made a scapegoat in order to strengthen his power. Such a policy is indeed often repeated in history. Another way is to divide those oppressed and thus rule them (Ex 5:1-21). Moses was accused of being an agitator. Pharaoh began to feel unsafe only when his nearest advisers differed in opinion from him (Ex 10:7-12).

It is not true that the poor do not have strength: “But the more they were crushed, the more they increased and spread, so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites” (Ex 1:12). Where does their strength to endure come from?

From their belief in God? The Bible answers our question. But we must remember that because of the force of the oppression, the poor may find it difficult to believe in God (Ex 6:9).

What is more interesting for us in the story of the deliverance of Israel from the slavery of Egypt is that the struggle was started by women. The two Jewish midwives who were ordered to kill male children at birth, feared God more than Pharaoh (Ex 1:15-21). We are reminded of the words of Jesus in Luke 12:1-2. The disciples were reminded not to be afraid of oppressors: rather they were to fear God.

The role of women is seen again when the Pharaoh becomes more cruel, ordering all Jewish male children to be thrown into the Nile (Ex 1:22-2:10). Life survives and flourishes because of a number of women who unite in rejecting this oppression.

Look for a moment at Moses, the leader of the liberation of Israel from the slavery of Egypt. His solidarity with the oppressed is of a high order (Ex 2:11.12). He does not lose courage even though he is challenged by the Pharaoh and by his own fellow countrymen. Neither does he hate the Pharaoh even though the Pharaoh often lied to him. He even prays repeatedly for those who oppress his people (Ex 8:4-9, 24-27; 9:27-30; 10:16-20).

## **8** Conclusion

These are a few thoughts concerning the biblical spirituality of the struggle for justice and peace. I am not a frontline fighter. My purpose is to consider the problems of people who struggle in the field and to try to accompany them with thoughts which may encourage and support

<sup>10</sup> See footnote 3 and J. Maqonet, “The Attitudes Towards ... in the Book of Exodus, *ibid.*, 200(6/1988), 11-20

them to continue their struggle. The source of my reflection is the Bible. I am sure that this ancient book can shed light on our present struggle. It is the book of a living experience, the experience of a people oppressed almost throughout their history. This book gives witness to the experience of people before God, the experience of believing people who struggle for justice and peace. We have seen the essential truths. Then what conclusion can we draw from all this?

For each person who believes in God and Jesus Christ his Son, the struggle for justice and peace is a call and a duty. The God in whom we believe is the God who cares for the oppressed, feels their suffering with them, hears their cry and, in the person of Jesus Christ His Son comes down to save them (Ex 3:8). This God is also a God full of mystery. He can be very slow in hearing the cries of the oppressed. Thus the struggle for justice and peace becomes also the struggle with God. Here also lies His cross. Because of this, people may not believe in their own strength. Our power is the work of God (2 Cor 3:5). True justice and peace come from God. People who struggle with and in God will never be afraid to face challenges. They will be more afraid of God than of what is human. They will struggle like the women of Israel, and like Moses and the prophets. They will have the attitude and feelings of Jesus (Phil 2:5). If the attitude and feelings of God and of his Son Jesus Christ become the basis and source of our struggle, then we can pray full of hope with Israel:

*Yahweh, you will ordain peace for us  
for indeed all that we have done, you  
have done for us.  
Yahweh other lords besides you have ruled  
over us,  
but we acknowledge your name alone.  
Your dead shall live.  
Their corpses shall rise. (Is 26:12-13.19)*