

PRAY

Compassionate God, you anointed Jesus with the Spirit and appointed him to bring good news to the poor. You anoint us with the Spirit and appoint us to bring good news to the poor in our time. Help us make your word come true. Amen.

“Persons have the right to migrate to support themselves and their families. The Church recognizes that all the goods of the earth belong to all people. When persons cannot find employment in their country of origin to support themselves and their families, they have a right to find work elsewhere in order to survive. Sovereign nations should provide ways to accommodate this right.”

Strangers No Longer:
Together on a Journey of Hope,
United States Conference of
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SPiRIT

Working with IMMIGRANTS

By Cindy Schlosser

Manuel and I sat on an old, beat-up couch in the *sala* (living room). He had come home from a long day of roofing in the heat of an El Paso summer day.

“Cindy,” he asks, “why did you come here?”

Manuel is referring to Annunciation House, where we both live with about 30 other men, women, and children. It is our home and has been home for nearly 100,000 immigrants and refugees since its doors opened in 1978.

“I believe I have a responsibility as a U.S. citizen and a Catholic to care for those who are seeking work in order to provide a decent, humane life for their families and themselves,” I say.

I have volunteered for two years of service at Annunciation House. Manuel has come out of necessity to support his family.

“I make the journey from Nicaragua and stay a year to make enough money to give my children the things that only money can buy: food, clothing, and education,” Manuel explains. “Then, I return to Nicaragua for three months or until the money starts getting low.

“While I’m in Nicaragua, I stay at home and spend time with my children and my wife. I don’t look for work because there aren’t any jobs. I am a father and a husband. I have a responsibility to provide two basic necessities for my family—love and money to live. The situation in my country does not allow me to do that, so I have to search beyond our borders.

“I have made the journey from Nicaragua to the U.S. five times and have only been deported once,” Manuel continues.

“Why would you choose to go back to Nicaragua after making it here safely?” I ask.

I have learned at Annunciation House that some immigrants come to the United States to earn enough money to return to their families and open a restaurant or other family business in their home country. Others stay and send money (remittances) back to their families, understanding they may never see their families again.

“I have six children and my wife at home in Nicaragua,” Manuel continues. “I leave home and travel thousands of kilometers through Central America, Mexico, and the U.S. border to get here. Mexico is the worst.

“This last time, my brother-in-law and I walked three days through Chiapas (a state in the south of Mexico that borders Guatemala). We rode cargo trains and ran. I have seen people fall off the tops of trains, losing arms and legs. One man was sliced in half, right down the middle.”

Manuel runs his hand across his stomach to show me

“We immigrants are robbed and beaten by gangs, by the Mexican police, and security officials hired by the train companies. Many women have been raped.”

Casa del Migrante, a shelter for immigrants in Arriaga, Mexico, documents violence toward immigrants. A third of men and 40% of women fall victim to violence in the 160 miles between the Guatemala/Mexico border and Arriaga.



Maria, a guest at Annunciation House, and Cindy.

At the border between Mexico and the United States, immigrants again experience brutal treatment from the Border Patrol and civilian vigilante groups or in detention facilities.

I feel awe at the love Manuel has for his family. He risks his life for them. Familiar feelings of sadness and anger surface as they do each time I sit with a friend or stranger and listen to their stories of struggle for daily bread and a life of dignity. I feel frustration because our U.S. trade policies lead to the emigration of millions from Mexico and Central America.

As agricultural products flow back and forth among the countries, farming becomes a bigger business. People who have survived on small plots of land by raising food for their own livelihood get displaced.

I feel at home in Annunciation House, surrounded by men and women who share lives of both extreme poverty and of undying hope.

During my two and a half years here, I have learned about immigration issues from books, seminars, meetings, and the Internet. But most importantly, I learned to listen to those whose voices are not heard.

I have heard fathers cry as they speak of the decision to leave their children. I have visited their children in their home countries, where they themselves cannot go and listened to their daughters and sons cry for them.

I have listened to mothers pour out their fears as well as their hopes for their children’s future. I have listened as teenagers vent the frustration of being the poor *indocumentado*, undocumented kid, who lives in a shelter.

“The poor are never invited to the table to discuss their own destiny,” says Ruben Garcia, the director of Annunciation House for the past 30 years. He teaches us to listen not out of pity but because our well being and that of the most marginalized, the poorest of the poor, are so deeply connected.

Sitting there with Manuel, I no longer try to explain my beliefs or philosophies. I simply listen. I witness to the truth of his experience and learn from his life of pain, hunger, fear, love, and hope.

I have learned to ask myself, “What am I doing to ensure that my neighbors’ voices are heard?”



Many children stay at Annunciation House.

“The human dignity and human rights of undocumented migrants should be respected. Regardless of their legal status, migrants, like all persons, possess inherent human dignity that should be respected. Often they are subject to punitive laws and harsh treatment from enforcement officers from both receiving and transit countries. Government policies that respect the basic human rights of the undocumented are necessary.”

Strangers No Longer

SUNDAY GOSPEL

3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Jesus fulfills God's promises.

LUKE: Many have undertaken to arrange a narrative of the events that have been fulfilled among us, as they were delivered to us from the beginning by the eyewitnesses and ministers of the word. It has seemed good to me also, having accurately traced things from the first, to put in writing an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know with certainty about the instruction you have received.

NARRATOR 1: Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, speaking in the synagogue. Word concerning him went out throughout the region. He taught in their synagogues, and all esteemed him.

NARRATOR 2: Jesus came to Nazareth, where he had been raised. He went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day as he usually did and stood up to read.



NARRATOR 1: The scroll of Isaiah the prophet was handed to him. Unrolling the scroll, he found the place where it was written—

JESUS: The Spirit of the Holy One is upon me; therefore, God has anointed me and sent me to proclaim good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty for captives, sight to the blind, release to prisoners, to announce a year of favor from God.

NARRATOR 2: Rolling up the scroll, Jesus gave it back to the assistant and sat down. Everyone in the synagogue fixed their eyes on him. He began by saying to them—

JESUS: Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.

Luke 1.1-4; 4.14-21

Border Mass

Some 500 Catholics from Mexico and the United States gather for Mass at the border fence on All Souls Day, November 2. Bishops from El Paso, Texas and Las Cruces, New Mexico celebrate Eucharist with the bishop of Juarez, Mexico. The Border Mass began in 1999.

All Souls is a day for remembering and praying for the dead, an important feast day in Hispanic

culture. The gathering also celebrates life, work for justice, and the human dignity of immigrants. The Eucharist remembers the many immigrants who have died trying to cross the border and the many girls murdered and buried in mass graves in Juarez.

For Bishop Richardo Ramirez of Las Cruces the fence represents crimes, sins, and violence on both sides of the border for which we need forgiveness.

In his homily he stresses that the physical barrier shouldn't stop people on both sides of the border from loving each other "as the brothers and sisters they are in the eyes of God."

At the sign of peace the fence prevents handshakes or embraces. The bishops and people press hands against the fence from both sides.



QUESTIONS

- 1 What motivates Cindy to work at Annunciation House?
- 2 How does the word of God become the work of God?
- 3 Whose voices are not heard in your school or community? What can you do to "invite them to the table?"
- 4 Why does Luke write his gospel?
- 5 How does Jesus fulfill the scriptures he reads?
- 6 How do we continue to fulfill the scripture from Isaiah?

Jesus: Who is he?

Jesus identifies himself with the poor of every kind and makes active love toward them the condition for entering his kingdom.

Catechism of the Catholic Church #544

Christology is an area of study. Just as biology studies life forms and psychology studies the human psyche or spirit, christology studies Jesus, who is the Christ. The title Christ means the anointed one or messiah. To think about christology is to reflect on the meaning of Jesus Christ for the human race and human history.

The question that people think about when they study christology is one that Jesus himself asks: “Who do you say that I am?” In Mark’s gospel Peter answers, “You are the messiah” (8.29). In John’s gospel Martha answers, “You are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world.” These answers identify Jesus as Israel’s long-awaited messiah.

In Mark’s gospel Jesus preaches the good news of God’s nearness from village to village in Galilee; he heals the sick and frees those afflicted with addictions and compulsions.

In Matthew’s gospel Jesus begins his preaching with the sermon on the mount, proclaiming in the beatitudes that the poor, the peacemakers, the persecuted are blessed.

In Luke’s gospel Jesus is a Spirit-filled and prayerful prophet who brings the good news of a jubilee to the poor. This year the Church reads from Luke’s gospel.

In Sunday’s gospel Jesus delivers his inaugural sermon at Sabbath worship in his hometown synagogue. He opens and reads from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah; then makes the claim that he is the prophet whom the Spirit of God anoints and sends to proclaim “good news to the poor, liberty to captives, sight to the blind, release to

prisoners, a year of favor from God” (Luke 4.18-19).

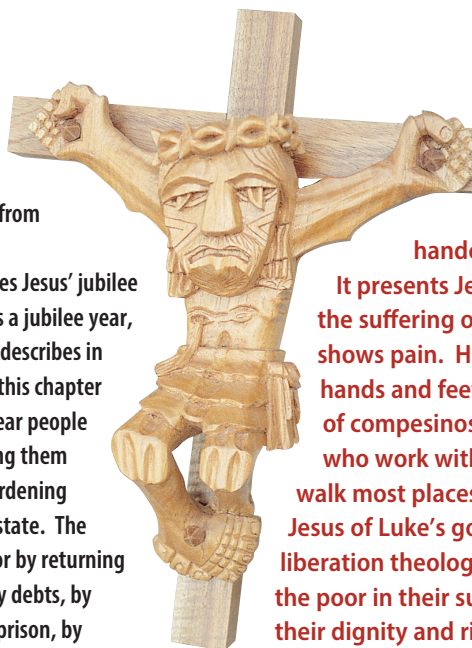
This passage announces Jesus’ jubilee mission. A year of favor is a jubilee year, which the Old Testament describes in Leviticus 25. The laws in this chapter require that every 50th year people restore the equality among them and stop poverty from hardening into an accepted natural state. The jubilee laws favor the poor by returning land they have sold to pay debts, by freeing those in debtors’ prison, by forgiving debts.

Luke’s gospel has a jubilee christology. It draws on Israel’s scriptures to reflect on who Jesus is, passages such as Isaiah’s. For Luke Jesus is a Spirit-filled prophet who comes to lift up the poor, heal the sick, and forgive sinners. He is a prophet mighty in word and deed (Luke 24.19), whose mission puts him in conflict with religious and government authorities.

Each gospel includes some stories about Jesus that the other gospels don’t tell. The stories unique to Luke’s gospel show Jesus’ mission to the poor, his willingness to forgive debts and sins, and his prayerfulness.

Only in Luke’s gospel is Jesus born in a stable among poor shepherds. Only in Luke’s gospel does Jesus tell the parable of the good Samaritan, a despised enemy who helps a man beaten, robbed, and left along a roadside that two temple officials, a priest and levite, pass by (10.30-37). Only Luke’s gospel tells the story of the merciful father who forgives his prodigal, youngest son and goes out to reconcile his hard-working, oldest son with his brother (15.11-32).

Only in Luke does Jesus tell the parable of the fool who reaps his biggest harvest ever and build bigger barns to store his crops rather than share with the poor, then dies (12.13-21). Only Luke tells the parable of the rich man and the beggar Lazarus, who lay starving and covered with sores



The Hernandez family of San Lucas Toliman in Guatemala

handcarved this crucifix.

It presents Jesus identifying with the suffering of the poor. His face shows pain. His body is short; his hands and feet are big like those of campesinos, the peasants who work with their hands and walk most places they go. Like the Jesus of Luke’s gospel the Jesus of liberation theologies accompanies the poor in their suffering and affirms their dignity and right to justice.

at the rich man’s gate. When both die, Lazarus rests in the bosom of Abraham and the rich man in torment (16.19-21).

Only Luke’s gospel tells the story of a short tax collector named Zacchaeus, who gives half his goods to the poor when Jesus stays at his house (19.1-10).

Luke stresses Jesus’ jubilee mission—his concern for people who are poor. As we hear these gospel passages in 2013, we will hear Jesus call the people of his time and the people of our time to care for the poor and change social systems that keep poor people poor.

FAITH in ACTION

- 1 Draw, paint, or write to express your christology, your reflection on who Jesus is. Who is the Jesus with whom you most identify? Use one of the passages unique to Luke’s gospel.
- 2 How do the crucifixes in your parish church and in your home portray Jesus? What christology do they express?

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