Dual Pandemics:
Why Black Lives Matter

Volume 5 Issue 1

NEW HORIZONS

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Letter from the Editor

By Barbara Anne Kozee

The horizon delineates earth from sky; it is a theoretical line, and its distance from the observer is always varying. I have never seen such beautiful horizons as the sunsets that I have witnessed atop Jesuit School of Theology (JST) buildings. These are multicolored, jaw-dropping horizons that encompass the Berkeley marina, hills and mountains, the shimmering lights of Oakland, the Golden Gate Bridge, and the city of San Francisco (all on a clear day, of course). For a brief, elusive moment, the sinking sun and the quieting earth are one, joined in joyous spirit along that horizon line that separates and varies. Horizons are an appropriate image for our journal for a few reasons. For one, they are unattainable by nature. Theology is a discipline of hope-filled seeking. As theologians and ministers, we sit in comfort with liminality and unknowing, with both the already and the not-yet. Just as the horizon always remains beyond our human limits, our understanding of God is constantly changing, varying, and ultimately incomplete. Secondly, horizons bring together. Our journal is a place where the human meets the divine, where we begin to catch a glimpse of God working in society. New horizons occur when positions and perspectives are shifted and varied. This journal dares to posit new ways of looking at the world around us, always in critical fidelity to the Gospels and the mission of Christ.

This first issue of *New Horizons*, "Dual Pandemics: Why Black Lives Matter," exists as the fifth volume and urgent continuation of the previous series of JST journals known as *New Wineskins*. In Tim Manatt, SJ's inaugural Letter from the Editor for the Spring 2006 issue, he cites a reason for the journal's creation as a means to grapple with the following question: "What does the culturally contextualized study of theology, and a faith that contributes to justice, mean to us?" In our current social context, the COVID-19 pandemic and the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor have deeply defined our theological paths. This issue seeks to respond to the urgency of the situation around us and to provide theological reflections on health crises and racial injustice, problems and questions that are deeply intertwined. In this issue, JST students will reflect on social issues as they see them and propose potential paths forward, from including voices from the Black Church, to introducing new communities to James Cone, to incorporating Ubuntu ethics into U.S. reconciliatory processes, to seeing the family as a site of social change. While each author articulates a unique response to our world, engaging systemic, communal, and personal levels of analyses, they all offer a certain degree of hope for dismantling systemic racism and white supremacy during pandemic times. Further and importantly, they articulate a place for theologians and ministers in global conversations on injustice. Finally, the Editorial Board has provided a pastoral reflection on Pope Francis's *Fratelli tutti*, identifying how the themes of welcoming the stranger might resonate in our current conversations.

This issue represents a beginning; it is a hopeful acknowledgment that we construct new horizons, and we realize our future. The work of resistance and regeneration will never be over, but our theology and faith can ground us in distinct approaches to addressing social issues and disrupting oppressive systems. This work is necessarily collaborative, as each of us possesses revelatory understandings of the perceived world for mutual interpretation and contemplation. Like the sunsets that we at JST are blessed with every day, may we always seek to experience beauty amongst the mystery, to find solace in ephemeral presence, and to see God on the horizon, as briefly gorgeous as this clarity can be.

Editorial Board

Editor

Barbara Anne Kozee

Barb Kozee (she/her) is a 2nd year Master of Divinity student concentrated in Christian social ethics. She comes to JST with a background in International Political Economy. In her academic scholarship, Barb aims to bring together the fields of theology and the social sciences. She is currently interested in the relationship between religion, voting behavior, and civil discourse and has written on issues related to gender, sexuality, and the family.

Editoral Board

Thomas Bambrick, SJ

Thomas Bambrick, SJ, is a member of the U.S. Midwest Province of the Society of Jesus and a third-year Master of Divinity student at JST. He has an academic background in English literature, Italian, education, and philosophy. His current interests include educational equity, Ignatian Spirituality and formation, and racial justice.

Alyssa Moore

Alyssa Moore is a second-year Master of Divinity student at JST. She has an academic background in both theology and environmental science, and is currently a 2020-2021 Fellow with CreatureKind, an interdenominational organization exploring the intersections of faith, farmed animal welfare, and other social justice issues. Her recent work in ecotheology and Catholic thought will be published as a chapter in the forthcoming volume *Valuing Lives, Healing Earth.*

Matt Yim, SJ

Matt Yim, SJ, is a member of the US West (UWE) Province and is a 2nd year Master of Divinity student at JST-SC. He has degrees in English Literature, Chinese Language & Literature, Library & Information Science, and Philosophy. His current scholarly interests include disability studies and the Old Testament, 20th century French philosophy, and the American Pragmatist philosophers John Dewey and George Herbert Mead.

Stanley Goh, SJ

Stanley Goh, SJ, is a Jesuit from Singapore and is completing his Licentiate in Sacred Theology at JST. He has an academic background in Political Science, Philosophy, Education and Theology. An educator at heart, he continues to dabble academically in the philosophy of education, experiential learning, and practical theology.

Joel Thompson, SJ

Joel Thompson SJ, is a Guyanese Jesuit and a second year Master of Divinity student at JST. He holds a BSc. in Electrical Engineering and a B.A. in Philosophy and Theology. His master's degree is in Environment and Development. Academically, he is interested in questions at the intersection of religion, development, and ecology. Most of his previous research and work has been centered on young adult ministry with an emphasis on environmental and social justice.

Anne Kallin Zehren

Anne is a MTS student, following a career in media (NBC, Newsweek) and as a start-up entrepreneur (Teen People, Current TV and Common Sense Media). She has served on a variety of boards, including advising President Clinton on youth violence and teen pregnancy, and as board V.P. of Alpha Sigma Nu. Anne hopes to an "entrepreneur for the Holy Spirit" by finding new ways to make spirituality more culturally relevant and accessible. She lives in Oakland with her son.

Black Lives Matter.

All you holy men and women pray for us.

We take a moment in recognition of the Black lives lost in 2020 due to police brutality, state-sanctioned violence, and white supremacist violence.

Andre Hill	**David McAtee**
Casey Goodson Jr.	**Alfred Bourgeois**
Angelo "AJ" Crooms	**Tony McDade**
Sincere Pierce	**George Floyd**
Marcellis Stinnette	**Dreasjon "Sean" Reed**
Jonathan Price	**Michael Brent Charles Ramos**
Oluwatoyin "Toyin" Salau	**Daniel T. Prude**
Brandon Bernard	**Breonna Taylor**
Dijon Durand Kizzee	**Ahmaud Arbery**
Rayshard Brooks	**Manuel "Mannie" Elijah Ellis**
Carlos Carson	**William Howard Green**

The Black Church: A Gift for All

Daryl Grigsby
Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University (Berkeley, CA)

Abstract
This paper provides a brief overview of the gifts of the Black church and contributes advice for white Christians who are serious about dialogue with their African-American faith partners. The continued invisibility of the Black church for white Christians undermines a credible Christian witness and ensures Christianity in America will be delinquent in matters of racial equity and social justice. The Black church emerges from a set of historical conditions that enable it to hear and respond to the presence of God in a way that produces unique gifts, especially in the form of prophetic tradition and speaking truth to injustice. The Christian religion would do well to stop viewing the Black church as a marginal part of its tradition, but rather as a co-creator of its faith.

Introduction

One of the definitive characteristics of Christianity in America, and indeed one of its greatest tragedies, is that white Christianity worships, lives, and acts as though the Black church does not exist. Seventy years after Ralph Ellison's classic *Invisible Man*, for white Christians, the Black church continues to remain invisible. Historians John Hope Franklin, Carter G. Woodson, Henry Mitchell, and others termed slave Christian gatherings *the invisible institution*. Two centuries after slavery's end, the Black church remains unseen, unheard, and unheeded by white Christians. This is to the detriment of Christianity in America, for the Black faith story holds gifts that could renew the American church.

Defining Black Church and its Rich History of Prophetic Thought and Truth-Telling

For a host of historical and sociological reasons, religious faith in the Black community has always been deeply prevalent. On the certainty of God's existence, sixty-one percent of whites were absolutely certain, compared to eighty-three percent of Blacks. Seventy-five percent

of Black respondents said religion is very important in one's life, compared to forty-nine percent of whites. Forty-seven percent of Blacks attend church weekly, compared to thirty-four percent of whites.[1] I argue that given the depth of faith in the Black community, the white church can learn from and emulate the Black Christian faith experience. But, firstly, what is the Black church?

Black church and white church are *broad* terms, each holding a wide spectrum of doctrine and practice. A white, evangelical mega-church differs greatly from a Quaker fellowship, and a Black Catholic parish is different from a storefront Holiness church. Despite the differences and given the common history of slavery, systemic racism, and white supremacy faced by the Black community in the U.S., I argue that there are enough commonalities to speak broadly of a Black church and a white church. According to C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence M. Mamiya, eighty percent of Black Christians are in the "seven major historic Black denominations: the African Methodist Episcopal (AME), the African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ), the Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME), the National Baptist Convention USA (NBC), the National Baptist Convention of America (NBCA), the Progressive National Baptist Convention (PNBC), and the Church of God in Christ (COGIC)."[2] While these denominations represent majority-Black worshipping populations, my definition of Black church also includes Black worshippers in white Catholic and Protestant churches. Wherever there are Black Christians, there is a Black church.

The failure of white Christianity to learn from its Black partners in faith has serious consequences, for it robs white Christians of wisdom derived from centuries of experience where

[1] "Religious Landscape Study: Racial and Ethnic Composition," *Pew Research Center*, 2014, accessed January 29, 2021.
[2] C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 1.

believers depended not on political power, economic security, or racial privilege, but instead on God alone. Exodus, incarnation, cross, and resurrection have different meanings among Black Christians. James Baldwin writes "the church I come from… is not at all the same church to which white Christians belong. [We do not] speak the same language or share the same hope."[3] One can argue that the white church in America has never recovered from its complicity with slavery from 1619 through 1865 or with the white supremacy that survived slavery and continues to this day. Further, C. Eric Lincoln and other historians have argued that the white church's complicity with slavery's violence, rape, and degradation rendered it unchristian. Consequently, the only truly Christian body in America for two centuries was the Black church, a church paradoxically invisible yet under attack.

White churches generally are not seen as contrary to American values or a threat to white supremacy. White churches have the privilege of uncritically flying American flags near the pulpit or altar, celebrating Memorial Day like a religious ceremony, and seldom speaking with force or power to the demons of racism or nationalism. While white churches sit comfortably within the American paradigm, Black churches, especially in the South, were and are subject to hate crimes and burnings: notable instances include the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing in 1963 and the Emmanuel AME Church massacre in 2015. In December 2020, white nationalists vandalized two historically Black denominations in Washington, D.C. No such act would happen to a white church, whose theology and practice do not pose a challenge to America's social values. In *Black Theology and Black Power*, James Cone argues that reconciliation to God in practical terms means that white Christians in America must become Black. To become Black means that white Christians' hearts, souls, and minds must become one with the oppressed

[3] James Baldwin, *Collected Essays* (New York: Library of America, 1998), 841.

through concrete acts of solidarity.[4] The continued comfort of white Christianity in the wake of continued anti-Black violence indicates that solidarity has not yet occurred, a fact most evident in the recent U.S. presidential election.

M. Shawn Copeland notes in *Knowing Christ Crucified* that "chattel slavery led Christianity to a crossroad: discipleship or duplicity."[5] She elaborates the ways in which white Christian churches domesticated the gospel to fit the needs of slavery. There were, of course, exceptions to this, with Quakers, Mennonites, and faith-inspired white abolitionists being among the most notable. However, many white Christians were and are too compromised by their allegiance to white supremacy and American nationalism to live the gospel of Jesus Christ. In 2020, we again came to Copeland's crossroad, and white Christians again overwhelmingly chose duplicity. According to Pew Research Center surveys, in November of 2020, seventy-eight percent of white evangelicals, fifty-two percent of white Catholics, and fifty-three percent of white non-evangelical Protestants cast a ballot for a man who unapologetically stands for white supremacy.[6] His lies, narcissism, blatant sexism, and fear and hate mongering are matched only by the racists who advised him. While white Christians continue to sit in the comfort of white supremacy, xenophobia, and nationalism, the Black church has developed, through centuries of struggle, a deep awareness of God's prophetic utterances against structures that degrade human life. In this way, prophetic virtue is not new for the Black church.

This prophetic voice was evident in the 2001 sermon by Revered Jeremiah Wright of Chicago's Trinity United Church of Christ. The sermon, taken from Psalm 137 and titled "The Day of Jerusalem's Fall," was condemned, mocked, and castigated by most of white America,

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[4] James Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power* (New York: Seabury Press, 1969), 151.
[5] M. Shawn Copeland, *Knowing Christ Crucified: The Witness of African American Religious Experience* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 2018), 9.
[6] Gregory A. Smith, "White Christians Continue to Favor Trump over Biden, but Support Has Slipped," *Pew Research Center*, October 13, 2020.

churches included. The media played on endless loop a few sentences from Wright's sermon. None took time to hear the entire sermon, which closed with a call for self-examination, personal responsibility, social transformation, and spiritual adoration.[7] Black Christians heard his sermon as consistent with the tradition and ministry of the Black church. The most recent presidential election and forgotten sermons are but a few examples of how the prophetic struggle for justice that has been a part of the Black church for centuries has been neglected as a part of our shared Christian tradition.

Speaking God's truth to injustice is also a fundamental component of the Black church that can serve to be a gift to all Christians. Maria Stewart, David Walker, Fannie Lou Hamer, and Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth are but a few truth-telling co-creators of God's reign in the world. C. Eric Lincoln argues that the Black church originated in the slave's experience with God in the midst of unmitigated suffering. He wrote:

> "For the Black believer, the Black church was not only a symbol of God's intention that all men should be free, it was also the instrument of God's continuing revelation of that intent. In the Black church, while God's love was unqualified, God's challenge was also unconditional, for he called every man to realize the highest potential of his humanity by being a living testament of the divine image in which he was cast. Since God himself was free, and man was created in his image, then man's struggle must ever be to maintain or recover the freedom with which he was endowed by his Creator. [God is the] first endorser of any struggle for liberation."[8]

Lincoln's insight, though clouded in the patriarchal language of the times, describes the foundations of the Black church. These foundations are a true gift that the whole church can benefit from. Evidence of life transformed from exposure to the Black church is seen in Lutheran pastor and martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer. His book *The Cost of Discipleship* and his legacy of opposition to Hitler and Nazism are famously revered in the Christian tradition. More unknown,

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[7] Martha Simmons, and Frank Thomas, *Preaching with Sacred Fire: An Anthology of African American Sermons, 1750 to the Present* (New York: W.W Norton, 2010), 862.

[8] C. Eric Lincoln, *Race, Religion, and the Continuing American Dilemma* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1984), 63.

however, is his growth through the influence of the Black church. Reggie Williams's *Black Jesus: Harlem Renaissance Theology and an Ethic of Resistance* notes that when Bonhoeffer arrived in Union Seminary from Germany, he was uninspired by the white churches he visited. Eventually, his fellow Union Seminary colleague Albert Fisher brought him to Harlem's Abyssinian Baptist Church. There, he met a Black Jesus who actively comforted and liberated his suffering. Williams notes that Bonhoeffer witnessed the dialectical ecclesiology of the Black church as a seamless harmony of "a 'priestly' ministry attending to the inner life of Christians and the 'prophetic' church engaged with the political and social concerns of justice and equality and freedom."[9] These foundational Black liberationist authors[10] could offer the same degree of inspiration to the wider Christian community. They are part of a rich tradition of Christian thought that is often neglected on traditional syllabi and yet that has many gifts to share. While Black Christians remain overwhelmingly Protestant, there is value in turning specifically to the gifts of the Black Catholic experience.

Black Catholic Faith: Not to Be Forgotten

The Catholic Church, the single largest denomination in America, includes a small but vital Black presence of three million members.[11] Black Catholics who continue in the faith despite obstacles importantly legitimize the Catholic claim to be a universal church. At Seattle

[9] Reggie Williams, *Bonhoeffer's Black Jesus: Harlem Renaissance Theology and An Ethic of Resistance* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2014), 89.
[10] Other sources upon which the church can draw are James Cone's *Black Theology and Black Power*, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, and *Said I Wasn't Gonna Tell Nobody.* And not to be neglected is Gary Dorrien's two-volume history of Black faith titled *The New Abolition: W.E.B. DuBois and the Black Social Gospel* and *Breaking White Supremacy: Martin Luther King and the Black Social Gospel.* Also ready to share gifts and stories are Reverend Pauli Murray, the first African American woman to be ordained a priest in the Episcopal Church, Mahalia Jackson's music ministry, Nannie Helen Burroughs' service through the Women's Convention of the National Baptist Convention, and the political mysticism of Howard Thurman.
[11] United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, "African American Affairs" Accessed December 11, 2020, usccb.org/committees/african-american-affairs/demographics.

University School of Theology and Ministry, I created an oral history of Black Catholic elders who remained faithful despite overt discrimination. They talked concretely of past indignities, such as priests uttering racial slurs or of being restricted to the the back and receiving the Eucharist after white parishioners, amongst other overt acts of racism. Each said they remained because they experienced God in the Catholic Church, and no flawed human was going to take that from them. In Black Catholics, we see the presence of resilience and the universality of the Catholic faith.

Black Catholic struggle includes the courage of the Oblate Sisters of Providence. These sisters were Black nuns who faced racism and ridicule from white Catholics yet persevered to minister to the needs of poor Black people in urban areas. Daniel Rudd created the *American Catholic Tribune,* the first and only national Black Catholic newspaper. He also created the still vibrant National Black Catholic Congress. Sister Thea Bowman's ministry of proclamation, service, and music energized the Catholic Church in America. Cyprian Davis summarized much of this legacy in *The History of Black Catholics in the United States* as well as Diana Hayes in *Taking Down Our Harps: Black Catholics in the United States.* These voices in religious life, news media, and liturgical ministry compose a great deal of the pastoral gifts of the Black Catholic church. Although Black Catholics are comparatively small in number, their voices should be listened to and uplifted as true members of the body of Christ given their courageous character. In the ways mentioned in this section, Black Catholics represent a distinct and important part of the wider Black church that should not be forgotten or erased.

Conclusion

Ironically, by ignoring the Black church, it is really the white church which is invisible and absent in many ways from God's struggle for human justice and dignity. The Black church is not better than the white church, nor are Black Christians better than white ones. No human being is better than another. The Black church, like all of us, is not perfect, infallible, or free from error. The Black church does, however, emerge from a set of historical conditions that enable it to hear and respond to the presence of God in a way that produces unique gifts, especially in the form of prophetic tradition and speaking truth to injustice. The Black Catholic experience provides an important point of reflection on universality and courage within the faith. The Christian religion would do well to stop viewing the Black church as a marginal part of its tradition, but rather as a co-creator of its faith. This paper has named a great deal of theologians and ministers to whom the church can turn. The gifts of the Black church are, to borrow a Catholic Eucharistic prayer, for our good, and the good of all God's holy church.

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Revised Psalm 137

Lament of the Israelites carried off into exile, into a land not their own

By Joel Thompson, SJ

[1] By the rivers of Babylon—
there I stood confused, sad and angry with tears in my eyes
when I remembered both the sufferings of my people as well as their joys
[2] On the willows there
I pounded my fists
[3] For there the captors stood staring dispassionately and
asked me "what do you have to be angry about?" "haven't we been good to you?"
and the tormentors asked, "can you stop overreacting? Focus on the positives – smile!"
"Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"
[4] How could I smile and sing? How could I pretend that everything was fine
in a world of racial injustice, greed, and invalidation? In a world where the color of my skin
made me feel like a threat, like a fool, like an unwanted blight? In a world where I was
judged and made to feel lesser than others…
[5] If I forget the sufferings of my tired people, of the poor and of the marginalized,
let my right hand never write again
[6] Let my tongue never move to utter praise
if I do not remember you,
if I do not set solidarity and the work for justice
above my highest joy.

James Cone: Subject of Tradition and True Reformer

Alan Berryhill
Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University (Berkeley, CA)

Abstract
James Cone is widely respected as the 'Father of Black Theology' and one of the most important theologians of the twentieth century. Yet at the same time, he is in many circles too quickly dismissed as a dangerous theological radical. This article presents two hermeneutical strategies that are designed to help Catholic readers better appreciate Cone's agenda. As a 'Subject of Tradition,' some of Cone's most challenging theological positions are shown to be the result of Cone actively and creatively wrestling with existing theological traditions. As a 'True Reformer,' Cone's career is interpreted in light of Yves Congar's criteria for authentic reform in the church. James Cone remains a challenging theologian, but these strategies can be utilized to encourage deeper engagement with Cone in pastoral settings.

Background

This paper emerged from a pastoral question: what is a pastorally responsible strategy for introducing the early work of James Cone to Catholic parishioners who are already willing to talk seriously about racism, yet like many Christians, have a perception of Cone as a radical, not to be taken seriously? In my well-educated and predominantly Asian American parish, anti-Asian racism has often been discussed, but anti-Black racism has rarely been grappled with.[1] That changed with the events of 2020, and I began to offer monthly lectures on notable Black theologians.

The session on the early work of James Cone (1938-2018) was perhaps the most difficult to prepare. James Cone was born in Bearden, Arkansas, and grew up in the segregated South

[1] I intentionally use the categories of Black and non-Black throughout this paper, rather than categories of White vs non-White. As an Asian American, I find this framing helpful to the extent that it better names the anti-Black racism perpetuated by the Asian American community. However, both of these paradigms cease to be helpful when they suggest that Asian Americans must pick a side in a supposed White-Black racial dichotomy. See Ki Joo Choi, *Disciplined By Race: Theological Ethics and the Problem of Asian-American Identity* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2019), 15-20.

attending the African Methodist Episcopal Church. After writing a dissertation at Northwestern University on the Swiss-German theologian Karl Barth, he went on to develop a ground-breaking theology of Black liberation that emphasized God's identification with the oppressed. Cone would become a longtime faculty member at Union Theological Seminary until his death, and is often credited as the 'Father of Black Theology.' He was the 2018 recipient of the Grawemeyer Award in Religion, was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and has been described as the most important theologian of his time.[2] Several factors motivated me to focus on his early work. Historically, his early works are essential reading for understanding Black liberation theology. Pastorally, it provided an opportunity to educate the attendees on the Black Power movement, which is so often minimized in favor of the Civil Rights movement.[3] As a practical matter, key ideas from his later work had been indirectly introduced through a previous lecture on his student Kelly Brown Douglas. Cone had drawn a parallel between crucifixion and lynching. Just as the Roman empire used public crucifixion as an instrument of terror, white Americans had since the time of the Civil War utilized public lynchings to intimidate and terrorize Black Americans. Douglas extends the parallel to include the psychological intimidation of contemporary mass incarceration and 'stand your ground' legislation.[4]

Introduction

In this essay, I will focus on debunking the perception that Cone is a theological radical who potentially falls beyond the bounds of orthodoxy. To be sure, such assessments might be

[2] Jim Wallis, "Why James Cone Was the Most Important Theologian of His Time," *Sojourners,* May 2, 2018, accessed Jan 26, 2021, sojo.net/articles/why-james-cone-was-most-important-theologian-his-time.
[3] Cone himself would later argue that the Black Power and Civil Rights movements needed each other. See James H. Cone, *Malcolm & Martin & America: A Dream or a Nightmare: Twentieth Anniversary Edition*. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2012).
[4] Kelly Brown Douglas, *Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and the Justice of God* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2015), 171-203. Compare with James H. Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2011), especially 30-31 and 152-166.

influenced by anti-Black racial bias or even the subtle anti-Protestant bias in my parish and in other parishes nationally. Nonetheless, I believe the perception of theological radicalism is worth engaging at face value. It is worth noting that my audience was highly receptive to Bryan Massingale and Kelly Brown Douglas, who are also prophetic voices challenging deeply held racial biases. But while these authors primarily offered theological critiques of culture and practice,[5] Cone may be perceived to be more radical because he often critiques theology itself. His theology is also innovative in ways that often seem radical. He has rejected the notion that heaven is a reward, and affirms that God is Black and Jesus is Black. Moreover, Cone even identifies himself as a political radical, especially when contrasting himself with the slow progress of white liberals.[6]

There are a number of ways to interpret James Cone that push beyond the label of theological radical. Diana Hayes emphasizes the importance of Black history and the Black church, highlighting that Cone was among the first to utilize Black religious experience as a legitimate source for theologizing.[7] Joseph Caldwell argues that white readers often overlook the significance of the Black Power movement, and fail to appreciate that Cone was filling an apologetic need for a distinctive Black Christianity.[8] Andre Johnson argues that the aggressive radical tone of Cone is the result of adopting a prophetic persona, which should be seen in light

[5] Douglas critiques the 'stand your ground' culture of Anglo-Saxon privilege, fear of Blackness, and Manifest Destiny. See Douglas, *Stand Your Ground*, especially 3-123. Massingale critiques the ways that the culture of the US Catholic Church has been influenced by a broader white privilege in US culture. Notably he does not critique the theology of Rome. See Bryan Massingale, *Racial Justice and the Catholic Church* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2010), especially 1-82.
[6] James H. Cone, *Black Theology & Black Power: Fiftieth Anniversary Edition* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2018), 30-33.
[7] Diana Hayes, "James Cone's Hermeneutic of Language and Black Theology," *Theological Studies* 61, no. 4 (Dec 2000), 609-631.
[8] Joseph W. Caldwell, " A Starting Point for Understanding James Cone: A Primer for White Readers," *Review & Expositor* 117, no. 1 (Feb 2020), 25-43. I would extend this to non-Black readers in general.

of the history of the Old Testament prophets and prophetic African-American Christianity.[9] Karen Teel emphasizes that white theologians have often failed to interpret Cone well because of deeply ingrained racial fears and biases.[10] Many contemporary audiences should also be reminded that Cone's anger was born out of the grotesque realities of lynching, and that one of the catalysts of the Civil Rights movement was the gruesome murder in 1955 of fourteen-year-old Emmett Till. Cone repeatedly emphasized that white American theologians, even progressive ethicists like Reinhold Neibuhr, consistently failed in their moral obligation to protest lynchings.[11] All of these approaches are helpful in appreciating the complexity and circumstances of Cone and begin to reverse the perception that he is a radical not worth taking seriously.

This paper makes the additional proposal of two hermeneutical strategies that more specifically address the perceived theological radicalism of James Cone: (1) Subject of Tradition and (2) True Reformer. These strategies are complementary to the other interpretations of Cone mentioned in the previous paragraph. But the strategies presented here can be particularly valuable in non-African American parishes that are willing and able to engage racism from a theological perspective, but have had little prior exposure to liberation theologies. In my own parish, these strategies have helped to enable a serious dialogue with James Cone in an environment that was unexpectedly open to hearing such a sharp (but valuable) critique of our mainstream theological traditions.

[9] Andre E. Johnson, "The Prophetic Persona of James Cone and the Rhetorical Theology of Black Theology", *Black Theology: An International Journal* 8, no. 3 (Nov 2010), 266-285.
[10] Karen Teel, "Can We Hear Him Now? James Cone's Enduring Challenge to White Theologians," *Theological Studies* 81, no. 3 (Sep 2020), 582-604. I find this applicable to Asian American audiences as well, to the extent that we have also been guilty of anti-Black racism in our communities.
[11] Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, 30-64.

Subject of Tradition

The first strategy utilized in acquiring a more comprehensive understanding of Cone is an ecumenical extension of M. Shawn Copeland's assertion that there is a "Black Catholic Subject of Tradition."[12] A "Subject of Tradition" is a Christian who is actively receiving and interpreting existing theological traditions.[13] Copeland highlights, for example, that in Cyprian Davis's *History of Black Catholics* (1990),[14] Black Catholics are portrayed as active subjects, rather than passive objects of white ministry. She especially cites the theological maturity of the lay-organized Black Catholic Congresses of the 1890s.[15] The Congresses placed social justice firmly in the center of Catholic identity, before we had a clear Catholic Social Teaching tradition—the seminal *Rerum Novarum* had only been published in 1891.[16] The Congresses also implicitly understood the baptismal priesthood of all believers seventy years before the Second Vatican Council would affirm the same in *Lumen Gentium*.[17] To affirm the "Black Catholic Subject of Tradition" is to affirm that Black Catholics have been actively receiving, interpreting, and creating Catholic traditions.

To see Cone as a Black Christian Subject of Tradition is to see him as one who was actively interpreting existing Christian traditions. It begins to challenge the perception that he was a radical who *dismissed* traditions; rather, he *wrestled* with, and even innovated on, traditions. This can be seen throughout his career with the ways that Cone has creatively drawn

[12] M. Shawn Copeland, "Tradition and the Traditions of African American Catholicism," *Theological Studies* 61, no. 4 (Dec 2000), 632-655.
[13] Copeland is following Yves Congar's understanding that tradition is an active process of handing on, rather than a passive reception. A 'subject of tradition' is a person who is actively carrying out the traditioning process. See Yves Congar, *The Meaning of Tradition*, tr. A. N. Woodrow (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 9-82.
[14] Cyprian Davis, *The History of Black Catholics in the United States* (Crossroad Publishing, New York: 1990).
[15] Copeland, "Tradition and the Traditions of African American Catholicism", 637-643. See also Davis, *The History of Black Catholics in the United States*, 163-194.
[16] Pope Leo XIII's 1891 encyclical *Rerum Novarum* is widely acknowledged as the founding papal document of modern Catholic Social Teaching.
[17] For Vatican II's affirmation of the universal priesthood, see *Lumen Gentium* §10.

on the traditions of the Black church. But in his earliest writings, this can also be clearly seen in important ways with Cone's complex relationship with German Protestant theology. This is not at all to suggest that legitimate theology must conform to traditional European questions –an expectation far too often used to disregard liberation theologies. I am simply making the observation that in his early works, Cone frequently borrows ideas from German Protestant theology, and then creatively applies them to new questions. Such creativity is typical of theological genius, and I propose reading this creativity as the active traditioning of a Black Christian Subject of Tradition.

A first example comes from Cone's eschatology. Cone voiced a concern that standard approaches to eschatology, with their emphasis on the rewards of heaven, are yet another "white lie" reducing Blacks to complacency. He writes sharply that "[Black theology] is not concerned with the 'last things' but with the 'white thing' [of white racism]."[18] But rather than simply dismissing eschatology, he develops a constructive proposal rooted in German Protestant eschatologies. He specifically aligns with Jürgen Moltmann, who had begun to incorporate the transformation of oppressed communities into eschatology.[19] While mainstream approaches to eschatology had often emphasized the rewards of heaven as a hope for the *next* world, Moltmann had articulated an eschatology focusing on how the promised future endows a hope for *this* world. "Moltmann's analysis is compatible with the concerns of Black theology. Hope must be related to the present, and it must serve as a means of transforming an oppressed community into a liberated—and liberating—community."[20] It is interesting to note that when Cone wrote these words in 1970, the so-called "school of hope" was in its infancy. Moltmann's *Theology of Hope*

[18] Cone, *Black Theology & Black Power*, 139.
[19] See especially Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology*, tr. James W. Leitch (London: SCM Press, 1967).
[20] James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation: Twentieth Anniversary Edition* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books,1990), 140.

(1964) was published in German six years prior and translated into English only three years prior. His important followup *The Crucified God* (1974) was not yet written, and neither was Johann Baptist Metz's seminal *Faith in History and Society* (1979). Cone is not passively receiving and regurgitating a well-established tradition. Rather, he is making an active choice to join an ongoing renewal effort, helping to shape a new justice-oriented tradition of eschatology that emphasizes a hope for this world more than deferring hope to the next world.

A second example is Cone's argument that God is Black in *Black Theology of Liberation* (1970). Cone's proposal has been criticized for inappropriately essentializing Blackness.[21] The objective here is not to defend him against such critiques, but rather to highlight that his proposal is a creative reappropriation of renowned Lutheran theologian Paul Tillich: "to speak of Black theology is to speak with the Tillichian understanding of symbols in mind."[22] In Tillich's theology, symbols are not *merely* symbols, but rather the symbol is ontologically connected to the symbolized. Symbols "point beyond themselves to something else" and "participate in that to which it points." A flag participates in the reality of the nation it symbolizes, so that an attack on the flag is seen to be an attack on the nation itself.[23] Cone reappropriated Tillich to present Blackness as a symbol that participates in the reality of oppression: "Blackness is an ontological symbol and a visible reality which best describes what oppression means in America."[24] Blackness is a symbol, not a strict equation, so Blackness is not being simplistically defined by oppression. Nevertheless, Tillichian symbols are ontological, so that the symbol of Blackness says something meaningful about oppression. When Cone speaks of the Blackness of God, this is

[21] For a summary of these critiques among Black theologians, see Trevor Eppchimer, "Victor Anderson's *Beyond Ontological Blackness* and James Cone's Black Theology: A Discussion," *Black Theology: An International Journal* 4, no. 1 (Jan 2006), 87-106.
[22] Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, 7. Kelly Brown Douglas has also observed that Cone's understanding of ontological Blackness is easily misunderstood when the Tillichian influence is not appreciated. See Kelly Brown Douglas, *The Black Christ* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1994), 58-60.
[23] Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper One, 2009), 46-48. The flag example is Tillich's.
[24] Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, 7.

not reducible to a pastoral inculturation for the Black church to see itself in the divine (important as that is). Cone is in fact making a profound statement about the Divine Attributes. "God is Black" symbolically expresses the ontological truth of God's relationship with the oppressed. The logic of the claim, and the profundity of it, rests upon Cone's masterful reappropriation of Tillichian symbols. Cone received an existing framework but applied it in a way that Tillich would never have expected to make a new contribution to the Divine Attributes.

For a third and final example, we consider Cone's chapter on Christology in *God of the Oppressed* (1975).[25] Though insights from Black Christianity are incorporated throughout the chapter, the basic logic of the chapter involves a creative tension between three German Protestant trends in Christology. Under the heading "Jesus Is Who He Was," he discusses Christologies 'from below' that emphasize historical-scientific analysis of the historical Jesus of Nazareth, especially his Jewishness.[26] Under the heading "Jesus Is Who He Is" are approaches that emphasize Christ's present day activity, a view he associated with Christologies 'from above' that prioritize the descent of the Divine Logos in the Incarnation.[27] Finally, under the heading "Jesus Is He Who Will Be," there is the eschatological approach of the promise of a future liberation through the cross and resurrection.[28] These three sections are not merely a historical survey of the available options, but the preamble to a dialectical resolution: "we do not

[25] James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed: Revised Edition* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997), 99-126.
[26] Cone primarily cites Wolfhart Pannenberg as an example of Christology from below, from the past. Pannenberg is also remembered for a proleptic, anticipatory Christology that emphasizes the resurrection of Jesus. Nonetheless, according to Cone it is still appropriate to classify Pannenberg as 'from below' because Pannenberg starts with the historical Jesus and emphasizes the resurrection as a historical event. Cone also sharply criticizes Pannenberg for deferring the Christian's experience of the resurrected Christ to the end of time. See Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, 106-112. Compare with Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus, God and Man*, tr. Lewis L. Wilkins and Duane A. Priebe (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968).
[27] In associating Christology from above with the present-day activity of Christ, Cone primarily has Karl Barth in mind. Barth had famously rejected the liberal Protestant emphasis on historical science to the exclusion of theological reflection. See Karl Barth, *The Essential Barth: A Reader and Commentary*, ed. Keith L. Johnson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), especially 44-56, 115-119, and 137-148.
[28] Cone appeals almost exclusively to the eschatological Christology of Jürgen Moltmann. See Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*, tr. R. A. Wilson and John Bowden (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), especially 160-199.

have to choose between a Christology 'from below' (Pannenberg) or 'from above' (Barth) or 'from before' (Moltmann). These three aspects of his history and person must be approached dialectically."[29] Cone's Black Christology emerges from a dialectic of the 'from above' and 'from below' approaches: Jesus *is* Black today because he *was* a Jew two thousand years ago. Cone further argues that this dialectic tension is only tenable through an eschatological tension between the cross and resurrection: "the cross represents the particularity of divine suffering in Israel's place… The resurrection means that God's identity with the poor in Jesus is not limited to the particularity of his Jewishness."[30] Seeing this helps us to appreciate that Cone's Black Christology is not reducible to a pastoral inculturation that affirms Black Christians seeing themselves in Christ (as important as that is). Cone is making an ontological claim about Christ's identification with oppressed persons. He has received three German Protestant trajectories, interpreted them dialectically, and then used them to propose a new tradition of Black Christology that affirms Christ's identification with all oppressed peoples, but especially with Black Americans. Once again, James Cone is acting as a Subject of Tradition by taking previously accepted theological ideas and applying them in new ways to shape his Black theology.

True Reformer

The second avenue to understand Cone as an example of active traditioning, vis-a-vis the Subject of Tradition label, is through Yves Congar's criteria of the necessary conditions for authentic reform in *True and False Reform*.[31] Congar's book is concerned primarily with

[29] Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, 120.
[30] Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, 124.
[31] Yves Congar, *True and False Reform in the Church*, tr. Paul Philibert (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2011). French text was originally published in 1950, and revised in 1968.

Catholic ecclesial reform without schism, however a secondary reading of the four-fold rubric he provides is helpful when making general claims about any Christian reformer. Showing that Cone's reformation of theology falls under Congar's rubric of a True Reformer demonstrates that Cone cannot be easily dismissed as a dangerous theological radical.

Congar's first criteria is that a true reformer must respect the primacy of charity and pastoral concerns.[32] Cone himself had emphasized a pastoral theology, writing "if I couldn't preach it, I wouldn't write it."[33] Others, including Dwight Hopkins, have also observed that the pastorally apologetic significance of Cone has long been underappreciated. At a time when many young Blacks were leaving the church to join Black Power and Black Consciousness movements, Cone offered a road to bring these ideas back into the church. Hopkins further credits Cone with saving the faith of an entire generation.[34] Also underappreciated has been Cone's testament to the power of charity throughout his career. Cornel West eulogized that "James Cone was a love warrior with an intellectual twist."[35] Even amidst his sharpest critiques of the failures of white theologians, Cone remained charitable: "It is not my intention to question the integrity of [a white theologian's] personal ethics. My concern is with the identity of Christian theology and the influence of culture."[36] This same charitable yet academic humility can be found in the prefaces Cone wrote for his various books' anniversary editions. In the preface to *Black Theology & Black Power*, he admits his "failure to link Black liberation theology to the global struggles for freedom."[37] In the same preface he also examines his "failure

[32] Congar, *True and False Reform in the Church*, 215-228.
[33] James H. Cone, *Said I Wasn't Gonna Tell Nobody: The Making of a Black Theologian* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2018), 58.
[34] The Oblate School of Theology, "Black Liberation Theology - Dr. Dwight Hopkins", April 29, 2016, video, 5:45, https://youtu.be/mw4Ntb5r5qw.
[35] Cone, *Said I Wasn't Gonna Tell Nobody*, ix.
[36] Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, 47.
[37] Cone, *Black Theology & Black Power*, xxxi.

to be receptive to the problem of sexism in the Black community."[38] Such an open admission of failure, the result of charitably listening to his critics, is another example of a willingness on Cone's part to not only be open to dialogue with a critical academy, but also to understand where his earlier work was insufficient.

Congar's second criteria is that a true reformer must remain in communion with the whole church.[39] This criteria is based upon Congar's pneumatological belief that fullness of truth requires listening to the Spirit-given wisdom of all the faithful. Part of the challenge here is that some of Cone's writings have suggested that Cone lacked interest in dialogue. In *Black Theology of Liberation* (1970) he demanded that all theology be Black liberation theology, writing that "in a society where persons are oppressed because they are *Black*, Christian theology must become *Black* theology."[40] This was likely influenced by both the separatist tendencies in the Black Power Movement and an over reliance on a Barthian methodology anxious to defend the objectivity of theology. Whatever the reason, Cone's writings seem to clash with Congar's criterion of remaining in dialogue with the whole church. But as Cone matured, his views evolved. In *God of the Oppressed* (1975), Cone is more open to theology that develops through dialogue. He requests that white theologians listen to his story and acknowledges that he also needs to listen to the stories of others. Cone writes "I cannot and have no desire to prove 'my story.' All I can hope to do is to bear witness to it… I hope to avoid imprisonment in my own subjectivity… and to speak the truth when called to give an account of the hope that is in me."[41] But Cone was not merely open to dialogue; he also actively participated in dialogue. In his posthumously published autobiography, Cone describes how his views were tempered by the

[38] Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, xv.
[39] Congar, *True and False Reform in the Church*, 229-264.
[40] Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, v.
[41] Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, 98.

intellectual discourse he received from critics like Charles Long and the cadre of students who laid the foundations of womanist theology.[42] Cone was not only in dialogue with these critics but also cognizant of the need for ecumenical dialogue with Catholics on racial justice and Black Catholicism. As Bryan Massingale has summarized, "throughout his career, Cone has shown a willingness to dialogue with and engage Catholic scholarship regarding racial justice that is unmatched by other Black Protestant theologians."[43] While Cone may have had some isolationist tendencies at the earliest stages of his career, his tendency towards genuine dialogue with others was represented in much of his later writings. In that sense, he should seriously be considered as remaining in communion with the larger Church and its mission.

Congar's third criteria is that the true reformer must have patience despite delays.[44] We must be mindful that an incrementalist logic of patience has often been used to ignore pleas for racial justice. But Congar was more concerned with reformers whose haste for a solution led to theological shortcuts. Congar writes: "Patience or impatience is not so much a question of the passage of time as the question of a certain spiritual quality in our attitude… holding back when tempted by simple, abrupt solutions or the extremes of 'all or nothing'."[45] Congar cites Martin Luther's polemical haste as a lack of spiritual patience.[46] He similarly chides John Calvin for writing his *Institutes* at the young age of twenty-seven, with only a training in law but not in theology.[47] It can be challenging to see Cone as a patient reformer. He was impatient with injustice, wrote in an aggressive, prophetic tone, and had an all-or-nothing commitment to

[42] Cone, *Said I Wasn't Gonna Tell Nobody,* 85-125. Womanist theology focuses on the empowerment and liberation of Black women. The movement emerged as a critique of the lack of the attention to women of color among White feminist theologians and Black male theologians.
[43] Bryan Massingale, "Has the Silence Been Broken? Catholic Theological Ethics and Racial Justice," *Theological Studies* 75, no. 1 (Mar 2014), 133-155, at 136.
[44] Congar, *True and False Reform in the Church*, 265-289.
[45] Congar, *True and False Reform in the Church*, 269.
[46] Congar, *True and False Reform in the Church*, 270.
[47] Congar, *True and False Reform in the Church*, 270.

liberation as the center of the gospel message. But in other ways, Cone does seem to exhibit the traits of a Congarian patient reformer. He wrote a doctoral dissertation on the anthropology of Karl Barth and had a deep intellectual and spiritual understanding of German Protestant theology. He also conducted extensive research on the Black religious experience.[48] Though his theology was controversial at times, it was thoughtfully developed and well-researched within existing theological traditions. He reports that it took ten years to research *Martin & Malcolm & America* (1991).[49] His final work, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* (2011), also took ten years of active work, building on at least three decades of wrestling with womanist critiques of redemptive suffering.[50] And while Cone was impatient with the glacial speed of progress on racism, he had no illusions of finding an easy solution. Racism was centuries old, deeply rooted, and challenging to eradicate. Throughout his corpus, one finds a deep, spiritual hope that his community would continue to fight, that "nearly four centuries of suffering will be redemptive for our children and grandchildren, revealing to them the beauty in their tragic past, and thereby empowering them to fight the violence of white supremacy."[51] Patience should not be mistaken for complacency. But seeing Cone as a patient reformer can be a helpful reminder that he was a careful scholar with a deep, spiritual hope and that his theology cannot be quickly dismissed.

Fourth and finally, Congar suggests a true reformer always returns to core principles rather than forcing new novelties.[52] Congar is not so much concerned with novel sources of inspiration (*aggiornamento*), but rather with the importance of rooting theological argument within the tradition (*ressourcement*). Cone was certainly inspired by Black Power, which might be deemed as a novelty, yet his theology remains deeply rooted in biblical tradition. His

[48] For example, see James H. Cone, *The Spirituals and the Blues: An Interpretation* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1972).
[49] Cone*, Said I Wasn't Gonna Tell Nobody*, 124-125.
[50] Cone*, Said I Wasn't Gonna Tell Nobody*, 126-129.
[51] Cone, *Said I Wasn't Gonna Tell Nobody,* 143.
[52] Congar, *True and False Reform in the Church*, 291-307.

theological arguments for a communal-historical understanding of sin and salvation are not based on Marx, but on the Exodus. Cone writes that "to fail to recognize God's activity as defined by the community of Israel is to exist in sin."[53] His hope for liberation from suffering might be inspired by Black Power, but ultimately his theological arguments are rooted in the paschal mystery, as "in the experience of the cross and resurrection, we know that Black suffering is wrong and that it has been overcome in Jesus Christ."[54] Cone was innovative and did propose new theological ideas. But to Congar's point, these new ideas were not argued as a novelty to the Christian tradition. Cone consistently defended that the God of liberation, who takes the side of oppressed persons, is a thoroughly biblical image rooted in the Exodus, the Old Testament prophets (especially Isaiah), and the ministry of Jesus.

Pastoral Significance

This paper attempts to defend two related strategies for interpreting James Cone. As a Subject of Tradition, he did not dismiss or simply passively receive tradition. Rather, he actively participated in a traditioning process. He joined Moltmann's ongoing renewal of eschatology, reappropriated Tillichian symbols to speak of God's Blackness as an ontological symbol of his identity with the oppressed, and synthesized three German Christological trajectories to propose a new Black Christology. Cone was a brilliant theologian actively wrestling with Christian traditions, contributing to numerous renewals within the tradition. Furthermore, this work of traditioning is reflective of a Congarian True Reformer. His work was eminently pastoral for the Black church and exudes a charitable humility. Though distinctively Black, Cone's theology develops in dialogue with the broader church. Though impatient with justice, Cone had the

[53] Cone, *Black Theology of Liberation*, 105.
[54] Cone, *God of the Oppressed,* 177.

spiritual and academic patience necessary to produce solid theological scholarship. Though inspired by Black Power, Cone was ultimately rooted in biblical tradition.

None of this is intended to diminish the challenge that Cone's theology presents to us. It is neither possible nor responsible to downplay his prophetic anger. He writes from the unflinching anger of the Black Power movement, protesting a four-hundred year history of injustice including slavery, lynching, and segregation. His theological proposals remain challenging, powerfully critiquing much of our theological traditions. But the concern of this paper is that in many parish contexts (and even in academic settings), Cone will be too easily dismissed as a theological radical. These interpretive strategies are intended to challenge those dismissals. I draw attention to his pastoral impact, his careful scholarship, and his active traditioning *not* out of an attempt to diminish the severity of his critiques. I draw attention to these things precisely in the hope that if Cone can be seen as a Subject of Tradition and a True Reformer, then perhaps more people in our parishes would be willing to truly listen to the message of James Cone. We all have much to learn from him.

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Yet the Last Are Still Last

Originally composed in New Orleans, Louisiana while on a Civil Rights Movement Pilgrimage and updated to reflect changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic

By Ellen Jewett

Saving up riches without regard for the other
We see it in the rich fool of the Gospels
We saw it on plantations
Exploitation of persons
Humans as disposable
Beings owned by other beings
Dressed up, fattened up, exercised, and auctioned off
The notary signed off on the purchase
Noting the person in front of you as "moveable property"
Despite being created in God's image

You recoup the eight hundred dollars you pay for a person in four growing seasons
Then their life is not worth protecting It's easier to buy someone else
Or to rent them for the season
Or to have your female slaves constantly pregnant
Property bearing property
Capital producing capital
At no cost to you
How economical

407,000 pounds of sugar in one year
At the cost of how many lives?

Raising a child as your own
A daughter to your childless wife
At least until she's older
And attractive
And can carry your child
Whom you have baptized
With your own name on his birth certificate
But who is still considered property
Because his mother was your slave
Your slave whom you raped
Little did you know
Your son would become a patriarch
Pépère
Two of his descendants become mayors of New Orleans
Is this the beginning of justice?
Is this the coming of the Kingdom?
"The last shall be first and the first shall be last"
And yet the last are still last
The "already but not yet"
Seems to simply be the "not yet"

As Black bodies lie wounded in our streets
In our jails
In the shadows of society
Dying from police violence
From COVID-19
From dehumanization
From simple, brutal hate

Justice is absent
Yet again
The same violence continues
Just in new ways
Where is the redemption in that?

Saving up riches without regard for the other
We see it in the Gospels
We saw it on plantations
We saw it in lynchings
We saw it in response to the Civil Rights Movement
We see it today
Monetary riches
Material riches
Emotional riches
Social riches
Awash in the blood of Black bodies

Ubuntu Ethics: Toward Racial Reconciliation and Reparations

Fikiri Kamuntu Deogratias, SJ

Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University (Berkeley, CA)

Abstract

This paper proposes Ubuntu ethics as a means for reconciliation in societies experiencing racial conflict. Rooted in Christian ethics and theological anthropology, the ethics of Ubuntu played a role in healing the wounds of apartheid in South Africa by bringing Black and white populations to the same table in order to facilitate a process of reconciliation via reparations. Ubuntu ethics begins with the notion that reconciliation has to move from a recognition of the wrongdoing and sinfulness of the perpetrators. Generally, this process involves naming the relationship between the historical oppressor and their descendants. After recognition, the notions of restorative justice and interconnectedness, integral to Ubuntu ethics, represent a concrete path foward. This paper will show that these notions necessitate that reparations, some sort of financial acknowledgement of systemic injustices, be a core element of seeking authentic reconciliation, and that the United States Christian tradition, like the South African tradition, can be a facilitator in this process. As an international student reflecting on the American context, I ardently believe that Ubuntu ethics can add value to the discussion on racial reconciliation in the U.S.

Introduction

One may ask what Africa has to offer the world in terms of philosophical and theological knowledge. Indeed, such a question is not uncommon in the U.S. context, where Africa's rich history and cultural heritage has been ignored and undermined in many ways. However, this hesitation to explore what Africa has to offer ignores the wealth of the continent's wisdom, of which *Ubuntu* is a part. Ubuntu ethics constitutes a possible solution in the struggle for racial reconciliation. *Ubuntu* is an African word that has a root in many African languages and cultures. It refers to the fullness and perfection of all of humanity. *Ubuntu* means that we can all flourish as human beings when we recognize one another's mutuality and interdependence. Ubuntu ethics argues that "a person with *Ubuntu* is open and available to others, [affirms] others,

does not feel threatened that others are able and good… [is not] diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed, or [when others are] treated as if they were less than who they are."[1] *Ubuntu* teaches us how to live together while being respectful of the Other's dignity and well-being. Rather than an exclusively punitive or transactional approach to rectifying harms, Ubuntu ethics makes room for a deeper form of racial reconciliation by arguing for restorative justice and systemic reparations.

The History of Racism within Catholic Social Teaching

In order to undertand why Ubuntu ethics, rooted in an African Christian perspective, can offer the western Catholic Church a new outlook to embody in conversations on systemic racism, it is important to begin with a historical analysis on the ways in which Catholic Social Teaching has failed to provide adequate pastoral and scholarly guidance on the themes of race and racial justice. From the beginning, the magisterium of the Catholic Church had ambiguous and even supportive positions on slavery and racism. Indeed, the history of Catholic Social Teaching and papal documents on slavery and racism can be divided into four primary periods. The Early Church favored slavery, a position facilitated by the decisions of the Council of Gangra, Gregory I, the Ninth Council of Toledo, and false interpretations of Scripture. From the beginning of the Church described in the Didache to the council of Toledo in 665, the Catholic Church argued for the moral justification of slavery, assuming that the institution was not contrary to divine law and biblical teaching. In the second period, the Medieval Church, from Pope Urban II (1089) until Pius II (1462), endorsed the enslavement of non-Christians, especially pagans. Church councils and Popes encouraged slavery and racism: Alexander III in the Lateran council of 1179; Innocent III during the fourth Lateran council of 1215; Gregory IX in his letter to the English in 1235; Leo

[1] Desmond Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 29.

X; and Pope Paul III. They authorized Christians, Catholic dignitaries, congregations, and laypeople alike to own slaves and to buy and sell enslaved Blacks within and outside the Roman Empire.[2] In the third, counter-reformation period, Church hierarchy from Pope Paul III (1537) to Alexander VIII (1661) began to move away from its prior acceptance of slavery through the use of ambiguous language on just and unjust slavery.[3] The popes did not punish cardinals or bishops who disobeyed their guidance or continued owning slaves.[4] Catholics, Christian congregations, and Church dignitaries did not stop the slave trade in their dioceses and territories. The economy of some dioceses, such as the U.S. dioceses of New Orleans founded in 1793, procured substantial wealth through the slave trade. Some laypeople donated their plantations to the Church, and Black people were forced into slavery to provide free labor to dioceses and parishes to sustain the Church's income.[5] Even after slavery was officially abolished, new, more subtle forms of slavery evolved, such as indentured servitude.[6] Finally, the modern era constitutes the fourth period of Church social teaching on the institution, in which slavery and racism are explicitly condemned. Papal documents condemning the practice began in 1890 with Pope Leo XIII, who was the first pope to condemn slavery unequivocally.[7] More recently, the encyclical letter *Fratelli tutti* by Pope Francis and the pastoral letter *Open Wide Our Hearts* by the U.S. bishops noticeably condemn slavery and racism as sins.[8]

Today, the world is experiencing a daunting period of racism mixed with the fear of the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, and migration crises. Racism is still one of "the most

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[2] John Francis Maxwell, *Slavery and the Catholic Church, the History of Catholic Teaching Concerning the Moral Legitimacy of the Institution of Slavery* (London: Barry Rose Publishers, 1975), 117-119.
[3] *Ibid*, 76-79.
[4] Diana Hayes, "Reflections on Slavery," in *Change in Official Catholic Moral Teachings*, ed. Charles E. Curran (New York: Paulist Press, 2003), 65-75.
[5] Katie Walker Grimes, *Christ Divided, Antiblackness as Corporate Vice* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017), 110-115.
[6] Joel S. Panzer, *The Popes, and Slavery* (New York: Alba House, 1996), 70-71.
[7] Hayes, "Reflections on Slavery," 65-75.
[8] Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, No. 20.

vicious of all human vices."[9] It constitutes one of the most persistent viruses and represents an evil of humanity that calls for a global response. Racism will not end until hierarchies of power have been dealt with. Like any illness, one must treat the source to heal it, not the symptom. In a church with a deep history of racism, Ubuntu ethics is a newer source of moral authority that recognizes the identity of the oppressed and restores their dignity as children of God. The Ubuntu virtues of mutuality and interdependence break the chain of racial classification in appealing to both the oppressor and oppressed, enabling them to see each other as peers with the same humanity.[10] In this way, the African Christian tradition with its emphasis on racial equality can provide a model for the U.S. context, where historically the faith has failed to be prophetic on these issues.

Ubuntu Ethics: New Source of Moral Authority

Ubuntu ethics is primarily an African philosophical and epistemological concept that is used in all aspects of life. In South African apartheid, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission engaged Ubuntu ethics to bring reconciliation to a country divided by racism. Nobel Prize laureate Desmond Tutu utilized Ubuntu ethics to heal the wounds of racial conflict by recounting the atrocities of apartheid, seeking to facilitate reconciliation and amnesty. Ubuntu ethics refers to the full humanness that we share. For linguistic illustration, the word *ubuntu* has a different meaning in every African language, yet each definition harkens back to the same root of interconnectedness. For example, *ubuntu* is *umunthu* in Chewa, *umundu* in Yawo, *bunhu* in Tsonga, *unhu* in Shona, *botho* in Sotho or Tswana, *umuntu* in Zulu, *vhutu* in Venda, and *ubuntu*

[9] Reinhold Niebuhr, *Christianity and Crisis* (New York: Winter, 1943), 11.
[10] Michael Battle, *Reconciliation: The Ubuntu Theology of Desmond Tutu* (Cleveland, Ohio: The Pilgrim Press, 1997), 5.

in Xhosa and Ndebele.[11] Ubuntu ethics has been useful in struggling toward racial reconciliation between the colonizer and indigenous in many post-independence African countries. Despite the atrocities of colonization, some African leaders such as Nelson Mandela of South Africa, Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya, and Sam Nujoma of Namibia practiced *ubuntu* when they pushed for reconciliation, rehabilitation, reconstruction, and reparations rather than simply reprisals against white colonizers.

In the South African context of apartheid, the color of one's skin made those who were white the elite of society as a birthright. This racial injustice caused tension and violence that resulted in loss of life, mainly Black life. The considerable gaps between the haves and the have-nots, the owners of the land and the homeless, the educated and the non-educated, the employed and unemployed were the everyday systems that maintained racism. Ubuntu ethicists and reconciliation stakeholders argued that "unless houses replace the hovels and shacks in which most Blacks live and unless Blacks gain access to clean water, electricity, affordable health care, decent education, good jobs, and a safe environment—things which the vast majority of whites have taken for granted for so long—we can just as well kiss reconciliation goodbye."[12] We can choose to face systemic racism and engage with solutions from personal, communal, and institutional perspectives. Ubuntu ethics in the South African context went beyond togetherness to reach the transformation of structures and systems. Each member of society is an agent, accountable for ongoing racial injustice.[13]

At this moment in our world, there is a need for a sincere encounter with our sins and responsibilities. There is a need to do more toward a new perception of racial cohabitation and

[11] Richard Tambulasi and Happy Kayuni, "Ubuntu and Democratic Good Governance in Malawi, a Case Study," in *African Ethics*, ed. Munyaradzi Felix Murove (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2009), 427-428.
[12] Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness*, 209.
[13] Whitney M. Young, *Beyond Racism, Building an Open Society* (New York: Paperback, 1971), 224-225.

mutual recognition. The present situation demands us to "turn history around, subvert it, and send it in a new direction."[14] To heal this world and its peoples requires a new vision and meaning of Black life to bring about a new culture. This is possible through Ubuntu ethics's emphasis on reconciliation via systemic change and reparations.

The Ubuntu Call for Reconciliation and Reparations

Reparations itself is not a new or revolutionary theory, but rather a global practice that started with reparations from the damages of World War I and the Cold War. The Jewish victims of the Nazi holocaust and Japanese Americans also represent two groups who gained reparations from human rights violations during World War II. Reparations take a different form according to the context and need. In the Jewish context, for example, reparations consisted of transferring money and funds from the German government to Jewish survivors.[15] Ubuntu ethics is unique in that it recognizes the simultaneous need for reconciliation and the right to reparations, rooted in a restorative desire for interconnectedness without need for punishment or payback. Before reconciliation was achieved, the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission first proposed adopting a new, inclusive constitution. The Commission recognized that "there is a need for understanding but not for vengeance, a need for reparation but not for retaliation, a need for *ubuntu* but not for victimization."[16] In South Africa, to fulfill these needs, reparation was practiced at the individual, communal, and governmental levels. Reparation is not compensation,

[14] Jon Sobrino, *No Salvation Outside the Poor* (New York: Orbis Books, 2017), 9.
[15] Ali A. Mazrui, "Africa's Wisdom Has Two Parents and One Guardian: Africanism, Islam, and the West," in *African Ethics: An Anthology of Comparative and Applied Ethics*, ed. Munyaradzi Felix Murove (Scottville: University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2009), 38.
[16] Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness*, 40.

but rather it is to be understood as "balm, an ointment, being poured over the wounds to assist in their healing."[17]

As Elizabeth Bound argues, "working for solidarity requires a process that includes addressing injury, loss, and fear, along with recognizing the multiple forms of oppression and domination in which we live."[18] Reparation turns the page to a new chapter in a nation's history by integrating the harmed into the system without need for payback. It draws near to the lamentable history of racism and gives the required honor and dignity to Black people. Reparations is resurrecting bodies to new life by paying back stolen integrity and talent. In a U.S. context, Ubuntu ethics's model that emphasizes relationship and interconnectedness could include empowering those who were victims of slavery and still are victims of racism by imparting education skills, religious power, and a national share of work equity to show an authentic sorrow for past systemic injustices. It should encompass power-sharing by including Black representation in state institutions. For Ubuntu ethics, reparations makes concrete and known the desire to repair relationship and maintain connection. Reparations is the first step in reconstruction of a society working toward the ultimate goal of reconciliation. It also concerns the human memories that will never be fully buried in the past. Dialogue and reconciliation through truth-telling and healing becomes a personal duty and a national priority. When the harm is long-lasting and cross-historical, reconciliation can be slow. Reconciliation and forgiveness are not a one-step journey to walk. Reconciliation is instead a process that requires audacity and stamina. Reconciliation and forgiveness do not have boundaries; instead, they are a path to

[17] Ibid. 51.
[18] Elizabeth Bounds, "Gaps and Flashpoints: Untangling Race and Class," in *Disrupting White Supremacy from Within: White People on What We Need to Do*, ed. Jennifer Harvey (Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 2004), 123-141.

building a genuine relationship leading to a new creation in Christ.[19] Ubuntu ethics, with its roots in authentic relationship and the idea of giving freely without payback or punishment, sees the necessity of reparations and systemic change if a nation is ever to see racial reconciliation.

Ubuntu's communitarian aspect with its care for Otherness, interconnectedness, and mutuality considers all beings as sharing the same humanity. Taking mutuality seriously requires accountability through some reparatory process and an ability to remember and to forgive. This approach is essential to address the systemic racism that dehumanizes Black people in the U.S. For a capitalist society steeped in racialized poverty, Ubuntu ethics could instill the attitude of caring for the less privileged and oppressed in the community: the understanding that all are interconnected. Laurenti Magesa argues that sharing, care, public witness, and building relationships are ethical components of leadership in times of severe crises grounded in the principles of Ubuntu.[20] The spirit of selfishness, avarice, and greed is challenged. The community has the moral duty to protect others' well-being in their diversity because human beings, despite skin color, are intrinsically linked, and our humanity is intertwined together.[21] All recollection of the past should, in any case, lead to the restoration and resurrection of life within this framework. This is, ultimately, what an Ubuntu framework would have to offer situations of intense racial conflict such as that currently being experienced in the U.S.

Conclusion

In a time of crisis, dehumanization, and stolen dignity, the U.S. Catholic Church can play an important role in facilitating social reconciliation by moving away from its history of outright

[19] Society of Jesus, *Rowing into the Deep: General Congregation 36* (Rome: Curia of the Superior General, 2017), Nos 3, 34.
[20] Laurenti Magesa, *What Is Not Sacred? African Spirituality* (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2014), 96-97.
[21] Carlo Petrini, and Sabina Gainotti., "A Personalist Approach to Public-Health Ethics.," *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* (2008). http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes

and ambiguous support for racism and toward a claiming of its global, African tradition and, specifically, a claiming of Ubuntu ethics. Ubuntu ethics recognizes that harmed relationships require acts of accountability that can then lead to reconciliation. *Ubuntu* insists on an understanding of humanity as a community of solidarity in which we share the same values and resources. Reconciliation through Ubuntu ethics is a peaceful and truthful process, where two parties listen to grief-filled memories and seek to heal any loss with restorative justice and concrete reparations that will contribute to the restoration of genuine relationships and cohabitation. The U.S. Church should learn from the role that the South African Christian tradition played in its social context and encourage both individuals and institutions to engage in work to remember and move beyond systemic racism rooted in the country's original sin of slavery.[22] This remembrance leads to a conversion of heart. Whether it be on a personal level, ecclesial level, or institutional level, this conversion concerns all of us. Ubuntu ethics tells us that the social structure that perpetuates our racist origins has to transform. It is in moving from this place that "double healing and conversion can occur."[23]

In the battle against racism, Black people are among the most crucified people. The remembrance and recounting of the stories of wounds and grief, the recognition of social and structural sin, together with the will of reparations, is an ethical approach that can bring about change. From Martin Luther King Jr. to Black Lives Matter, these perspectives have told their struggles in the face of violence and denial of recognition. Ubuntu ethics requires that white Americans recognize the role of African slavery in the foundations of the nation and the economy by promoting systemic change on a path to racial reconciliation. Ubuntu theology recognizes and restores the image of God in each person. From this perspective, both the

[22] Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The Invisible Institution in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 103-110.
[23] United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Open Wide Our Hearts," No. 7.

oppressor and oppressed should see their peers as created in the image of God. Ubuntu theology exists at a crossroads between forgiveness of the past and reparations for the future, posing a promising ethical response to moral injustice.

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Revised Psalm 16

To honor the memory of Brandon Bernard, who was executed by the United States federal government on December 10, 2020.

By Matt Wooters, SJ

Be with me, God. They are going to kill me. All of them. Everyone who pays taxes, all 141 million of them are paying for the poison that will destroy the body that you built.

But my eyes are on you. You keep me warm in this cold, solitary cell.
They call it justice. They call this law and order. But my eyes are on you. This blood sport. This modern-day lynching. Another black body taken from his mother. But my eyes are on you.

But I know this is not the end. My end is with you. When they are mopping the death chamber of my blood, sweat, piss and shit after they kill me. I will be with you. I keep you always in my mind.

I feel sorry for them, Lord. They think they are you. They think they can arbitrate who is killed. Unlike them, I know I am a sinner. I know that I have done bad things, I've spent my whole adult life repenting. I know that is not the fullness of who I am. I rest in you.

Forevermore, I will be with you in joy. Forevermore, my blood is on their hands and their tax forms and their ballots. Forgive them… for they know exactly what they are doing.

Building the Beloved Community: Christian Ethical Reflections on Race, Gender, and Family During COVID-19

Porsia Tunzi
Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University (Berkeley, CA)
Graduate Theological Union (Berkeley, CA)

Abstract
Catholic circles are no stranger to using the beloved community as a way to communicate a particular vision of what the world could and should be. Rooted in a Christian social ethics framework, this transformative vision captures how the Gospel story and paschal mystery might be lived out today. This paper examines how Catholic ethicists can adopt the beloved community lens as a way to broach issues of race, gender, and family during the current COVID-19 pandemic. This vision of the beloved community specifically looks at how spiritual resistance, Eucharistic solidarity, and community organizing can approach matters of race, gender, and family together, ideally empowering families to work toward racial and gender justice in the midst of the current crisis and beyond.

"...the end is reconciliation; the end is redemption; the end is the creation of the *Beloved Community*. It is this type of spirit and this type of love that can transform opponents into friends. It is this type of understanding goodwill that will transform the deep gloom of the old age into the exuberant gladness of the new age. It is this love which will bring about miracles in the hearts of men."

-Martin Luther King, Jr., "*Facing the Challenge of a New Age," 1956*

Martin Luther King, Jr. believes that it is our collective call to build the *beloved community* where "racism and all forms of discrimination, bigotry and prejudice will be replaced by an all-inclusive spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood."[1] King's *beloved community* is a lens in which equity, solidarity, inclusivity, radical hospitality, and racial and social justice are the pillars for a healthy society where all people are committed to compassion, truth-telling, and reconciliation. It is also a lens with deep roots in a Christian vision of building God's kingdom

[1] The King Center, "The King Philosophy," *The King Center*, accessed May 16, 2020.

here on earth where all people may flourish. Is this an idyllic vision for the world or a grounded, tangible one? Catholic circles are no stranger to using the *beloved community* as a way to communicate a particular vision of what the world could and should be. Rooted in a Christian social ethics framework, this transformative vision captures how the Gospel story and paschal mystery might be lived out today. The *beloved community* is also a vision and lens that offers a way for the field of Christian social ethics to authentically deal with or think about race, gender, and family *together* in a United States context. By offering a new, revitalized lens or way of seeing, the *beloved community* vision allows scholars to engage in a pedagogy that infuses reflection and action — praxis — where matters of race, gender, and family become personal, real, and transformative. This vision becomes an essential one to adopt, as the U.S faces simultaneously a global pandemic and continued racial injustices and uprisings.

Why is talking about matters of the family important when discussing race and gender? What perspectives might we gain? Why are these categories not often examined together, especially when it is impossible to separate family and gender from the larger social structure of racism? How might attention to family in discussions on race create opportunities for social transformation? How does race and racism impact the American Catholic identity and, in particular, American Catholic families? These questions unveil gaps in current scholarship when addressing complex issues. By reflecting and expanding upon current research in Catholic social thought, social ethicists can move toward an intersectional framework that examines race, gender, and family together for the purpose of building the *beloved community*.

This paper is divided into two sections. In the first, I briefly review past and current developments and methodologies concerning race, gender, and family in the field of Christian social ethics. Understanding where the discipline has been as well as the progress it has made

aids in understanding how the *beloved community* lens can serve as an intersectional tool to examine issues of race, gender, and family. The second section will provide a case study – that of the current COVID-19 crisis – that analyzes where ethicists can work toward building the *beloved community*. This vision of the *beloved community* specifically looks at how spiritual resistance, Eucharistic solidarity, and community organizing can approach matters of race, gender, and family together, ideally empowering families to work toward racial and gender justice in the midst of the current crisis and beyond.

Race, Gender, and Family: Limitations and Progress

Race, gender, and family have been topics of concern for Catholic theologians and ethicists, yet these topics have not adequately converged, missing a critical opportunity for intersectional dialogue and justice work to be achieved. Despite such limitations, some ethicists are making deliberate movements, cultivating new practices, and implementing new methodologies. This section examines the limitations and progress in the field so far, illuminating a path toward cultivating a *beloved community* in the present day.

Although neither explicitly examines family, scholars Shawn Copeland and Bryan Massingale's analyses on race and racial justice unearth the need for inclusion and reimagination of family issues. For Copeland, it is through seriously considering embodied experiences of Black women's historical oppression that scholars can learn about what it means to be human and what it means to do justice. The trauma-filled experience of being seen merely as breeders, where slavery devoured and reduced women and childbearing to a commercial objectification, reveals a need to talk about the intersection of race, gender, and family. Sharing the stories of women who, against "repeated whippings, brandings, and severed [appendages]," "refused to

surrender to slavery" and continued to fight for freedom, even with young babies in their arms, unveils the inherent dignity and incessant will to be free that is fundamental to the human person.[2] In his examination of racism in the Catholic Church, Massingale notes the slave spiritual: "sometimes I feel like a motherless child" is a soulful lament that conveys "the pain, grief, hurt, and disappointment of belonging to a church wherein [Black Catholics] too often feel orphaned or abandoned."[3] This metaphor of motherhood and being an orphan evokes the collective yearning to create and belong to a *beloved community*—a community of belonging, familial hospitality, and justice.

Some contemporary scholars have examined the role of race in their analysis of family and justice. Julie Rubio argues for families to develop practices of resistance in order for social transformation at both the home and society level to occur; in this way, families are a necessary aspect for resisting injustice.[4] James and Kathleen McGinnis look at family as domestic church and social forces such as racism and sexism that impact families. A domestic church vision allows families to become "agents of their own development and in the process involve themselves in the transformation of the world" and helps families "move more fully into the world rather than retreat from it."[5] Nichole M. Flores demonstrates how the Latina/o practice of "extended communal family promotes solidarity by strengthening the larger community"[6] and by enhancing the common good.

Catholic Social Teaching also emphasizes that families specifically can play a vital role in building the *beloved community*. As John Paul II adamantly states in *Familiaris Consortio*:

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[2] M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being*. (Minneapolis, Foretress Press: 2009), 115.
[3] Bryan N. Massingale, *Racial Justice and the Catholic Church*. (Mayknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 2010), 79.
[4] Julie Hanlon Rubio, *Family Ethics: Practices for Christians* (Washington, D.C: Georgetown University Press, 2010), 160.
[5] Kathleen McGinnis and James McGinnis, "Family as Domestic Church," in *One Hundred Years of Catholic Social Thought: Celebration and Challenge*, ed. John A. Coleman (Orbis Books, 1993), 125.
[6] Nichole M. Flores, "Latina/o Families: Solidarity and the Common Good," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 33, no. 2 (November 30, 2013): 57–72, 69.

> "The Christian family is thus called upon to offer everyone a witness of generous and disinterested dedication to social matters, through a 'preferential option' for the poor and disadvantaged. Therefore, advancing in its following of the Lord by special love for all the poor, it must have special concern for the hungry, the poor, the old, the sick, drug victims and those who have no family."[7]

Families—as a unit and as individual members—are intimately called to community and social engagement, education (e.g. antiracist book clubs), and service (e.g. virtual phone banks). Being in relationship with all members, particularly those who are poor and disadvantaged, is critical to living out what it means to be a family in church and society. John Paul II specifically calls upon the family to be in communion with social and political commitments and empowers lay people to go out into the world and live the social teaching of the church. Although John Paul II does not explicitly discuss race issues, it becomes clear with these words that families are responsible for fostering equity and racial justice in their homes and communities. John Paul II and Christian ethicists provide a window into seeing how family can act as a site of convergence where a *beloved community* vision is made manifest.

Ethicists are also progressing the field by engaging in important truth-telling work. Eric Yamamoto describes truth-telling as the process of "recalling history and its present-day consequences in order to release its grip."[8] Although difficult to acknowledge, the Catholic Church has fallen short, made mistakes, and has actively perpetuated and functioned within the complex inner workings of white supremacy. This is not an easy reality to unpack, yet it is necessary to tell the truth about the past and present when the church has helped facilitate racial inequity, domination, colonization, and slavery throughout its history. Truth-telling work that examines gender, family, and the roles of women is also necessary if one hopes to find solutions

[7] Pope John Paul II, "Familiaris Consortio," November 22, 1981, par. 47.
[8] Eric K. Yamamoto, *Interracial Justice: Conflict and Reconciliation in Post–Civil Rights America* (United States: NYU Press, 2000).

to social justice issues like racialized sexism and sexist racism.[9] To find a way forward toward gender and racial justice, the Catholic Church, and Christian ethicists particularly, must do the truth-telling work necessary in acknowledging how racism has actively infiltrated all aspects of Catholic life, especially family life, where white privilege has dominated and oppressed those who fall outside the perceived white norm.

Truth-telling work can also be a call for critical examination and reimagination of Christian social ethics as a discipline and field. Michael Jaycox urges his fellow scholars to "invert the academic gaze toward ourselves by asking about our own complicity in white supremacy."[10] In order to be effective in working toward social justice, the field must undergo scrutiny as well as reimagination by asking whose voices are heard, who is allowed to produce knowledge, and how ethical frameworks have been infiltrated with racist and patriarchal ideas.

Further, Catholic ethicists are utilizing ethnography and intersectionality as methodological tools to adequately broach complex issues. Ethnographic work, particularly in-depth interviews, allows ethicists to respond intentionally to "the signs of the times"[11] and enables scholars to take seriously the varied and often messy experiences of women and families in the Catholic Church. Likewise, adopting an intersectional lens allows scholars to unpack and understand complex problems and structures as well as to recognize intersecting dimensions of identity.[12] In utilizing these methodologies, Christian ethicists have the potential to cultivate a

[9] Christine Gudorf, for example, discusses the real clash between papal teaching on private/family matters and the lived realities of women and families in "Encountering the Other: The Modern Papacy on Women," in *Change in Official Catholic Moral Teachings*, ed. Charles E. Curran (New York: Paulist Press, 2002).
[10] Michael P. Jaycox, "Black Lives Matter and Catholic Whiteness: A Tale of Two Performances," *Horizons* 44, no. 2 (December 2017): 306–341, 331.
[11] Pope Paul VI, "Gaudium et Spes," December 7, 1965, par. 4
[12] Kimberle Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1241–1299.

new vision of inclusion and social transformation in the here and now. This vision is the *beloved community* made tangible where matters of race, gender, and family can be approached together.

COVID-19: A Case Study in Building the Beloved Community

The remaining part of this paper provides a case study demonstrating how Catholic ethicists might address family, gender, and race in the midst of the COVID-19 global pandemic. What healing, what practices can we create and foster in the continued confinement of COVID-19? How do both adults and children learn to operate in the dialectic of sorrow and joy, despair and hope, suffering and peace? A framework of the *beloved community*—one of spiritual resistance, Eucharistic solidarity, and community organizing—can empower families and inspire movement toward racial and gender justice during the current crisis.

The COVID-19 pandemic unveils not only the collective American folly that we value some lives more than others, but also a "deep understanding that our lives are inextricable from social, political, and economic forces."[13] It is by no accident that our racial and economic makeup as well as our family histories overwhelmingly determine our chances of being directly impacted by the crisis. It is Black and indigenous people who suffer most, who are bearing the brunt of the health and economic burdens that face us today.[14] At every stage, from risk of exposure due to being essential workers, to testing access, to gravity of illness and death, people of color bear the heaviest burden of COVID-19.[15] Black people have died from COVID-19 at

[13] Yohana Agra Junker, "On Covid-19, U.S. Uprisings, and Black Lives: A Mandate to Regenerate All Our Relations," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 36, no. 2 (2020), 117.
[14] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "COVID-19 in Racial and Ethnic Minority Groups," *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, last modified April 22, 2020.
[15] Daniel Wood, "As Pandemic Deaths Add Up, Racial Disparities Persist — And In Some Cases Worsen," *NPR*, last modified September 23, 2020.

one and a half times the rate of white people nationwide.[16] The vast, often interlocking issues such as health care disparities, racism, domestic abuse, and unemployment that arise in light of the pandemic, reveal what the most vulnerable among us face in everyday life. The pandemic exposes social inequities and reveals what it means to continue to live in the tight grip of American white supremacy.

This revelation of immense and complex suffering invites Catholic ethicists to reimagine the role of the church as well as the way in which we engage in relationships and connect with others. It also invites scholars to think about the new ways in which Christian communities are being called to advocate, organize, and resist in a time of unified distress. It is here that the vision of the *beloved community* offers not merely a response to the current crisis, but a new way of being and living in the world, one that deals authentically with family, gender, and race issues together. To make the *beloved community* a tangible reality, three concepts and practices—that of spiritual resistance, Eucharistic solidarity, and community organizing—provide ordinary opportunities for healing and justice.

Spiritual resistance, or an act of resistance rooted in a deep sense of spirituality that grounds oneself and one's community in values like human dignity and social justice, can contribute to the building of a *beloved community*, particularly during the current pandemic. Cultivating a nonviolent spirituality of white resistance rooted in the Beatitudes, for example, has the power to decenter the white subject culturally and institutionally, allowing for the *beloved community* to become a tangible reality in the United States.[17] A spirituality of non-violence

[16] In partnership with Boston University's Center for Antiracist Research, *The Atlantic* created "The COVID Racial Data Tracker" as a way to analyze and publish racial data and the COVID-19 pandemic across the U.S.
[17] Margaret R. Pfeil, "'Pacem in Terris' and a Nonviolent Spirituality of White Resistance to Hyper-Incarceration," *Journal of Catholic Social Thought* 11 (2014): 127–149.

offers "a way of being in the world."[18] This is seen concretely in the example of Dorothy Day who "exhorted the Catholic Worker houses of hospitality to wield the works of mercy as spiritual weapons" in American cities.[19] The spiritual resistance of activists such as Day, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Thomas Merton provides a tangible vision of how a spirituality of resistance can counteract the injustices that plague society.

Catholic ethicists can also consider how families in a variety of parish communities might develop a spirituality of resistance and allyship. Without intentionally fostering this spirituality within families on the ground, American society remains fractured by racism. One way families might cultivate a spirituality of resistance is engaging in Black Liturgies, "a project seeking to integrate concepts of dignity, lament, rage, justice, rest and liberation with the practice of written prayer."[20] Writer, liturgist, and speaker Cole Arthur Riley debuted this resource via Instagram on June 26, 2020, inviting people from all walks of life to pray, resist, and hope in a time of continued confinement and racial injustice. Taking time to engage in this liturgical resource as a family provides a space to grapple with racial injustice and white privilege as well as to embody values of racial equity, human dignity, and justice for all. Jean Pierre Ndagijimana, Rwandan psychologist and research scholar, emphasizes the importance of remaining connected during a time of pandemic and confinement through adopting an "everyday spirit-in-action." For example, Ndagijimana shares that there is a sacred connection, perhaps even an act of communal resistance, when meeting the eyes of a fellow Black male runner while on his daily evening route; it is as if their mutual, intentional glance says, "keep going, you got this." Ndagijimana also calls attention to the importance of creating informal virtual safe spaces that foster a

[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid, 134.
[20] Cole Arthur Riley, "Black Liturgist," Squarespace, *Black Liturgist*, last modified January 2021.

community of care where fears and vulnerabilities may be seen and shared.[21] In these ways, a vision of the *beloved community* becomes real.

Further, the *beloved community* calls for Eucharistic solidarity—an active embrace of social action and mutual liberation inspired by the crucifixion narrative—among all people. Eucharistic solidarity is a deliberate infusion of and linkage between Jesus's suffering on the cross and the remembering of the "Black victims of history, martyrs for freedom."[22] It is a "virtue, a practice of cognitive and bodily commitments oriented to meet the social consequences of Eucharist."[23] Similar to adopting a spirituality of resistance, families are called to racial justice through Eucharistic solidarity, an embodied, intentional practice of community.

This time of quarantine and pandemic brings forth a hyper-awareness of our embodied, visceral, and human experiences. It is our physical being-ness as gendered, familial bodies and the depth of our bodily woundedness that remind us of our desire to be seen and of our human capacity for freedom, resistance, and redemption. For Copeland, it is the wounds of Black women, men, and children who were tortured and enslaved that "constitute another stigmata. These 'hieroglyphics of the flesh' not only expose human cruelty but disclose the enslaved people's moral grasp of the inalienable sacredness, dignity, and worth of their humanity."[24] It is our wounds, especially the wounds of the most marginalized among us, that unveil our human goodness and intrinsic worth—the crux of what it means to be an embodied being made in the image of God. This understanding is where Eucharistic solidarity is made manifest. A simple and deliberate act of Eucharistic solidarity and indeed racial justice is wearing a mask. In doing so, people not only protect themselves, but they actively protect their fellow community members,

[21] Phone interview, "Solidarity and Spiritual Resistance During COVID-19," with Jean Pierre Ndagijimana.
[22] Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*.
[23] Ibid, 127.
[24] Ibid, 116.

especially those most vulnerable and at risk. Wearing a mask is one of the most tangible acts of solidarity during this time of pandemic because it is intentional, active, and community-centered.[25]

Massingale's reflection on racial reconciliation creates a praxis for families to participate in Copeland's Eucharistic solidarity. Although Massingale does not engage with families specifically, his questions provide a guide for family involvement in this important work. His questions include, "How do we overcome the poisonous legacies of suspicion, mistrust, fear, animosity, and even hatred that constantly threaten our attempts at intergroup living?" and, "How do estranged groups learn to live together in justice, and not merely coexist in the same place?"[26] Also important is fostering this moral imagination in young children. What would a racially just society look like? Can you envision an America free from the stain of racism? Reflecting upon these questions invites families to actively participate and take responsibility in the building of the *beloved community*.[27] There is opportunity for the decentering and dismantling of white supremacy to start at home and in one's local church community. Providing families with opportunities to ask these questions in virtual sharing groups and to apply their reflections to concrete action in a local community context is an important step forward.

These reflections echo John Paul II's call for families, as an intentional social institution, to work toward justice.[28] Participating in virtual antiracist education programs[29] is one way to make Massingale's reflection on racial reconciliation come alive during continued confinement. As COVID-19 continues to unveil multifaceted and interlocking racial and health injustices,

[25] Ignatian Solidarity Network, "Wearing a #facemask Is an Act of #solidarity.," Twitter, April 11, 2020.
[26] Massingale, *Racial Justice and the Catholic Church*.
[27] Massingale, *Racial Justice and the Catholic Church*.
[28] Pope John Paul II, "Familiaris Consortio."
[29] JustFaith Ministries, a nonprofit Christian organization, offers the program series, "Faith and Racial Equity: Exploring Power and Privilege," to church communities across the U.S.

parish communities and families, now more than ever, are invited to reflect, learn, and unlearn so that they may be more effective change agents in their work toward Eucharistic solidarity.

Finally, community organizing as a Christian theological praxis is another way to make real the *beloved community* in American society. Annie Fox emphasizes how the process of community organizing in which community members coming together with a common purpose to enact social change creates opportunities for social and spiritual transformation on a small scale in parish communities. In many ways, community organizing intuitively addresses race, family, and gender issues together through storytelling, intentional relationship building, and active listening.[30] This relationship building through conversations of encounter acts as a precedent to action, where families can form deep connections to fellow church members and the community at large.[31] These encounters of storytelling allow community members to begin to understand systems of power and to engage in public research actions on a local level. Prophetic action, the final phase of community organizing, allows families and other community members to imagine new ways of acting and discerning a way forward in building the *beloved community*.

Although it is difficult to engage in the kind of community organizing Fox describes during the current pandemic crisis, this model serves to uplift the importance of storytelling and encountering people and families where they are, either virtually or through social distancing. It is in times of crisis that community members, especially families, need opportunities to share their experiences and stories. Allowing them to respond to a question like, "How is COVID-19 impacting you and your family right now?" will give insight into the needs of and sufferings in the community. From here, leaders of the community organizing initiative can help families imagine solutions and invite them into action. This process can serve as a concrete way to make

[30] Annie Fox, "Prophetic Pastoring: Faith Based Community Organizing and the Power for Change," April 6, 2020.
[31] *Ibid.*

real the *beloved community* that Martin Luther King, Jr. calls for in his vision for a more just and equitable society.

Virtual phone banks are another tangible example of what community organizing might look like during the pandemic. Calling a list of families in one's parish directory and singular pairing, for example, pairing a child with an elder in the community, allow for individual and collective needs to be heard so that churches might offer the right support and resources. In a very tangible way, this process invites people to help their neighbors who are elderly or self-isolating during the COVID-19 outbreak by arranging grocery drop offs, volunteering to tutor children virtually, sharing extra resources, or simply fostering a sense of community; it allows an opportunity for people to listen, create, and work towards a common goal. Through this type of relational work, vulnerable sharing, connection, and belonging can be achieved during a time of isolation, uncertainty, and fear.

During COVID-19, it is in celebrating Black Liturgies, creating informal virtual safe spaces, wearing masks, participating in antiracist education, and engaging in virtual phone banks and other prophetic actions that the *beloved community* is able to come to fruition in the ordinary here and now. A *beloved community* lens offers a way for Christian social ethicists to examine how people, especially families, can actively participate in practices that uplift, challenge, serve, and empathize with those most vulnerable in our society, particularly those suffering from and greatly impacted by COVID-19.

Conclusion

This paper examines the ways in which the field of Christian social ethics can authentically engage in intersectional issues. Through the case study of the COVID-19 crisis, it

becomes clear how race, gender, and family can converge in building the *beloved community*. Future research might include an analysis of papal and U.S. bishops' documents as a way to better grasp precisely what the Catholic Church's official stance is on matters of race, gender, and family. The inclusion of additional scholars such as Emily Reimer-Barry, Barbara Andolsen, Shawnee Daniels-Sykes, and Katie Grimes, and a deeper analysis of their current scholarship on race, gender, and family will be critical in future analysis.

How do we build the *beloved community*? When we acknowledge how our bodies yearn collectively for connection and belonging and to be truly seen, when we tell the truth about our shared histories of complicity in oppression, when we listen to the stories and experiences of friends, neighbors, and strangers, we may catch a glimpse of the *beloved community* in the ordinary, in the here and now, in the complex and intersectional family.

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Author Biographies

Daryl Grigsby

Daryl Grigsby was born in Washington, DC, and currently lives in Nevada City, California. Daryl was the founder of the San Diego Black Writers and Artists, and has published articles in several newspapers and magazines. He is also a published author, including *In Their Footsteps; Inspirational Reflections on Black History for Every Day of the Year* and *Celebrating Ourselves: African-Americans and the Promise of Baseball*. Daryl graduated with a Master of Arts in Pastoral Studies from Seattle University School of Theology and Ministry in 2002, and has volunteered with Get On the Bus, and the tutoring program of the Inland Valley Faith Consortium.

Alan Berryhill

Alan Berryhill is a lay theologian in the final semester of the Master of Theological Studies program at the Jesuit School of Theology, with an emphasis in systematic theology. He has previously studied mathematics and computer science at UC Berkeley and the University of Southern California. His theological interests include pneumatology, Christology, Asian American theologies, and the theologians of the Second Vatican Council. He lives with his wife in San Jose, CA, where he works as a software engineer.

Fikiri Kamuntu Deogratias, SJ

Fikiri Kamuntu Deogratias is a Jesuit from the Democratic Republic of Congo. He is currently an online student studying Theology at the Jesuit School of Theology (JST) of Santa Clara University. He is pursuing a Licentiate in Sacred Theology (STL) in social ethics. Before his STL program, he studied theology at Hekima University College in Nairobi. He is interested in topics regarding social justice, mainly ecological justice and reconciliation.

Porsia Tunzi

Porsia Tunzi is a PhD student at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, CA, and an adjunct professor at California Lutheran University in Thousand Oaks, CA. Porsia holds an M.A. in American Studies from Pepperdine University, and a B.S. in Psychology and Theology and Religious Studies from Saint Mary's College. Her research interests include religion and society, American Catholicism, social justice, family, gender, race, and applied theology and ethics.

Crossing Roads

The Editorial Board
Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University (Berkeley, CA)

In many ways, the entire parable of the Good Samaritan serves as a hermeneutical key to the thought and approach of Pope Francis. It was very much a part of his early writings when he compared the Church to a field hospital at the forefront of tending to the immediate needs of all. This same parable took pride of place in *Fratelli tutti* as well, filling an entire chapter while having us consider how this is "constantly retold" (FT 69) each and every day of our lives. It begins with the question, "Who are our neighbors?", a question that challenges us to reconsider differences and boundaries which may prevent us from truly being the loving beings that we are created to be. The encyclical does much more than ask questions–it is a call to action and one which makes us consider which side of the road we want to walk on.

Both the priest and the Levite in the parable famously saw the injured man and passed by on the other side of the road, putting distance between them and the problem, using the road as a buffer that separated them from someone in need. This image is particularly apt when we consider the number of people who have walked in protest in recent months, passing through streets in solidarity with those who are most in need of representation, proclaiming not just that Black Lives Matter, but that this recognition is but the start of greater change that has to happen in our society. And so, during dual pandemics of systemic racism and COVID-19, we are called to creative, intimate, and new forms of connection, to be close in radically different ways so that we can engage meaningfully and with love.

The act of not passing by on the other side, of stopping and aiding those most marginalized, lies at the heart of *Fratelli tutti*. Much more can be said about this, and deeper, more profound readings of the encyclical are bound to come, but two aspects stand out at this time with urgency: the need for relationship and for dialogue, both of which require the closeness that comes from bold and countercultural road crossings. This "speaks to us of an essential and often forgotten aspect of our common humanity: we were created for a fulfilment that can only be found in love." (FT 68) This is the acknowledgment of the fundamental truth that we are all children of God and that we cannot remain isolated from the suffering that is experienced around us. This also allows us to recognize that love is more than just a series of actions but has its "source in a union increasingly directed towards others, considering them of value, worthy, pleasing and beautiful apart from their physical or moral appearances" (FT 94). This love for others moves us closer to each other in spirit even as we remain physically distant, forming dignified relationships and starting meaningful dialogues.

Editorial Board: Crossing Roads

Human persons are, by nature, open to relationships. We have a deep call within us to transcend our individual selves through encounters with others (FT 111). This comes through the rejection of radical individualism and the promotion of social friendship and universal fraternity, affirming the worth of every human person through the relationships that we have (FT 106). Relationality can thus be seen to be the basis for solidarity; we cannot help but be moved when faced with the visceral reality of difficulties and suffering of others. The encyclical helps us recognize that the antidote to the fragmentation that comes with rampant individualism lies in the solidarity or "solidity" which relationships bring (FT 115). The turn toward relationality that is grounded in love pushes us to expand our vision of who our fellow children of God are, inviting us to cross the road to be with those in need or of different social positions than our own, standing together because there is no other alternative if we claim to follow the Lord.

The concrete help that we can give and the solidarity with those in need are but the start of something more. The importance of dialogue emphasized in the encyclical could not have come at a better moment. Political and social discourse over the past months has descended into polarized polemics, becoming not dialogue but merely parallel monologues (FT 200). These catch one's attention but do little to actually bring us into contact so that we can begin to understand one another. This has to change, and the monologues have to be transformed into an authentic conversation that "involves the ability to respect the other's point of view and to admit that it may include legitimate convictions and concerns" (FT 200). Dialogue, thus described, is about listening and being attentive to others, crossing roads so as to be closer with and understand those with whom we speak. Authentic dialogue not only increases the possibility of being understood but also aids in the building of relationships, a grave necessity in these days.

The building of relationships and engaging in dialogue also requires a deep examination of where we are as a church. Recognizing and remembering our past, our complicity with systemic racism, and our failures at protecting the most vulnerable can be the first step. Even the title of the encyclical, being less gender inclusive than it should be, points to the distance between where we are and where we should be as a church. By taking a long look at the reality of who we are as church and by making the courageous step to begin reconciliation within, our church can begin the slow and difficult step of crossing the road. And we realize that the crossing is in itself a continuing process, because as a pilgrim church, we are always on the move, walking forward together. The many pictures of people protesting in the middle of roads and streets all over the world, standing up for the underrepresented, are potent images for us as church. In order to cross the road, we need to pause and gather in solidarity while always looking to the other side, toward the visions of those who seek justice.

Editorial Board: Crossing Roads

The need for relationship and authentic dialogue, even in these difficult times, brings us back to the original questions, "Who are our neighbors and who are our siblings?" Building relationships and engaging in dialogue allow one to see what Jesus wanted us to see–that our neighbors and siblings are present all around us, as long as we are willing to cross the road to meet them. And that crossing of roads is, perhaps, the whole point of the question. Being neighbors is not a one-way street (pun somewhat intended) as we become recognized as neighbors to others, too. By seeking to be in relation and dialogue with others, we act in love and realize how we are loved in return. It is this spirit of reciprocal love that prevents us from thinking that we have all the answers and to recognize that just as we cross roads to be with others, they do the same with us. *Fratelli tutti* reminds us that we are not only all siblings in the Lord, but that we are also invited to work with Jesus, our brother, to build a world that is at once fraternal, equal, and loving.

It is apt to end here with the second part of the prayer that ends Francis's encyclical, asking for open hearts to achieve our shared dreams, dreams that begin with our writings in this journal and that will be carried out as we actively cross roads to be with our neighbors, sisters, and brothers.

May our hearts be open
to all the peoples and nations of the earth.
May we recognize the goodness and beauty
that you have sown in each of us,
and thus forge bonds of unity, common projects,
and shared dreams. Amen.

Call for Papers

New Horizons:
A Peer-reviewed Graduate Journal
Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University

Volume 5 Issue 2: "At a Crossroads"

"There are those who appear to feel encouraged or at least permitted by their faith to support varieties of narrow and violent nationalism, xenophobia and contempt, and even the mistreatment of those who are different. Faith, and the humanism it inspires, must maintain a critical sense in the face of these tendencies, and prompt an immediate response whenever they rear their head. For this reason, it is important that catechesis and preaching speak more directly and clearly about the social meaning of existence, the fraternal dimension of spirituality, our conviction of the inalienable dignity of each person, and our reasons for loving and accepting all our brothers and sisters" (FT, par. 86).

New Horizons invites submissions on the themes of Pope Francis's *Fratelli tutti*. In a time of deep polarization, how do we welcome the stranger by creating dialogue and inviting the crossings-over and beyond of identities, spaces, and comforts?

The Journal invites pastoral, academic, and multimedia submissions that provide theological reflection on migration and global refugee crises; dialogue and seeking the common good; environmental justice and climate change; biblical interpretations of polarized social issues; gender and Catholicism; Pope Francis and systematic theology; a culture and economy of productivity, efficiency, and exploitation; globalization, community, and the human family; social ethics in a time of COVID-19; and other such pressing issues. While these prompts are meant to guide submissions, they are not limiting in their scope. The Journal warmly invites any papers emerging from reflections on the themes of *Fratelli tutti*.

Academic papers should be formatted according to the Chicago Manual of Style, 17th. Ed., and comprise between 2,000-4,000 words. Homilies and pastoral reflections are held to the same word count. Poetry, prayer, artwork, and photography are highly welcomed components of the journal.

Submissions should be uploaded by 5pm on May 28, 2021 to newhorizonsjst@scu.edu. Accepted submissions will be published in August 2021. Please email bkozee@scu.edu with any questions or inquiries.

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NEW HORIZONS

Volume 5 Issue 1