AQUINAS INSTITUTE OF THEOLOGY

PROCLAIMING WHAT WE HAVE SEEN AND HEARD: PREACHING THE DEVELOPING WORLD MISSION EXPERIENCE IN THE FIRST WORLD

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To Christopher Roark and the people of St. Dominic and Santo Domingo, who each day inspire me to live the Good News

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ABSTRACT

PROCLAIMING WHAT WE HAVE SEEN AND HEARD: PREACHING THE DEVELOPING WORLD MISSION EXPERIENCE IN THE FIRST WORLD

Fanta, Thomas Gerard, M.Div., D.Min. Aquinas Institute of Theology, Saint Louis, Missouri, 2014.

This project offers a resource for the training of lay preachers from the first world who have participated in mission trips to the developing world of El Salvador. The project further enhances the experience of the mission trip by giving mission participants the tools to proclaim the gospel in light of their mission experience. Chapter One explores the unique political, economic, religious and cultural realities of the mission territory of El Salvador. Chapter Two examines the spiritual history of the missionaries themselves within the culture of the United States, exploring the various spiritual movements that have shaped their nation. Liberation Theology and its impact on the people of El Salvador and the United States will be discussed in Chapter Three. Its profound impact on lay spirituality and their understanding of the scriptures will also be examined. Chapter Four outlines four preparation meetings for missionaries as well as the spiritual agenda for the mission trip to El Salvador. In Chapter Five, eleven key points for effective preaching will be offered in a description of a workshop to be given to returning missionaries to enable them to proclaim what they have seen and heard on their mission trip. A qualitative and quantitative analysis of the effectiveness of this workshop as well as sample homilies will also be presented in this chapter. The project concludes with reflections on the benefits of missionary preaching for both the missionaries and their sponsoring communities.

INTRODUCTION

Sister Mary Rose Terrel is an Ursuline sister of the Diocese of Cleveland who has been serving on the Cleveland mission team in El Salvador for nine years. Following the exhortation of Pope John XXIII to "renew your wonders in our time, as though in a new Pentecost, and grant that Holy Church, united in unanimous and intense prayer around Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and guided by Peter, may spread the kingdom of the divine, Savior, a Kingdom of truth, of justice, of love, and of peace",[1] the Diocese of Cleveland established a mission to El Salvador in 1964, and since that time many priests, religious women and lay people have served as members of the mission team. Two of the Cleveland mission team members, Ursuline Sr. Dorothy Koesel and lay missionary Jean Donovan, offered their lives as martyrs during the Salvadoran civil war in 1981. This tragedy took place while I was a sophomore at a Jesuit high school in Cleveland, and I still recall as a young man being affected by their murders.

Why would someone give her life for God? Why should Catholics from the United States go to this dangerous placed called El Salvador when there are so many poor people in our own country? Could this really be what God wants us to do?

[1] John XXIII, *Humanae salutis.* 25 December 1961, http://conciliaria.com/2011/12/john-xxiii-convokes-council/(accessed November 4, 2013).

After completing college with a business degree, I decided to pursue the vocation of priesthood and was ordained to the Diocese of Cleveland in 1988. After various assignments as associate pastor in suburban parishes of the diocese, I was named pastor of St. Dominic Church in Shaker Heights in 2001, one of the wealthiest parishes in the city.

In December of that same year, I joined with others to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the martyrdom of Sr. Dorothy and Jean Donovan in a diocesan celebration at St. John the Evangelist Cathedral in Cleveland. During the liturgy, I was reminded of the impact of their martyrdom on my high school years, and decided it was time to learn more about these people and this country called El Salvador.

In the year 2003, I took part in an information gathering tour of El Salvador with International Partners in Mission, a Lutheran lay organization based in Cleveland. The purpose of the initial trip was to learn about the various opportunities for partnerships with the rural poor of El Salvador. International Partners in Mission focuses on the funding of cooperative organizations for the poor throughout the developing world, and I thought this might be an excellent opportunity to expand the vision and ministry of the affluent parish community where I serve.

While on this initial trip, although I was most impressed with the work of the organization, I was disappointed with the lack of personal relationships with the recipients of the funding and decided this was not the organization our parish was looking to join. I was looking to form a faith-based relationship with a developing world community, and although I acknowledged the apparent need for sharing economic assistance that this agency facilitated, I had hoped that this assistance could be coupled with a sharing of faith

One of the sites I visited on this initial trip was the rural village of Chiltiupán in the department of La Libertad, thirty-five miles southwest of the city of San Salvador. There was a Catholic mission parish serving the village, and ironically the staff was all missionaries assigned by the Diocese of Cleveland, my home diocese. When I learned that the name of this community was *Santo Domingo*, I decided to pursue a discussion with mission staff about the possibility of beginning regular faith-based mission trips from our community to the people of Chiltiupán. It is here where I first met Sr. Mary Rose Terrel, "Sr. Rose," a meeting which has had a profound effect on my own life and on the lives of those I serve as pastor.

It was the eighth day of a ten day trip, and the group of eighteen Clevelanders was suffering from "information overload." We had visited more than twenty work cooperatives sponsored by International Partners in Mission when we came upon Sr. Rose, who had just arrived as the newest member of the Cleveland Mission team. Sr. Rose had left her work as a development director for her religious order, serving some of the wealthiest people in Cleveland, and had volunteered for the mission team at the age of sixty-eight. The memory of her close friend Sr. Dorothy's martyrdom had inspired her at this late age in life to begin this new ministry, and she was both excited and overwhelmed by the needs of her new community of Santo Domingo.

Sr. Rose gave us a tour of the parish and described the extreme poverty and beautiful faith of the people she was serving. She invited us to meet several families in their homes and shared with us her hopes and dreams for the parish. The Salvadorans we met could not have been more welcoming, and by the end of that day, I said to Sr. Rose, "I will be back, and the people of Saint Dominic will be with me."

She offered a half-hearted smile and responded, “I have heard that many times from other tour groups, yet no one ever seems to come back.”

As our tour bus left the village late in the afternoon, Sr. Rose stood in the road waving goodbye, and seeing this woman, who had given up a life of meetings and meals with wealthy donors of Cleveland to serve this humble community, I made a commitment to myself: I would return.

In the past ten years, more than 250 parishioners of all ages from Saint Dominic have shared in a mission trip to Santo Domingo parish. Saint Dominic sponsors four trips a year: two trips are focused on building relationships between our communities, one provides medical assistance by using trained personnel from our community to serve in the Santo Domingo clinic, and a fourth trip focuses on the high school youth of our community.

Throughout these many years, I have acted as the leader of the relationship trips and have seen an immense outpouring of faith and love through members of both communities. The focus of these relationship trips is the sharing of faith and life with the people in both communities. Various meals, discussion groups and home visits offer the opportunity for members of both parishes to come to understand their daily struggles and joys, as well as their living out the Christian faith. The Cleveland visitors participate in daily Eucharist with parishioners of Santo Domingo, and the shared sense of faith and mission deepens with each visit.

At the conclusion of every mission trip, Sr. Rose asks the Cleveland visitors the question, “When you return home, what will you tell others of what you have seen and heard here?” This always leads to a lengthy discussion of transformation, vision, a

deepening of faith and a greater desire to live the gospel. There are tears and new insights and a new vision of the relationship between the gospel, the poor, and our community.

Unfortunately, during the early trips, the discussion always ended at that final meeting of the mission visit, with no follow-up to the parish community in Cleveland. Our initial mission trips sought out projects to assist the people of Santo Domingo, yet very quickly it was apparent that any manual labor we would share in would be easily accomplished by the people of their community. Those first trips were exciting and fulfilling, yet it was clear that there were many misconceptions about the developing world and much ignorance about the community we were visiting. Often the missionaries were so concerned with personal safety and accommodations, as well as the initial shock of a first-time experience of developing world poverty, that much of the trip was spent dispelling misconceptions about Central America and the community we were serving. We decided early on that the focus of the mission trip would not be manual labor, but rather the deepening of faith and a stronger sense of solidarity with one another.

In order to make the trips more meaningful, I designed four sessions prior to the trip which explored the cultural, religious, and political realities of the people of El Salvador. Although it was a general survey of information, it proved to be invaluable in breaking down misconceptions about life in Central America and specifically in rural El Salvador. These meetings helped the mission participants to approach their trip with a different vision about the reality of poverty in the developing world as well as the faith of the poor, dispelling any romanticized notions about “simplicity of life” and “strong family connections” so often spoken of when referring to the poor.

The preparation meetings and the mission experience itself have been life-changing for many individuals from our community, yet after numerous visits, I realized that these mission trips could have a far greater impact on my parish community if participants were given the tools to "proclaim what they have seen and heard" upon their return from their travels. Many suburban communities are sponsoring such trips at the cost of hundreds of thousands of dollars in travel expenses, yet how does this experience transform the lives of the majority who cannot take part in such trips? This leads to the core of my thesis proposal.

Much preparation is done by the participants before they take part in these mission trips. There are information meetings as described above, there are travel arrangements, government papers, vaccines, family and work obligations to be dealt with. Yet what about the preparation of hearts? How does the gospel guide us on these trips, before, during and after? How could I help the participants from my community have a transformative experience in their relationship with God and the people of Santo Domingo as well as deepen their relationship with the Word of God? How could I help them to share this experience when they return home? These will be the questions that will guide my thesis project, and from which I hope to empower my parishioners with the tools to help them preach about their experiences to our community.

Saint Dominic Church, Shaker Heights, Ohio

Saint Dominic Church in Shaker Heights, Ohio was dedicated in 1947 as an official parish of the Diocese of Cleveland. The parish is located in a predominately Protestant community in northeastern Ohio. The church building resembles a New England Congregational Church: a Georgian red brick façade, painted white pews and

pewter chandeliers. The crucifix that originally hung behind the altar featured an image of Christ the King, Jesus robed in glorious splendor with a jeweled crown upon his head. This image of Christ the King was a popular one at the time of the church's construction, as World War II had just ended and the great monarchies of Europe had collapsed. Pope Pius XII promoted this image as a way to focus on the kingdom of God that overshadowed all of these monarchies. In many ways, this image reflected this former era when Catholics often saw the triumphant nature of the Church over other Christian traditions and world religions as the defining feature of their faith. Some would say that for the parishioners living in the affluent suburb of Shaker Heights, this image symbolized a "suburban God," mirroring the affluent lives of those in this upper-middle-class suburb.

In its beginning years, St. Dominic Church quickly attracted the many wealthy Catholic residents of this suburb. The neighborhoods of Shaker Heights were home to the titans of industry in Cleveland, and the real estate included many mansions and estates. At the same time, this community also included many rental properties and a population with much lower income levels. There was likewise great racial diversity, as many African Americans fleeing the city of Cleveland during the 1960s racial unrest also found a home here. Although the neighborhood surrounding St. Dominic included great racial diversity; very few African Americans came to the parish, preferring the comfort of their former inner-city communities.

The City of Shaker Heights became a national leader in the area of education during the 1960s and 1970s. Racial integration was a top priority, and the public school

system became a model for that integration. As more African Americans gained in affluence during the 1970s, the parish soon became home to its first black members.

As society continued to change during the final decade of the twentieth century, St. Dominic mirrored those changes. The congregation continued to become more diverse both racially and economically, and it appears that the community welcomed these changes.

At the present time, St Dominic is a vibrant, growing community. The 2012 *Status Animarum* report lists that the average age is thirty-five years old, and in the year 2012 there were twenty-four funerals and 104 baptisms. The parish continues to be home to many upper-middle- class and wealthy residents of the city, yet the majority of the members are basically middle class. The congregation is 70% Caucasian, 20% African American, and 10% a combination of Latino and Asian members. In recent years the community has attracted more than 40% of its population from those residing outside the parish boundaries.

St. Dominic Church supports a private Catholic day school with 175 students and a Parish School of Religion for more than 450 students. There are presently 1410 households registered in the parish, with ministries available to serve every segment of the population.

St. Dominic Church is most well known for its vibrant Sunday liturgies, as the community places a strong emphasis on liturgical music and "welcome" ministries. The parish mission statement *A Eucharistic family living the mission of Christ* places the focus on the "Eucharistic family," those who gather each week to celebrate their faith.

The parish staff consists of one ordained priest and six full time lay ministers. The average age of the staff is thirty-nine, and all are grounded in their commitment to justice and service to the poor. The parish supports the usual ministries of adult education, RCIA, Eucharistic ministers, lectors, etc., yet the most popular area of commitment by parishioners is service to the poor.

In 2002 the parish staff began a ministry called "PROJECT SERVE". The goal of this ministry was to invite parishioners to share their time, talents and treasures with those in need in both the parish boundaries as well as impoverished inner city Cleveland. The parish partners with nine non-profit agencies to provide opportunities of service for parishioners, with more than 600 parish members participating in the year 2012.

As the parish social conscience continued to evolve, the concept of a mission trip to a developing world community evolved as well. In 2003, the first group of parishioners went to El Salvador to begin a relationship with the people of Santo Domingo in Chiltiupán. Since that time, there have been more than forty such trips. This form of service in the relationship with Santo Domingo has become a hallmark of the parish's mission, and the effects on both Santo Domingo and St. Dominic have been profound.

In 2008, after many discussions with the parish liturgy commission and parish pastoral council, it was decided that a new cross be commission by the parish. The jeweled Christ the King that hung behind the altar had become almost an embarrassment for many in the community. A new cross was commissioned, and the artist was encouraged to carve an image that better reflected the humanity of Jesus, and a deeper awareness of the poor and suffering of the world. It was the staff's hope that this new cross would inspire parishioners to recognize their responsibility to serve those who are

in need. A cross almost twice the size of the former cross was carved by a local artist, and upon the cross hangs an image of the suffering Jesus, his body twisted in agony, a crown of thorns upon his head. This new image symbolizes the community's commitment to those who are suffering, whether they are in our own community, or in the rural village of Chiltiupán at Santo Domingo Church in El Salvador.

Santo Domingo Church, Chiltiupán, El Salvador

Santo Domingo Church stands upon the highest point of the village of Chiltiupán located in the La Libertad municipality of El Salvador. The church steeple can be recognized for miles throughout the valleys of the region, and the church building mirrors a typical European church. It is made of cement blocks and plaster, and the building seats 350 people. Simple handmade wooden benches fill the church interior, and a large statue of Saint Dominic adorns the front entrance. The building is regarded with great pride by the village residents, as it is the largest building in this community of almost 6,000 citizens.

Chiltiupán is ranked as one of the poorest communities in the entire country. One main road up the mountain leads to the village, leaving the community in isolation from most of the country. There is no official industry in the community, and the majority of the residents make their living off the land, growing coffee beans for sale and corn and beans for personal use. The average annual income is $600 per year, the lowest in the country. Moreover, the community's geographic isolation hinders any economic growth. The more economically secure in the community have their greatest source of income from relatives in the United States providing them with remissions.

The community boasts a large public school which is administered by Dominican sisters, with almost 900 students attending. The commitment of these religious women has made the school noted for academic excellence, although the great majority of the students conclude their education at the sixth grade, as this is the age when government funding for education ceases and student families must begin to pay tuition on their own. Only 20% of the student will matriculate to complete their high school degree.

The church staff consists of a native born Salvadoran priest, an American religious sister and a part-time secretary. The church also has a medical clinic which is administered by a Salvadoran physician and two parish nurses. Ninety percent of the clinic budget is provided by Saint Dominic Church in Shaker Heights, Ohio. The clinic is noted throughout the region as providing the best available medical care. There is no charge for medications, and parishioners pay a nominal fee for doctor visits.

The primary focus of the parish priest is the sacramental and spiritual life of the community. In addition to the main parish church of Santo Domingo, the priest also serves thirteen *canton* chapels spread across a region of twenty-five square miles. Each of these *canton* churches hosts a Eucharistic liturgy once a month, and also provides religious education and sacramental preparation for children. Only one mass is celebrated on Sundays at Santo Domingo Church for the residents of the entire region.

The parish priest at Santo Domingo welcomes the relationship with St Dominic Church and is actively involved with promoting activities of shared faith and service. Sr. Rose keeps in constant contact with the St. Dominic staff, and works as a translator and facilitator for shared mission activities. Saint Dominic parish provides 25% of the parish

budget for Santo Domingo, and continually tries to meet financial needs of the Salvadoran community.

In the ten years since the relationship between the two communities first began, Saint Dominic has financially supported the parish, school, medical clinic and even purchased a tract of land to be used by parishioners to learn modern farming techniques as well provide food for their families. School supplies, playground equipment, computers and a library have also been provided to the school by Saint Dominic Church. Emergency funds for those afflicted by ongoing natural disasters of flooding and rain storms have allowed the community to serve its poorest members. Saint Dominic has had fund campaigns for the purchase of electrical lines to be installed on the mountain, eco-friendly stoves to be purchased for a thousand families, and tuition for high school and college students in the community.

More important, though, than all of the financial support given to Santo Domingo has been the opportunity to share life and faith with the people of Santo Domingo. All of the mission trips included experiences of shared Eucharist, prayer and meals with members of the parish. The trips also include home visits to those in the parish, as well as meetings with members of both communities to share the realities of our lives in different parts of the world. These personal interactions with Salvadorans have proved to be the highlight of every mission trip and have been the impetus for numerous conversions and deepening of faith by members of both communities.

Although more than 250 members of Saint Dominic have participated on these mission trips, it is apparent that the majority of parishioners in Shaker Heights will never make this trip. Financial constraints, staff limitations and the realities of daily life inhibit

most from taking part in this PROJECT SERVE activity of St. Dominic Church. Yet the experience of those who are able to make such trips is quickly forgotten without an opportunity to share their insights and reflections with those in the United States. The shared prayer and scripture reflection with Salvadorans has had a profound effect on many St. Dominic parishioners, and I hope to provide an opportunity for them to reflect on the scriptures through this experience and to proclaim what they have seen and heard to their fellow parishioners. Like the first disciples sent out two by two, the missionaries from Saint Dominic are likewise called to preach the good news of the gospel in light of what they have seen and heard on their mission.

In Chapter One, I will explore the political, economic, religious and cultural realities of the people of El Salvador. There will be a special focus on the rural poor, the lingering effects of the civil war, and the community's tenuous relationship with the institutional Church.

Chapter Two will focus on the people of St. Dominic parish and the Church in North America. Movements of spirituality in the United States as well as the values of the people at St. Dominic Church and their reactions to these movements will be discussed.

Liberation theology was a predominant spiritual movement in Central America throughout the later part of the twentieth century. Chapter Three will explore the theological foundation of this movement and its impact on the spirituality of believers in both El Salvador and the United States. This chapter will also explore the emerging field of inculturation, and its relationship to faith communities and the spiritual life.

Chapter Four will examine the experience of faith sharing between the two communities as experienced by missionaries from St. Dominic. It will include the preparation sessions for the missionaries as well as a format and reflection of shared experiences during the mission trip.

In the next chapter, the focus will be "proclaiming what we have seen and heard" on the mission trips, and the assistance provided to help returning missionaries preach the gospel in light of their experiences. A workshop for participants focused on apostolic preaching is described, and also a study on the impact of such a workshop on the missionary's proclamation of the gospel.

The final chapter will focus on the lessons learned and the adaptation of this project for other parish communities and educational institutions who take part in similar mission trips.

It is the hope of this project that a shared experience of scripture reflection between members of a first world community and a developing world community coupled with education about the cultural nuances of developing world communities and education about scripture and preaching will help train missionaries to more effectively proclaim what they have seen and heard on their mission trips.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PEOPLE OF EL SALVADOR

Introduction

In the city of San Salvador, the capital of El Salvador, stands the Metropolitan Cathedral of the Holy Savior, the principal church of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of San Salvador. The site of the Cathedral is the original location where the old temple of Santo Domingo once stood. First constructed in 1842, the Cathedral has been restored multiple times after numerous earthquakes and fires, and remains the seat of the present archbishop of San Salvador. The architecture is a mix of Roman and Byzantine art, and the main altar features an image of the Divine Savior, donated by the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V in 1546. The Cathedral square features statues of Christopher Columbus and Queen Isabella of Spain, and the entire Cathedral complex clearly represents the strong influence of the Spanish conquerors that first came to the region in 1524, claiming yet another Central American colony for the Catholic monarchy of Spain. The Cathedral's grand interior features many European statues, stained glass windows and elaborate artwork, all of which stand in stark contrast to the history of a population shaped by overwhelming poverty, oppression and an agrarian economy.

In 1997, native Salvadoran artist Fernando Llort was commissioned to produce a mural for the façade of the Cathedral. Llort combined folkloric images of *campesinos*, horses, crops and birds of peace on painted tiles to surround the exterior of the front of

the church. His desire was to tell the history of the Salvadoran people using primitive images through an art-form which originated in the northern region of La Palma, El Salvador.[1] The art form is simple and colorful, typically making use of animals such as birds, rabbits and turtles, as well as common objects such as flowers, trees and houses. The painted tiles around the Cathedral's façade were very different from the European influenced architecture of the structure, yet revealed the true history and culture of the Salvadoran people. The mural was entitled *Harmonia de mi pueblo,* or "Harmony of my people", and was created as a monument to the Salvadoran people who have persevered through so many struggles throughout history. It was created as a celebration of peace, as the recent thirteen-year civil war had come to an end, and the population was anxious to begin rebuilding.[2]

The cathedral has become a favorite site to visit for the people of El Salvador as well as the people of Saint Dominic as the church basement holds the tomb of martyred Archbishop Oscar Romero. The primitive artwork on the façade of the cathedral reminds the Cleveland visitors of those they have come to share their faith with, and the grand architecture reminds them of the history and European roots of the Catholic Church in El Salvador.

In late December of 2011, the Archbishop of San Salvador, Jose Luis Escobar Alas, gave orders to remove all of the tiles from the ceramic mural from the façade of the Cathedral. He did not consult the government or the still-living artist or any other

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[1] Joseph Frazier, *El Salvador Could Be Like That: A Memoir of war, politics and journalism from the front row of the last bloody conflict of the U.S.-Soviet Cold War* (Ojai, California: Karina Library Press, 2012), 156.

[2] Ibid, 158.

diocesan offices.[3] A large white sheet covered the Cathedral's front as workers chipped off all 2,700 pieces of the mural tile. The masterpiece of the Salvadoran artist was destroyed in days.

Uproar immediately ensued. Various communities within the country joined in the outcry as once again they experienced the oppression and destruction of their cultural identity by an institution of power. The Archbishop immediately apologized for his actions, claiming he was unaware that the Cathedral as well as the mural on the façade was in the process of becoming an official cultural monument. The archbishop claimed that the mural was falling into ruin and had become a hazard to visitors.[4]

Many conspiracy theories continue to unfold about the true reasons for the destruction of the mural, yet this author believes that the very act of destruction is an apt reflection of the experiences of the Salvadoran people in their history. Time and time again, institutions of power have sought to control through oppression, violence and their own personal interests the Salvadoran population. This oppression has left the majority of the population living in extreme poverty, deprived of basic human rights of education, property, and a story to call their own.

This chapter will explore the history of oppression that the Salvadoran people have experienced since the first invading force of the Spanish monarchy in the early sixteenth century. The oppression has been perpetuated by military dictatorships, the Salvadoran oligarchy, the United States of America, and at various times in history, the

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[3] Rachel Heidenry,"Archbishop Orders Destruction of Salvadoran Mural," Pulitzer Center for Crisis Reporting, January 6, 2012, http://pulitzercenter.org/reporting/el-alvador-mural-destruction-archbishop-metropolitan-cathedral-oscar-romero-farabundo-marti-fmln-civil-war-reconciliation (accessed October 14, 2012).

[4] Ibid.

Roman Catholic Church. It is critical for visiting missionaries to understand this history as it has had a profound impact on the Salvadoran experience of the Church and the gospel, and will have a great impact on their preaching when they return home.

Oppression and the Military

I met Raul on one of our first mission trips to El Salvador. Sr. Rose had invited a group of Salvadorans to join parishioners from St. Dominic for lunch, to share with us their experiences of growing up at Santo Domingo Church. Raul is one of the most dedicated members of the community. He is 43 years old, yet looks to be much older. He is married and has three adult children, and makes his living as a construction worker in the community. He is skilled with both cement work and carpentry, and easily shares his love of God and his parish.

The group from St. Dominic had prepared for the trip by reading and discussing the events surrounding the civil war in El Salvador, which paralyzed the country from 1980-1993. One of the missionaries asked Raul, "What are your memories of the civil war?" We realized he was only a teenager at the time, yet were still interested in what his impressions were from this dark time in the country's history.

"Our village is very remote, so neither the guerillas nor the government's army were very interested in us. From time to time soldiers from both sides would make their way through town, yet they basically left us alone."

Another missionary asked, "Were you ever in the army?"

Raul's mood seemed to darken, and he continued.

> "Yes, for a very short time, my brother and I served in the government army. I was only 14 when they came to the field we were working in and told us we had to join their forces. I had never held a gun before, yet they quickly gave us uniforms and weapons, and we were lead away to a town near the coast.

> I had never been outside of my village before, and so I was both excited and nervous about the trip. We had travelled only a few short miles on foot when we came upon a group of *campesinos* returning from the fields. There were several families, parents and their children, and it was clear they had worked a long day.
>
> Our commanding officer immediately began shouting at them, asking them where they were coming from and where they were going. He accused them of being enemies, and when they argued they were not, he accused them of helping the enemy. I remember there was much shouting and arguing, and then one of the officers told them he was going to teach them a lesson. We were instructed to load our weapons and on the count of three, he was going to throw one of the children in the air and we were to fire. He picked a small boy right from his mother's arms, grabbed him by the leg, and flung him to the sky. All of our guns exploded at once, and the baby's body was torn apart.
>
> The years that followed were more of the same, yet the memory of that baby and his mother screaming always stayed with me.
>
> When I returned from the war, I could not sleep. Everything was different, I began to lose more weight, and I had nightmares of that baby. Day in and day out, my mother would plead with me to just forget, but how do you forget such things? Finally, she gave me a bible and told me to read it from cover to cover. It took me almost one year, but when I finished, I finally found peace. I was able to forgive the people who made us do this, but I don't think I will ever forget it."[5]

Our group sat in silence, as tears fell freely from our eyes. Raul was crying as well, yet it was clear he had forgiven. His life of commitment to God and his Church had brought him healing, yet the memory of what had happened was still strong and clear.

The term *pipil* was adopted by the Spanish invaders in describing certain indigenous populations of El Salvador and was adopted upon their first contact with the Salvadoran people. Best translated as "childish" or "child-like", the term was used because the Spanish regarded these Indians as culturally backward, inconsequential and a simple people.[6] In her constant quest for power and riches, the Spanish monarchy sent invading troops throughout the whole of Central America to gain riches for the crown.

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[5] Raul Sanchez, personal interview. Chiltiupán, El Salvador, November 17, 2008.

[6] Virginia Q. Tilley, *Seeing Indians: A Study of Race, Nation, and Power in El Salvador* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005), xviii.

In June of 1524, the Spanish soldier Pedro de Alvarado led an invasion against the *pipile*. Although regarded as great warriors, the *pipile* were no match to the well-armed Spanish army. With their multiple weapons, horses and metal armor, the Spanish army quickly conquered the population. Thousands of *pipile* were branded and marched into slavery, and what was once a highly affluent and highly centralized society of nobles, commoners and slaves was now converted into a population of vassals, put into service of the Spanish crown.[7]

The *pipile* were now understood to be "Indians," a people with a new identity and an impoverished material experience, imposed by the Spanish rule. For three centuries, they would comprise the laboring base for Spanish colonial settlement; their culture shattered and transformed, their towns and cities appropriated and ruined.[8] This conquering by the Spanish invaders began a long history of foreign governance through violence, fear and oppression, governance which will take on various military faces throughout the centuries. The Spanish called the conquered land "*Provincia De Nuestro Senor Jesus Cristo, El Salvador De Mundo*," the "Province of our Lord Jesus Christ, Savior of the World," which was later abbreviated to "El Salvador" meaning "the Savior."

Throughout the next 300 years, El Salvador served as a colony of Spain. Like other Central American countries, the native population was subjected to ongoing military violence and oppression. Although El Salvador did not have the minerals of gold and silver of other Central American countries, the rich volcanic soil proved ideal for the cultivation of coffee and indigo, which became the colony's primary export for

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[7]Tilley, 5.

[8]Ibid, 6.

the European continent. The citizens of the country were treated nearly as slaves, whose sole purpose was to enrich the coffers of Spain.

Inspired by the revolutions taking place at the end of the eighteenth century in North America and France, the Salvadoran people began a series of revolts in the early 1800s, as their desire to free themselves from Spanish rule became more intense.[9] After three unsuccessful attempts at breaking the Spanish oppression, the authorities in Spain granted their colonies in Central America independence in 1821. The cost of maintaining armies in both Europe and Central America had become too expensive, and the government of Spain could no longer afford to control this foreign territory.[10] For the first time in almost three hundred years, the "Province" of El Salvador was now a free country.

Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, the newly independent country of El Salvador faced countless struggles. There were numerous battles with the neighboring states of Guatemala and Honduras, mainly over border disputes, which resulted in repeated invasions by armies from surrounding states. As the governance of the country had been controlled by Spanish settlers, the only real organized force within the country was the military.[11] These forces had served under the governance of Spain, and quickly became the primary source of political power in the country. Much like their Spanish predecessors, they ruled through fear and violence, governing to gain personal riches rather than to serve the Salvadoran people.

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[9]John Lynch, *New Worlds: A Religious History of Latin America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 95.

[10] Ibid, 99.

[11] Ibid, 105.

By the mid-nineteenth century, the need for indigo had all but disappeared throughout Europe, and the major crop of the country became coffee. Communal land laws all but abolished an ancient system of community farms, and land ownership became concentrated in the hands of a few wealthy citizens with Spanish origins. These landowners took advantage of the numerous displaced *pipile* of the country, and so began an even more exploitive form of governance through economic oppression, forcing the majority of the population to work the coffee fields now spreading throughout the region, as this was the only crop of profit in the nation.[12] This newly formed oligarchy of rich landowners was in constant conflict with the military power of the country. Although they enjoyed political power in the later years of the twentieth century, a coup lead by army General Tomas Regalado would overthrow the Oligarchy in 1898, and begin a long period of military governance in which each president would choose his own successor.[13]

Throughout the first thirty years of the twentieth century, the military system of chosen successors continued to be the political force which ruled El Salvador. Yet even within the military itself there was discord. The worldwide economic depression in the 1920s had sent world coffee prices spiraling downward, and there was great discontent among both the citizens and the military as the poverty of the country increased drastically. Recognizing an opportunity to grasp power, a group of midlevel ranking military officers staged a coup in 1931, naming General Maximiliano Hernandez Martinez as the new president of El Salvador. Martinez would govern the nation for the next 13 years, in what is regarded as a regime which committed draconian acts of terror,

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[12] Erik Ching, *Landscapes of Struggle: Power, Society and Community in El Salvador*, ed. Aldo Lauria-Santiago and Leigh Binford (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2004), 51.

[13] Ibid, 58.

leading the already impoverished people of the country into even greater economic hardship.[14]

Although the violence of Martinez's regime knew no class boundaries, the defining act of violence by the military government took place in the western coffee regions of the country in what has become known as the "*Matanza*" (massacre).[15] On the night of January 22, 1932, a mass insurrection was launched. The coffee workers invaded the local towns and began a spree of looting, drinking and violence. The majority of these workers were of the Indian population, and soon government troops were sent to quell the uprising. Although the uprising itself and subsequent military intervention were very short, the ensuing repression of Indian people claimed some 30,000 lives. The violence ended when the Indian population through a variety of new laws were forced to give up their native language and dress and were assimilated into the general *mestizo* population.[16]

The Salvadoran presidential election of 1935 gave the illusion of an emerging democracy, as Martinez announced his plans to "run" for president. Unfortunately, by this time his patronage system was so intertwined into the fabric of society that any fair and just election was impossible. Any person with national-level political standing was brought into the government, placed under surveillance, arrested, or exiled. [17] Martinez went on to easily win the election, and his rule by patronage and intelligence gathering shaped a society based on fear and suspicion. Martinez effectively transformed the

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[14]Ching, 60.

[15] Thomas Anderson, *Matanza* (Willimantic, CT: Curbstone Press, 1992), 17.

[16] Ibid, 188.

[17] Ching, 67.

fledgling democracy into a military dictatorship, and his system of governance would shape the next fifty years of the country's development.

Beginning in the 1970s, widespread political mobilization in the Salvadoran countryside was met with brutal repression by military and paramilitary forces. The peasant population was spiraling into even greater economic decline, and deepening poverty was widespread. Peasants were forced to choose sides in the emerging conflict: whether to join with the military government or the growing revolutionary movement. It appears that the great majority of the peasants were not interested in the conflict, and many numbers fled to nearby cities and coastal towns. By 1980, the country was at war within itself, and for the next eleven years would experience untold violence and brutality, as the military government tried to regain control of a population in revolution.

The civil war in El Salvador brought massive economic turmoil among both the peasant population as well as the wealthier classes. The American government quickly sided with the military rulers of the country, providing huge amounts of financial and military assistance to the ruling government. The United States feared an intrusion of communist ideals into their Central American neighbors as well as a loss of economic control, and joined with the Salvadoran government to crush those who were challenging the status quo.[18]

After numerous high profile assassinations planned by the Salvadoran government, most notably the Archbishop of San Salvador Oscar Romero, four American churchwomen, and the Jesuit faculty of the Jesuit University of Central American, the public outcry from the American people became so intense that the United States

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[18]Penny Lernoux, *People of God: The Struggle for World Catholicism* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1989), 178.

government chose to cease all military assistance to the Salvadoran government. The war quickly came to a conclusion as the Salvadoran government had no financial support for their brutal efforts to stop the revolution. Formal Peace Accords between the Salvadoran government and the revolutionaries were signed in 1991. Peace had finally come to this war-weary country.

The process of re-building the nation has been a difficult one, most notably because of a clause in the Peace Accords which granted immunity to all military officials from both the government and the guerillas for any accused war crimes. With more than 70,000 Salvadorans killed during the eleven year conflict, the wounds upon the soul of the nation were deeply imbedded, and the common citizen had no recourse for the injustices and murders which had terrorized the nation.[19]

The Peace Accords produced a positive result in the realm of political governance, as the military was basically stripped of any control of national affairs. The military budget was reduced to a bare minimum, and the army generals who had lead the brutality against their own people were forced into retirement. Free elections were held within the country, and two political parties emerged representing the former ruling party and the newly formed revolutionary party. For the first time in more than a century, the military rule of the country had come to an end.

Military oppression has been an ongoing reality of the Salvadoran people ever since the first conquerors from Spain arrived on the continent in 1524. A generally peace-loving society has been terrorized and brutalized by military forces for almost 500 years, all for the economic benefit of a select ruling population. From the weapons made of

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[19]Walter LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions: The United States in Central America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993), 358.

metal and fueled by gunpowder which first came with the Spanish invaders to the advanced technical military equipment provided by the United States government, the *pipile* have enjoyed very little peace in the history of their country. The majority peasant population which sought to live in peace and farm their soil has been deprived of the most basic human dignities due to the military governance of a select few.

Although the great majority of the population continues to live in poverty, men and women like Raul continue to forgive, longing for a better life for their families. Their experiences and reflections offer a glimpse of the kingdom of God and the power of God's grace at work among the *pipile*, and give new meaning to the gospel passage from MT 18:3 "unless you become like little children you will not enter the kingdom of God."

Oppression and the Salvadoran Oligarchy

The month of November marks the beginning of the coffee bean harvest in El Salvador. Grade schools are closed as entire families join together to share in the back-breaking work of coffee bean picking, hoping to make enough income to support the family during the winter months.

Each November a relationship-building mission trip is organized by St. Dominic parish. As part of the week-long trip, members of St. Dominic join families from Santo Domingo for a morning of sharing in the centuries-old work of coffee bean picking. Each missionary is fitted with a *canasta*, a large plastic shallow basket which is tied around the waist. We drive to various hillsides in the back of a rented pick-up truck, and the Salvadoran families join us in the truck, a luxury compared to the long journey on foot they usually make.

On one of our trips, the group of seventeen parishioners joined with two families, which included five adults and seven children of various ages. Coffee bean picking is especially difficult in El Salvador, as there are no flat lands for farming. The coffee bean trees are planted on steep mountainsides, as farmers use every available piece of land for planting.

The Salvadorans explained that we were to pick the red beans as the green beans were not yet ripe, and we immediately set about the task of filling our baskets. A spirit of laughter and friendship filled the air as the Salvadorans tried to teach us how to position our feet at the base of the tree below the plant where we were to pick the beans. Some of the Salvadorans began to sing as they worked, and there was a wonderful sense of community and being one with nature on that hillside.

Yet within a half hour, the singing grew softer as the sun began to scorch the sky. Several of our group had to stop for water, and even more found themselves overwhelmed by flies in their faces and ants in their shoes. The singing eventually subsided and the reality of the hard work set in. More than one person in the group "spilled their beans," watching helplessly as the basket emptied down the hillside.

After two hours of work, I began to worry about the health of our group, as they were unaccustomed to the high temperatures and altitude. We finished our work and all gathered together in a clearing. One by one our group proudly emptied their beans into one of the *canastas*. The seventeen of us did not even fill one basket, while each of the Salvadorans' baskets was filled to the brim.

The group piled back into the pickup truck and made their way to the coffee station where beans were purchased by suppliers. We anxiously waited as they dumped

the large basket onto the scale. One basket held about four pounds of beans. Seventeen workers for two hours produced a profit of $12.60. The realization of the income and work and inequity and injustice did not need to be explained. Most in the group of missionaries were accustomed to paying $4.00 for a cup of coffee at Starbucks.

The presence of a distinct ruling oligarchy in El Salvador can be traced to the mid-nineteenth century, when the production of coffee within the country became the primary export of the nation. International demand for indigo had all but disappeared, leaving the farming and production of coffee as the sole cash-crop of El Salvador. The fertile land was ideal for its growth, and the *campesino* population provided a cheap labor force which yielded high profits for landowners. The only hindrance to the high profit of coffee production was the ownership of the land itself, and the system of political maneuvering to gather landholdings into the possession of a distinct minority produced an oligarchy which remains in power to this day. A succession of presidents, both conservative and liberal, throughout the last half of the nineteenth century supported the seizure of land from individual smallholders and communal owners. This has had a devastating effect on the economic health of the typical Salvadoran family, yet perhaps an even more devastating effect on the country's soul.

The coffee elite of El Salvador are basically comprised of two groups: the landowners and the mill owners. Although the landowners oversee the agricultural aspects of the coffee crop, the mill owners are critical in determining its distribution and export from the country. These two groups have a profound impact on the economic development of the country. The rural population is held at the mercy of the landowners, and their economic future depends on their coffee jobs. Unfortunately, if the peasants'

life labor is at the mercy of a landowner, or if their economic livelihood depended on the generosity of a mill owner, they will always share in a relationship based on subservience. Throughout the history of the country, the oligarchy has taken full advantage of this relationship, and a "coffee elite" remains in existence to this day.

In Jeffery Paige's "Coffee and Power in El Salvador", the economic system based on the power of the coffee elite is explored through the vision of the landowners. In interviews with this powerful group, Paige provides a clear yet shocking vision of how the coffee elite regard themselves and their impact on society in relation to the peasant population. The poor are discussed as almost a separate nation or species to be assisted, to be led, to be employed, to be helped to a higher standard of living in an industrial future but were never regarded as legitimate claimants on societal resources or power.[20] Similar to the experience of African slaves in American history, the Salvadoran peasant continues to be regarded as a different class of humanity, one which is to be used at the service of the elite.

The oligarchy of present-day El Salvador continues to guide the economic life of the nation. The ownership of the media, utilities, and most importantly the land it itself is controlled by a small number of wealthy families. The chasm between rich and poor continues to instigate civil unrest and great economic disparity. As of December 3, 2013, the website **worldnews.about.com** noted a report by the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development, that the tiny country of El Salvador had more deaths per capita from 2004-2009 than any country in the world. Meanwhile, Salvadorans continue

[20] Jeffery M. Paige, "Coffee and Power in El Salvador," *Latin American Research Review* 28, no.3 (1993), 29.

to spend the month of November picking coffee beans, hoping to feed their families, pay their housing rents, and make it through another winter.

Oppression and the Government of the United States

As part of the preparation meetings for St. Dominic missionaries, the group spends a session studying the impact of the United States government on the political and economic life of the people of El Salvador. This session is especially difficult to grasp for most of the St. Dominic parishioners. How could their government take part in such oppression? Why don't the American people know about this? How can we justify so much expense on a country which seems so inconsequential in comparison to the size of the United States?

The long history of oppression and abuse by foreign powers that has plagued the Salvadoran people can find no greater oppressor than the United States government. No area in the world is more tightly integrated into the United States political-economic system, and none, as President Ronald Reagan warned a joint session of congress in April of 1983, is more vital for North American security than Central America.[21] Throughout the centuries, the United States government has intervened numerous times into the affairs of each of the five Central American nations. Although this has mostly occurred under the flag of "national security," one does not have to research too much to discover that the primary motivation for this oppression has been the economic interests of the United States.

Nearly two-thirds of all United States trade and the nation's oil imports, as well as many strategic minerals, depend on the Caribbean Sea lanes bordered by the five Central

[21] LaFeber, 5.

American nations. [22] Beginning with the Spanish conquerors, the poor of El Salvador and the other Central American nations have been regarded as cheap labor to strengthen the economies of foreign countries. The United States government has covered its oppressive actions under the veil of fighting communism, yet the society it has shaped through its economic policies has left the majority of the nation living in poverty.

Perhaps the best way to understand the relationship between El Salvador and the United States is through the theory of dependency. Dependency may be generally defined as a way of looking at Latin American development, not in isolation, but as part of an international system in which the leading powers have used their economic strength to make Latin American development dependent on, and subordinate to, the interests of those leading powers.[23] In the case of El Salvador, the United States has forced their economy to rely on the export crop of coffee, and because the price of coffee depends on the international marketplace controlled by industrial powers, the Salvadoran economy is completely subservient to the world market price of coffee. The massive coffee fields that stretch across this small nation in turn use up viable land which would better be used to grow local foods to feed the Salvadoran people. Thus malnutrition, even starvation, grew with the profits of the relatively few producers of the export crop.

Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, American investors began to make greater commitments to the region of Central America. There were gold and silver mines, coffee and banana plantations, and an extensive railroad system built to transport these items to northward and to the coasts for export. Although this economic

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[22] U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, *GIST; A Quick Reference Aid on U.S. Foreign Relations* (May 1982).

[23] La Feber, 17.

investment was primarily done by private corporations in the United States, these same corporations held strong influence on their elected officials, leading to a dangerous union between military and economic interests. No formal invasion by United States troops took place in El Salvador at this time in history, yet the economic invasion was laying its foundation, and its influence continues to the present day.

The policies of the United States government throughout the final years of the nineteenth century focused mainly on the political stability of the region of Central America. Revolutions in various nations caused concern to the nation which was founded on a revolution, yet now saw these revolutions seeking freedom and independence as contrary to its financial interests. The United States needed the steady supply of raw materials from Central America to feed its own economic interests, and any political unrest and subsequent disruption of the delivery of these raw materials needed to be dealt with.[24]

Thus began a policy of supporting oppressive and unjust regimes throughout the twentieth century. The United States did not intervene in the nations to stop revolutions and bring about stability. Rather, the motive for Washington's policies was to promote its own interests. Interests and imperial rivalry, not morality and consistency, drove the U.S. Policies. [25]

As noted in the previous section, the oligarchy of El Salvador controlled the majority of the economic interests of the nation. Unlike other Central American nations, these wealthy leaders controlled the economy, leaving El Salvador in a unique situation in relation to the United States. As labor and peasants began to revolt against this system,

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[24]LaFeber, 36.

[25] Ibid, 39.

the landowners quickly aligned themselves with the military. This step freed them from the business of politics and gave them complete free economic rein. They controlled the majority of the land, exports, utilities and labor force of the small nation. It only made sense then that the United States would align themselves with these ruling families and the military.

Throughout the years leading up to the Second World War, the Salvadoran economy continued to grow as the demand for coffee from the North seemed unending. Unfortunately, the only citizens to benefit from this profitable trade were the wealthy landowners. The average peasant citizen saw no financial gain from this cash crop, and the majority of the population continued to live in declining economic standards.

The demand for coffee rapidly declined after the Second World War, as the primary customer was the United States military and the economic conditions in El Salvador declined even further. Social unrest was common, and the potential for revolution was quickly recognized by Washington. Salvadorans were not turning toward communism, yet rather moved northward into Honduras and even into the United States, seeking food for their families and a more just way of life.

The election of John F. Kennedy as President of the United States introduced a new attitude toward Central America. Kennedy's "Alliance for Progress" was an extremely ambitious plan that would pour billions of dollars into Latin American development. One of his goals was to weaken the military dictators of the region and therefore shape democratic societies which would benefit United States interests. Unfortunately the revolution in Cuba took precedent over any of these efforts, and soon the United States government adopted an anti-communist fear in the entire region. The

problem of Central America was defined as Castro, not poverty, and the oppression continued. [26]

Money originally designated for economic development in Latin America soon became used solely for the purpose of strengthening militaries. Large groups of Central American and especially Salvadoran military officers were brought first to the School of the Americas in the Panama Canal Zone and later to the School of the Americas in Georgia. The goal of this training was internal security for Latin American countries, yet in reality became the way in which the status quo was enforced for the oligarchies.[27] Any form of dissent by peasant populations was controlled through sophisticated methods of torture, taught to the military officers by the elite United States forces.

In the case of El Salvador, where poverty was the greatest and civil unrest the most active, President Kennedy saw the military forces as the best way to stop communist penetration in the region.[28] Once again, special interest groups in Washington shaped the intervention of the United Sates, not the needs of the Salvadoran people.

After the assassination of President Kennedy, President Johnson quickly moved to dismantle the Alliance for Progress. Funds were needed to support the war in Vietnam, and the economic value of Latin America to the United States was diminishing. By the late 1960s, the Alliance's remnants consisted of its most dangerous parts: an emphasis on private investment that worsened the already glaring economic imbalance in a Central America; a dependence on the military, trained and supplied by the United States, to

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[26] LaFeber, 152.

[27] Ibid, 143.

[28] Ibid, 145.

maintain order in restless societies; and promises made repeatedly by Kennedy, Johnson, and other United States officials that raised hopes and aspirations.[29]

The private investments made by American corporations were obviously for the benefit of the shareholders, not the Salvadoran people. The training by the United States military of Salvadoran military officers was surely not for the personal safety and welfare of Salvadoran citizens. The promises of various U.S. government officials were simply empty promises, as they did nothing to better the lives of the Salvadoran population. Revolution was inevitable, as the oppression brought to bear by these policies gave the Salvadoran people no other options.

Unfortunately, most Americans have little or no knowledge of their government's intervention into Salvadoran affairs. We trust our government to do what is best for our nation, and rarely are concerned how this might affect the life of a *campesino* living in the hills of El Salvador. Yet when we meet the *campesinos,* when we share meals with them and celebrate the Eucharist with them and see them as individuals, our conscience is awakened and our hearing of the gospel is changed. No outside power has had more effect on the Salvadoran people than the United States, and in almost every situation, it has not been a beneficial one. The Salvadorans we enter into relationship with know this better than anyone, yet they welcome us with open hearts.

These are important issues for those who visit El Salvador on Christian mission trips. How do these experiences change the missionary's understanding of their own government? How do they affect their understanding of the gospel? What impact will they have on how they might preach the gospel to others as they reflect on these issues?

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[29] Lafeber, 161.

These questions will be explored further in subsequent chapters, as they will have effect on the preaching in light of their experiences in El Salvador.

Oppression and the Roman Catholic Church

It was decided early on by the staff of St. Dominic that although we would provide economic assistance and professional skills to the people of Santo Domingo, the primary purpose of our visits was to share our faith and to deepen our relationship with Christ and the word of God. We come as Catholic missionaries, but we are also highly educated Catholic Americans and our wealth and understanding of the Church definitely shapes our vision.

On one of our trips during the Lenten season, we were invited to participate in a procession throughout the village to commemorate the Stations of the Cross. This ancient Catholic tradition has long been abandoned by the people of Saint Dominic, yet it was clear by the presence of several hundred Salvadorans that is was very important to them. As we processed through the town, we stopped at various Catholic homes where elaborate altars had been built on the road, each holding a photograph of one the events of the journey that Jesus had made to the cross. The Salvadoran priest read the description of the Station, and the crowd dropped to their knees on the dirt road and prayed and sang in commemoration of the suffering of Jesus.

Our "sophisticated" American Catholicism had abandoned this tradition, yet it was clear that this was a deeply sacred and spiritual event for the Salvadorans. What could we learn from that experience? Often times during the procession the Salvadorans were moved to tears, yet we had stopped this religious practice in our own parish. The majority of the Stations are rooted deeply in the scriptures, and in many ways the

Salvadoran embrace of this tradition was a homily itself. How would our experience of this tradition affect our preaching?

The relationship between the Salvadoran people and the institution of the Roman Catholic Church is perhaps the most complex and disheartening of all the forms of oppression experienced by the population of El Salvador. From the first missionaries who landed in the region in conjunction with the Spanish monarchy in the sixteenth century, to the present day Catholic communities in the country, there appears to be continued confusion experienced by Salvadorans as to the intentions and motivations of the institutional Church.

The Spanish monarchy of the sixteenth century was intimately tied with the leadership of the Catholic Church. The monarchy regarded the land of El Salvador as simply another source of income, and the Church hierarchy quietly turned away from any uproar about brutality towards the native people. This attitude persisted throughout all of Central and Latin America as the European Church appeared to be more concerned with riches than the salvation of souls.

The Church hierarchy at first glance appeared to regard El Salvador as another population to be "saved", with no regard for native religion, customs and stories of the people. Yet the brutal oppression experienced by the native populations was in such contrast to the gospel message that it is apparent that the Church's primary motivation was the accumulation of wealth. Although the population quickly embraced the Catholic theology of the Paschal mystery; the passion, death and resurrection stories of Jesus, the leadership seemed to have used this embrace to silence the population's claims of oppression and directed their faith to the "next life" in paradise.

For centuries the magisterial Church assigned European bishops to come to this new land and govern its people. These were men trained in the European Church, with no understanding or regard for the customs and traditions of the native peoples. Opulent residences were built to accommodate their European tastes, and the bishops soon found themselves in the grasp of the oligarchy that obviously could fund such lavish living.

Throughout the decade of the 1960s a new theological movement began to flourish throughout Central America, a movement which was especially welcomed by the people of El Salvador. "Liberation Theology", as the movement was known by, placed the Word of God within the hands of the laity, and invited them to reflect on the scriptures in light of their present day situation. Rather than focusing on the ceremonies and rituals of the Catholic tradition, this movement saw Jesus as the "liberator from oppression", whether it be political, economic or religious.

Salvadorans embraced this movement, and lay catechists were trained throughout the country to help the peasants deepen their understanding of the scriptures in light of their lived reality. The political rulers quickly dismissed this movement, recognizing that it was challenging the power they were so desperately trying to hang on to.[30] Unfortunately, the institutional Church in Rome also rejected this movement; perhaps fearful of the power it seemed to give the ordinary Catholic in this war-torn region.

More will be spoken of this movement in Chapter Four, but suffice to say it left many Salvadorans disillusioned with the Catholic Church, and opened wide the doors for the Pentecostal and Evangelical movements which were spreading across the region. Missionaries from these new churches were quick to dismiss the rituals and pomp of

[30] LaFeber, 226.

Roman Catholic worship, and invited the common person to celebrate their faith through song and emotional displays of faith, embracing the culture of the people.

As the country dealt with so much economic disparity throughout its history, the majority of the population who lived in poverty were left to discern which form of Christianity most appealed to their reality. Catechists, many local clergy, and certain Church leaders embraced Liberation Theology, while others in both the local hierarchy and the Roman hierarchy soundly rejected it.

Within this culture of theological confusion emerged perhaps the most polarizing figure of the Salvadoran life in the late twentieth century: Archbishop Oscar Romero. The archbishop was a native born Salvadoran, yet like so many other bishops at this time, was intimately tied to the oligarchy and military powers. He kept to the traditionalist wing of the church, a conservative in theology, cautious towards Vatican II and Medellin; he read the Gospel as a message of peace and reconciliation rather than liberation and division.[31] Yet it is clear that Romero was conflicted in his early leadership, for on the one hand he was schooled and remained faithful to the hierarchical status quo of siding with the rulers of the day, while on the other hand priests who ministered under him were sharing in the struggles of the peasant population.

One of Romero's closest friends was Father Rutillio Grande. Fr. Grande ministered to the poorest of Salvadorans, and repeatedly pleaded with Romero to see the plight of his people. In the midst of this struggle, Grande was assassinated by government forces for his work with the poor, and Romero experienced a profound conversion. In many ways he was "liberated" from his former way of thinking, and soon became the champion of the rights of the poor.

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[31] Lynch, 309.

As the civil war began in the 1970s, Romero became the "voice of the people", crying out to anyone who would listen for the oppression to end. He pleaded with the oligarchy, the military and death squads to stop the killing, and it quickly became apparent to the political leadership that he must be silenced. The "voice of the people" was martyred by an assassins' bullet on March 24, 1980, a murder ordered by the military powers of the day.

This began one of the harshest periods of bloodshed in Salvadoran history. At Romero's funeral in the main Cathedral of San Salvador, military forces opened fire on the crowd. Later that year four American Church women were brutally raped and slain. By 1984, 46,000 Salvadorans had been murdered by the death squads, and the country was in a complete state of turmoil. The Episcopal Conference of El Salvador, while slow to raise a voice on behalf of human rights, was quick to pounce on what it regarded as Catholic deviation.[32] The institutional Church remained basically silent, once again leaving a peasant population confused about the role of their Church in the ongoing conflict between the government and the majority of the population.

After the death of Archbishop Romero, the Church in El Salvador was left with no clear moral leadership. Local communities under the direction of native clergy and missionaries continued to pursue the practices of Liberation Theology, yet Pope John Paul II's clear mandate that this spiritual movement should cease slowly dampened the spirits of this movement.

The present situation of the institutional Church in El Salvador holds a fragile foundation in Salvadoran life. The number of Catholics in the country continues to

[32] Lynch, 313.

decline, with the present numbers hovering around 57% of the population, having plummeted from the former estimate of 70% of the population just 30 years ago.[33]

Perhaps the greatest oppression by the Catholic Church in Salvadoran life was and is experienced through her silence. With the exception of Archbishop Romero and a few other leaders, the institutional Church has continuously sided with the military and economic leaders of the nation. Although the faith of local Catholic communities remains strong, there is no clear "Catholic voice" in the Salvadoran Church. John Paul II's condemnation of Liberation Theology struck a serious blow to the religious experiences of the typical Salvadoran. The present Archbishop of San Salvador, Jose Luis Escobar Alas, through his destruction of the cathedral façade, does not seem to be aware of the concerns of those he has been called to serve. This entire situation does not bode well for the future of the Salvadoran Church.

CONCLUSION

Oppression has become a way of life for the people of El Salvador. The history of the *pipile* has been marked by European domination, and in the last century, domination by the United States. It appears as if every invading power seeks to control and dominate this peace-loving people simply for personal financial gain. The military, oligarchy and the government of the United States, as well as the institution of the Roman Catholic Church, have done little to improve the lives of ordinary Salvadorans, leaving a native population dazed and disillusioned about their future. Until most recently, even the possibility of canonization of Archbishop Romero, perhaps the greatest religious figure of their history, seemed impossible.

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[33] Christian Smith, "The Spirit of Democracy: Base Communities, Protestantism, and Democratization in Latin America," *Sociology of Religion* 55.2, (1994):120.

Yet amidst all of this oppression, the Salvadorans we meet on each of our visits continue to live in hope. They gather to read the bible, they celebrate the Eucharist, freely share their faith and work together to build true communities of faith. Their hearing and reflecting on the gospel appears to be the foundation of both their faith and their daily living. Their relationship with God is intimately woven into the fabric of the community, often times leaving American missionaries speechless at their depth of faith. We come to share the gospel with them, yet they live the gospel in a way that stirs the hearts of us all. us. How can we express this faith in our proclamation of God's word?

The election of Pope Francis as Bishop of Rome has brought much excitement and hope to the worldwide Church, but perhaps most importantly to the developing world. His commitment to the poor and his call to end all forms of oppression has reinvigorated the hope of the Salvadoran people, and the American missionaries must be especially attentive to this hope in their preparation for preaching.

CHAPTER TWO

THE PEOPLE OF SAINT DOMINIC PARISH AND THE CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

Introduction

Religion and faith in the United States have evolved from a unique history, as the birth of the nation came out of a struggle for religious and political freedom from the British Empire. Any association between organized religion and politics caused suspicion with the Founding Fathers, as the very independence of the newborn nation was based upon freedom and the rights of its citizens, and this included freedom from any forced or coerced religion. The intimacy and comingling of Church and State was not to be welcomed in the new country, as the colonists were adamant in their claim that all people were free to worship or not worship the God of their choice.

Like its advances to churches in Central and South America, the Roman Catholic Church in Spain and France immediately sent missionaries to the new nation, all of whom brought with them their own religious experiences and practices. The early decades of the founding of the United States brought numerous discussions, arguments and declarations about the role of religion in society, all of which were very different from the European experience. Catholics who settled here found themselves in a political culture which offered no state religion and no public support of any particular religious practice. Having arrived in a predominantly Protestant majority, the first Catholics were challenged to craft a spirituality and practice of belief which was faithful to the

magisterial Church in Rome, yet at the same time aware of a religiously pluralistic nation.[1] This unique situation has had a tremendous effect on American Catholic spirituality, the impact of which is clearly seen in the community of St. Dominic Parish in Shaker Heights, Ohio.

The city of Shaker Heights was founded in 1906 by Otis and Mantis Van Sweringen, wealthy railroad owners who envisioned a utopian community of various forms of housing with a centralized public transportation system. The brothers purchased the land for the original city boundaries from a Shaker religious community and immediately began building mansions on wide boulevards, attracting the many wealthy industrialists who called Cleveland their home. Certain boulevards were dedicated to mansions, others to apartment buildings, while still others to smaller homes on tree-lined streets all of whose residents made their way to the train stations which provided transportation to the city of Cleveland. Each street was to follow specific architectural guidelines, from the slopes of roofs to the color of paint on the house. Although not particularly religious themselves, the brothers also mandated the architecture of any church building to be built in the city. The initial congregations were comprised of local residents, with the majority of the population claiming Protestantism as their religion.

Although there was a sizable Catholic immigrant population at this time in Cleveland, the majority were uneducated and flocked to the communities closer to the city of Cleveland, where manufacturing and industrial businesses were booming with the burgeoning steel industry of the city. The community that the Van Sweringens' envisioned did not have a place for these Catholic immigrants, as both economically and

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[1]Joseph P. Chinnici, *Living Stones: The History and Structure of Catholic Spiritual Life in the United States,* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 17.

religiously they had come from an entirely different culture, less affluent and non-Protestant. The long-held American suspicion of Catholics and their allegiance to Rome versus their commitment to the United States was clearly evident in the new suburb of Cleveland.

In this chapter, I will explore the American experience of spirituality from the founding of the nation to the present day. The birth of the community of St. Dominic coincided with a unique time in the history of American spirituality and the growth of the Catholic community in the United States. St. Dominic parish mirrors the experiences of the nation in this growth, and the effects of the Vatican Council II and various social justice documents have had a profound impact on the spiritual life of the community.

The Birth of a Nation: American Catholic Spirituality

The unique experience of the first Catholic settlers in the United States from their European origins to a new political climate has made the American experience of spirituality decidedly different from that in other parts of the world. With no coerced spirituality or forced public religion, American Catholics experienced and responded to God in a variety of ways. The coexistence with other faith traditions, the majority of which were Protestant in origin, caused adaptations and changes to the practice of the Catholic faith which were often misunderstood by Roman Church authorities. The development of the new Church in this distinct culture would occur based on the strength of the Gospel message rather than the strength of Rome.

The first Catholic settlers in the United States made their home in the state of Maryland. These Anglo-Catholics came from a persecuted Church in England, where there was limited access to public worship and a scarcity of ordained clergy. As their

spirituality came out of a persecuted society in Europe, their faith was domestic, interior and personal, which was easily adaptable to the American experience. The tolerance of Americans toward the immigrants' rituals, practices and beliefs allowed them to pursue their spiritual lives with a freedom never experienced before in Europe.

Richard Challoner was a Catholic Bishop in Protestant England who had a profound influence on the foundation of American Catholicism. His Douay-Rheims translation of the Bible, as well as his published prayer book for the laity, *Garden of the Soul,* afforded Catholics the ability to pursue their spiritual development in spite of the lack of ordained clergy in the United States. [2] In "Garden of the Soul" Catholics developed their spirituality through a focus on a Christ-centered interior life. Faith was personal in the garden of the soul, allowing Catholics to separate the spiritual and temporal life, a spirituality easily adapted to the American experience of separation of Church and state. They reserved their spirituality to practices within their homes and local parishes, while at the same time were deeply involved in public life. This "republican" spirituality allowed Catholicism to find a home in the United States, and the *Garden of the Soul* prayer book was the most popular devotional well into the nineteenth century.[3] It promoted a deeply interior faith, resulting in an almost elite sense of spirituality in the new world. *Garden of the Soul* prescribed spiritual practices that individuals could perform at home and in the ordinary conditions of their life, and

[2] Ann Taves, *The Household of Faith: Roman Catholic Devotions in Mid-Nineteenth Century America* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986), 72.

[3] Chinnici, 27.

fostered a type of piety that was simple, sober and unostentatious, befitting the cultural circumstances of colonial Catholicism.[4]

Bishop John Carroll, the first bishop in the United States, captured this republican spirituality in his commissioning of the first cathedral in North American, the Cathedral of the Assumption in Baltimore, Maryland in 1806. This sacred building, the first religious building constructed after the signing of the Constitution, was very different from the cathedrals of Western Europe. Its neoclassical architecture exhibited a simplicity and dignity directly mirroring the interior spirituality of American Catholic life. It stood as a monument to the permanency of the faith in the new world, and the acceptance of Catholics as part of the mainstream culture of the day.

Household of Faith American Spirituality

As the monarchies of Europe crumbled throughout the nineteenth century, a devotion-centered form of spirituality began to develop throughout the European continent. Catholics became defensive and defiant in their relationship towards the secular state resulting in a proliferation of public Catholic practices, from public processions to non-Eucharistic community prayer.[5] These public displays of faith were brought to the United States by a new wave of immigrants and quickly emerged as the predominant practice of faith in the young nation.

In moving from the interior life to the public life, Catholics in the United States looked for God in the Church rather than their interior, Christ-centered life. Believers were united in this public community of worshippers, uniting them both with fellow

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[4]Patrick W. Carey, *Catholics in America: A History (*Lanham, Maryland: The Rowman and Littlefield Publishing Group, 2004), 12.

[5] Claire E. Wolfteich, *American Catholics Through the Twentieth Century: Spirituality, Lay Experience and Public Life* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2001), 24.

Catholics as well as the spiritual family of Mary, Joseph, the angels and saints. The emphasis on the church as the means of salvation and the spiritual homeland or refuge for the immigrants was concretely put into practice in a variety of parish-centered and distinctly Catholic spiritual activities such as parish missions, pious confraternities, and devotions to the saints.[6] Parish life flourished, as communities of Catholics looked to their local churches for acceptance and support of their beliefs.

Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, prayer books and various public devotions became the primary form of the practice of faith in the United States. Catholic immigrants brought with them their statues and rosaries, scapulars and relics, all of which pushed their faith into the public life. Although the priest's Latin mass continued to be the primary form of worship, these various devotional practices allowed Catholics to celebrate their native cultures by preserving the much-loved traditions of their homelands. Devotions to the Sacred Heart, the Seven Sorrows, and the Miraculous Medal all proliferated, as these forms of public prayer could be celebrated without a priest and in their native tongues. The practice of dedicating certain days to saints, weeks to novenas, and months to Mary and Joseph became the foundation of Catholic life.

The devotions of the Catholic Church in America at this time in history placed a strong emphasis on the doctrines of Tridentine Catholicism. Although participation in these practices was strictly voluntary for American Catholics, their standardization in rituals and texts began to shape an institutional identity for Catholics, which then began to separate these Catholics from other Christians in the nation.

This new form of spirituality tended to focus on gaining favors from God rather than deepening an interior relationship with God. Repetition of prayers and the exactness

[6] Carey, 37.

of devotional rituals mirrored well the free market society of the United States, and their wide acceptance by Catholics created an almost militant attitude within the Catholic community.[7] This attitude undoubtedly furthered the suspicion and distrust by the Protestant community.

Often spoken of as the "house of faith" spirituality, this new form of being Catholic created a parallel world for American Catholicism in the construction of schools, hospitals and Catholic lay organizations.[8] Catholics could freely live within the United States and practice their faith without government influence. The parallel world of health care and education brought a sense of comfort and security to the Catholic community, but at the same time aroused suspicion and prejudice by their fellow Americans who questioned their allegiance to Rome in opposition to their allegiance to the republic.

In 1847, the bishops of the United States petitioned Pope Pius IX to dedicate their nation to the Immaculate Conception of Mary. Planning began immediately to build a shrine to honor Mary in this title, and Catholic parishes across the nation were asked to contribute to the building fund. For more than fifty years funds were collected and plans were drawn, and the resulting basilica in Washington, D.C. is a testimony of the triumph and strength of the Catholic community in the United States. The basilica stands overlooking the nation's capital, and the architecture and numerous chapels and statues reflects the devotional piety of this era, representing the varied ethnic backgrounds of U.S. Catholics. The Basilica of the Immaculate Conception continues to be one of the largest churches in the United States, and its ornate and grand design was copied by

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[7] Wolfteich, 47.

[8] Taves, 129.

smaller immigrant communities throughout the nation in their own parish church constructions. Although happy to be accepted in this land of opportunity, Catholics during this time in history were determined to make clear that their first allegiance was to God and the Church.

The first two decades of the twentieth century brought record numbers of immigrants from Europe as that continent was engulfed in World War I. These immigrants left their war-ravaged lands to come to the land of opportunity in the United States. Catholic immigrants typically migrated to communities which spoke in their native tongue, and these communities found their foundation in the neighborhood parish. Household of faith spirituality continued to be the primary locus of Catholic life, although over time it became more Eucharistic and clergy-centered. High and low masses, Eucharistic adoration, Eucharistic processions, and Eucharistic congresses became the defining celebrations of Catholic life. Countless sacrifices of money and labor helped build churches with grand architecture, celebrating both the Catholic faith and the native homelands of believers. These ethnic parishes became the center of both social and religious activity for Catholics, allowing them to create a community within the larger society where they felt secure and free to live their faith. The city of Cleveland mirrored this trend as ethnic churches were built in close proximity to each other, often times continuing to fan the flames of conflict of their European origins.

After a time, Catholic assimilation into the American culture and its unique political setting caused many to look beyond the walls of their Catholic churches with the desire to help shape society in accord with the demands of the gospel.[9] Various social movements within the Catholic community began to evolve, leading directly to a new

[9] Wolfteich, 45.

way of "being Catholic" and a different form of spirituality, often referred to as "world of grace spirituality."[10]

World of Grace American Spirituality

The liturgical movement centered in Collegeville, Minnesota, the Dorothy Day Catholic Worker movement, and the Christian Family movement all pushed American spirituality to a new way of living faith in the United States. The focus of these movements was to sanctify everyday life and to find God in society through volunteerism and commitment to the poor.[11] This movement away from the household of faith and living spirituality within the church walls to community volunteerism and bringing faith to the civic community marked a new era of Catholic spirituality in the United States.

Each of these movements found its strength in the reading of the scriptures and adapting them to the lived experiences of Catholics. This "worldly" activity outside of the household faith was quickly embraced by American Catholics. Although the Church community was still seen as the primary avenue of grace, Catholics felt called to see the entire world as a place of grace as well. Service to the poor and the promotion of basic human rights for all people became part of "being Catholic" in the United States. These movements caused suspicion among American bishops, as the movement into public life lessened their authority and control, yet Catholics continued to participate in record numbers.

As the world of grace spirituality continued to flourish, the United States became embroiled in World War II. Record numbers of Catholic men were drafted to serve their nation, and the Catholic subcultures of immigrant parishes soon emerged into public life.

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[10]Chinnici, 208.

[11]Ibid, 211.

In their service to the nation, these Catholic men and women proved their loyalty to the country, and upon their return from the war, made use of the GI bill to attend college in record numbers. Within a short period of time, the blue collar immigrant workforce of the high school educated Catholic community attained a new place in society through higher education. By the mid-1960s, Catholics, who had been for the most part poor and uneducated blue-collar workers, were as well-educated as other Americans, and as a group, would be indistinguishable from Americans as a whole.[12] Leaving their Catholic subculture, they immersed themselves in public and private universities, and their subsequent degrees propelled them into the world of finance, medicine and politics. They were no longer regarded as foreign-speaking laborers with an allegiance to Rome, but rather active participants in American public life. The election of John F. Kennedy as the first Roman Catholic president of the United States solidified their place in society, and brought about a whole new way of understanding the Catholic faith and spirituality in American culture.

Reinforcing this trend of the world of grace in American Catholic spirituality in the 1960s were the deliberations and documents of the Second Vatican Council. As Pope John XXIII called upon Church leaders to reflect on what the Catholic faith meant in these times and in today's world, numerous documents were produced which seemed to support this new way of "being Catholic" in the United States. Documents were written about Catholic relations with Protestant Christians and the religions of the world. Openness to dialogue and interaction with society were supported by the documents on religious liberty and faith in the modern world. Vatican II confirmed what many

[12]Diana Hayes and Peter C. Hahn, *Many Faces, One Church: Cultural Diversity and the American Catholic Experience* (Oxford, UK: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2005), 1.

Catholics had already begun to experience: the world is a grace-filled place, and God is present outside the walls of the Catholic Church.

The effects of the world of grace spirituality as well as the documents of Vatican II also had an effect on church buildings themselves. Church architecture changed dramatically as new worship spaces were designed which focused more on the people present rather than the world to come. Statues, colorful windows, and grand sanctuaries with communion railings gave way to open spaces, windows opening to the world, and a renewed liturgy which dropped the language of the Roman Empire and replaced it with the language of the local community. The renewed liturgy also moved from being priest-centered to community centered, promoting the active participation of all who were present. The world of grace spirituality focused more on bringing faith to society than on grand church buildings, and the locus of Church life changed from service to those within the Church walls to those on the outside.

The end of the twentieth century and beginning of the twenty-first century have brought unique challenges to the Church in the United States. Financial scandals and clergy sexual scandals within the Catholic community have caused many to question Church authority and the leadership of both local bishops and the Church in Rome. The continually evolving sexual revolution and issues surrounding premarital sex and gay marriage have further divided the Catholic conscience. The lack of rights for women in the Church as well as an apparent "reining in" of the American Church and her leaders have further disillusioned Catholics. In the most recent years, health care battles surrounding abortion and contraception have brought Catholic teachings in direct opposition to American political sentiment. World of grace spirituality is often in

opposition to American political and moral values, and the Church once again finds herself defending her teachings in American society. Catholic citizens of the United States continue to struggle with the values of their nation verses the values of their Church.

Under the leadership of Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI, the Church seemed to regress as these Church leaders questioned the value of many of the changes since Vatican II. Both of these popes stressed devotional piety, and seemed determined to separate Catholics throughout the world from the societies they lived in. They appeared to have been trying to bring the Church back to the household of faith spirituality, and regarded the world of grace with increased suspicion. A form of elitism was promoted amongst the clergy, and many of the robes and prayers of former eras were dusted off and returned to Catholic life. The leadership of these two men appears to have had a divisive effect on American spirituality, as a portion of the population rejoiced in the return to the former ways of being Catholic, while others in the Catholic population pushed for even greater reforms.

World of grace spirituality had emboldened many Catholics, both lay and ordained, to strive for human rights, peace and justice for all citizens of the world. While the devotionalism of the household of faith spirituality often tends to emphasize denying the present world and longing for paradise, the world of grace spirituality looks to Christ as a liberator, one who will free humanity from all of the political and economic injustices which keep people enslaved in their communities. Christ as liberator is the hallmark of this spirituality, and various bible based movements began to evolve in

Catholic circles. Perhaps the most significant of these movements was the birth of Liberation Theology, which will be further explored in the next chapter.

At the writing of this paper, the Church has elected a new pontiff, Pope Francis, the first pope from South America and the developing world. Within the first months of his papacy, Francis has shown his preference for the world of grace spirituality, and his indifference to many of the household of faith teachings. He has shattered notions about the elitism and power of the Catholic Church, and has dropped to his knees to wash the feet of prisoners at a Holy Thursday service. He has urged both bishops and priests to throw off the robes of wealth and power and become a "poor church for the poor". His desire to reshape the power structures within the Church has brought much hope to those who hold the world of grace spirituality. His unique Latin American experience of the Church serving in poverty has obviously shaped his vision and practices, and only time will tell the impact of those experiences.

The Spirituality of the Church of St. Dominic, Shaker Heights, Ohio

From the very beginning, the city of Shaker Heights mirrored much of the experiences of American spirituality of the rest of the nation. With an almost non-existent industrial tax base, the community based its budget resources on the taxation of residential real estate. As the Catholic community of greater Cleveland further entrenched itself in local immigrant parishes and schools, the city of Shaker Heights set out to build what became one of the finest public school systems in the nation. Community schools with distinct Georgian architecture were constructed throughout the community, and for the first 50 years of the city, there was no Catholic institutional presence.

On October 11, 1945, the bishop of the Diocese of Cleveland, Edward F. Hoban, announced the formation of a new Catholic parish in Shaker Heights. World War II was drawing to an end, and a sizable number of Catholics were migrating to this community in the eastern suburbs of Cleveland. St. Dominic was to be one of the first of forty parishes created by Bishop Hoban as the post World War II economic boom propelled Catholics out of their urban immigrant communities into the mainstream of public suburban life.

Fr. Edmund F. Ahern was made the first pastor of St. Dominic Church in 1945, and he immediately set out to invite the Catholic residents of Shaker Heights to become part of this new community. Like so many other Catholic communities at this time of history, St. Dominic parish ascribed to the "household of faith" spirituality model. A Ladies Guild was started for the women of the parish, and a Holy Name Society was begun for the men. The young parish met at the site of Lomond School, a public school within the suburb. The group of some 400 people gathered for weekly masses and devotions, and set about finding a site for their new community and fund raising efforts to build the first church building.

Construction of the new church building was completed in 1947, and work began immediately on the construction of a Catholic school for the parish. Although still a predominantly Protestant civic community, more than 400 people were part of the new parish. Catechism classes were begun, and the traditional Holy Name Society for men and the Ladies Guild for women sponsored numerous fund-raising events. Garden parties, bridge tournaments and parish dances began to shape the distinct Catholic

community, separating them from others in the civic community. The household of faith spirituality was firmly implanted in the parish.

The Second Vatican Council brought many changes to the Catholic community, and throughout the 1960s and 1970s, St. Dominic slowly adapted to these changes. The sanctuary was redesigned to accommodate the new liturgy, with a new altar being built allowing the priest to face the people while presiding at mass. Side altars were removed, reflecting the theology of the documents of Vatican II. Yet although these physical changes were in keeping with the new theology, parish life remained largely unchanged at St. Dominic, with the Ladies Guild and Holy Name Society dominating parish life through fundraisers and various parish social events. The leadership at the time was reluctant to adapt to the world of grace spirituality, and the numbers of parishioners slowly declined as reenergized Vatican II Catholics sought out more accommodating communities in neighboring parishes.

In 1985, Fr. Martin Amos was named the pastor of St. Dominic. Fr. Amos was a former seminary professor, and with his knowledge and vision, began to bring about many of the changes in parish life initiated by Vatican II. He began numerous adult education classes, weekend spiritual retreats for the laity, and various social outreach activities. The parish commissioned a St. Vincent DePaul Society to serve the poor of the community, and parishioners were encouraged to be involved in Habitat for Humanity, a civic organization which built homes for the poor. The interior of the church was completely renovated to reflect the Vatican II liturgy. The communion rails were removed and new reconciliation rooms were constructed to reflect the new rite. All of these changes introduced the world of grace spirituality to the parish, and for fifteen years

the community flourished under Fr. Amos's vision and leadership. Participation by the laity in both parish life and the larger civic community attracted many new congregants.

In the year 2001, Fr. Amos was called by Pope John Paul II to become an auxiliary bishop of the Diocese of Cleveland. I was named the pastor of St. Dominic, the first pastor completely schooled in Vatican II theology and firmly implanted in the world of grace spirituality.

Upon my arrival at the parish, I found a community that appeared to be searching for meaning. Although many in the community had adopted the world of grace spirituality, the majority of the parish was inactive. Sunday liturgies were led by a traditional choir with very little congregational participation. These masses were sparsely attended, and the average age tended to be those in their mid-fifties. The day school was floundering, and the Parish School of Religion numbered about 250 children. The census enrollment listed 950 registered households, with 250 financially contributing members.

As a new pastor, I conducted a series of listening sessions where parishioners were invited to shape the future of their community. These meetings focused on updating parish facilities, educational opportunities, and general parish life. More than 500 parishioners attended these listening sessions, and the general consensus was that there needed to be more opportunities for parishioners to share their gifts with those in need.

In the year 2002, a new initiative PROJECT SERVE was begun in the parish. The goal of this initiative was to link parishioners with opportunities to serve those in need in our local community, throughout the country, and within the developing world. Various partnerships with local social service agencies were begun, affording the parishioners

with opportunities to give of their time, talents and treasures to those in need. It was at this time that the parish outreach to Santo Domingo in El Salvador began.

In planning any parish outreach to the poor, parish leaders need to approach the community in the spirit of justice and not charity. The secular world abounds with opportunities to serve those in need, yet the Christian community must take care not become just another service agency doing charity work. The world of grace spirituality speaks of bringing the gospel message outside of the church walls to the larger society; hence the gospel must be the foundation of all service if it is to have meaning in relationship to faith and spirituality.

From the very beginning, the mission relationship between the people of St. Dominic and the people of Santo Domingo has been based on the shared experiences of believers in both communities, and the foundational gospel values which form us as a Church. Preparation meetings for the Saint Dominic missionaries seek to inform participants to share in the mission in the light of the gospel. In addition to the temporal preparation that any mission trip requires, the Saint Dominic missions seek to introduce parishioners to the words of Jesus, and the invitation to feed the hungry, comfort the suffering and bring liberty to captives. Thus the participants will be grounded in the world of grace spirituality as they prepare for their trip and hopefully will be open to God speaking to them through their experience of service and relationship building.

Each parish trip includes multiple opportunities for reflection between Salvadorans and members of St. Dominic. Interestingly enough, the household of faith spirituality is clearly evident in El Salvador, and parishioners from St. Dominic share in various devotions with the people. Stations of the Cross, public praying of the rosary,

and various processions honoring local saints have opened the minds and hearts of many St. Dominic parishioners as to the value of these devotions. At the same time, Salvadorans easily share their faith in reflecting upon the daily liturgical scripture readings, and it is clear in their reflections that they are firmly rooted in the world of grace spirituality as well. This combination of two forms of spirituality has been a gift to our community, giving a new appreciation for devotional practices in the spiritual life as well as the gospel call to care for the temporal needs of the poor.

In the fall of 2013, St. Dominic Church celebrated ten years of their relationship with the people of Santo Domingo. The numerous parish trips throughout these years have formed a bond between these two parishes which has enriched the lives of all mission participants. Yet the reality of any international trip to a developing country is that most parishioners will not be financially or physically able to participate in a mission trip. Time constraints, family and work commitments, as well as financial limitations prohibit most from sharing in this mission. Although local opportunities for service have allowed parishioners to share in this world of grace spirituality, there is uniqueness about an international trip that has had a profound impact on both individuals and the parish community. The parish has displayed astounding generosity to the various projects undertaken in El Salvador, yet the experience of deepening of faith and spirituality has been limited to the participants on the mission trips. It is my hope that the project described in this paper will expand the experiences of the missionaries to include the larger parish community, and in doing so, deepen their relationships with God and the Church. The experience of reflecting on the gospel with our brothers and sisters in El Salvador can have a much greater impact on our community if participants are given the

tools to proclaim “what they have seen and heard”, and therein become true missionaries of the gospel in both the developing world and the world in which they live.

CONCLUSION

The development of Catholic spirituality in the United States from the colonial days until the present has been influenced by the unique place that religion holds within government and the secular world. The principles of freedom of religion and freedom from religion have allowed American Catholics to chart their own course for living faith within a diverse society. Although undoubtedly influenced by the various theological trends brought by European immigrants, American Catholics have always enjoyed a freedom from government coercion, often times claiming that same freedom in relation to the Roman Church authorities as well.

The first Catholics in the United States treasured their independence and developed a deep interior spirituality which focused on a Christ-centered life. Their acceptance in American society allowed them a deeper sense of security in their faith, and after a time gave them the confidence to more publicly live their faith in their parish communities. The household of faith spirituality was best exhibited in the strength of these local parish communities, and the subsequent development of separate schools and hospitals gave them an even stronger sense of identity.

The democratic values of American society were the perfect environment for the world of grace spirituality to flourish, as a sense of community and volunteerism were inherent to the political culture in the United States. The command of the gospel “to care for the least of our brothers and sisters” empowered American Catholics to leave the security of their Church buildings and bring their faith into the secular world.

The community of St. Dominic in Shaker Heights has mirrored the larger trends of spirituality within the United States as this middle/upper class parish slowly transcended the household of faith model to the world of grace model of living faith. Parishioners have embraced this model in record numbers in their service to the poor, yet struggle with understanding the difference between charity service and the gospel call of doing justice. The mission to El Salvador and the partnership between the two communities provides a perfect opportunity to deepen the participants' understanding of the scriptures. Educating the participants in the field of preaching will give them the tools needed to proclaim the gospel upon their return from El Salvador, thereby allowing them to "proclaim what they have seen and heard," following the example of the first disciples of Jesus.

The value of freedom is perhaps the most treasured foundational principle of the United States. Yet many fail to connect this value when understanding the message of Jesus, especially when it applies to citizens of nations where freedom is not so readily available. The unique development of spirituality within the American context of freedom is not so easily translated to the experiences of the people in El Salvador, where various forms of economic and political oppression continue to shape their everyday experiences. The next chapter will explore the differences between spirituality in the United States versus spirituality in Central America, and the unique role of Christ as liberator within the Salvadoran society.

CHAPTER THREE

LIBERATION SPIRITUALITY: NORTH AND SOUTH

Introduction

The basic human right of freedom and the concept of liberation are traditionally terms used to describe political cultures. Citizens of democratic societies see them as fundamental to understanding how individuals live in their communities and relate with government and societal values and laws. People in the "North," citizens of the United States, hold freedom as their most treasured value, and typically relate the term to individual freedom and individual rights. North Americans are proud of their "free country" and pride themselves as "defenders of freedom" throughout the world. The concept of freedom is brought to almost every public debate, whether arguing about abortion rights, gun rights, taxes or the economy. North Americans expound exorbitant amounts of rhetoric and money to defend their right to be free.

Yet when North Americans apply this value of freedom to their neighbors in Central America, there is the tendency to believe that their understanding of freedom in the political society is to be embraced only when it provides a benefit to the United States. This is most apparent in the relationship between the governments of El Salvador and the United States. The long history of intervention by North American political and business leaders has resulted in a relationship between two nations that is clearly not

based on freedom and liberation. Time and time again, North American political and business leaders have enslaved Salvadorans through military intervention and economic trade agreements which do not allow for freedom for the people of El Salvador.

When we apply the concepts of freedom and liberation to the spiritual lives of Salvadorans, we see much of the same dynamic taking place. The Eurocentric Church of the United States as well as the Church authorities in Rome have consistently tried to "Romanize" the faith of Salvadorans, from the arrival of the first missionaries from Spain to the more recent pronouncements regarding new ways of thinking and praying and reflecting on the gospel, the Catholic Church has attempted to confine Central Americans in a spirituality foreign to their lived experiences of God's presence in their lives.

At the time of the Second Vatican Council, various local theologians from Latin America heeded the call of the council documents to adapt the faith to the lived experiences of believers. This was most clearly seen in the changes in the liturgy, yet the far greater impact came in the practice of spirituality. As people of the developing world began to reflect on their experiences in the light of the scriptures, they began to regard their living in poverty as a result of evil, if not the product of sin. Jesus, the savior and liberator, came to free them from this slavery. Their reflections lead them to understand their experiences in an entirely different way, affecting both their spiritual lives and their lived political reality. Out of these experiences evolved a new way of understanding spirituality throughout the Third World: Liberation Theology.

In this chapter, the focus will be on the impact of Liberation Theology on faith communities in both the United States and El Salvador. The theological foundations of Liberation Theology will be explored, as well as the pastoral practices which resulted

from it. The chapter will conclude with some brief remarks on the emerging field of inculturation and faith, and its effect on the spiritual lives of those who live in the developing world.

The Theological Foundations of Liberation Theology

The Latin American theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez, considered by most as the first theologian to offer the foundational principles of Liberation Theology, understood liberation to be seen as something "comprehensive, an integral reality from which nothing is excluded, because only such an idea of it explains the work of him whom all promises are to be fulfilled."[1] Gutiérrez outlined three levels of liberation which are helpful in understanding the impact it has on faith and the spirituality of believers.

The first level of liberation involves freedom from social situations of oppression and marginalization that forces many (and indeed all in one or another way) to live in conditions contrary to God's will for their life.[2] This is clearly seen in the oppressive poverty experienced by the majority of the developing world. This poverty is the result of a multitude of factors, the majority of which involve individuals and/or institutions which fail to allow individuals to enjoy the freedoms given to them as children of God. This is clearly seen in the massive economic injustices of the people of El Salvador, but can also be seen in the same injustice experienced by the poor in the United States, and for that matter in any culture. Yet beyond economic oppression countless individuals throughout the world are persecuted and oppressed because of their race, sexuality, lack of education; the forces of oppression are legion.

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[1]Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*. Translated and edited by Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, NY: Orvis Books,1988). xxviii.

[2] Ibid.

The second form of liberation involves personal transformation and the conversion of individuals. This liberation affords the individual the inner freedom to confront any kind of oppression or servitude which does not allow for freedom and prevents them from becoming all that God has called them to be.[3] Again, this is clearly seen in El Salvador in the experiences of *campesinos* and the forced servitude of their labor and employment practices. Unjust wages and lack of opportunities for any kind of advancement or security in their employment enslaves Salvadorans in much the same way that they were first enslaved by the Spanish conquerors some 400 years ago.

This oppression can likewise be seen in the lives of the poor throughout the United States. Lack of basic health care or documents proving "legal status" are just a few examples which prohibit inner freedom in the nation which proclaims "freedom" as a core value of the culture. In recent years, arguments over the legality of gay marriage and the rights of same-sex couples has also brought to the forefront discussions over what "freedom" really means.

The final level of liberation as understood by Gutiérrez involves a more apparent "spiritual value": the liberation from sin. This liberation attacks servitude at its foundation, for sin is the "breaking of friendship with God and with other human beings, and therefore cannot be eradicated except by the unmerited redemptive love of the Lord whom we receive by faith and in communion with one another." [4] It is this final form of liberation which clearly goes to the heart of the gospel message and the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. For only Jesus Christ, the liberator and savior of the world can lead us to true freedom in God's love.

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[3] Ibid.

[4] Gutiérrez, xix.

Gutiérrez argues that the difficulty with these three principles of liberation is that they are not exclusive of one another and true freedom cannot be found by focusing on only one level. Rather, liberation must be total, and involve every aspect of the human condition, from personal freedom to political freedom, to freedom from sin in all areas of life. Liberation from sin is the only true remedy of any social injustice, and when it is eradicated, true reconciliation with God and others abounds.

As the theology of liberation began to unfold in the developing world, there was almost an immediate tension experienced amongst Church officials. Although there was a long tradition of understanding salvation as freedom from sin, in many situations throughout El Salvador the Church leaders themselves were by their silence about economic and military injustice condoning the slavery and oppression of their people. The faith these leaders had promoted among their people was an interior faith, not one to be spilled out into the world of grace. The Church had entered into an unholy alliance with government officials there, and the connection between faith and the Church versus the corrupt political and economic systems of the country forced many Church leaders to choose a side. Would they align themselves with the oppressors, those who promoted the culture of sin and oppression? Or would they align themselves with the majority of the population, the poor and the oppressed?

Fr. Rob Reidy, a priest of the Diocese of Cleveland, first came to serve the poor of El Salvador in 1985. The country was in the midst of a civil war, the archbishop of the capital city had been assassinated, and mission team members of his own diocese had been brutally raped and murdered just five years before his arrival. He was assigned to the church in port city of LaLibertad, and immediately went about the work of

administering the sacraments to the people of the parish. Although actual combat in the civil war was minimal in this port city, refugees from the countryside were arriving by the thousands, seeking a safe place for their families. Although they remained devout in their faith, the refugees were coming to the parish for basic needs of food, clothing and shelter.

Fr. Reidy, reflecting on the situation he found upon his arrival, remarked, "I came to preach the gospel, to do the work of a parish priest. Yet how do you serve the Eucharist to those who are starving for food? How do you speak of the good news when so many are living in fear? How can you say that God will protect you when they have nowhere to sleep at night?"[5]

Fr. Reidy's reflections were mirrored numerous times by other priests, religious and lay church workers who were serving in El Salvador at this time in history. Many would go on to give their life for the faith, all in service to God's people.

Meanwhile, back in the United States, most of the population had little awareness of the violent conditions experienced by the poor in El Salvador. Although their government was sending hundreds of millions of dollars in aid to the government of El Salvador, the average American would be hard-pressed to even locate the country on a map. The United States government was actively involved both financially and militarily in a civil war in one of the poorest countries of the world, purportedly to defend "freedom and democracy," yet in reality was taking part in the evil of oppression and violence that was terrorizing hundreds of thousands of innocent people.

One of the greatest tensions experienced by believers in the United States revolves around the American principle of the separation of church and state. The writers

[5] Reverend Robert Reidy, personal interview. Cleveland, Ohio, January 13, 2010.

of the Constitution of the United States were very aware of the power of the institutional Church in their European homelands, and were firmly committed to erasing this power in their new country. This obviously causes a conflict for Roman Catholics in the United States, as Catholicism is the only religion that had a centralized authority in Europe. Throughout the history of the United States Catholics have walked a delicate road in being faithful to their Church and to the principles of the laws of their country. Yet what happens when the civil government participates in evil? Should the American Catholic speak out in faith? Or should they remain respectful of this separation of Church and State? Liberation spirituality has a clear and specific response to these questions.

Liberation Spirituality and the Scriptures

Prior to Vatican Council II, the spirituality of Catholics throughout the world was guided primarily by the doctrinal teachings of the Church. Religious orders made various inroads into the spiritual life throughout the centuries, as the ministry of their members shared the charisms of their founders with the laity, yet for the majority of Catholics, spirituality was shaped by the doctrinal preaching of secular priests. Biblical study and reflection were relatively unheard of Catholic circles, as this was seen as a "Protestant" practice. Although the practice of reading and reflecting on the scriptures is now a world-wide practice of Catholics, the roots of this scripture based spirituality can be found among the poorest of the poor in Central America.

Liberation spirituality began in Latin America, with its primary focus being the reading of sacred scripture in light of human history. As the majority of Latin Americans had infrequent access to the Eucharist and formal theological catechesis, much of their

spirituality had been formed through their long and deep history of popular religion, which basically evolved in communities that did not have ordained leaders.

When Fr. Rob Reidy first arrived in the village of Chiltiupán in El Salvador as the new pastor of Santo Domingo Church in 1990, it was just days before the celebration of the Easter Triduum. As Fr. Reidy busily prepared for the celebration of the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday, he was distracted by a commotion on the side of the church building. Going out to investigate, he was surprised to find forty or so parishioners erecting elaborate displays of flowers and trees on the side lawn. When he questioned the crowd about their activity, a young man spoke up:

"It's for the garden" he said, "the garden of prayer. We always build a garden on Holy Thursday so that we can keep watch with Jesus on the night before Good Friday. Even though his disciples fell asleep, we will not. We will stay with Jesus."[6]

The people of Santo Domingo had grown accustomed to not having a priest to celebrate the Triduum, and so they invented their own services where they needed no priest, where the stories they had read in the bible could come alive for them. This "popular religion" continues to this day, with celebrations and processions for various feast days of Saints, most notably on the "Day of the Dead," November 2, when the government and businesses officially shut down and Salvadorans take part in a daylong celebration in cemeteries throughout the country commemorating the lives of their deceased family members. Liberation theology gave Church credibility to these local customs, and further deepened the hunger for God's word and the practice of faith.

The Salvadoran spirituality was based on the people's self-reflection on their common experiences, their centuries-old understanding of rituals and nature, as well as a

[6] Reidy Interview.

shared experience of poverty and oppression, all of which influenced their relationship with God. By telling and retelling the gospel stories within their communities, they fashioned their own traditions and rituals out of their cultural experience. A deep faith prevailed in their culture, even with the absence of ordained leadership.

In its initial stages, liberation theology downplayed the importance of popular religion, yet in the following years it became viewed as a potential resource for life among the poor from which involved a distinctive Latin American theology of inculturation.[7] More will be said of this theology of inculturation later in the chapter.

The basic principles of a spirituality of liberation find their primary focus in praying the scriptures and reflecting on daily experiences. Even the least educated person gains a new kind of wisdom and vision when the Word of God breaks into their life. By bringing both past experiences as well as present realities to the reading of scriptures, liberation spirituality urges people of faith to examine their history and everyday activities in the light of God's word. This in turn affects their understanding of living faith, for the gospel urges them to act now in the name of Jesus.

At present, there are twenty-four communities or *cantones* which comprise the parish of Santo Domingo in El Salvador. Each of these communities has a lay catechetical leader, who gathers the community together each week to reflect on the Word of God. The *cantones* are served by the parish priest with a Eucharist celebrated once a month, and so the majority of their spiritual formation occurs during their bible sessions on the other three weeks. Catechetical leaders from all the *cantons* meet once a month with the pastor of Santo Domingo for education in the Catholic faith as well as

[7] Diego Irarrázaval, *Inculturation; New Dawn of the Church in Latin America* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2008), vii.

scripture study. They in turn take the knowledge they acquire back to their local communities and direct scripture sharing groups for parishioners. Scripture study and reflection has been woven into the daily life of Salvadorans, all a direct result of liberation theology.

The Church of Saint Dominic in Shaker Heights has one parish priest who celebrates the Eucharist every day for the parish. Although there are six bible study groups in the community, the majority of the church members still rely on these daily masses for their education and understanding of the scriptures. Where the Salvadorans take a more active lay-lead approach to bible spirituality, the majority of the parishioners at St. Dominic still rely on the priest to nourish their spiritual lives. In the past several years, staff members have attempted to introduce *Lectio Divina* exercises to various parish meetings. Although these have been well-received, parishioners still seem to rely on the priest's relationship to the scriptures rather than their own. In my experiences, the poor of El Salvador appear to have a much deeper relationship with God's word than their neighbors in North America.

Liberation Spirituality and the Eucharist

The celebration of the Eucharist takes on a whole new meaning with a focus on the scriptures, for the Word of God becomes a primary, relevant component of the liturgy. In the past, the majority of preaching at the Eucharistic liturgy was based on the doctrines of the Church, with little or only a passing reference to the scriptures proclaimed at mass. Priests were given "sermon topics" by their local bishops, all of which stressed various doctrines and principles of the faith. The Liturgy documents of

Vatican II brought a whole new emphasis to the Liturgy of the Word, urging priests to share with God's people the rich treasures found in the scriptures proclaimed at mass.

Prior to Vatican II, the celebration of the Eucharist was conducted in the Latin language. Participation in mass was largely a passive affair and due to a lack of clergy, an infrequent event for many Salvadorans. The introduction of the vernacular and the increased awareness of the power of God's word affected liturgical music and participation, and the embrace of local traditions and musical instruments allowed Salvadorans to begin to share in "full and active" participation in the celebration of the Eucharist. Peoples with their cultures reformulate the liturgy and sacramentality, and although this does not happen often at an official level, it is widespread within popular religion, its celebrations, and its ethic of solidarity.[8]

During the Salvadoran civil war, most political dissidents were silenced or murdered. Church teachers, both priests and lay catechists, made connections between the gospels stories and the suffering that surrounded the people at this time in history, and were often tortured and assassinated simply for preaching the gospel. The oppression put forth by the Salvadoran government was spoken of as evil in the eyes of God, and the celebration of the Eucharist was therefore regarded with contempt by many government officials.

Archbishop Oscar Romero of San Salvador was perhaps the most controversial Catholic official in the eyes of the government during the beginning years of the civil war. Romero used his pulpit to chastise both the rebel forces and the army officials, calling for peace and an end to the oppression of the poor in the country. He had been warned by various people that the military was planning to assassinate him, yet he could

[8] Irarrázaval, 14.

not be silenced from preaching the gospel. Toward the end of his life, his Sunday homily was broadcast across the entire country, as hundreds of thousands of Salvadorans huddled around radios to hear the Word of God. In one of his last public homilies, Romero made reference to those who sought to silence him, and prophesied that he would "rise in his people," an invitation and exhortation to the people of El Salvador to carry on his mission of preaching God's word. Romero's voice was silenced by an assassin's bullet on March 24, 1980 while celebrating the Eucharist. Liberation theology and the preaching of the gospel had cost him his life.

One of the primary activities for St. Dominic missionaries to El Salvador is sharing in daily Eucharist with members of Santo Domingo. Whether it is in the main church in Chiltiupán or in one the various *cantons* scattered across the mountain, these liturgies prove to be some of the most transformational experiences for the American visitors. The singing is joyous, the musical instruments often are hand-made, and the deep devotion of the local parishioners is inspiring. In addition to the usual financial offerings taken up at mass, the communities who worship in and around Chiltiupán also bring up material gifts for the poor. Often the residents walk up to two hours to attend mass. The priest in his homilies uses simple images of animals and farming and the nature that surrounds the countryside to help parishioners make connections to the gospel. He also uses experiences and events of family life which make the gospel come alive for those sharing in the celebration. After the mass, Salvadorans gather in front of the church for food and fellowship, and often the conversations revolve around the gospel and homily from the mass.

Roberto and his wife and three children walk two hours each Sunday morning to attend the mass at the main church of Santo Domingo. When I spoke to him on a recent mission trip, I asked Roberto what the mass meant to him. In his gentle manner, he described the experience of his family.

> "Before we leave the house, I read the gospel from the mass of the day to my children. As we make our journey, we all discuss what this might mean for us. We arrive at church and thank God for all that he has given us, especially the gift of his Son. As we make our way home, we talk about what the priest told us in his homily, and when we return home, we read the gospel again."[9]

As I listened to Roberto, I could not help but be inspired by his family's practice of *Lectio Divina.* The Word of God is truly food for his journey, giving him strength and vision for the week ahead.

Liberation Spirituality and Pastoral Practice

The practice of liberation theology and its call to Salvadorans to see beyond their personal struggles to the larger community empowered them to put their faith in action, as the Word of God began to speak to every aspect of their culture and relationships. The reading of God's word in light of human history also affected their participation in civic society, leading them to call for political change and the rights and dignity of all human persons. All the blood of the martyrs, spilled in El Salvador and throughout Latin America, far from causing discouragement and despair, has brought a new spirit of struggle and a new hope to the people.[10] Rather than passively accepting the oppression of their government, Salvadorans were empowered to speak out against this oppression as a response to the gospel. In addition to Oscar Romero, thousands of catechists, priests,

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[9] Personal interview with Roberto Carlos. Chiltiupán, El Salvador. November 14, 2011.

[10] Jon Sobrino, *Where is God? Earthquake, Terrorism, Barbarity, and Hope* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2004). 87.

religious and laity were martyred during the civil war, many as a result of putting their faith into action.

As Catholics in the United States began to deepen their relationship with the Word of God, many of their experiences mirrored those of their brothers and sisters in El Salvador. Reading the scriptures without the strict guidance of the clergy produced abundant fruits in the life of the Church as American Catholics responded to the call of the gospel and reached out in service to those most in need, both locally and globally. Through their reflections on the Word they began to see themselves as participants in the mission of Jesus, and made connections between the scriptures and their political and economic life as well as their cultural realities.

In the last fifty years, social action and service to the poor are regarded as essential practices for living the Catholic faith in the United States. This passion for justice is a direct result of liberation theology and the practice of reading God's word in light of the present realities of the day. It has profoundly affected my own preaching as a pastor, and forms foundational principles for the practice of ministry in my parish and for the missionaries who will be trained to preach as they return from their mission trips.

The practice of liberation theology in reading the scriptures has caused tension for both church leaders and lay people, especially when applied to politics, yet American Church leaders seem far more comfortable in speaking about sexual matters than the military interventions of their government. Throughout the years of the civil war in El Salvador, very little was said by Catholic leaders regarding the oppression supported by the United States government. In the 1980s, El Salvador became almost an obsession by American civil leaders. The revolution in neighboring Nicaragua and the success of the

Sandinista rebels and the subsequent communist regime caused so much concern for the United States that they were not going to allow this upheaval to be repeated in El Salvador. United States' aid to the brutal government of El Salvador totaled more than a million dollars a day in the 1980s, and although human rights abuses were clearly documented, the entire affair was met by almost complete silence by the official Church.

At this same time in history the American government was courting a closer relationship with the Vatican Offices of Pope John Paul II. Some would argue that President Reagan exploited Pope John Paul II's desire to erase communism in Poland by exaggerating the threat of communism in El Salvador. For the first time in history, the United States would appoint an ambassador to the Vatican City State, thereby acknowledging the institution of the Church and its power in the world and opening an official diplomatic relationship between them. Again, some would argue that this was Reagan's political plan to silence any opposition to the horror of the revolutions taking place in Central America.

As the events of the civil war in El Salvador and political unrest throughout Central and South America continued to heighten throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the Vatican began to take a seriously look at the practice of liberation theology and its effect on the political realities of the developing world. John Paul II was concerned about Marxist influence on the theology's analysis of Latin America's political economy. From John Paul's viewpoint any concessions to Marxist theory inevitably led to communist totalitarianism.[11]

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[11]Penny Lernoux, *People of God: The Struggle for World Catholicism* (New York: Viking Penguin Inc., 1989) 96.

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, then Prefect for the Doctrine of the Faith of the Curia, led the charge against liberation theology. In numerous meetings with bishops throughout Central and South America, Ratzinger attempted to inflict a stinging judgment on the work of the liberation theologians. Tensions increased as Latin American Bishop Conferences argued against these charges, outlined in Ratzinger's "Instruction on Liberation Theology." For conservatives in the Curia as well as those to the far religious left in Latin America, this instruction seemed to put an end to any future discussion of liberation theology and its practice in the developing world. Yet John Paul II consistently reached out to these bishops, backing away from the more severe condemnations of Ratzinger and simply urged caution. Although the American media announced the death of Liberation Theology because of the instruction, John Paul II never condemned it.[12]

Whatever one's judgment might be about the "catholicity" of liberation theology, it is clear that the practice of reading the scriptures in the light of the present lived reality of the people made a dramatic difference in the spread of the faith amongst the poor of Latin America, especially the people of El Salvador. Reflecting on the scriptures, celebrating the Eucharist and the pastoral practice of the Church changed dramatically because of liberation theology, and continues to transform the Church in both El Salvador and the United States to this day.

From Liberation Theology to Inculturation

On November 16, 1989, six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her daughter were brutally murdered on the campus of the Jesuit University of Central America in San Salvador by the American funded and trained army of El Salvador. Each November, on the Saturday closest to the date of the massacre, thousands of Salvadorans gather on the

[12] Lernoux, 111.

campus and create vibrant *alfombras,* or "rugs" made of salt, sawdust and flowers. These rugs are created on the campus streets commemorating the lives of the murdered Jesuits and numerous others who died in the Salvadoran civil war. Students, faculty, alumnae and Salvadorans as well as representatives from Jesuit Universities around the world gather together for a candle lit procession followed by a large outdoor mass in which the stories of these martyrs are retold and celebrated for their gift to the Church. The procession begins in front of the museum dedicated to these martyrs, and the participants march directly over the *alfombras*, into the main thoroughfare of the city outside the campus, and then return to a large field where the mass is celebrated.

As pastor of St. Dominic in Shaker Heights, I have participated in this procession for the last ten years with members from my community. We typically arrive a few hours early so that we might walk the route of the *alfombras,* joining thousands of others taking photographs of the beautiful artwork displayed on the concrete. There is almost a holy silence as we move along, as the *alfombras* tell the story of the faith of so many who gave of their lives for the gospel during this dark period of El Salvador's history. Candles are distributed to all of the participants, and then the procession begins, and as we make our way along with believers from around the world, the *alfombras* are destroyed by the participant's footsteps.

My first experience of the procession brought a mixture of emotions as the beauty of this cultural art was destroyed by my sandals, yet over time I have come to learn that by walking this road, the parishioners of St. Dominic and I become part of this Salvadoran faith story. The spirit of Archbishop Romero, the Jesuit martyrs and their housekeeper, the martyred missionaries from Cleveland, as well as the thousands of

unnamed *campesinos* become part of my faith story, and they inspire me to continue to live the mission of Jesus. As we make our way along this walk, I ask for forgiveness from God and from the Salvadoran people for my country's role in this tragedy, and I resolve to be different, to be open, and to be liberated from my own sins of oppression and injustice.

The Church throughout the world, following the lead of the Second Vatican Council and Pope John Paul II, has begun to define its mission and identity in terms of the rich concept of evangelization. Obviously the purpose of any parish mission trip is a sharing in this evangelizing role of the Church. Father Hervé Carrier, S.J., tells us that evangelization has two essential components: inculturation and liberation. Inculturation is the work of the evangelization of cultures and liberation is the defense of people and their cultural development.[13]

The idea of "inculturated liberation", the joining of these two concepts of inculturation and liberation was begun at the Puebla Conference in 1979. The conference recognized liberation as the small and large achievements of communities becoming more human. Inculturation recognized that each community and people, with its cultural paths, internalizes the message and puts it into practice.[14]

As theologians in Latin American continued to grapple with Vatican pronouncements on liberation theology throughout the last decades of the twentieth century, their focus moved to the ideas surrounding this concept of inculturation. Inculturation is the process by which the gospel, the Word of God, is incarnated in human

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[13] Allan Figuero Deck, S.J. "The Evangelization of Cultures and Catechists" in *Reflections on Inculturation* , ed. Frank Lucido (Washington, D.C.: National Catholic Educational Association, 2002), 1.

[14] Irarrázaval, 68.

life. [15] This term refers to the encounter between the Good News of Jesus Christ and culture, and the only way this encounter can occur is through dialogue. Catholics from the "North" and Catholics from the "South" cannot encounter God's word together unless they share it together. They must learn to listen to the stories, observe the rituals, try to understand values and share in sincere prayer if there is any hope for a deepening of true faith. Intercultural and interreligious dialogue are essential to this process, for in the sharing of our stories we come to understand a different face of God, thereby bringing God closer to us and to each other.

One of the greatest difficulties of preparing missionaries for parish mission trips is to confront our own attitudes about social class discrimination, racism and ethnocentrism. Americans have a tendency to believe that the entire world wants to be like them, and so any dialogue is colored by the misperception that we have a better life in our country than others in the world. We believe that our values are the best values, and our desire for material wealth should be the driving force for all people. Often accused of being "ugly Americans," we are often viewed by the world community with suspicion, as our arrogant and imperialistic attitudes can often dismiss or diminish the experiences of others throughout the world.

Five years ago, missionaries from St. Dominic Church began a series of meetings with the people of Santo Domingo about the struggles and frustrations of keeping their families safe and fed. These discussions revealed that "daily bread" was a primary concern: their poverty was so overwhelming that they could not think about homes or education, for they were simply struggling to feed their children. The concept of a communal, parish farm was proposed, and the Salvadorans were overwhelmed by Saint

[15] Deck, 4.

Dominic Church's offer to purchase land for their parish. Yet no sooner had the plan been proposed when the Saint Dominic contingent began to speak about markets for produce, micro-loans, and investments of profits. The Salvadorans seemed overwhelmed. They were looking to feed their hungry children, and we wanted to build a grocery store. We had come with all the best of intentions, but we had never really listened to their story.

Many of these same dynamics unfold when the institutional Church attempts to make inroads in developing countries. In the case of El Salvador, the majority of the population does not have a regular contact with ordained clergy, yet their faith is very strong. Through the centuries since the first Spanish invaders, Salvadorans have reflected on the word of God and through rituals and practices have developed their own "culture" of faith. Many of the traditions of the first missionaries continue to be treasured and promoted through music, dance, and prayer in their homes, as well as public processions through their city streets. These public processions, long abandoned by the Church in the North, continue to be a great source of spiritual nourishment in El Salvador. Veneration of saints, all-night vigils in front of statues and festivals on saint's days are at the core of their faith. Rather than dismiss these practices as being outdated or superstitious, the missionary from the North must enter into them and discover the presence of Christ there.

CONCLUSION

Liberation theology has had a profound impact on the life of lay Catholics in both the United States and El Salvador. It has also had a profound effect on the way we both understand and celebrate the Eucharist, as well as the pastoral practices found in our local parishes.

In many ways, the institutional Church in the United States has taken on an "establishment" role, and has seemingly lost its evangelical spirit. If we do not understand a culture, we cannot share the gospel, and the evangelizing role of the Church is defeated. The Church is called to be a sacrament, so that each people, with its culture and religion, may find the truth and be transformed by the love of God.[16] The faith of the Salvadoran people and the faith of the people in the United States are both incomplete and evolving. The cultures of each of these countries continue to shape and form the beliefs and values of their people. Only through reflection and dialogue can we grow in faith together. It is imperative that missionaries from the United States be well-prepared for their mission trips through reflection on their own culture and education about the cultures found in the developing world. The next chapter will explore these preparation meetings and their importance for first world missionaries.

[16] Irarrázaval, 25.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE MISSION TRIP: PREPARATION SESSIONS AND IMPORTANT ELEMENTS

Introduction

The community of St. Dominic is primarily upper middle class, with a wide range of socio-economic groups, and travel to foreign countries is a more common experience for those who have the financial means. In planning for a typical vacation outside the United States, most Americans will research the places to be visited. There are numerous travel guides to be read, listing various historical landmarks and prime restaurants, as well as hotel rooms to be reserved. American tourists purchase expensive walking shoes, elaborate photographic equipment, and some will even update their cell phone service to include international calling and internet. Although they desire to see the world beyond their borders, they typically like to bring their world with them.

Much has been written about "religious tourism" promoted as mission trips for wealthier Americans, and many argue that the funds spent on airline tickets, hotels and travel supplies would make a far greater impact if the Americans stayed home and just sent the money to their mission destination. On the first visits to El Salvador by the people of St. Dominic, groups typically agonized over what to bring as gifts for the people of Santo Domingo. Candy was always a good choice for the children, and often times suitcases weighed in at sixty pounds of Hershey bars. Small toys for the children

were the second choice, and pencils to be used at the school were third. It never occurred to the mission planners to ask the ministers in El Salvador what they might need. In many ways we were no different than the first Spanish visitors, who came with tobacco and colored fabrics to appease the native population.

Although many in the parish were familiar with visiting developing countries, their experiences were to resort-centered countries with sandy beaches and crystal waters which catered to tourists. Experiencing the native culture was limited to a tour bus ride outside their highly guarded all-inclusive resort, and perhaps a brief discussion with a maid or busboy at their hotel. They often think of their vacation as a blessing to the local people, providing jobs at hotels and restaurants, and most often are completely ignorant of the political, social and cultural realties of the resort country.

In the evolving relationship between the people of Saint Dominic and people of Santo Domingo, I hope to guide the missionaries in a different experience on our mission trips. Our first visits were filled with much ignorance, rash judgments, picture-taking, and a general sense that we were making a difference in El Salvador through our great generosity. There was little or no attempt to truly understand the lives of the poor, or the cultural realities of their poverty and faith. Missionaries signed up with the best of Christian intentions, yet had been so formed by their own cultural reality of living in the United States that they failed to see this mission as something different from their typical tropical vacations.

In this chapter, I will outline the various planning meetings for our mission trips, as well as the opportunities planned on the trip itself to know and share faith with the Salvadoran people. Both of these elements are essential for preparing missionaries to

preach the word upon their return home. Recognizing that our five-day trip is a limited experience and can provide only a glimpse of the reality of El Salvador, it is still essential that minds and hearts are formed to meet the people of Santo Domingo not as tourists but as brothers and sisters in Christ.

The four preparation meetings will each focus on a distinct aspect of Salvadoran life. Session one focuses on the political history of El Salvador. It is important that missionaries understand the long history of oppression inflicted by governing parties on the Salvadoran people so that they might begin to understand how this oppression has shaped their culture. It is equally important that they understand that a great deal of this oppression was sponsored financially by their own United States' government.

Session two focuses on the economic realities of Salvadoran life. The capitalist culture of the United States often causes Americans to make judgments about employment focus and practices of the Salvadoran people. It is essential that missionaries have at least an awareness of how a life of poverty and hunger shapes a community's attitudes and practices concerning daily wages and caring for their families.

In the third preparation meeting, the focus is on Church life and the religious practices of Salvadorans. The impact of liberation theology, Archbishop Oscar Romero, and small faith communities have had a profound effect on the Salvadoran experience of Catholicism, and although we share many similar experiences of faith, there is a uniqueness to the life of faith of Salvadorans that must be understood to better grasp the depth of their spirituality.

In the final preparation meeting, the focus will be on an overview of the communal culture and customs of the rural village of Chiltiupán. The rhythm of life and

relationships amongst neighbors in this small village are very different from our American experience of living in community, and missionaries need to be aware of this before, during and after the trip.

Throughout the mission trip itself, various opportunities for discussion, meals and reflections are planned both with the people of Santo Domingo and the missionaries themselves, so that the trip might be one of true awareness and reflection on the experiences that each day will bring to the group. The impact of God's word through the experience of *Lectio Divina* will be the guiding format, and will hopefully give the missionaries insights which will affect their preaching of the Word upon their return.

A workshop takes place once the missionaries have returned from their trip to help prepare them to "proclaim what they have seen and heard." This workshop will be discussed in the next chapter.

Preparation Session One

Our first several trips to El Salvador involved very little preparation. Emails were sent with lists of clothing and travel requirements, and most often the missionaries met for the first time at the airport as they began their journey. This led to some awkward interchanges, as the first several days were spent just learning each other's names. The lack of preparation promoted a "tourist attitude," as there was disparate knowledge about El Salvador and mixed motivations for making the trip.

Session one begins with basic introductions among missionaries regarding their family, employment and motivation for signing up to participate in the mission. *Lectio Divina* is introduced for the first time, the first clear signal that this is not a tourist trip but a faith journey. The group cannot establish a relationship with the people of Santo

Domingo without first having a relationship with each other. By sharing some introductory personal information as well as a *Lectio Divina* exercise, the group begins to bond as a small faith community.

It is important for missionaries to understand the history of the relationship between the people of Saint Dominic and the people of Santo Domingo and how that relationship began. The leader should present the motivation for the first trips, and the subsequent evolution of the relationship and its impact on both communities. Although numerous church bulletin announcements at St. Dominic have described the various committees that have formed due to the past trips' experiences, a clear description of these committees is important to heighten the awareness that the trip is about an ongoing relationship, not a tour of another country.

At St. Dominic, these committees include a "Clinic Committee" which supports the work of the medical clinic at Santo Domingo; the "Education Committee" which acts as a support for the local grade school and high school of Santo Domingo. The "Farm Committee" is a group of parishioners at St. Dominic who support the ongoing efforts of the people of Chiltiupán to be self-sustaining in a farm that was purchased for the parish by the people of Saint Dominic. Finally, the "University Committee" works to identify and fund high school students from the village who have the capability to move on to higher education at the college level.

At the first meeting, it essential to explain the goal of the mission trip, which is "to strengthen the relationship between our two communities and to discover how to exchange gifts with one another to deepen our faith." This statement sets the foundation for all future meetings. The trip is not a tour, nor a way to discover how we might use

our power to transform the lives of the poor. The trip is about faith, relationships, and a discovery of the gifts God has given to each community and ways to share those gifts.

On a recent trip to El Salvador with the high school youth from St. Dominic, our group crossed paths at the Houston airport with a neighboring Cleveland parish youth group who had just spent a week assisting the construction of an orphanage in Honduras. The teens from the neighboring parish were proud of their work, and after explaining the horrors of making cement in 100 degree heat, they asked the youth from St. Dominic, "So what did you build?" Without hesitation, a teenage girl from St. Dominic replied, "We built relationships." I could not have been prouder of her response!

My experience tells me that most Americans have very little understanding of the impact of their own country as well as other first world countries on the economic development of Central America. In order to understand this impact, it is important that missionaries understand the political history of the country they are visiting. Session one includes a brief sketch of the political history of the country, beginning with the Spanish conquest, moving through various oligarchies and military leaders who ruled the nation, and the various wars that have plagued the country. In the case of El Salvador, a special focus is placed on the most recent civil war, as so many of those whom we will enter into relationship with have experienced the brutality and devastation that came with that conflict. The United States government played a critical role in this war, and the truth of our nation's role in the brutality must clearly be explained. The post- war rebuilding and the continued intervention and control by the United States must also be presented, as well as the present political reality.

Session one concluded with an explanation of this doctoral project, with an invitation to missionaries to share in the project once they return home. The practice of *Lectio Divina* is then introduced and experienced, using the daily gospel reading for the first mass to be celebrated on our arrival in El Salvador.

The ultimate goal of this first session is to create the foundation of a small faith community which will go forth and proclaim the gospel in both El Salvador and in our local community. See Appendix A for a brief outline for this preparation meeting.

Preparation Session Two

The second preparation meeting for the mission trip focuses on poverty, unemployment and the economic realities of the people of El Salvador. In order to help the group begin to understand the gravity of poverty that exists in Chiltiupán, the opening activity invites the participants to share with their fellow missionaries their educational background, and how that background has enabled them to succeed in their own economic life and standard of living. This activity helps the participants grow in their understanding of each other, and helps them to understand that their place of birth and the opportunities that came with that are a decisive factor in their present economic well-being.

Once the group shares their personal stories, the facilitator then offers a broad sketch of the economic life of Salvadorans. Much of this life has been determined by the intervention of American corporations who from the beginning of the twentieth century saw in the country of El Salvador rich soil, cheap labor, and massive profits for their shareholders. Although many Central American countries were economically pillaged for their production of fruit, El Salvador's economy became totally subservient to the

American demand for coffee. An understanding of wealthy landowners, coffee producers and millers needs to be briefly explained, as each played a unique role in the economic oppression of the majority of Salvadorans.

The greatest economic factor for success in El Salvador is the ownership of land. As 90% of the countryside is owned by 10% of the population, it quickly becomes apparent why such economic disparity exists within the country. With little or no opportunity to purchase land for themselves, the typical Salvadoran is locked within a cycle of poverty based upon land ownership. This concept is foreign to many Americans, especially those living in the economically rich community of St. Dominic.

Although it is helpful to offer specific statistics regarding poverty, the gross domestic product, foreign remittances and the local currency, it is more beneficial to cite specific stories of individuals living in the community of Santo Domingo. Quoting Gustavo Gutiérrez, "You say you love the poor? Name them." By sharing these stories of real people the group will most likely meet on the trip, the participants will hopefully move beyond statistics and grow in their awareness of the importance of relationships shared between the two communities.

The second session ends with another practice of *Lectio Divina*, using the daily mass reading that will be proclaimed on the second day of the trip. In order to prepare the group to share in this prayer, the facilitator reminds the participants of the connection between true physical hunger and poverty and how this influences the hearing of the gospel. Our lived experiences of food and shelter and the health and safety of our families all have a profound impact on how we receive, reflect and proclaim God's word. See Appendix B for an outline for this preparation meeting.

Preparation Session Three

After two preparation meetings, the group has shared their family history and educational background. They have typically seen each other at Sunday mass, and the beginning of a small community has started to take shape. In this third meeting, the leader invites the participants to share their faith journey, a more personal question. Missionaries will be asked to describe their experiences of childhood faith, and their family of origin's commitment to the Church. They are then invited to share their present involvement in the parish community. Finally, the participants are asked to reflect and share how these experiences have shaped their motivation for signing up for the trip to El Salvador. It is the hope for this meeting that the missionaries will begin to more clearly understand the difference between a mission trip and a tour and will grow in their awareness of the spiritual foundation and activities of the trip.

After the opening discussion, the presenter offers a brief overview of the Church's connections with the first Spanish invaders, and the subsequent development of the Church in El Salvador. The Church hierarchy of the country has had an ongoing relationship with the ruling government parties, which undoubtedly has affected the way in which the average Salvadoran regards the role of the official Church in their life of poverty. The privileged life of a great number of the clergy in El Salvador and their subsequent silence about government atrocities inflicted on the poor have caused a justified suspicion of all Church authority. Many American Catholics share this same suspicion about their own hierarchy and clergy in general, and it is important to allow the participants to voice their concerns.

The presenter then moves to an overview of liberation theology and how its beginnings as a movement blossomed in the countryside of El Salvador. Many Americans seem to dismiss this movement as a politically motivated spirituality and have little understanding of its gospel roots and why it was so quickly embraced by the poor throughout Latin America. The movement's formation of small base communities and the impact of these communities on Catholic spirituality should be clearly stressed. Tensions between rural communities and the Salvadoran hierarchy as well as Vatican authorities and the reasons for these tensions should be explored by the group. Participants should be invited to share their own experiences of this form of base community if they have shared in it on their own faith journey.

After laying the foundations for understanding base communities and liberation theology, the presenter then introduces the life of the greatest contemporary spiritual leader for Salvadorans, Archbishop Oscar Romero. There are few homes throughout the region of Santo Domingo's parish boundaries where you will not find a portrait of Romero. Even in the poorest of shacks, there always seems to be a prayer card or framed photo of the Salvadoran bishop. Romero's conversion to understanding the life of the poor was strongly connected to the assassination of his close friend and fellow priest Rutilio Grande. Romero's subsequent embrace of the gospel message as uniquely connected to the struggling poor had a profound effect on his preaching and activities as spiritual leader of the largest diocese in the country. His ministry changed how many of the poor viewed the Church and motivated them to become more active in their faith. Romero's assassination sealed his place among his people, and rather than silencing his voice, he truly "rose among the people."

In the planning meeting, it is explained that the Saint Dominic mission trip always includes a journey to Romero's home and the Church where he was assassinated in San Salvador. The religious sisters serving at the *Divino Providencia* have preserved his small home that holds various artifacts from his life. The group will share in a guided tour of this home with one of the religious sisters living there, and a short prayer service is held at the altar where he was assassinated. The mission group is encouraged to view the film *Romero* directed by John Duigan on their own time to further understand Romero's impact on Salvadoran life.

Session three continues with a presentation on the parish of Santo Domingo in Chiltiupán, and the efforts of the pastor there to lead his community in the life of faith. The liturgy in both the main church of Santo Domingo as well as the numerous *cantons* throughout the community is the primary work of the pastor, followed by sacramental preparation and the planning of various processions and feast days throughout the year. The role of the medical clinic as well as Santo Domingo School and their importance to the parish is also highlighted.

Sharing in the liturgical life of the people of Santo Domingo is of paramount importance on the trips. Although the missionaries typically do not speak Spanish, the experience of being in the presence of Salvadorans and witnessing their reverence and devotion during the liturgy, as well as their great efforts to journey to the place where mass is celebrated , all provide a moving experience of how much their faith means to them. The joy of their music, their lack of desire that mass be over quickly, and their lingering after mass on the Church grounds all give an indication of how central this celebration is to their lives. Throughout the many years of our mission relationship with

the people of Santo Domingo, Saint Dominic parishioners have remarked repeatedly that these celebrations are deeply moving experiences for them and inspire them to reflect on their own participation of the Eucharist at home.

Session Three concludes with another experience of *Lectio Divina*. The gospel reading used for the exercise is the gospel that will be proclaimed at mass on the third day of the mission trip. See Appendix C for an outline of this meeting.

Preparation Session Four

The final preparation meeting begins with the practice of *Lectio Divina*, using the gospel that will be proclaimed on the Sunday or last day of the trip. The group will have had four sessions of this spiritual practice, and will hopefully understand the process of listening, reflecting and sharing with the group. This practice will be repeated using the same readings with Salvadorans during the mission trip. Past experience with practicing *Lectio Divina* with parishioners of Santo Domingo has taught me that Salvadorans are far more comfortable with sharing their faith and gospel insights. The repeated practice with missionaries is an important part of their preparation for the trip and should not be skipped.

The presenter then gives a general overview of community life in Chiltiupán, including proper clothing, greetings and salutations, food and water cautions and currency. Packing for a mission trip is much different than packing for a cruise, and the missionaries should be made aware of cultural customs which are different from our own.

On our third trip to El Salvador, the decision was made by the staff of St. Dominic to reside in a local hotel on the mission trips. Our trip is a relatively short one, and so lodging with families from Santo Domingo where language, sanitation and sleeping

conditions are so vastly different from our own was thought to detract from the larger experience of sharing faith and building relationships with the Salvadorans. The group stays together in one hotel together, allowing for evening reflections and shared dinner meals with fellow parishioners. This arrangement strengthens the community of my own parish, and allows for deeper reflections on their shared experiences.

The experience of a mission trip can be overwhelming emotionally, physically and spiritually. Missionaries who have never been to a developing world location are usually overwhelmed by the extent of the poverty they confront. In many ways there is a "stimulus overload": poverty, sanitation, language and culture, as well as the joy and welcome shared by the Salvadorans often overwhelm the missionaries. In order to promote a deeper sense of reflection and memory of their experience, missionaries are given a journal in which they are asked to reflect on various parts of their day. They are encouraged to spend at least 15 minutes at the end of each day of the trip answering questions from their experiences. These reflections will hopefully inspire them when they return from the trip and are asked to "proclaim what they have seen and heard." The journal will also help heighten their awareness and attention to the people they meet and the experiences they share in each day. A copy of this journal can be found in Appendix D.

In this final session, I have also further explained to the missionaries my thesis project and invite them to participate in the project upon their return home. The mission trip can have a much wider impact on the parish community if they are willing to give witness to what they have seen and heard, and their hearing the word of God and

proclaiming it in light of these trips has the potential to transform the parish community. The outline of session four can be found in Appendix E.

One cannot underestimate the importance of the missionary's participation in these planning meetings. When advertising in the parish bulletin for the trip, the dates of these meetings are listed as essential for those planning to join the group. Without adequate preparation through these meetings, the missionary trip simply becomes a site visit or tourist destination, and both the individual and the group of missionaries loses the potential impact and deeper meaning of the trip. My personal experiences tells me that if one cannot commit to the preparation meetings, perhaps this is not the best time to make the mission trip. The sense of community that is built during these preparation meetings is subsequently strengthened on the trip, and provides an ideal community for sharing faith and continued service on their return to the United States. It also provides a smaller community to discover how God's word can be proclaimed to the larger community through preaching.

Faith Sharing with the Parishioners of Santo Domingo

The mission trip as planned by the staff of St. Dominic includes visits with groups of parishioners from Santo Domingo as well as opportunities for "unplanned" visits to homes of members in the community. The planned visits take on a meeting format, when the group from Saint Dominic gathers with parishioners from the school community, the clinic staff, the farm leaders as well as the local *Obras de Caridad*, a group similar to our own Saint Vincent DePaul Society. These meetings typically involve personal introductions of all those present, some light refreshments, a shared prayer, and then a discussion about the work or ministry of the Salvadorans assembled. Parishioners from

Saint Dominic are encouraged to ask questions about the ministry, and share insights about their own similar experiences at home.

On one of the trips, university students and their parents gathered with the missionaries and talked about the trials and tribulations of college life. Parents of Salvadoran students expressed pride in their children, yet also expressed fear about their children going away to school and the dangerous and foreign world they confront in the capital city of San Salvador. Parents from Saint Dominic expressed many of the same concerns about "letting their children go," and there was an immediate sense of bonding in the group. This was just one of many experiences when the sharing of personal stories between the two communities revealed many similarities in family life.

The unplanned visits generally involve small groups of Saint Dominic parishioners going out and knocking on doors of members in the parish. They may bring with them a small bag of beans as a gift, but the real purpose of the visits is simply to share stories about families and work, and the missionaries are usually overwhelmed by the warm reception they receive in Salvadoran homes. Missionaries are encouraged to bring pictures of their own families to share with Salvadorans, and to end their visit with a prayer of thanksgiving for the meeting. These individual home visits are perhaps the most powerful of the entire mission experience, as the missionaries observe first-hand the typical family life and homes of people from Santo Domingo.

The project described in this thesis desires to provide a specific experience of *Lectio Divina* with groups of Saint Dominic parishioners and Santo Domingo parishioners, and so planning is essential to gather such groups. Our visits typically take place during the work week, and so the local priest as well as Cleveland missionary Sister

Rose Terrell invites various groups in advance to meet with us to share in *Lectio Divina*. It is helpful to have two translators present, as well as both English and Spanish versions of the gospel readings.

The *Lectio Divina* meeting typically begins with some sort of refreshment and introduction of the members of the group. Individuals are asked to share their family backgrounds as well as their present employment or role in their families. Ideally there would be four to five members from each community present, as well as the two translators.

The presenter then explains the practice of *Lectio Divina* to the people of Santo Domingo. It has been my experience that Salvadorans are much more comfortable with reading the bible and sharing their reflections. This is a common practice in their catechism classes as well as the small communities that many of them belong to. The reading is first proclaimed in English by one of the Saint Dominic missionaries, and then proclaimed in Spanish by one of the Salvadorans. The group members are then asked to share a word or phrase that spoke to them as the reading was proclaimed. After all have shared their word or phrase, a period of silent prayer follows and then the readings are proclaimed again. Participants are then asked to share why they felt the word or phrase spoke to them at that time. The session concludes with the Lord's Prayer, prayed by the participants in their native language, followed by sharing the sign of peace.

In the numerous times I have presided at this activity, it is clear that the Salvadorans' relationship with God's word is a profound one. Their insights generally leave the American missionaries humbled and questioning their own hearing of God's word. Sharing in this activity amidst the heat and poverty of El Salvador, and listening to

the joy and hope understood by the parishioners from Santo Domingo through God's word, is truly a spiritual experience. Where St. Dominic parishioners typically try to explain what Jesus was saying to the people in the gospel stories, the Salvadorans always try to share what Jesus is saying to them. The experience reveals the difference between the American head and the Salvadoran heart, and the missionaries typically leave the meeting with a deep sense of respect for the Salvadoran's faith.

Although ideally this practice of *Lectio Divina* would be done once a day on the mission trip, logistics and schedules have typically allowed us to do it only twice during the trip. Planning the small meetings takes great effort, but was well worth it, and the returning missionaries generally agree that this was truly a spiritual experience for them.

The Saint Dominic mission trip begins with an immediate immersion into the life of the community of Santo Domingo. The first days allow numerous opportunities for parishioners from both communities to share stories and begin to understand each other's lives. The end of the trip always includes a visit to the capital city of San Salvador, Archbishop Romero's home, and the site of the massacre of the Jesuits at the Jesuit University of Central America. These concluding activities of the trip help to frame the stories of the Salvadorans they prayed and shared meals with, and provide a larger context of the Church and faith life of the Salvadoran people.

CONCLUSION

The preparation meetings, cultural and spiritual activities while in El Salvador and the constant reminders of the spiritual foundations of this trip form a base of experiences and reflections which prepare the missionaries to preach God's word upon their return using the process described in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

TRAINING PARISHIONERS TO SHARE THE GOSPEL JOY OF THEIR MISSION EXPERIENCE

Introduction

> The Gospel joy which enlivens the community is a missionary joy. The seventy-two disciples felt it as they returned from their mission (cf. Lk 10:17). Jesus felt it when he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and praised the Father for revealing himself to the poor and the little ones. (cf. Lk 10:21). It was felt by the first converts who marveled to hear the apostles preaching "in the native language of each" (Acts 2:6) on the day of Pentecost. This joy is a sign that the Gospel has been proclaimed and is bearing fruit.[1]

After sharing in more than twenty mission trips to El Salvador with members of the community of St. Dominic, it is clear that the majority of the missionaries have experienced this "gospel joy" that Pope Francis speaks of. They share this joy with their family members who greet them at the airport on their return. They share this joy with co-workers who anxiously wait to hear about their experience. And they continue to share this joy with their fellow missionaries when they return two weeks later for a "debriefing" of their mission trip. Yet their parish community, those people they live and share faith with each week at Sunday Eucharist, rarely hear more than a brief summary of their experience. Although their "proclamation" of the Gospel takes on many different forms, no forum has been available for them to share their witness with their home faith community.

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[1]Francis,*Evangelii Gaudium* [Apostolic Exhortation, 2013] http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html (accessed July 10, 2014) 1.21.

I would suspect that for the great majority of Catholics, the term "preaching" is reserved for the words of the ordained clergy that follow the proclamation of the gospel at Sunday Eucharist. Yet, as Catholics, each of us is called through baptism to share in the priesthood of Christ, including his prophetic and teaching function. The *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* from the Second Vatican Council clearly states: "Each individual layman must stand before the world as a witness to the resurrection and life of the Lord Jesus and a symbol of the living God."[2] The preaching of the Gospel is therefore not just tied to Holy Order, but rather is intimately linked to baptism, the sacrament that each of the faithful share in.

In the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* from the Vatican II documents, the council fathers gave emphasis to the importance of scripture in the life of the Church, and saw the proclamation of the Word as integral to all liturgical celebrations. This heightened emphasis on the scriptures inspired numerous Catholics to pursue classes about the bible, opening a door to the spiritual life which was previously rarely offered to them. Many lay people have gone on to study for undergraduate and graduate degrees in scripture, and those who attended Catholic high schools and colleges are all offered at least introductory classes in biblical studies. An increased awareness of Ignatian, Benedictine, and Dominican spiritualities has likewise heightened the importance of the scriptures in lay spirituality. Yet the actual proclamation of the word through preaching continues to be mainly reserved to the ordained clergy.

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[2] Second Vatican Council. "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church", in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*. Edited by Austin Flannery, O.P. (Northport: Costello Publishing Company, 1981), #38.

The *Directory for Masses with Children* broke new ground when it gave permission for the laity to preach if "the priest found it difficult to speak to children."[3] The 1983 Code of Canon Law likewise appeared to support preaching by the laity when it dropped the prohibition of lay preaching which had been noted in the 1917 Code. Yet each of these documents was basically referring to the preaching of the homily at the celebration of the Eucharist. This ongoing debate of who is able to preach at Sunday mass is beyond the scope of this paper. Rather, I would like to focus on the idea of lay preaching in various circumstances, not the preaching of the Eucharistic homily.

In his recent Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium,* Pope Francis invites everyone to "be bold and creative in this task of rethinking goals, structures, and methods of evangelization in their respective communities." [4] I believe that lay preaching aligns clearly with this goal of "rethinking methods of evangelization" in that it provides the encouragement, support and training of missionaries to "proclaim what they have seen and heard" on their Salvadoran mission trip. Pope Francis states: "Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelization; indeed, anyone who has truly experienced God's saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim his love."[5] It has been my experience in sharing so many mission experiences with the laity of St Dominic that God's saving love has touched them during these trips and that their missionary journey should not end when they return from their

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[3] Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship. *Pueros Baptizatos.* [Directory for Masses with Children, 2004] http://www.catholicliturgy.com/index.cfm/FuseAction/DocumentContents/Index/2/Subindex/11/DocumentIndex/477 (accessed May 5, 2013), #24.

[4] *Evangelii Gaudiuum,* #33.

[5] Ibid, #120.

trip. "All of us are called to offer others an explicit witness to the saving love of the Lord, who despite our imperfection offers us his closeness."[6]

This chapter outlines the process by which returning missionaries have been invited and trained to give witness to the Gospel and their experiences in El Salvador. It will describe how a pilot project was conducted at St. Dominic, the rationale behind its structure and content, and a detailed description of the workshop and process for use in the future. It will conclude by exploring the workshop's practicality and effectiveness using quantitative and qualitative assessments, and provide some conclusions regarding the training of lay preachers.

OVERVIEW OF TRAINING PROCESS AND PREACHING OPPORTUNITIES

St. Dominic parishioners who took part in a mission trip to El Salvador were invited to attend a "preaching workshop", at which time the fundamentals of preaching as understood by the American Bishops as well as Pope Francis were outlined. The invitation included a gospel passage and the missionaries were asked to reflect on the passage and their experiences in El Salvador and prepare a reflection to bring to the workshop. At the workshop they were asked to "self-evaluate" their first draft, using the homiletic principles discussed by the presenter as a guide. They were encouraged to work on a second draft, using the information they learned at the workshop, and to return this final version within one week. Finally, the participants were invited to share their proclamation in one of three ways.

First, the missionary was offered the opportunity to make an "audio" version of his/her preaching, which will be used as a backdrop for a video slide show of the Salvadoran mission trip on the St. Dominic Parish website.

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[6] Francis, #121.

The second opportunity for proclamation is a video version of their homily, in which the missionary would be filmed preaching his or her reflection and then this video would be posted on the parish website.

The final opportunity for preaching would be a live presentation following the Prayer after Communion at the Sunday Eucharist. The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments declared in *Redemptoris Sacramentum* that this is the only time a lay person may give witness during the Eucharistic liturgy.[7]

The Workshop Invitation

The idea of lay preaching is a foreign one to Catholics in the community of St. Dominic. Although there are frequent invitations at the end of mass by parishioners for the congregation to become involved in the various parish ministries, it is unheard of for a parishioner to preach on God's word at the Eucharistic celebration. In recent years, various lay staff members have preached at the Good Friday service, yet no parishioner has taken on this role.

More than 250 parishioners have shared in mission trips from St. Dominic. In trying to discern a "pilot group" for this project, I decided to invite those parish missionaries who have invested themselves in the various ongoing committees which support our mission to El Salvador to be the participants in the preaching workshop. I felt that these men and women have shown a commitment to the mission activity of the parish, and would be more likely to respond to this invitation.

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[7] Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, *Redemptory's Sacramentum* [Instruction 2004]. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20040423_redemptionis-sacramentum_en.html (accessed April 3, 2013), #121.

The majority of the parish has been kept informed about my progress in this Doctor of Ministry program, and so the letter of invitation cited the workshop's connection to my degree of studies. Missionaries were invited to prepare a 300-500 word reflection on their experiences in El Salvador using a scripture passage provided for them. Although the letter of invitation was clear that at some point they would be asked to consider sharing their reflection with the larger community, I hesitated to call the reflection a "homily" as I felt it might dissuade them from participating, fearing that they would have to deliver the homily at Sunday mass, or that they were not qualified or "worthy" to take on this role. The letter of invitation focused on the importance of "proclaiming what they have seen and heard", and how this proclamation would benefit the larger community of the parish who generously support the mission activities in El Salvador through their financial gifts. In this paper I will use the terms "homily" and "reflection" interchangeably, as I regard what they will be composing as homilies. A copy of this letter of invitation is included in Appendix F.

The Preaching Workshop: Content and Rationale

Of the 35 parishioners invited to the workshop, 22 accepted the invitation and 19 actually participated. Their ages ranged from 38 to 78, with an equal number men and women participating. Participants were asked to bring two copies of their reflection, one to be turned in to me and one for their own use.

The workshop began with a simple opening prayer, followed by brief introductions of the group members. Participants were from five different mission trips, both medical trips and relational trips, and shared with the group their history in the

parish and the trip they participated in. Although many in the group recognized each other from Sunday Eucharist, for most this was their first actual meeting.

As the presenter, I gave the group an overview of this doctoral project. I shared with them my desire to broaden the mission experience for the people of St Dominic through preaching the word to the majority who would never make such a trip. I then outlined for the group the various chapters of my thesis paper, giving them a brief overview of the themes discussed in the paper leading up to this workshop.

The workshop began by focusing on evangelization and the role of the laity in the proclamation of the gospel. I cited various Church documents which supported and encouraged lay preaching, with the major focus being Pope Francis's latest document *Evangelii Gaudium.* My hope was to help them to see that this proclamation was a fruit of their baptism, and that both Church documents as well as the present pope himself saw their role as evangelizers to be critical in the building of the kingdom of God. All of the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization, and it would be insufficient to envisage a plan of evangelization to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients.[8]

At this point, I encouraged the participants to call to mind their experiences of *Lectio Divina* on their mission trip. This practice was only done by those who took part in a relational trip, and those who shared in this practice immediately described their experiences as "humbling" and "profound." They explained to the group how the Salvadorans seemed so comfortable in talking about the bible and that their reflections were clearly "from the heart." One participant commented that although she had

[8] Francis, #120.

practiced *Lectio Divina* in the preparation meetings at St. Dominic, it was not until she shared the experience with parishioners of *Santo Domingo* that she understood its power in the spiritual life.

The workshop then shifted focus to the actual act of preaching and the preparation and drafting of a homily. The majority of the content for this section of the workshop was taken from the American Bishops document on preaching *Fulfilled in Your Hearing* as well as suggestions from Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium*. Although the American Bishop's document was primarily concerned with preaching by ordained clergy in the Sunday assembly and Pope Francis' comments on this topic are directed to ordained clergy as well, I felt the wisdom and clarity of the directives was easily applicable to lay preaching.

Unless the word of God in the Scriptures is interiorized through prayerful study and reflection, it cannot possibly sustain the live-giving, love generating words that preachers want to offer their people.[9] The writing of a homily must have as its foundation this prayerful study and reflection, and so the first principle the missionary must understand is that a homily is different from a travel brochure or summary of the trip. A homily flows from a relationship with Jesus, as the word to be proclaimed is based upon the divine words of Scripture. Workshop participants were reminded that the practice of *Lectio Divina* they learned in the preparation meetings and shared in on the mission trip was meant to form a foundation for their experience of proclaiming the Word of God. Although there are many different ways to pray over the scripture, this ancient spiritual practice provides an easy guideline for preparing to preach. In order to make

[9] Bishops' Committee on Priestly Life and Ministry. *Fulfilled in Your Hearing*: *The Homily in the Sunday Assembly* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 1982), 11.

connections between the lives of the people and the Gospel, the preacher will have to be a listener before he is a speaker.[10]

In listening to the scriptures, the preacher embarks on the spiritual journey that is the writing of a homily. Trust in the Holy Spirit who is at work during the homily is not merely passive but active and creative.[11] The workshop presenter cannot emphasize this point enough. The preparation and preaching of a homily is an act of the Holy Spirit, and the preacher must be receptive and attentive to that Spirit from the very beginning.

The second area of preparation to be focused on in the workshop is the introduction to scriptural exegesis. I made the decision to forgo a discussion of the historical critical method of approaching the scriptures so as not to overwhelm the participants, and chose rather to focus on on-line resources for understanding the biblical meaning of the text. For exegesis to be done at the highest professional level, the exegete must have knowledge of original languages, accesses to the tools of textual criticism, extensive historical and archeological background, a comprehensive knowledge of the development of biblical faith, and a familiarity with the history of the theological interpretation of texts in both the synagogue and the Christian churches.[12] The American bishops acknowledge that few ordained preachers have this kind of training, and so if it is not expected of most ordained preachers it cannot be expected at all by the lay missionaries. Yet resources are available from preachers who have done this difficult study which all preachers have access to. Participants should be directed to

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[10] Bishops' Committee on Priestly Life and Ministry, 10.

[11] Francis, # 145.

[12] Bishops' Committee on Priestly Life and Ministry, 11.

www.textweek.com, as this writer believes it is the most accessible and easiest to navigate to get the required resources for exegesis.

Whenever we stop and attempt to understand the message of a particular text, we are practicing "reverence for truth."[13] The missionary preacher must understand that although God speaks to each person through the scriptures, it is a message that is given in the context of divine inspiration, and the preacher, although recognizing the truth spoken to them in their prayerful preparation, must make every effort to understand the meaning of the text as understood by the author and its history in the Church community. They are not just preaching what they "think" the passage says, but need to explore its meaning on a multitude of levels. By "reverencing the truth," the missionary preachers will enhance their own spirituality as well as the spirituality of those whom they are preaching to.

Returning missionaries have shared their stories with neighbors, co-workers and relatives. In each of those situations, the missionary most likely tailors their story to the interests of the listeners. In the same way, the missionary preachers must consider the parish community they are preparing the homily for. The homily will be effective in enabling a community to worship God with praise and thanksgiving only if individuals in that community recognize there a word that responds to the implicit or explicit questions of their lives.[14]

For the great majority of the people of St. Dominic, the intended audience of the preacher, their understanding of our parish involvement in El Salvador focuses on the medical clinic, farm, and on college students who are funded through their donations. In

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[13] Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiani* [Apostolic Exhortation: 8 December 1975], 78:AAS 68 (1976), 71.

[14] Bishops' Committee on Priestly Life and Ministry, 22.

trying to understand the congregation, the preacher must be extremely cautious. The goal of the mission program at St. Dominic is not charity but rather a relationship with the people of Santo Domingo. The preacher must be cautious to avoid any excessive praise or self-gratitude for the financial contributions given to the mission efforts in El Salvador. Acknowledging the goodness of the listeners may or may not be appropriate, depending on the message of the scripture to be proclaimed. Yet if the focus of the message is charity work, the heart of both the mission experience and the gospel will be lost. A preacher has to contemplate the word, but he also has to contemplate his people.[15] Preaching to your fellow parishioners is most likely different from preaching to your co-workers, and the preacher must be keenly aware of this when preparing a homily.

The final principle to be explored in the preparation of preaching is the missionary's personal experience of God's word. Every individual has had his own unique experience on the mission trip and will likewise have his own personal experience of God's word. In reflecting upon the scripture passage to be preached, the missionary will be convincing only if the word preached is something that has affected him personally, inspiring a "burning heart" similar to the travelers on the road to Emmaus. What is essential is that the preacher be certain that God loves him, that Jesus Christ has saved him and that his love always has the last word.[16]

A basic guideline for the "personalization" of the text is offered by Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium*:

> In the presence of God, during a recollected reading of the text, it is good to ask, for example: "Lord, what does this text say to me? What is it about my life that you want to change by this text? What troubles me about this text? Why am I

[15]Francis, #154.

[16] Ibid, #151.

> not interested in this? Or perhaps: What do I find pleasant in this text? What is it about this word that moves me? What attracts me? Why does it attract me?[17]

The preacher should dedicate a period of prayer time with these questions, and allow God to speak directly to his/her heart in the preaching preparation.

Once the various preaching preparations were explained, the workshop then explored the actual drafting of a homily. A short explanation of the "written word" versus the "oral word" was offered at this time in order to help the participants understand that drafting for preaching is different from writing an article for a news resource. The draft to be written will eventually be proclaimed aloud and the missionary must keep this in mind as she begins to write. Although vocal styles, hand movements and facial expressions during oral preaching are beyond the scope of this project, simple concepts such as writing in the first person and conversational style were explained.

Perhaps nothing frustrates a congregation more than when a preacher does not offer a clear central idea. A multitude of concepts or competing images will only confuse a congregation as they try to determine what the preaching is about and the message (or messages) will simply be lost. We need to ensure, then, that the homily has a thematic unity, clear order and correlation between sentences, so that people can follow the preacher easily and grasp his line of argument.[18] This point was emphasized in the workshop.

Although each preacher will have a distinct style, all preachers should begin by writing down their thoughts. This will allow for a foundation on which a homily can be written. Once the ideas, images, and direction of the homily are determined, the preacher

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[17] Francis, #153.

[18] Ibid, #158.

can then "revise' his/her draft to make sure that the homily does in fact have a central, unifying idea, and that this idea is clearly stated and repeated throughout the homily.[19] The participants in the workshop had the experience of writing down their reflections.

The word "gospel" implies some sort of "good news," as the scriptures contain the story of the saving action of God throughout human history. The scriptures are meant to encourage us in our life of faith and so each homily must somehow bring this "good news" into the lives of the faithful, shining the light of God's love on their daily living. A simple question that the homilist might ask himself is "Where is God's promise, power and influence in our personal story present in the readings?"[20] In the numerous stories shared by Salvadorans about the oppression, poverty and hunger they experience each day, they continually point to the saving actions of God's love in their world. It is this power of "good news" that so often inspires the Cleveland missionaries, and needs to be incorporated into every homily, and this was emphasized in the workshop presentation.

One of the most important things in writing a homily is to learn how to use images in preaching, how to appeal to imagery.[21] As most of the listeners in the congregation have never been to El Salvador, the preacher must reflect on her own experiences of the trip and try to paint a picture with words to help the listeners understand what she has experienced and how God's word was revealed in that experience. She will be encouraged to "use this story or image as an opening so that people are able to identify with the situation right from the beginning."[22] If the preacher

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[19]Bishops' Committee on Priestly Life and Ministry, 34.

[20]Ibid, 37.

[21]Francis, #157.

[22] Bishops' Committee on Priestly Life and Ministry, 34.

chooses a negative or sad image, she must do so not to invoke pity, but rather to lead the congregation to the good news of God's saving love.

On one of our first mission trips to El Salvador, a group of St. Dominic parishioners was returning from the celebration of mass in one of the *cantons* in the community. The group was riding in the back of a pick-up truck driven by Sr. Rose. We were singing and laughing and delighting in the beautiful Salvadoran countryside when Sr. Rose slowed the truck to cross over a shallow riverbed. As we looked up stream, we heard screaming and yelling coming from the woods. Sr. Rose stopped the truck, and out of the woods appeared a young teen age boy, naked and shackled around the neck with a chain which was attached to the base of a tree. Sr. Rose walked up to investigate, where she met the boy's mother. She discovered that he was chained for his own protection. He had suffered from schizophrenia since his childhood and there were no medications available. His parents needed to work during the day, and so they chained him to the tree so that he would not wander off.

The subdued mission group returned to the hotel where we entered into a lengthy discussion about the chains of poverty and the inequality of medical care throughout the world. I later used the image of the boy in a homily at a Good Friday service where I spoke of the crucifixion as freeing us from the chains of sin, and the resurrection empowering us to seek out those who were chained by sin and set them free. Upon further reflection, I discovered from many in the congregation that day that the image of the chained boy so disturbed them and overpowered the good news, and so in that way I failed to complete the preaching act as a proclamation of good news.

Negative images of poverty and oppression abound in the Salvadoran countryside, and the preacher must be careful when choosing such images for his homily. It is essential that the image leads the community to good news or it will not be effective. It is a good idea for the missionary to share with someone the image or story to make sure that the homily's "opening" is understood in a way that people can relate to and does not overpower the gospel message.

The final area of consideration the workshop emphasized for preaching the gospel is the "challenging word." A simple checklist for the homilist is provided by the document *Fulfilled in Your Hearing* written by the American bishops which I believe is an invaluable source for the preacher.

What is the doubt, the sin, the pain, the fracturing in our own lives which the passage touches?[23] This question invites a personal examination by the preacher of his own life of faith, and of the way the passage speaks to him. To speak from the heart means that our hearts must not just be on fire, but also enlightened by the fullness of revelation and by the path travelled by God's word in the heart of the Church and our faithful people throughout history.[24]

To what form of conversion do these words call us?[25] This is a critical question for the preacher, as it directs the congregation to a concrete response to the scriptures. More than a "nice thought," the preaching should invite the listener to an active faith response, both a new vision and a physical response to God's word coming alive in the world.

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[23]Bishops' Committee on Priestly Life and Ministry. 37.

[24] Francis, #144.

[25] Bishops' Committee on Priestly Life and Ministry, 37.

What difference can the good news make in my life?[26] The preacher needs to further explore this question in his personal faith journey as well as in the life of the community to whom he preaches. A preacher needs to contemplate the word, but he also has to contemplate his people.[27] Exegesis and prayer in preparation for preaching is not done in isolation; rather it needs to reverence the congregation at all times and be aware of their joys and struggles. In many ways, this question should guide the entire preaching act, for it is both personal and communal, and will be the ultimate judge as to whether the preaching is relevant.

Self-Evaluations of First and Second Drafts

At the completion of the presentation on the principles of preparing to preach and writing the first draft of the homily, the workshop presenter asked the participants to do a self-evaluation of their first draft. Participants were reminded that no one would read this self-evaluation other than the workshop director, and they were asked to be as truthful as possible. There is no expectation that they be master homilists! The majority of their knowledge about homiletics prior to the workshop had come from their experiences as members of a congregation. They typically know good preaching when they hear it, and the goal of this workshop is to give them the tools needed to preach God's word in a more effective way.

The questions on the self-evaluation survey relate to the principles outlined during the workshop. Applying these principles to their writing, the participants were asked to answer simply "yes" or "no" to the questions on their survey. They were reminded that they would be given the opportunity to write another version with their new knowledge

[26] Bishops' Committee on Priestly Life and Ministry, 38.

[27] Francis, #154.

about preaching, and that they would be asked to self-evaluate their final version using the same questions. The workshop self-evaluation form can be found in Appendix G.

At the conclusion of the self-evaluation, the participants were asked to offer a short reflection on three questions. These questions were offered to guide the director in planning future workshops.

The participant was first asked whether or not he/she believed lay people should be preaching God's word in this way. The question was asked to discover their understanding of preaching in relation to baptism and holy orders.

The participants were then asked to state how much time was spent on writing their preaching. Their answers were intended to provide a framework for guiding future preachers as to the amount of time commitment this project would entail.

The final question was asked to understand what the most difficult part of the preaching preparation was. Their insights and concerns will guide the presenter in future workshops, discovering their greatest handicaps and possibly adapting future workshops to address these if needed.

At the conclusion of the workshop, the presenter encouraged the participants to revise their first draft with the knowledge they attained at the workshop. They were given a second evaluation form for this final version, to be completed and returned with their final draft within one week. This second self-evaluation was basically the same as the first, and the participants were encouraged to use it as a guide for their writing as it captured all of the major points of the workshop. See Appendix H for this second self-evaluation.

Evaluator Pre-test and Post-test

Once the workshop was completed, the workshop director collected all of the first drafts and self-evaluations of the group. The director then conducted a pre-test of the participants work, hoping to determine the group's baseline understanding of the preaching act. For some of the questions he referred to the parishioner's initial self-evaluations, for example to find out from each person whether they used *Lectio Divino* in the preparation of the first draft, he depended on their self-report. This pre-test was structured to provide a quantitative summary.

When the drafts were submitted, the evaluator completed a post-test of this final draft. The difference between the two drafts as summed up in the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores enabled the workshop director to judge the effectiveness of the workshop and its impact on the preacher's work. Both the evaluator's pre-test and post-test can be found in Appendix I.

EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PREACHING WORKSHOP

The pilot preaching workshop evaluation process was designed to determine if and how homiletics might be taught to parishioners in order to share the Good News following their trips to El Salvador. It is the hope of this author that the initial mission experience might take the form of "reverse mission", where the missionaries would return from their trip and further their mission activity by proclaiming what they have seen and heard in light of the gospel and their experiences in El Salvador. The self-evaluations of the participants as well as the pre-test and post-test by the workshop presenter will be discussed in this section. Both quantitative and qualitative results help in the evaluation of this project and will help assess the project's utility and effectiveness.

Quantitative Evaluation

There are a multitude of books written on the subject of homiletics, yet this author chose to focus on two primary documents on preaching in designing the preaching workshop. It was my hope that the participants would be given a basic understanding of what is included in preparing a homily, and the American Bishop's *Fulfilled in Your Hearing* and Pope Francis' *Evangelii Gaudium* provided the foundation for the workshop and the pre-test and post-test used by the presenter.

The numbered pre-test conducted by the presenter corresponded to the self-evaluation conducted by the participants. The only difference was that the self-evaluations enabled the participants to directly answer the questions. It included eleven questions, all designed to correlate with the major points presented at the workshop. At the conclusion of the workshop, the participants turned in a first draft of their reflection, together with their self-evaluations. The presenter evaluated the participant reflections with a "yes" or "no" answer, recognizing that subjectivity was unavoidable. Some of the questions provide a way for the assessor to examine the degree of adherence, yet a simple yes or no was adequate for the quantitative assessment of the project. The answers to questions two, four and seven all relied on the participants' responses in their self-evaluation. The following is the pre-test which was used to score the participants' first draft:

Workshop Pre-Test
(The same form was used for the post-test)

Circle the best response

1.	The talk included a personal example from their own response to events and people and described it in language that is understandable.	No	Yes
2.	They used exegesis thoroughly in preparing their talk and used outside written sources to discover more of what Jesus was saying. (You can refer to their self-report here or decide whether you can see this from the written talk – do the same for everyone)	No	Yes
3.	If they presented this aloud to a group, I would feel satisfied that it conveys something that would have an impact on the listeners.	No	Yes
4.	Did they read it aloud and reflect on how it sounds? (Use their self-report, or you can substitute your best guess.)	No	Yes
5.	Their talk includes some detailed specific events or describes a person from the El Salvador trip.	No	Yes
6.	Do you think it will be easy for listeners to apply this talk to their own lives? Did the participant give concrete ways for them to do this?	No	Yes
7.	They did *Lectio Divina* with the scripture and prayed the text. (Refer to their self-report on this, or give your best guess.)	No	Yes
8.	Do you think the participant had a clear picture of their audience and what the audience was like when they wrote the talk? (Refer to their self-report or give your best guess)	No	Yes
9.	Did their talk have a clear focus or main point, and do you think others could state it?	No	Yes
10.	Did their talk convey specific 'good news' in a way that can transform the world beyond those who hear it?	No	Yes
11.	Did they challenge the audience in specific ways?	No	Yes

This same set of questions was used for the post-test after the respondent turned in their final version of the reflection, corresponding with the similar eleven questions for the participant's self-evaluation of their final versions, which accompanied their final version of the homily. Questions circled "yes" were given a point value of one.

The average pre-test score for the nineteen participants with a response of "yes" was 6.2 out of the eleven questions. The average post-test score was 11. The average difference was between the pre-test and post-test was 4.7. This marks a significant

improvement after attendance at the workshop, recognizing at the same time that this is a pilot project and statistical tests are not possible with this small sample size. See Appendix J for a summary of the pre-test and post-test scores. A discussion of these quantitative results will now be explored.

All of the participants scored a "yes" to the first question, in both the pre-test and the post-test. This question explored the technique of using images and/or personal experiences in their homilies. The invitation to the workshop asked the participants to write a reflection on a selected scripture passage using their experiences on the mission trip, and so it is logical that all of the participants would have scored "yes". In the same way, all of the participants celebrate Sunday Eucharist at St. Dominic where the pastor always uses a story or image from his experiences to preach the gospel. It can be inferred that the participants were modeling that preaching style in their reflections.

The second question involved the use of exegesis in homily preparation. Only two of the nineteen participants responded yes to this question in the pre-test. During the preaching workshop many of the participants were amazed at the availability of online resources for help with understanding the biblical text. All of the participants made use of these resources for their final draft, and each showed significant improvement in demonstrating this knowledge in their final version. The post-test scores revealed that all of the participants responded "yes" to this question with their final draft. The evaluator used both the participant's response in their self-evaluations as well as evidence of this exegesis in the text to make this determination.

Question three involved the impact of the preaching on listeners. Ten of the nineteen reflections scored a "yes" to this on the pre-test, although the level of impact

varied with each individual's reflection. All of the participants' final versions scored a "yes" to this question.

The fourth question of the survey was hoping to discover whether or not the participant read their text aloud and reflected on how it sounded. The evaluator relied on the self-evaluation of the participants and only three responded "yes" to this answer initially. After the preaching workshop, all participants responded "yes". Many commented that it helped them to clarify and sharpen their ideas when they proclaimed the text aloud at home.

Question five asked whether or not the missionary used a specific event or described a person from the El Salvador trip. All of the respondents scored a "yes" to this question on the pre-test. Again, this outcome can be a result of the workshop invitation letter as well as the preaching style of the pastor in their parish community. Likewise, the respondents all scored a yes to this statement on the post-test.

The sixth question dealt with the congregation's application of the message to their own lives. The use of concrete examples in preaching is critical for good preaching, and half of the group did this in the draft before the workshop. Many of the missionaries spoke of their experiences in the passive voice, and although they offered an interesting window into their trip, they did not make this relevant to a listening congregation at St. Dominic. The post-test revealed all of the respondents made use of their knowledge from the workshop and all scored "yes" to this answer, giving concrete examples in their final drafts for the listeners to apply the scriptures and message to their lives.

Question seven involved exploring the use of *Lectio Divina* in preparing the reflections. The evaluator relied on the responses of the participants in their self-

evaluation of their first draft, and only one respondent scored "yes" to this question. Considering all of the time that was spent on *Lectio Divina* in the mission trip preparation meetings as well as the trip itself, this response was most disappointing. During the preaching workshop, the presenter stressed the importance of taking the text to prayer, and focused on the use of *Lectio Divina* during the mission experience. All of the respondents scored "yes" to this question on the post-test, with the scoring based upon the self-reporting of the participants from their self-evaluation of the final draft.

Question eight dealt with the missionary having a picture of the congregation or audience that would be receiving the text. The evaluator scored "yes" to this question for all nineteen respondents on both the pre-test and post-test, even though five of the missionaries said they did not do this in their self-evaluation before the workshop. It may be that the missionaries underestimated the degree to which they were doing this originally.

The ninth question explored the homilist's use of a main point and the congregation's ability to identify that point. In the pre-test, only two respondents scored a "yes" to this answer. The majority of the first drafts included reflections with multiple points and no clear focus. Although they made for interesting reading, they offered so many perspectives that the evaluator was left unsure about what was being conveyed in the reflection. There was a dramatic difference in the evaluator's scores after the workshop, as all of the final versions captured this concept by providing one clear point which could be easily summarized from the preaching. Many of the participants commented that this was the most significant learning from the workshop, helping them to realize that they did not have to "say everything" in this preaching, and that their

message should be more closely tied to the message of the biblical text. All participants scored "yes" on the post-test for this question.

Question ten concerned the preaching of "good news" and the transformative power of preaching. Seventeen of the reflections scored a "yes" to this question on the pre-test. Although they often conveyed multiple points, their sincerity and faith was evident in their reflections and I believe others would be transformed and inspired by their homilies. In the post-test, all of the respondents' scored a "yes" to this question.

The final pre-test and post-test question explored the "challenging word", asking whether or not the homily gave specific ways for the congregation to respond. Only three of the respondents scored "yes" on the pre-test to this question, while all of the respondents scored "yes" on the Post-test. This concept showed overwhelming improvement by all of the preachers as they gave concrete examples and challenges for the congregation to put their faith into action in their final drafts.

Qualitative Evaluation

As I reflect on this project, my first observation is both surprise and gratitude that so many missionaries responded to the workshop invitation. Those who could not attend thanked me for the invitation, and the majority of them simply could not attend on the date of the workshop. Their willingness to share their stories and to learn about preaching revealed both a commitment to our mission work as well as a commitment to the parish. They seemed excited to "proclaim what they had seen and heard," and their reflections revealed the transformative power of both the scriptures and their experiences in El Salvador. After reading all of the reflection from the workshop, many things were learned in the process of training lay people to preach the Good News.

The first learning was their desire to preach and their desire to preach well. At the bottom of the self –evaluation of the first draft, three additional questions were asked. The first question asked whether or not they thought it was good for them to preach this way or if preaching should be left to the priest. All of the respondents answered "yes" to the first part of this question, believing that they had something significant to share with their home congregation.

In the self-evaluations of the first draft and final version by the participants, the question was asked, "Do you think it is good for you to preach in this way or do you think only the priests should do this?" All nineteen respondents said "yes" to the first part of this question, offering various reasons, all of which encouraged the participant in this project.

They added comments after the question such as, "It helped me to reflect on the trip and bring deeper meaning to it." Several commented that it helped them to focus their thoughts and made it easier to share their experiences with others. Many said that it helped them to make connections to the word of God and deepened their appreciation of the bible.

The second question asked how much time was spent on this project. I was shocked to see that the majority spent eight to ten hours, a significant amount of time for parishioners with careers and families. Not only did they believe it was important to preach, they also were willing to put in the time necessary for good preaching.

The third question sought to understand what the hardest things were in their writing the reflections. Fourteen of the respondents stated that the beginning and end of their talk were the most difficult task of writing the reflection. Nine of the respondents

said that focusing on one clear point or image was their greatest difficulty. As none of the participants had ever even attempted to write a homily, these comments are not surprising.

One of the missionaries who participated in the workshop is a high school educator who shared in the parish mission trip in the summer of 2013. On her return, she immediately became involved in the "Education Committee" of St. Dominic, which seeks to find ways to improve the quality of education at Santo Domingo school in El Salvador. She responded immediately to the workshop invitation and produced a fine first draft. Her self-evaluation of this draft revealed that she was too introspective and self-focused. Her final version revealed descriptive images that immediately painted a picture for the listener and drew them into the reflection. She focused her ideas and had one central point that was easily stated. She challenged the listener to live the gospel, and showed the work of simple exegesis. A copy of both the first draft and final version can be found in Appendix K.

A major learning of the workshop and evaluation process is that given the proper tools, lay people can write excellent homilies. Basic principles of preaching can be learned in a short time, and parishioners can apply those principles to become good preachers. When given clear guidelines for sharing their experiences, parishioners can offer a perspective on the scriptures as well as their mission trip which can inspire congregations to grow in their commitment to God and the work of the kingdom.

Two examples of this are found in the homilies by an executive at a local bank who took part in a mission trip with his teenage son and a pediatric pulmonologist who has taken part in two of the mission trips. Copies of their final homilies can be found in

Appendix L. They are impressive examples of quality preaching which can inspire congregations to hear and respond to the scriptures in unique ways.

In the self-evaluation of their final version, all of the respondents said that they spent significant amounts of time on their revisions. When asked if the workshop helped them revise their talk, all nineteen responded with a resounding "yes". Many commented that they knew their first draft was incomplete, yet they just did not understand how to "fix it." Fourteen respondents said the concept of a "central point" was most helpful in their revisions. Several commented that if they had this information before they began to write their first draft, the writing of that draft would have been much easier.

The final phase of this project will be the actual public preaching of the homilies written, and this phase does not form a part of the evaluation done here. All nineteen respondents expressed the desire to do this public presentation, whether in an audio version or a video presentation. Only five of the respondents said that they would be willing to proclaim their preaching at Sunday Eucharist, yet with some encouragement, I believe others will follow.

Another major learning of this project is that the workshop for preaching is an effective way to train missionaries to proclaim the good news. All of the preachers utilized the principles presented at the workshop to make significant improvements in their preaching. All of the respondents scored a perfect score of "11" in the evaluator's post-test of their reflection, which I believe affirms the effectiveness of this workshop.

Another learning of the project is that given the eleven points of reference from the self-evaluation, lay missionaries from the parish community can write effective homilies. These good homilies can have a transformative effect in a community. The

work of the mission can continue in the parish and others can be inspired to respond to the gospel in unique and varied ways. The impact of the trip can move from being a personal transformation for the missionary to a communal transformation for the people he shares life and faith with.

CONCLUSION

Reflecting upon both the qualitative and quantitative evaluations of the workshop, it is clear that lay people can preach, and can preach well. Providing a checklist of items to follow and some guidance in doing so, as was done in the workshop, can help them to create effective homilies. Future mission trips from St. Dominic will include a follow-up meeting after the trip with a presentation on preaching and an invitation to the missionaries to preach about their experiences in the light of God's word. Participants will be given the eleven point check-list to guide them in this process of writing their reflection. The experience of the mission trip will be deepened and expanded through preaching about their faith and can lead others into a deeper commitment to both their own community and the people of El Salvador. Individuals and all of our parish communities in the United States can benefit from the training of missionaries to proclaim what they have seen and heard on their trips to El Salvador.

CONCLUSION

In my first assignment as a parish priest, I was sent to a large suburban parish with 3,500 households. The pastor was a canon lawyer and my fellow associate was a diocesan priest who had just returned from seven years of mission work in El Salvador. Many of the meal conversations shared between the priests revolved around the mission work of our diocese in El Salvador. My fellow associate was dealing with many emotions that I could not understand, as he had just spent seven years in a war-torn country serving in extreme poverty, and now he was thrust into the culture of a middle-class suburb in the United States. He was frustrated by the perceived lack of commitment to the Church by the suburban parishioners, and was angered by the consumption-based culture of the United States. Although I had served in various soup kitchens throughout the city of Cleveland, I had no experience of true poverty, and there were often clashes between the two of us. I could not possibly understand his world-view, and because of my ignorance, simply dismissed him and his desire to awaken my conscience and the consciences of those we served.

Reflecting on that first experience of priesthood, I am ashamed for my lack of care for my fellow associate and my unwillingness to understand what he experienced. I was more concerned with parish programs and the daily dramas of the typical suburban parish, and I failed to see the connection between his passion, the gospel, and my service in the Church.

That first parish assignment undoubtedly affected my entire priesthood, and when the occasion arose for me to visit El Salvador, it was the memory of my foolishness and immaturity as well as a multitude of other factors that caused me to make the trip. At the same time, the memory of four women who were brutally raped and murdered in El Salvador simply because of their service to the poor inspired me on a road to self-discovery which now shapes my personal and priestly life.

My first mission trip opened both my eyes and my heart to the people of Chiltiupán, for in sharing their stories with me they have made the gospel come alive in profound ways. It has been my mission since that time to share that experience with others in both my preaching and my invitation to parishioners to join me on a mission trip. On each return visit to the people of Santo Domingo in El Salvador, my faith grows stronger, and my desire to share that experience with others has become a passion of my ministry. The people of this small community reveal to me the face of Christ, and their willingness to share their faith and homes with me and my parishioners have helped me to better serve the people at St. Dominic.

My first visits to El Salvador were filled with much ignorance, as I had no understanding of the history, the government, or the economy of this small culture. I also had no understanding of what faith and religion meant to these holy people, and I simply saw my role as one who could improve their quality of life through inspiring my own parishioners to share their material wealth with them. Over these last ten years, I have come to understand that Salvadorans have a wealth that draws me back time and time again, and that wealth is found in their love of God and the scriptures, and the impact that that love has on their daily lives is something that brings me great peace. It is that peace

that I desire to share with others on these trips, to inspire them in the same way that the Salvadorans inspire me.

This paper began with the history of the country of El Salvador, from the Spanish invaders who first conquered the nation and through brutal oppression tried to erase the story of the Salvadoran people and make them part of the European story. In the midst of this oppression, the story of the gospel was first heard in this small nation, and was quickly embraced and has flourished throughout the centuries. At the same time, the oppression has continued, whether it is by the military, oligarchy, United States government, and many would say the Catholic Church herself. This oppression has lead to the deaths of countless people, and has mired the nation in a struggle for justice by its poorest members. Yet despite all of this turmoil, the faith of Salvadorans is strong, and their desire to serve God and their neighbor inspires hope in all who meet them. Understanding this is crucial to the engagement of those of us from the United States who visit on our mission trips and how we share with others on our return.

Chapter Two explored faith and spirituality in the United States throughout her history, with a special focus on the people of St. Dominic Church in Shaker Heights, Ohio. By tracing the various spiritual movements in the Catholic Church in the United States, the author showed the foundations for the present mission work of the community of St. Dominic. Parishioners' preaching based on their experiences returning from mission trips supports the mission orientation in an important way.

Chapter Three explored the spirituality of the communities of Saint Dominic in Shaker Heights and Santo Domingo in El Salvador, with a special focus on liberation theology and the effect this spiritual movement has on both communities. Liberation

theology offered a new way of understanding the scriptures and the Eucharist, and has had a profound impact on how Catholics understand what it means to be "church" in both countries. The emerging field of inculturation was likewise explored in this chapter, as the impact of culture on the development of faith communities must be appreciated when seeking to have a relationship with individuals or communities in cultures that are different from our own. This perspective informed the preparation sessions prior to the mission trips, the activities while there, and the preaching workshop conducted after the trips.

The next chapter described how information from the first three chapters was organized into a series of four sessions for parishioners at St. Dominic preparing to go on a mission trip to El Salvador and described these sessions. These preparation sessions are essential for the bonding of the group as well as informing them about the culture and people with whom they will share life and faith on their mission trip. They set the spiritual foundation for the trip and guide the missionary in both their spiritual and temporal preparations. They also provided a foundation for learning while there, and the capacity to use their experiences in preaching on their return.

In Chapter Five, the author outlined the preaching workshop for returning missionaries, citing extensively from Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*. Participants' self-evaluations of both their first draft and final version were incorporated into the process, as well the workshop presenter's pre-test and post-test. The workshop focused on eleven basic principles of preaching, providing the returning missionaries a guideline for writing this reflection on the gospel in the light of the experiences of the mission trip. This chapter concluded by exploring the results of the

workshop. Both qualitative and quantitative analysis of the pre-test and post-test were discussed, with several examples of the fruits of the workshop. The results provided strong evidence that when returning missionaries are given the proper tools for preaching, they can proclaim God's word in an effective manner.

Lessons Learned from the Project

The value of short-term mission trips is a topic on which numerous opinions are held, yet it is this author's contention that these trips can be truly valuable for a parish community only if they are understood in the light of the gospel. If the mission trip is primarily concerned with building a structure, painting a school or picking coffee beans, then perhaps the money spent on airline tickets and hotels would better be used by simply sending the funds to the mission territory and the missionary from the United States remaining at home. Yet if the trip is about relationship building, where the missionary is truly open to understanding the experiences of people in a developing country, then the impact of the trip can have a transformative effect on both the missionary and the congregation they return to. This can be accomplished only through preparation for the trip that includes a holistic view of the mission territory, formed through education and reflection on the economic, religious and political culture of both the missionary's culture as well as the culture of the country he is visiting. This preparation had a critical role in the subsequent writing of homilies by missionaries.

Introducing *Lectio Divina* to the missionaries in preparation meetings as well as Salvadorans on the trip provides a strong, practical, spiritual foundation for mission groups from the United States. When suburban parishioners from the United States share this spiritual practice with Salvadorans, there is a level "playing field," as the word of

God is not partial to any one culture, it is God's gift to all of us. Breaking open God's word with brothers and sisters in El Salvador awakens the life-giving power of the word, and hearts are opened to the stories of others. Although citizens from the United States have a wealth of material gifts to share, they also have a wealth of spiritual gifts, as do the Salvadorans, and the communal sharing of these gifts through *Lectio Divino* enriches all those who take part in it. The understanding and practice of this form of spiritual reading and listening practice provides the foundation for good preaching.

Although outside forces have oppressed the Salvadoran people for centuries, they can also provide an experience which can facilitate healing and hope for both missionaries and those they serve. By breaking down prejudices about Central Americans and those who are poor, short term mission trips can provide transformative experiences for the Salvadorans, the missionaries, and the communities which support the missionaries. Moving the missionaries from a posture of charity to a posture of justice and learning can open their eyes to see their neighbors in Central America in an entirely different way. It can likewise open their eyes and hearts to the scriptures and help them to preach the gospel in new and varied ways.

The preaching workshop at the conclusion of the mission trip tied together all of the preparation meetings as well as the trip itself, and provided a completely new experience for parishioners to preach the gospel when they returned home. By giving the lay missionaries basic tools for preaching, the value of the mission trip takes on an entirely different form, moving from individual transformation to a community's transformation through the power of God's word. The lay people involved in this project were eager to take on this role and approached the preaching act with faith and

enthusiasm. Their willingness to be evaluated and their desire to "do better" were humbling, and their openness to the transforming power of God's Word in their own lives deepened the value of the trips as well as strengthening their commitment to work for justice in the world.

Applications of the Project to other Short-term Mission Groups

Almost every major university, both religious and secular, offers some kind of mission experience for their students. Likewise, numerous parish communities have formed mission teams to both the developing world as well as in service to their local communities. Significant amounts of money and time are spent on these projects, and this author believes that for those groups going from Christian communities, it is essential that the spirit of God's word fills their preparation meetings, the trip itself, and the reflections and actions which result from the trip.

Every institution, religious or educational, which undertakes a mission trip, must make it a priority to have preparation meetings. The mission group's director must have an awareness of the culture, religion and politics of the mission country and the preparing missionaries must spend significant time exploring the cultural distinctions of the mission territory, as well as reflecting on their own cultural biases. Preparation meetings must be well thought-out, and the presenter must allow participants to reflect on their own experiences, and compare and contrast those experiences to the communities they are visiting.

For Christian institutions, it is imperative that the word of God be the guiding focus of the trip, as the mission trip itself is a response to the command of Jesus to go out and proclaim the good news. Although there is great economic value in trips made by

secular organizations, the Christian mission trip can have the distinctive intension of transforming the hearts of those who share in the trip as well the people they serve. Yet this can only be accomplished through a well prepared preparation program which focuses on God's Word. During the trip itself, opportunities for *Lectio Divina* and other forms of prayers shared with people of the mission country will provide an invaluable experience for the participants and set the foundations for future sharing about the trip.

Opportunities for reflection and sharing as they return from the trip are essential for broadening the impact of the value of the trip. These opportunities allow the participants to share in the experience in light of further reflection amidst the busy-ness of life when he returns. By designing a follow-up program which guides this reflection in the light of the scriptures, participants can move from the head to the heart and further their understanding of the impact of the trip on their life of faith. This reflection session allows the missionary to share with others in the safe environment of those who took part in the experience with them.

The preaching workshop as designed in this project can be adapted to any religious mission trip, such as high school trips, university trips, or parish mission trips. By offering basic guidelines for preaching, participants can become missionaries to their own communities, proclaiming what they have seen and heard on their trips and making the gospel come alive for their listeners. The experience of writing their reflections as well as proclaiming them become forms of prayer in themselves, and will impact both their personal faith as well as the people who receive the Word.

Although pictures and videos from mission trips provide a window into the experience of missionaries, words spoken from the heart can proclaim the good news in a

way that no electronic device can. I have witnessed the spiritual power of a mission trip in the lives of hundreds of my parishioners as well as the thousands of additional people we have met from El Salvador over the years in our service to the people of Santo Domingo. Yet the preaching workshop as designed in this project has the potential to reach thousands of people in my home community and open their eyes and hearts to both the gospel message and the people of El Salvador. I believe that every mission trip has this same potential, offering immeasurable value to all who receive the good news shared by returning missionaries.

APPENDIX

A. First Missionary Preparation Meeting Agenda

El Salvador Relational Mission Trip
Preparation Meeting #1

I. Opening Prayer and Welcome

II. Introductions
-Share with the group your general family, church, work background.
-Why did you decide to sign up for this trip?

III. General Overview of St. Dominic/Santo Domingo Relationship History
-Relationship Trips
-Medical Trips
-Youth Trips

IV. St. Dominic-El Salvador Mission Committees
-Clinic Committee
-Education Committee
-Farm Committee
-University Committee

V. Goal of the trip: To strengthen the relationship between our two communities and to discover how to exchange our gifts with one another to deepen our faith.

VI. Relationship Trip Agenda
-Is there anything you would especially want to experience while you are there?

VII. The Political History and Present Day Government of El Salvador
-Before the Spanish Conquest
-Spanish Conquest and Rule 1524
-Salvadoran Independence 1821
-Emerging Oligarchy 1820s-1930
-Military Dictatorships 1931-1979
-Salvadoran Civil War 1979
-The Present Day Political Situation

VIII. My Doctoral project and Introduction to *Lectio Divina*

IX. Closing Prayer-spontaneous

B. Second Missionary Preparation Meeting Agenda

El Salvador Relational Mission Trip
Preparation Meeting #2

I. Opening Prayer and Welcome

II. Introductions
-Share with the group your educational background, your parent's role in this education, and your employment history

-How have these combined factors affected your economic/living standard today?

III. The Economic Life of Salvadorans

A. History of United States Involvement

B. Coffee, Landowners, Peasant Class

C. Relationship Building and our Mission Trip

D. Signs of Hope

1. The Santo Domingo Clinic

2. Agricultural Project

3. Education

IV. Lectio Divina

VI. Next Meeting

C. Third Missionary Preparation Meeting Agenda

El Salvador Relational Trip
Preparation Meeting #3

Opening Prayer and Welcome

Introductions

-*Share with the group a brief background of your faith journey, including your childhood family faith, and your adult experience of involvement in the Church*.

-*How have these experiences and your present relationship with God influenced you to sign up for this mission trip?*

The Church and Religious Culture of Salvadorans

-Complex History of Church relationship and Spanish Invaders

-Liberation Theology

-Archbishop Oscar Romero

-Santo Domingo Parish life in Chiltiupán

Lectio Divina

-Gospel reading from day 3 of the mission trip

Closing Prayer

D. Missionary Prayer Journal

St. Dominic

El Salvador

Mission Trip

Journal

God of New Beginnings

We come before you with open hearts and outstretched arms
seeking guidance as we reach beyond ourselves
to find your love in those we meet.

We ask that our arms might embrace your Spirit
and that our eyes continue to see You in others as we celebrate your love.

We ask for the strength and patience
to be people of peace and instruments of justice.
By simplifying our lives, may we come to discover
the simplicity of your message.

Through your strength we open ourselves in a new way,
committing ourselves to walk your path and share in your work.

We thank you for the gift of one another,
for it is through one another that we experience oneness with You.

Keep us close and never let us stray from You.

As we begin our journey into the depths of your love,
we are fearful yet certain of your powerful and gentle presence. Amen.

A Morning Prayer

Gracious God,

Thank you for the gift of today.

Refresh me –invite me –

To discover your presence in each person that I meet, and every event encountered.

In moments of challenge and decision,

attune my heart to the whisperings of your wisdom.

As I undertake ordinary and unnoticed tasks,

gift me with simple joy.

When my day goes well, may I rejoice!

When it grows difficult,

surprise me with new possibilities.

When life is overwhelming,

call me to Sabbath moments

to restore your peace and harmony.

May my living today reveal your goodness.

Amen.

A word about this Journal…

We hope that these pages offer you some space to record your thoughts throughout the five days that you'll be spending with our sister parish in El Salvador. We hope that the reflection questions, quotations, and scripture passages will help you to reflect on each day and begin to process all of what you may experience.

There are a couple of pages for every day that we are in El Salvador. Each day begins with a different theme and has space for remembering your "highs" and "lows." (Did something bring you particular joy or consolation? Did anything bring sadness or desolation?) Each day also has some blank space for you to journal about the things that were most striking to you – people, sights, sounds, smells... And finally, each day's section closes with a prayer or scripture passage.

While we highly encourage you to journal each day, please use this journal however it is most meaningful to you. Do not feel compelled to limit yourself by the theme, quotes, or questions – use whatever is helpful as a starting point to reflect on your own unique experience.

God be with you!

Vaya Con Dios!

Day 1

trust [*truhst*]

n.

1. reliance on the integrity, strength, ability, surety, etc., of a person or thing.

"High" of the Day:

_____

_____

_____

_____

"Low" of the Day:

_____

_____

_____

_____

"Trust in him at all times, O people: pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us."-Psalm 62:8

Why did you choose to come on this mission trip?

(If you've been before, why did you choose to come on this trip for the second time?)

What are some of your hopes?

What are some of your fears?

"Our first task in approaching another people, another culture, another religion is to take off our shoes, for the place we are approaching is holy. Else we may find ourselves treading on another's dreams. More serious still, we may forget that God was here before our arrival."

-Max Warren

"My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going.
I do not see the road ahead of me.

I cannot know for certain where it will end.
Nor do I really know myself,

and the fact that I think I am following your will

does not mean that I am actually doing so.
But I believe that the desire to please you

does in fact please you

and I hope that I have that desire in all that I am doing.
And I know that if I do this,

you will lead me by the right road although I may know nothing about it.
Therefore will I trust you always

though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death,

I will not fear, for you are ever with me

and you will never leave me to face my perils alone."

- Thomas Merton

A PRAYER

(often attributed to St. Theresa)

May today there be peace within.

May you trust God that you are exactly

where you are meant to be.

May you not forget the infinite possibilities

that are born of faith.

May you use those gifts that you have received

and pass on the love that has been given to you....

May you be content knowing you are a child of God.

Let this presence settle into your bones and allow your soul the freedom to sing, dance, praise and love.

It is there for each and every one of you.

Day 2 - Love

love [*luv*]

n.

A deep, tender, inexpressible feeling of affection and care toward a person, such as that arising from kinship, recognition of attractive qualities, or a sense of underlying oneness

"High" of the Day:

_____

_____

_____

_____

"Low" of the Day:

_____

_____

_____

_____

"Let us love not in word or speech,

but in deed and truth.'

-1 John 3:18

What person or event touched you most deeply today?

Where did you experience God's love?

"The first duty of love is to listen."

-Paul Tillich

"Remember that the heart is a muscle. The only way any muscle grows stronger is by tearing, by straining, by working. Don't worry, it will grow back stronger. The hardened heart is the only one that won't break. Through the fissures and cracks, people will reach into our hearts and touch us. Our tears when they touch us are only squeezed out by the swelling inside our chest. My wishes for all of you include a few tears and some heartbreak, not because I want you to hurt, but because I want you to heal and have the capacity to love grow greater…"

-Greg Downey

Nothing is more practical than finding God,

That is, than falling in love in a quite absolute, final way.

What you are in love with,

What seizes your imagination

Will affect everything.

It will decide what will get you out of bed in the mornings,

What you will do with your evenings,

How you spend your weekends,

What you read, who you know, what breaks your heart,

And what amazes you with joy and gratitude.

Fall in love.

Stay in love.

And it will decide everything.

-Pedro Arrupe, S.J.

PRAYER OF ST. FRANCIS

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

Where there is hatred . . . let me sow love.

Where there is injury . . . let me sow pardon.

Where there is doubt . . . let me sow faith.

Where there is despair . . . let me sow hope.

Where there is darkness . . . let me sow light.

Where there is sadness . . . let me sow joy.

O divine Master,

grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled,

as to console,

to be understood, as to understand

to be loved, as to love.

For, it is in giving that we receive,

it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,

it is in dying to self, that we are born to eternal life.

Day 3 – Service

service [*sər-vəs*]

n.

1. the occupation or function of serving

2. employment as a servant

"High" of the Day:

_____

_____

_____

_____

"Low" of the Day:

_____

_____

_____

_____

"And the king will say to them in reply,

"In truth I tell you, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these sisters &brothers of mine, you did it to me."

-Matthew 25:40

What do you need to let go of in order to be fully present to the people around you?

What does it mean to be a servant?

How did you serve and how were you served by the people around you?

"No way of service is the only way or even the absolutely best way. You are not called to be Mother Teresa. You have to give you. You have to discover what the best, richest, wisest way to give yourself is in your circumstances… [Because] the world has never had you and it <u>does</u> need you or God would not have made you."

-Fr. Michael Himes

"If you have come here to help me,

then you are wasting your time…

But if you have come here

because your liberation is bound up with mine,

Then let us work together."

-Lila Watson

John*13:1-17*

Before the feast of Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to pass from this world to the Father. He loved his own in the world and he loved them to the end…

So, during supper, fully aware that the Father had put everything into his power and that he had come from God and was returning to God, he rose from supper and took off his outer garments. He took a towel and tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and dry them with the towel around his waist.

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Master, are you going to wash my feet?"

Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing, you do not understand now, but you will understand later."

Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet."

Jesus answered him, "Unless I wash you, you will have no inheritance with me."

Simon Peter said to him, "Master, then not only my feet, but my hands and head as well…"

So when he had washed their feet and put his garments back on and reclined at table again, he said to them,

"Do you realize what I have done for you? You call me 'teacher' and 'master,' and rightly so, for indeed I am. If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do. Amen, amen, I say to you, no slave is greater than his master nor any messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you understand this, blessed are you if you do it."

Day 4 – Gift

Gift [*gift*]

n.

1. something given voluntarily without payment in return, as to show favor toward someone, honor an occasion, or make a gesture of assistance; present.

"High" of the Day:

_____

_____

_____

"Low" of the Day:

_____

_____

_____

"So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you;

seek and you will find;

knock and the door will be opened to you.

For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened."

-Luke 11:9-10

What are some of the talents and gifts that you bring to this experience?

What blessings are you experiencing from this immersion experience?

"We must not only give what we have;

we must also give who we are."

-Desire-Joseph Mercier

"What we are is God's gift to us.

What we become is our gift to God."

-Eleanor Powell

SUSCIPE

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty,

my memory, my understanding

and my entire will,

All I have and call my own.

You have given all to me.

To you, Lord, I return it.

Everything is yours; do with it what you will.

Give me only your love and your grace.

That is enough for me.

-St. Ignatius of Loyola

Day 5 – Mission

mission*[ˈmi-shən]*

n.

1. The act or an instance of sending.

2. A specific task with which a person or a

"High" of the Day:

_____

_____

_____

_____

"Low" of the Day:

_____

_____

_____

_____

And what does the LORD ask of you

but to do justice, to love kindness,

and to walk humbly with your God?

-Micah 6:8

How has this experience been similar to or different than what you were expecting?

How will this experience affect your life once you're back to your "normal" routine?

How would you share this experience with a family member or friend?

"Inching ourselves closer to creating a community of kinship such that God might recognize it. Soon we imagine, with God, this circle of compassion. Then we imagine no one standing outside that circle, moving ourselves closer to the margins so that the margins themselves will be erased. We stand there with those whose dignity has been denied. We locate ourselves with the poor and the powerless and the voiceless. At the edges, we join the easily despised and the readily left out. We situate ourselves right next to the disposable so that the day will come when we stop throwing people away. The prophet Habakuk writes, 'The vision still has its time, presses on to fulfillment and it will not disappoint…and if it delays, wait for it.'"

- Greg Boyle, S.J.

"I hope you come to find that which gives life a deep meaning for you. Something worth living for – maybe even worth dying for, something that energizes you, enthuses you, enables you to keep moving ahead. I can't tell you what that might be – that's for you to find, to choose, to love. I can just encourage you to start looking and support you in the search.

-Sr. Ita Ford

"What we do is very little.

But it is like the little boy with a few loaves and fishes.

Christ took that little and increased it.

He will do the rest.

What we do is so little. We may even seem to be constantly failing.

But so did He fail. He met with apparent failure on the Cross.

Unless the seed falls into the earth and dies, there is no harvest.

Why must we see the results?

Our work is to sow.

Another generation will be reaping the harvest."

- Dorothy Day

It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view. The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision.

We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work. Nothing we do is complete, which is a way of saying that the kingdom always lies beyond us.

No statement says all that could be said. No prayer fully expresses our faith.
No confession brings perfection. No pastoral visit brings wholeness.
No program accomplishes the church's mission. No set of goals and objectives includes everything.

This is what we are about. We plant the seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise.

We lay foundations that will need further development.
We provide yeast that produces far beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something, and to do it very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.

We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker. We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own. Amen. *Although this prayer is often attributed to Oscar Romero, it was actually written by Fr. Ken Untener (later Bishop Untener, bishop of Saginaw) for John Cardinal Dearden; given by John Cardinal Dearden as a homily at Blessed Sacrament Cathedral, Detroit, October 25, 1979.*

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E.Fourth Missionary Preparation Meeting Agenda

El Salvador Relational Trip
Preparation Meeting #4

Opening Prayer and Welcome

Lectio Divina

-Gospel reading from the last day of the trip

Salvadoran Culture and Customs

-Greetings and salutations

-Photography

-Clothing

-Food and water

-Visit to the City

-Backpack/daybag

-cash

-rain gear/shoes/bathing suit

Review of Itinerary

Explanation of Fr. Tom's Doctoral Project

-Invite participants to think about sharing a homily/reflection on their return.

Closing Prayer

F. Workshop Letter of Invitation

Dear Friends,

As you know, I have been working on my Doctor of Ministry in Preaching at the Aquinas Institute of Theology in St. Louis for the past 6 years. The focus of my dissertation has been how to help returning parish missionaries from El Salvador "proclaim what they have seen and heard" to their fellow parishioners at St. Dominic.

In Pope Francis's recent "Joy of the Gospel", he invites people everywhere to give witness to their faith. Although we typically think of preaching as the "priest's job", all of you have shared in a profound experience of a mission trip which I believe needs to be proclaimed.

I invite you to share in the final phase of my project, which is a preaching workshop designed for lay people to help them give witness to their understanding of the gospel and their experiences in El Salvador. The workshop is scheduled for Wednesday, April 9, from 7-8:30pm in the large meeting room. Participants will be asked to prepare a 3-5 minute reflection talk on the gospel passage enclosed and write it out. This typically would be 300-500 words. You are asked to bring a copy of the draft of your reflection talk to the workshop, and you will hand that copy in to me. In the workshop I will give suggestions for the talk and for refining your draft. Following the workshop you will be asked to do a final version of your talk including what you have learned in the workshop, and give me a written copy of that by April 16.

My hope is that, using your final version of the reflection talk, you will be willing to: record an audio version, a DVD film version, or for those who feel inclined, give a communion reflection at Sunday mass. The audio version could be used, with your permission, as a background for our website's video of El Salvador trips, and the DVD could be posted on the website itself so that we might spread the "good news" of the gospel and our mission activity in El Salvador.

I realize that this type of project will take some work, and may not be for everyone. Travel and work schedules may prohibit your participation. I would ask that you prayerfully consider taking part in this workshop so that the message of our missionary activity might reach a larger audience and inspire others to live the gospel.

Thanks for your consideration. Please feel RSVP to the project/workshop by contacting me at **tgfshaker@yahoo.com**.

Sincerely,

Fr. Tom

G. Preaching Workshop Participant First Draft Self-Evaluation

Name:
Date:

Self-evaluation of the FIRST DRAFT of your reflection talk
Be completely honest in answering this, and give the answer that is most true of your first draft. You will have a chance to improve your reflective talk and then re-evaluate it after that.

Circle your response

1. My talk includes a personal example from my own response to events and people and describes it in language that is understandable.	No	Yes
2. I have used exegesis thoroughly in preparing my talk and have used outside written sources to discover more of what Jesus was saying.	No	Yes
3. If I presented this aloud to a group, I would feel satisfied that it conveys something that would have an impact on the listeners.	No	Yes
4. Did you read it aloud and reflect on how it sounds?	No	Yes
5. My talk includes some detailed specific events or describes a person from the El Salvador trip.	No	Yes
6. Do you think it will be easy for listeners to apply this talk to their own lives? Did you give concrete ways for them to do this?	No	Yes
7. I did *Lectio Divina* with the scripture and prayed the text.	No	Yes
8. Did you have a clear picture of your audience and what they were like when you wrote your talk?	No	Yes
9. Does your talk have a clear focus or main point, and do you think others could state it?	No	Yes
10. Does your reflection talk convey specific 'good news' in a way that can transform the world beyond those who hear it?	No	Yes
11. Did you challenge the audience in specific ways?	No	Yes

a. Do you think it is good for you to 'preach' in this way or do you think only priests should do this?

b. How much time did you spend on this?

c. What were the hardest things for you in writing this talk?

H. Preaching Workshop Participant Final Draft Self-Evaluation

Name:
Date:

Self-evaluation of the FINAL VERSION of your reflection talk
Now that you have finished revising your reflective talk, answer the questions once again.

Circle the best response

12. My talk includes a personal example from my own response to events and people and describes it in language that is understandable.	No	Yes
13. I have used exegesis thoroughly in preparing my talk and have used outside written sources to discover more of what Jesus was saying.	No	Yes
14. If I presented this aloud to a group, I would feel satisfied that it conveys something that would have an impact on the listeners.	No	Yes
15. Did you read it aloud and reflect on how it sounds?	No	Yes
16. My talk includes some detailed specific events or describes a person from the El Salvador trip.	No	Yes
17. Do you think it will be easy for listeners to apply this talk to their own lives? Did you give concrete ways for them to do this?	No	Yes
18. I did *LectioDivina* with the scripture and prayed the text.	No	Yes
19. Did you have a clear picture of your audience and what they were like when you revised your talk?	No	Yes
20. Does your revised talk have a clear focus or main point, and do you think others could state it?	No	Yes
21. Does your reflection talk convey specific 'good news' in a way that can transform the world beyond those who hear it?	No	Yes
22. Did you challenge the audience in specific ways?	No	Yes

a. Do you think it is good for you to 'preach' in this way or do you think only priests should do this?

b. How much time did you spend on this?

c. Did the workshop help you revise your talk? If so, how?

I. Evaluator Pre-test and Post-test

Evaluator **Pretest**
Preaching Workshop on how to construct a "Reflection Talk" that shares the good news with others.

Name:
Date:

Circle the best response

23. The talk included a personal example from their own response to events and people and described it in language that is understandable.	No	Yes
24. They used exegesis thoroughly in preparing their talk and used outside written sources to discover more of what Jesus was saying. (You can refer to their self-report here or decide whether you can see this from the written talk – do the same for everyone)	No	Yes
25. If they presented this aloud to a group, I would feel satisfied that it conveys something that would have an impact on the listeners.	No	Yes
26. Did they read it aloud and reflect on how it sounds? (Use their self-report, or you can substitute your best guess.)	No	Yes
27. Their talk includes some detailed specific events or describes a person from the El Salvador trip.	No	Yes
28. Do you think it will be easy for listeners to apply this talk to their own lives? Did the participant give concrete ways for them to do this?	No	Yes
29. They did *Lectio Divina* with the scripture and prayed the text. (Refer to their self-report on this, or give your best guess.)	No	Yes
30. Do you think the participant had a clear picture of their audience and what the audience was like when they wrote the talk? (Refer to their self-report or give your best guess)	No	Yes
31. Did their talk have a clear focus or main point, and do you think others could state it?	No	Yes
32. Did their talk convey specific 'good news' in a way that can transform the world beyond those who hear it?	No	Yes
33. Did they challenge the audience in specific ways?	No	Yes

I. Summary of Pre-test and Post-test

Summary of Pre- and Post-scores

Name	Session date	Pretest total(yes=1)	Posttest total (yes=1)	Difference
	4/9			
110*		2	11	9
111		5	11	6
112		8	11	3
113		4	9	5
114		6	11	5
115		7	11	4
116		7	11	4
117		6	11	5
118		10	11	1
119		8	11	3
120		6	11	5
121		7	11	4
122		7	11	4
123		4	11	7
124		7	11	4
125		7	11	4
126		6	11	5
127		6	11	5
128	6	11	5	

Scores taken from Evaluator's ratings

Average pre-test total: 6.2

Average post-test total: 10.9

Average difference: 4.7

*Participant's names are numbered on a separate sheet to protect their confidentiality.

K. Sample Homily: First Draft and Final Version

Education has always been a passion of mine since I was in high school. Early in my life, I knew that I wanted to teach and it remained with me until I was legally able to do just that. I realized early that students with special needs energized me and I have always felt called to empower them to learn, live and grow into productive adults. I never tire of my daily work, and I use the term work synonymously with the word pleasure, as that is how I view my interactions with them. My greatest joy at school is when I receive word from graduates that they are succeeding in college and life when once there was little success in their future.

I was attracted to the Education Committee at St. Dominic simply because of the education component as well as the similarity to the social justice piece that I experience through my life as a teacher at Beaumont School. In St. Angela's first counsel she states, "You have more need to serve others, than they have to be served." Many of my colleagues had taken the trip to Salvador and I sensed a longing to experience this as well.

I journeyed to El Salvador in June of 2013 as a representative of the Education Committee. I chose to travel not with the adult groups that attend every year, but to "tag along" with the high school group in June, as I enjoy experiencing activities with teens as their freshness and excitement is energizing and keeps me thinking long after the experience is over. I believe that my gifts and talents are embedded in the fact that I learn more from the students than I teach them.

While in El Salvador, I observed such great need for education and service. Those that are quiet with little voice are the ones that draw me to them, just as the students with special learning differences have done for so many years in my professional life.

The passage from Matthew asks me to use my gifts and passion for education and multiply them. Jesus calls us to use our talents creatively and to reproduce the benefits. So, as I reflect on my trip, I continue to search for ways to use my love for teaching those who require guidance. The students I am drawn to with special needs are similar to those in El Salvador who may be forgotten or those who live in the most remote areas with the least amount of assistance. It is those students that call me to focus my efforts and direct my passion. This task upon first glance is overwhelming, just as the tasks I approach with students each day at school. Matthew's gospel urges me to work diligently, listen, and advocate for those in El Salvador still in the greatest need, those who may not be most visible or most vocal.

Final Draft of Reflection for Preaching Workshop

I traveled to El Salvador in June of 2013 and the eyes and song of a young girl left an imprint in my heart and mind. On a rainy afternoon, we traveled by truck up the mountain to a small hut on the hillside. The young girl's brother sat on the bed, unable to walk. The girl shared her home with her grandmother and others and the environment was unlike any I'd seen before. She sang for us from a book with no words and handed me a picture drawn in colored chalk on a brown paper bag. That picture is framed in my

living room and reminds me daily of those that have no voice, yet sing in happiness for strangers.

Education has always been a passion of mine since I was in high school. I realized early that students with special needs energized me and I have always felt called to empower them to learn, live and grow into productive adults. It is important to understand that all people must be heard, even those that are small or poor or too weak to speak. They are the ones that need others to teach them, help them and advocate for them.

I was attracted to the Education Committee at St. Dominic simply because of my passion for teaching and the commitment of the committee to social justice. As a teacher at Beaumont School, I am dedicated to promoting social justice. In St. Angela Merici's first counsel she states, "You have more need to serve others, than they have to be served."With Angela's inspiration, many of my colleagues participate in mission trips to El Salvador and I, too, sensed a longing to experience this as well.

I journeyed to this small country in June of 2013 as a representative of the committee. I believe that my gifts and talents are in recognizing that I learn more from the students than I teach them.

While in this small country, I observed such great need for education and service. Those that are quiet with little voice are the ones that draw me to them, just as the students with special learning differences have done for so many years in my professional life.

The passage from Matthew asks us to use our gifts and passion and multiply them. Jesus calls us to use our talents creatively and to reproduce the benefits. So, as I

reflect on my trip, I continue to search for ways to use my love for teaching those who require guidance. The students I am drawn to with special needs are similar to those in El Salvador who may be forgotten or those who live in the most remote areas with the least amount of assistance. It is those students that call me to focus my efforts and direct my passion.

This task, upon first glance is overwhelming, just as the tasks I approach with students each day at school. Matthew's gospel urges us to work diligently, to listen and advocate for those in El Salvador still in the greatest need, those who may not be most visible or vocal. Communities include those that can speak for themselves and receive the most, and also others who require support and advocates and someone who refuses to forget them. I am called to help them, remember them and encourage others to do the same.

It is easy to listen to those who are loud, that can speak for themselves with courage and self-confidence. Those are the ones that demand our attention, that are easy to serve as they can tell us what they need. It's the others that require our talents the most, that God calls us to serve; the quiet ones, in huts on the hillside who light up and sing and give us the gift of themselves.

L. Sample Final Version Homilies

Sample One

On Wednesday, November 14, 2012, my son, Patrick, and I got up early to leave for the airport for our 5 day mission trip to El Salvador. We were going on a "relationship trip." Our goal was to build lasting relationships and understand the needs of the people of Chiltiupán. My son and I were looking forward to this trip very much; not only to experience a new culture and to see how we could help in our own way but also to spend some nice father/son bonding time together. As many of you know, it is not easy in our hectic, fast-paced lives to find quality time to simply "talk and connect" with the ones we love.

In preparation for the trip, I had a recurring but unanswered question in my head, "What exactly is a "relationship trip"?" When I have spoken to other friends in the past that have gone on mission trips, they typically talked about helping fix up a home or school, administering healthcare, or providing instruction on new techniques to local teachers. These trips and many more had a common theme of using ones skills to help others. So what is a "relationship trip"? Again, I understood that we were to build relationships and understand the needs of the people, but how would this tangibly really help them? What skills would my son and I be "bestowing" on others to help improve their lives?

The trip was everything we thought it would be and much more. We visited the vegetable farm that St. Dominic helped fund and develop. We toured the village, meeting many local people, and talking with them with the help of our translators. We

visited the local parish school, and enjoyed watching the students sing and dance for us; it was their way of saying "thank you" to the wonderful parishioners of St. Dominic. We visited homes that contained the new stoves that St. Dominic provided. We sat and talked with the Women's Guild, held Mass in many lovely churches, and presided over a town hall meeting.

On the surface, many aspects of the Salvadoran peoples' lives are not that different from ours. But as we talked further and asked more questions, we realized how truly different they are. The vegetable farm was a great gift, but most of the "farmers" need to walk five to ten miles to pick the vegetables for the next few days. They had not yet learned how to turn the farm into a self-sustaining profitable operation. Many of the local people we met through our translators had stories that were unbelievable. Some of the women we met were raped numerous times and had the fatherless children to prove it. The school we visited looked like a safe haven compared to the difficulties of daily Salvadoran life. However, we realized that since the average income of a typical family is approximately $150 per year, nearly all of the children would never have the opportunity to go to college. Even if they did, there are few jobs to seek after graduation. The homes with the new stoves: many sat unused because the locals did not understand how to use them. The homes could only loosely be described as a house. They were more like tin boxes big enough for a few people to sleep in at night. The churches were beautiful, but they also hinted at the struggles that the Salvadoran people faced as their country was caught between the warring factions of capitalism and communism (recall the brutal killing of priests, Archbishop Romero, and the four Ursuline nuns in 1980). Lastly, at the town hall meeting, we learned about the real needs of the people for better

healthcare. They were describing to Fr. Tom how much money it was going to take to build a small clinic so that they could provide the people with just the most basic of healthcare services.

As I reflected on the various experiences, I could not help but feel a real desire to help the people of Chiltiupán in any way I could. God has blessed my family and me and it is our obligation to give back. Yes, we can and have given money through Project Serve. But what could we do to really help them directly? But again, this was a relationship trip, not a home building trip. As I sat at the airport waiting for our flight, it suddenly hit me, we are giving them hope. Hope that there are people out there that care about them. Hope that others are praying for them. Hope that there are ways to improve their lives. But it was not just us giving them hope. God has given all of us talents and as he says in Matthew, chapter 25, as we use our talents for good works, God expects even greater things from us.

What talents and responsibilities did he give and expect from the people of Chiltiupán? After just a few days of getting to know the villagers, I realized that they gave me hope. Hope that we can once again enjoy the more simple things in life. Hope that the man made pressures in America cannot take away our spiritual soul.

What amazed me most about the people I met was how loving, spiritual and content they were. Some did not know how life is different in other parts of the world, but many did. In all cases, I saw proud, loving people who accepted their circumstances and showed tremendous devotion to God, the Church, and their families. In many ways, the people of Chiltiupán taught my son and me how we should live our lives. They gave us hope for a more grounded future. They gave us time to simply “talk and connect.”

Gifts and talents have been distributed to all of us. The people of Santo Domingo gave me as much or more than I gave them. How are you using the talents God has given you?

Sample Two

"I am so nervous to go on this trip. I am not sure what I have to offer these people. How will I communicate with them? Will anything that I do there actually be helpful, meaningful? Can I make a difference?"

These questions, and many more, are swirling in my head as I set out to participate in a medical mission trip to El Salvador last spring. "I speak no Spanish. I have never been to any South or Central American country. I have no idea even what "mission" really means. I am not sure what made me sign up in the first place."More questions, more doubts.

As with many other times in my life, I push forward, perhaps largely driven by a curiosity to experience something different, without much expectation for exactly how the week will unfold. Unfold it does: a group of 12 people, with varied areas of expertise, from nursing to dentistry to pharmacy to medicine, spend 3 1/2 days seeing 845 patients in and around a remote mountaintop community outside of the port city of La Libertad in El Salvador. The doubts melt away, the language barrier lifts, and I welcome the familiar feeling of connecting with a patient, providing a truly listening ear, a meaningful touch, a healing heart. Even with limited pills to prescribe, I am able to treat the patients with medicine in its purest form, with that human interaction. So, at the end of an exhausting but exhilarating week, I feel almost guilty that I have gotten so much out of this experience. These people have welcomed my touch, have embraced the therapy I

have to offer, and, in so doing, they have renewed my true passion for medicine; a passion that is often times lost in my practice of medicine at home.

In the parable in MT 25, a master entrusts his possessions to each of his servants, giving, to each, different talents, according to their abilities. When the master returns, he settles his accounts with the servants. He is not looking to compare who has the most talents, but rather how each servant has used and grown his individual talents. The master knows and expects that each servant have the capability to expand those talents. The language of the parable is purposeful. First, the parable states, "A man going on a journey called in his servants and entrusted his possessions to them."It is clear, then, that the gifts that each servant has are really God's possessions to be used and expanded. S

Second, the parable states, "To one he gave five talents; to another, two; to a third, one."It is tempting to interpret the word, "talent" in a purely economic sense. Each servant charged to make a monetary return on investment for the master. However, the term talent emphasizes the point that the growth and "return on investment" is achieved instead by the use of the God-given gifts that each servant has been given.

Finally, the parable makes it clear that different numbers of talents are given to each servant, and "to each according to his ability." God does not give any of us more than we can handle. The servant's talents are expanded only by the servant taking a leap of faith and stretching himself to utilize the gifts that have been entrusted to him. So, the doubts that creep in as I embark on a mission trip are relieved by this knowledge that God has given me exactly those talents that I can handle according to my ability. In this way, then, my involvement in the mission trip is really driven not by my own curiosity, but rather by God's calling.

It is God's will for us to grow our gifts. For me, this growth happened on a mountaintop in El Salvador. To each of you, I ask, "Where do your talents lie? How are you growing the gifts that God has given you?"To each of you, I say, "Challenge yourself. Take the risk to grow your talents. Take comfort in the knowledge that God has given you gifts according to your own ability and not more, so the leap you take to grow is supported by the safety net of God's calling."

The "mission" does not need to happen in a foreign country or in a remote, mountaintop village. The "mission" can happen in your daily lives as you offer comfort to someone who is lonely and afraid, even when you are unsure exactly what to say. The "mission" can happen as you volunteer in a shelter, even if you don't know what to expect and it is in an unfamiliar or scary part of town. The "mission" can happen as you are willing to support your family member in a decision that you may not fully agree with or understand.

When the master comes to settle his account, what will that look like for you and your life?

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