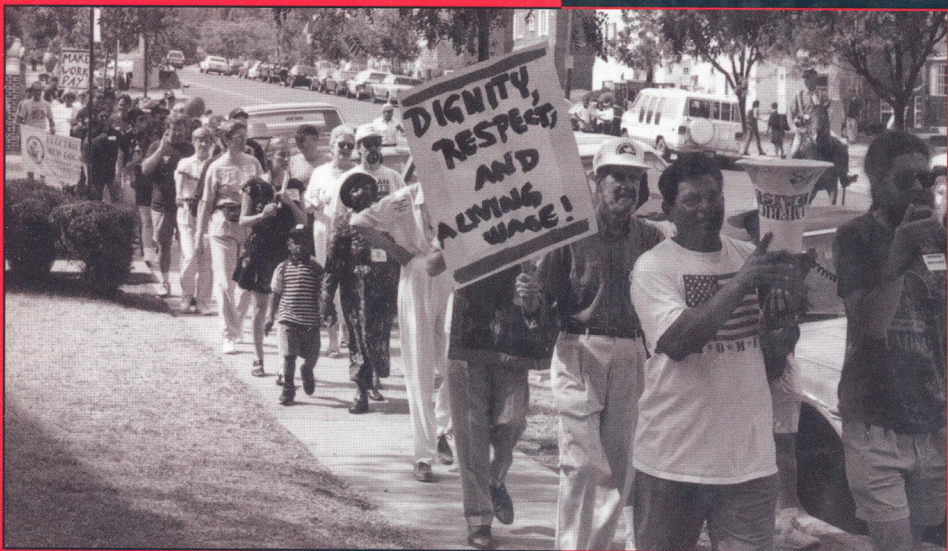


Credible Signs of Christ Alive

Case Studies from the Catholic Campaign
for Human Development



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Introduction



Catholic Social Teaching and the Catholic Campaign for Human Development

Before we turn to our case studies, it will be of value to create a context for the reader. The project profiles are best understood when viewed through the faith-justice lens of CCHD. That lens helps us to bring into focus the face of America's poor with the face of the poor revealed to us in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

Although not all of the cases studied have direct church links, all relate closely, as we will see, to biblical roots and Catholic Social Teaching. This introductory chapter will briefly outline something of those roots and teachings. But the reader is reminded, even cautioned, at this point, of the basic premise of the case-study approach: beginning with real life stories is always more informative and more exciting and usually the best way to ignite the Catholic sacramental imagination. Our goal should be to put ourselves into the story—to the extent that we can—and identify with the people in the cases. But first, let us begin with a story familiar to all of us about a tough stretch of road between Jerusalem and Jericho. As we will see, the same kind of road runs right across our country from Camden, New Jersey, to Los Angeles, California.

GOOD SAMARITAN: DO-GOODER OR RISK TAKER?

The lawyer tested Jesus with the age-old and ageless question, "Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" When Jesus' surprising response united love of God with love of neighbor, the questioner became defensive

and self-righteous. "And who is my neighbor?" (Stoutzenberger, *The Christian Call to Justice and Peace*, pp. 8–10).

Jesus replied, "A man fell victim to robbers as he went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. They stripped and beat him and went off leaving him half-dead. A priest happened to be going down that road, but when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side. Likewise, a Levite came to the place, and when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side. But a Samaritan traveler who came upon him was moved with compassion at the sight. He approached the victim, poured oil and wine over his wounds and bandaged them. Then he lifted him up on his own animal, took him to an inn and cared for him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper with the instruction, 'Take care of him. If you spend more than what I have given you, I shall repay you on my way back.' Which of these three, in your opinion, was neighbor to the robber's victim?" He answered, "The one who treated him with mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise" (Lk 10:30–37).

At this point probably most of us fast-forward to identify with the Samaritan but fail to really grasp the twist Jesus is giving to his parable. Most of us have some sense of what it means to be a victim. We might be scared stiff in certain city neighborhoods. We might have been laid-off in a corporate downsizing or had our pension plans vaporized overnight. We might even have been mugged walking home from the bus stop. In short, we can readily identify with the "help" part of Jesus' parable. Why not stop and help the poor guy? But the parable is about more than helping a victim on a dark street or highway. It is about more than the dilemma of stopping or dialing 911. It concerns the much broader issues of human solidarity and what Pope John Paul II refers to as entrenched "structures of sin." It is about systemic change, a way of being that promotes the good of every individual.

The story confronts us with numerous questions and the potential for endless application to our own times. Was the situation a question of charity or was there a longer-range issue of justice? Was this a chance occurrence or were travelers easy targets on a road controlled by gangsters? Who was responsible for safety? Most importantly, why were the people with the power, means, and authority—the community, religious, and government leaders—unwilling to respond? Apparently, they believed they couldn't help the bleeding man because his blood might contaminate them and render them unworthy to worship in the temple, according to the purity laws of the times. Institutional, religious, and national structures made them close their eyes and slink to the other side of the road. It is easy for us to pass judgment on these men, but what would we have done in the same situation? What do we do in our own lives to reach out

to those in need? Are there subtle sinful structures of racial, religious, national, or class prejudice that lead us to be like the men in the story?

The parable is meant to confront us with stark contrast. If eternal life is tied up with love of neighbor and victim—which side are we on? Are we willing to stand by and stand up for victims? Are we willing to risk and share some of our resources, power, and authority? Unfortunately, “Samaritan” has crept into our vocabulary as “do-gooder” but clearly Jesus had something much stronger in mind. The Samaritan—a victim himself as a member of an outcast minority in his time—takes a risk and opts for the victim, a trait repeated over and over in our case studies. Jesus’ meaning reaches all the way back to the prophets and forward to modern Catholic Social Teaching. We are all in some ways victims but God’s justice through Christ somehow clings to us. For Jesus, as for Jeremiah, to know God is to do justice (cf. Jer 22:13–16). God is on the side of the victim—the poor, the outcast. But that doesn’t mean he’s not on our side. It means rather that God is pushing us to see, understand, and identify with the less fortunate in our society. That is the meaning of the Church’s “option for and with the poor.” In a very real sense it is a call to conversion. It is also a twenty-first century insight into Jesus’ challenge to the lawyer, “Go and do likewise.”

Most of us probably want to “do likewise,” we are just not sure how to go about it. Often the hardest thing about following Christ is translating good intentions into deeds. Catholic Social Teaching offers some guidelines. But as has often been said, Catholic Social Teaching is “our best kept secret.” That unfortunately is still too true. Nonetheless, the word, as our case studies indicate, is getting out. For over thirty years, CCHD has put flesh on the bones of Catholic Social Teaching helping poor people become empowered and design solutions to their own problems. At the same time the Campaign has fostered partnerships and solidarity with those with greater access to resources and power. The best-kept secret is at least being whispered. The gospel call to justice is working to break the cycle of poverty. Indeed, we can as a community “go and do likewise.”

BIBLICAL ROOTS OF JUSTICE

As one reads and reflects on the case studies in the following chapters, it is very easy to project biblical images onto the men and women and the scenes described. In a few instances, I have done just that. The very revelation of God in the Old Testament, beginning with Genesis, takes place in a call to responsibility and justice. The Hebrew word used for *justice* relates to defense of the weak, the freeing of the oppressed. The story of the Exodus is key and a model for community organizing—complete with

training—" . . . I will assist both you and [Aaron] in speaking and will teach the two of you what you are to do" (Ex 4:15).

[Community Organizing] is a values-based process by which people—most often low- and moderate-income people previously absent from decision-making tables—are brought together in organizations to jointly act in the interest of their "communities" and the common good.

The term "values-based" refers to values that form the basis of CO theory and practice. For most community organizers and . . . groups, the values include: community, solidarity, equality, freedom, justice, the dignity of the individual, respect for differences, civility, and political democracy. (Larry Parachini and Sally Covington, *Community Organizing Toolbox: A Funder's Guide to Community Organizing*, Washington, D.C.: Neighborhood Funders Group, 2001, pp. 11 and 41, fn 9.)

The poverty, harsh labor, and humiliation which the Jews suffered in Egypt present a horrible and almost hopeless picture. But the spark of hope is never extinguished, God awakens the call to leadership in Moses. It is interesting to note that like the leaders in our cases, and probably, like most of us, leadership begins with lots of butterflies in the stomach. Moses too had that queasy feeling when he had to stand up for what was right. He was hesitant and stammering. "Who am I that I should go to the Pharaoh and lead the Israelites out of Egypt?" (Ex 3:11). "If you please Lord, send someone else" (Ex 4:13). But Moses rises to the call. That call to freedom, however, is also a call to responsibility and is, indeed, threatening not only to the powerful—the Pharaoh—but also to the powerless—the Hebrews themselves. The Exodus account is very candid and realistic, not unlike the stories which follow. In many ways the ancient Hebrews are a symbol of the reluctance we all experience when faced with real freedom and responsibility. But as the men and women in our case studies show us, the epitome of sin is giving in and giving up. That is denying one's humanity and denying God—idolatry. Today, if we are candid, we can imagine accusing Moses, the "activist," of stirring up the poor people who really were content with their lot. Indeed, Jesus too would fall prey to the same charge. The Scriptures are a mirror to read the signs of our own times.

When Israel forgets its own history and God's call to justice, the prophets—especially Amos, Isaiah, and Jeremiah—take up their role as social conscience. True religion cannot be reduced to ritual or lip service.

Away with your noisy songs!
I will not listen to the melodies of your harps.
But if you would offer me holocausts
then let justice surge like water,
and goodness like an unfailing stream (Am 5:23–24).

This, rather, is the fasting that I wish:
releasing those bound unjustly . . .
Setting free the oppressed . . .
Sharing your bread with the hungry,
sheltering the oppressed and the homeless;
Clothing the naked when you see them,
and not turning your back on your own (Is 58:6–7).

Liturgy and sacrament come alive and are made manifest in works of charity and justice. Religion is animated by service.

Jesus built on this tradition with his message of the Kingdom of God. His first preaching echoed Isaiah.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring glad tidings to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to proclaim a year acceptable to the
Lord (Lk 4:18–20).

These same themes reverberate throughout all of the gospels and the letters of St. Paul. Jesus is “the justice of God.” He was clearly a critic, a troublemaker, and a disturber of the peace who must have really riled the local authorities when he said that the Kingdom of God had already begun!

To return to the Good Samaritan story, it is not clear that the lawyer caught the real meaning of “neighbor” but we don’t have any excuses for missing the point. Solidarity and service are woven throughout the great lessons of the New Testament: the Beatitudes (Lk 6:20–26); Lazarus and the rich man (Lk 16:19–31); the washing of the feet (Jn 1:12–20); the final judgment (Mt 25:31–46).

Jesus’ death on the cross is the consequence of a life in the radical service of justice and love, a consequence of his option for the poor and outcast human beings, of a choice for his people that suffered exploitation and manipulation. Within an evil world, any commitment to justice and love is perilous. (Edward Schillebeeckx, *Church: The Human Story of God*, New York: Crossroad, 1990, p. 125.)

The lessons might seem harsh or demanding, but the meaning is clear: ignoring the sufferings of the poor not only hurts the poor; in the long run, it hurts us all. That is the thrust of Pope John Paul's message on solidarity between the poor and the non-poor. In his first encyclical *Redeemer of Humankind*, 1979, no. 13, he set the tone for that solidarity by reminding us that "through his incarnation the Son of God united himself to each one of us." If only we could grasp Christ's identification with all of humanity—and especially the poor and the vulnerable—we could move in faith to a real human solidarity.

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

The biblical roots of justice and God's call to human solidarity, especially solidarity with the poor as manifested in the Incarnation, involve serious ethical, economic, social, and political implications. Being Catholic means being socially responsible. We are called "to work for justice; to serve those in need; to pursue peace; and to defend life, dignity and rights of all sisters and brothers. This is the call of Jesus, the challenge of the prophets, and the living tradition of the Church" (U.S. Catholic Bishops, *A Century of Social Teaching*, 1990, 1).

This call to action and service is spelled out in a series of Papal documents and Bishops' statements which form modern Catholic Social Teaching. The major documents of modern Catholic Social Teaching are included in the table below.

- Pope Leo XIII, *On the Condition of Labor*, 1891
- Pope Pius XI, *The Reconstruction of the Social Order*, 1931
- Pope John XXIII, *Christianity and Social Progress*, 1961
- Pope John XXIII, *Peace on Earth*, 1963
- Vatican Council II, *The Church in the Modern World*, 1965
- Pope Paul VI, *The Development of Peoples*, 1967
- Pope Paul VI, *A Call to Action*, 1971
- World Synod of Bishops, *Justice in the World*, 1971
- Pope Paul VI, *Evangelization in the Modern World*, 1975
- Pope John Paul II, *On Human Work*, 1981
- U.S. Catholic Bishops, *The Challenge of Peace*, 1983
- U.S. Catholic Bishops, *Economic Justice for All*, 1986
- Pope John Paul II, *On Social Concern*, 1987
- Pope John Paul II, *The Hundredth Year*, 1991
- Pope John Paul II, *The Gospel of Life*, 1995
- Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia in America*, 1999

Catholic Social Teaching began in the late nineteenth century with Pope Leo XIII's *On the Condition of Labor* (1891) which took up questions related to the harsh economic conditions and abuse of workers brought about by the Industrial Revolution. The encyclical supported the workers' right to organize and join unions and the need for a "family" or "just" wage. This legacy continued through Vatican II and the U.S. Bishops' *Economic Justice for All* (1986) and John Paul II's *On Social Concern* (1987) and *The Hundredth Year* (1991). The recent encyclicals of Pope John Paul II broaden the legacy to deal with structures of sin, global injustice, the growing gap between rich and poor, and the contemporary dangers of consumerism.

Pope John Paul's social message embodies new elements which have come to the fore since the Second Vatican Council, 1961–1965. These include a social or structural dimension to sin and a "preferential option for the poor and the vulnerable." What the Pope refers to as "structures of sin" are rooted in "personal sin and thus always linked to the concrete acts of individuals who introduce these structures, consolidate them and make them difficult to remove. And thus they grow stronger, spread and become the source of other sins, and so influence people's behavior" (*The Social Concerns of the Church*, 1988, no. 36). Discrimination against racial minorities would be the prime example for Americans. But overall, the realization of the social and structural dimensions of sin cries out for a preferential response.

These two teachings, the social or structural dimension of sin and the option for the poor, have pointed the Church toward a more active stance which seeks to empower poor people themselves. Solidarity is the key.

Positive signs in the contemporary world are the growing awareness of solidarity of the poor among themselves, their efforts to support one another, and their public demonstrations on the social scene which, without recourse to violence, present their own needs and rights in the face of the inefficiency or corruption of public authorities. By virtue of her own evangelical duty, the Church feels called to take her stand beside the poor, to discern the justice of their requests, and to help satisfy them, without losing sight of the good of groups in the context of the common good. (Pope John Paul II, *On Social Concerns*, 1987, no. 39.)

The "cries of those who are poor" in our society demand new and renewed commitment to systemic social change through organizing, community outreach, legislative networks, racial reconciliation, social policy development, coalition-building, and public and private sector partnerships for economic development. (U.S. Bishops, *In All Things Charity*, 1999, 32.)

Two additional quotes capture well the social commitment of the Church and the intimate linkage between faith and justice.

The joys and hopes, the sorrows and anxieties of the women and men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way oppressed—these are the joys and hopes, the sorrows and anxieties of the followers of Christ. (Vatican II, *The Church and the Modern World*, 1965, no. 1.)

Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation. (World Synod of Bishops, *Justice in the World*, 1971, no. 6.)

The challenge embodied in these quotes is framed by a set of principles and themes which have been distilled from scripture, history, and Catholic reflection on ethics, economics, politics, and law. These basic themes of Catholic Social Teaching will be fleshed out in each of our case studies. The following brief preview alerts the reader to some basic concepts.

1. *Life and dignity of the human person.* Every one of us is made in God's image. The human person is central. Basic dignity is not something we earn; it is a gift of God. No matter what TV, pop culture, fashion, the stock market, or the government say, people are sacred and more important than things.
2. *Call to family, community, and participation.* How we organize society, laws, economics, and public policy affects the integrity and well-being of individuals and families. We depend on one another. We need to participate in the decisions that affect us; when one suffers, we all suffer. *Subsidiarity*, a key concept, is related to *participation* and means that decisions about governance and economics should be made as closely as possible to the people most directly affected. Families, neighborhoods, community organizations, and small businesses should have a strong voice. But when necessary for the *common good* larger government entities should be ready to step in and assist.
3. *Rights and responsibilities.* Fundamental human rights need to be protected. Each person has a right to food, shelter, health care, education, and employment. Coupled with these rights, however, is our individual and collective *responsibility* to help meet the needs of one another and society as a whole.
4. *Option for and with the poor and vulnerable.* The test of our society's real moral worth is how we treat the most vulnerable people in our midst. Catholic tradition affirms Jesus' teaching on the Last Judgment. "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me. . . . Amen, I

say to you, what you did not do for one of those least ones, you did not do for me" (Mt 25:35–45). Working with the poor and vulnerable is a special duty.

5. *Dignity of work and the rights of workers.* The dignity of the person and the dignity of work are intimately connected. The economy exists to serve people, not the other way around. The basic rights of workers must be protected: the right to organize and join a union, the right to a living wage, and adequate benefits such as health insurance.
6. *Solidarity.* The teaching of the gospel calls us to love and serve our neighbor but to expand that concept of neighbor beyond family, national, racial, and religious limits. We are called to be one human family and in a special way to manifest our solidarity with those less fortunate. This notion of solidarity is a central theme of John Paul II and is a contemporary way of expressing St. Paul's image of the "Body of Christ" in the age of globalization.
7. *Care for God's creation.* From the opening lines of the Bible, we are called upon to live in harmony with one another and with God's creation. *Stewardship* of the environment means concern for issues such as air and water pollution, exploitation of animals, increased use of pesticides and fertilizers, global warming, and recycling of materials. Care of the earth is a requirement of our faith.

The above seven themes are a popular thumbnail sketch of Catholic Social Teaching. However, we should not be content with simply checking off a list of themes or principles. Principles can sound too idealistic or academic. Moreover, the application of broad principles in complicated economic and political situations is a very delicate matter. Massaro quotes Pope Paul VI:

In the face of such widely varying situations, it is difficult for us to utter a unified message and to put forward a solution which has universal validity. Such is not our ambition nor our mission. It is up to the Christian communities to analyze with objectivity the situation which is proper to their own country, to shed on it the light of the Gospel's unalterable words and to draw principles of reflection, norms of judgment and directives for action from the social teaching of the Church. (Pope Paul VI, *A Call to Action*, 1971, no. 4.)

Massaro goes on to say that these "sentences contain much wisdom" (Massaro, pp. 107–108). Indeed, as we will see, the same kind of wisdom is evident in the cases below. Principles cannot be applied in a "one-size-fits-all" fashion.

Very often the reaction to the Church's social teaching and to the political and economic implications of the gospel is either one of ignorance—"I didn't know that"—or defensive discomfort—"What is the Church doing

messing around in politics and business?" Both are unfortunate reactions and not far removed from the parable of the Good Samaritan. But these reactions usually change when principles are seen and understood in practice. That is what this book hopes to accomplish.

CASE STUDIES

It is in the conversations with project participants and the analysis of their own situations that human dignity, workers' rights, solidarity, the option for the poor, and concern for the environment came alive for me and revealed the human face of God. The human story—the human struggle—opens the way to shared meaning and free discussion where we can hear and better understand the stranger, the poor, the marginalized. It is only in this way that we get to know who our neighbor is and better understand what is really happening on that tough stretch of highway to Jericho.

Many times during my visits to the CCHD projects, the beautiful reflections of John Kavanaugh in *Faces of Poverty, Faces of Christ* came back to me:

There is a poverty which is not blessed

It is a curse . . .

It can crush the spirit . . .

Christ came not to bless this poverty, but to change it . . .

Finally, so much would he want this dehumanizing poverty changed, he revealed that our response to such degradation would be the very condition of our entry into his reign . . .

So much did he want the sufferings of these poor attended to that he took upon himself their skin and bones

And told us we would be attending to him

The projects reflected on in the next six chapters cut across the United States and represent a broad range of the working poor—whites, African-Americans, Latin Americans, and a variety of immigrant groups including Africans, Asians, Hispanics, and Russians. The case studies focus on CCHD's thirty-year history in community organization as well as its more recent emphasis on economic development. A clear concern was to link the cases to CCHD's emphasis on Education for Justice and its poverty awareness campaign, PovertyUSA.org. Both efforts reach out to the non-poor. This educational component is essential to CCHD's mission and is highlighted in the 1970 founding resolution. "The poor have not chosen poverty. Poverty is the result of circumstances over which the poor themselves have little or no control. We hope through the Campaign for Hu-

man Development to impress the facts on the non-poor and to effect in them a conversion of heart, a growth in compassion and sensitivity to the needs of their brothers [and sisters] in want" (*Resolution on the CCHD*, NCCB, 1970).

The first case describes the Delmarva Poultry Justice Alliance and its effort to bring together small chicken farmers with poor, immigrant poultry workers to organize and fight for workers' rights, better working coalitions, and more just contract arrangements.

The Northern Virginia suburbs of Washington, D.C., is the locale of the second case study. Working largely with low-income, new immigrants, the Tenants and Workers Support Committee organized and won the Alexandria City Council's support for a living wage for all city government contract workers.

The third case chronicles the decades-long organizing struggle of the Camden Churches Organized for People and the battle to rebuild Camden, New Jersey, one of the poorest cities in the country. Their organizing effort eventually won massive support from the governor and state legislature.

Southwest Iowa with its rapidly changing hog industry is the scene for the fourth case study. The Southeast Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement are fighting the large "factory farms" which have put in jeopardy a whole way of life and raise serious issues of air and water pollution.

Our fifth case study concerns the Anti-Displacement Project in Springfield, Massachusetts. This case describes the successful efforts of poor people to buy out and rehabilitate five large public housing projects and to establish and control a number of new economic initiatives which combine wealth and assets to benefit their communities and ensure long-term, decent-paying jobs for low-income residents.

The final case, *Comunidad en Movimiento*, is a parish-based community activity of Dolores Mission, one of the poorest parishes in Los Angeles. A group of Mexican women has stood up to the violence in their neighborhood and worked for peace establishing a safe-streets program and community policing model project.

As will become evident each project was very different and at different stages of development. Some groups were very experienced, others more recently organized. Some were clearly successful, others struggling. Some were very closely related to parishes and congregations, others were not. However, all adhered to the CCHD's criteria and all were enlivened by themes of Catholic Social Teaching listed above—clearly some more consciously than others. After spending time with each community, a number of themes emerged and cut across all the cases. Human dignity and respect were always mentioned first. Women, young people, and

new immigrants were key actors. Training for community leadership and for jobs was a priority for every group. The need to “demystify the economy” kept emerging in discussions as well as the need for something akin to a “spirituality of work.” Affordable housing, health insurance, and childcare were on everybody’s mind. The need for transparency in government and business allowing for meaningful dialogue with workers was another focal issue. In addition, concern for the environment is rapidly gaining a voice among the working poor.

Three characteristics stood out. First, the involved community organizations held religiously to the view that there are no permanent enemies. While strong stances might be called for, alliances and partnerships, whether with government or business, were always sought. Second, participants in the cases were in it for the long haul. The poor understood that quick fixes don’t work. They are committed to the long struggle. Third, in each of the projects examined, I was struck by the subtle traces of Christ’s paschal mystery. Repeatedly, groups faced apparent failure, even death—but they did not give up. They somehow were able to elicit new options out of those apparent failures. They were able to turn death to resurrection.

The issue of faith-based organizing demands further elaboration. Churches have played a key role in providing space for discussion across racial and ethnic lines. Although not all of our cases are examples of faith-based organizing, all are, in some ways, influenced by this approach. CCHD’s faith-based organizing goes back to the 1970s. But in the last few years, the organizing role of churches, synagogues, and increasingly mosques, has moved to the national stage. Political scientist Meredith Ramsey has highlighted the importance of faith-based organizing as well as the need for non-threatening “free spaces” for learning and discussion. “Where do ordinary people, steeped in lifelong experiences of humiliation, barred from acquisition of basic skills of citizenship—from running meetings to speaking in public—gain the courage, the self-confidence, and above all the hope to take action on their own behalf? . . . For Americans, particularly black and Hispanic Americans, that free space is most often found in church” (Meredith Ramsey, “Redeeming the City: Exploring the Relationship between Church and Metropolis,” *Urban Affairs Review* 33 [May 1998]: 618–619).

METHOD

In each of the cases the author loosely followed the method known as the “pastoral circle.” The approach has four basic steps. The first is *immersion*

into the community or situation. Listen to the people, hear their story. What is going on? What are people feeling? Try to see what they are seeing. The basis for any understanding or analysis is lived experience. The second step in the circle is an *analysis* of the situation. What are the patterns? What are the important political, social, and economic factors? Who has the power? As Massaro reminds us, "humility before the data" is important. Only then can we really understand the issues. In the third step we reflect on our understanding of the issues. That *reflection* is based on our faith perspective, scripture, Catholic Social Teaching, and our grasp of the working of the Holy Spirit in the community. With this faith reflection we can now make a judgment on the issues. The fourth step in this pastoral circle concerns *decision* and *action*. Given the experience—now analyzed and reflected on—what should one do? If we have enough information, we move to action.

This is, in a nutshell, the method which I followed and would suggest might be a helpful approach for the individual reader or discussion group. Listen to the story, experience with the people, understand the issues, make a judgment based on faith as to where you stand on the issue, and then act on your judgment. You will obviously note how the people have acted and then whether the case prompts you to some action. For many individuals and parish groups, two reactions often arise when one reaches the action stage. The first is that situations of poverty and injustice are too complicated. There is always the other side of the story or more to learn. The second reaction is the nagging sense that one person, one committee, or one parish is powerless before such a huge problem. Don't be put off. Both concerns are paralyzers!! Acting alone is difficult but a community, parish, or diocese acting together can accomplish a great deal. Read the cases, reflect on what the six struggling organizations have accomplished. That in itself will be an incentive to action.

The method, outlined above, closely parallels CCHD's "Journey to Justice" process retreat which attempts to prayerfully assist participants to recognize the struggles of those who are poor and to help break down the myths and stereotypes about poverty in the U.S.A. The journey consists of three phrases—planning, a weekend immersion retreat with leaders from a CCHD project, and follow-up action.

One further point deserves mention before moving on to the case studies themselves. Frederick Perella, one of the formulators of CCHD's education for justice approach, recently praised the Campaign's early accomplishments. He also mentioned some shortcomings. One in particular caught my attention. Perella pointed out that although projects involved clergy and laity, they rarely involved the parish faith community as such.

The initial event of the Journey to Justice process is a weekend retreat that is designed for twenty to twenty-five participants. This retreat consists of eight sessions that build on each other and represent a key part of the total conversion process. During the retreat, participants are led through reflection on and discussion of the scriptural call to justice and Catholic social teaching, especially as they relate to the preferential option for and with the poor. A major and key portion of the second day of the retreat is devoted to a lengthy immersion experience with a CCHD funded group (or other empowered low-income group as defined by CCHD and Catholic Charities USA). Following the immersion experience, participants are introduced to the concept of social sin and its relation to personal sin. This is followed by a session on social analysis within the context of the pastoral circle. The participants are then called to imagine anew what can be done to address root causes of poverty in their community. The final session is a call to commit to taking the first step to make real their image of a just community by agreeing to attend a post-retreat meeting. This is often done within the context of a liturgy. (Ulrich, *Parish Social Ministry*, p. 104.)

“Such projects therefore were not often seen as expressions of evangelism or development of the community of faith. Overt effort to integrate prayer and spiritual reflection into the dynamics of the projects has been rare” (Frederick Perella, Jr., “Roman Catholic Approach to Urban Ministry, 1945–85,” in Clifford J. Green, ed., *Churches, Cities and Human Community: Urban Ministry in the United States, 1945–1985* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996], p. 204).

CCHD funding, of course, is open to all, regardless of faith commitment or church affiliation. Many groups with no religious ties are funded. Nonetheless, the author saw a notable change from Perella’s earlier observation. This change likely, but not entirely, relates to the increase in faith-based organizing. Scripture reflection, public prayer, ecumenical services, sacramental vision, and liturgy all emerged in the context of the work described below—obviously in some cases more than others. Moreover, the parishes and congregations involved in the projects reviewed show a direct link, a continuum, between charity and justice and between personal sin and social or structural sin. They sought consciously to relate faith and justice. In a few instances, as we will see, there is explicit linkage of social justice concerns to Catholic Trinitarian theology and Eu-

charistic liturgy. Some of what I saw and heard was captured by the provocative questions of urban faith-based organizer, Clifford J. Green:

Ministry to cities needs . . . a renewal of faith vigorous enough to meet the challenge of the urban context. Will biblical faith be revised so that it is as hopeful of public redemption as personal salvation, of social justice as of peace of mind? Will a new and enduring practice of lay vocation in public life arise? . . . Will a new ecumenism be born to serve the new millennium? The formidable challenge of renewing American cities exposes the equally formidable task of renewing the American Churches. *Veni Creator Spiritus!*" ("Seeking Community in the Metropolis: Reflections on the Future," in Green, ed., *Churches, Cities and Human Community*, p. 307.)

Indeed, *Veni Creator Spiritus*—Come Holy Spirit. The reader will find much of the Spirit and the new ecumenism that Green calls for in the following case studies. Moreover, it is often the faith connection that keeps communities going, sometimes in the face of a violent "culture of death." In the Gospel of John 1:38–39, Jesus issues an invitation to "come and see." You are invited to do just that—come along on the CCHD journey to justice and get to know some of your American neighbors. You will see many credible signs of Christ alive and meet many Good Samaritans—most of them poor people but also many priests, ministers, sisters, politicians, business people, and parishioners like you.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the parable of the Good Samaritan. What might be some applications for you today?
2. Talk about the biblical roots of justice. How do you see scripture influencing your views of justice and politics? Why do you think Jesus might be understood as the justice of God?
3. Read through the seven themes of Catholic Social Teaching. Try to apply these themes to some current situations in your own parish, city, or region.
4. Discuss the meaning of solidarity between the poor and non-poor. Can you think of any current examples?
5. Talk about the four steps in the pastoral circle: immersion-experience; analysis-understanding; reflection-judgment; action-decision. Discuss each step with your group. Why is this method described in a circle?
6. Discuss your understanding of CCHD and its approach to helping poor people become empowered. How has your parish or diocese been involved with CCHD?