

# Stirrings



A Basilian Peace & Justice Newsletter

Spring 2017

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## A Challenge Based on the Gospel of Mercy

*I suggest that every Basilian house or apostolate, according to its means, sponsor the settlement of a refugee family in the cities in which we are based.*

By Warren Schmidt CSB

Lampedusa, Italy: On July 8, 2013, Pope Francis first visited this small island of about 6,000 inhabitants off the coast of Sicily, also a major first port of entry into Europe for perhaps tens of thousands of undocumented migrants and



refugees per year, mainly from North Africa and the Middle East. There, in his homily in response to one of the many shipwrecks that have claimed the lives of migrants in the Mediterranean, desperate to reach Europe, Pope Francis coined the phrase, “the globalization of indifference.”

In the same homily, Pope Francis likened this indifference to the attitude of the Biblical Adam and Cain, the first lost in his own comfort and pride, believing himself to be his own god, and the second indifferent to his responsibility for the life of his brother Abel, whom he kills in a jealous rage. And so God asks Adam and then Cain, “Adam, where are you?” “Cain, where is the blood of your brother?”

Two months after this papal address on Lampedusa, on October 3, 2013, another shipwreck off the island’s shores would claim an

estimated 360 more migrants’ lives. Two years later, in September 2015, the image published by media worldwide of three-year-old Alan Kurdi of Syria, drowned on a Turkish beach, would draw renewed attention to the

Syrian civil war, ongoing since 2011, from which 4.8 million refugees have fled Syria and a further 6 million have been displaced within Syria.

These are but a fraction of the number of our world’s forced migrants, refugees together with people smuggled and trafficked, most often for slave labour and sex. By December, 2015, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated a worldwide total of 65.3 million forcibly displaced people, representing 1 of every 113 people globally. 21.3 million of these are refugees by UN definition. Nearly 500,000 of these are from the Americas.

Refugees and other forced migrants, in such staggering numbers, become mere objects of sensationalism, fear, and further abuses, if indifference is allowed to prevail. Pope Francis’

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## Refugee Challenge

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Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2016 was entitled “Migrants and Refugees Challenge Us: The Response of the Gospel of Mercy.”

The plight of the world’s refugees and migrants indeed challenges us, particularly as Catholic Christians, to act with mercy toward these most vulnerable of our sisters and brothers. Concretely, Pope Francis proposed, at the height of refugee influx into the EU, that each European parish meet this challenge by sponsoring a refugee family.

Since then, the Donald Trump administration has proposed building a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border. European leaders have campaigned on similar anti-migrant, nationalist and protectionist policies. President Trump has signed two executive orders banning nationals from select countries from entering the U.S. and temporarily halting U.S. refugee claim processing. Despite appeals courts’ blocking implementation of these orders, enforcement officials have been thrown into confusion if they have not been complicit in the Trump administration’s security-obsessed



disregard for human life and dignity, as in warrantless searches and detentions already taking place in higher-density migrant neighbourhoods in major U.S. cities.

Before becoming U.S. Vice-President, then-Governor of Indiana Mike Pence publicly refused to allow the settlement of Syrians in the state. Then-Archbishop of Indianap-



olis, Joseph Tobin, now Cardinal Archbishop of Newark, openly defied Pence by sponsoring Syrian refugees through the archdiocese.

To my Basilian confrères first of all, I propose, in light of these developments, Cardinal Tobin’s action as a model of meeting Pope Francis’ challenge to respond with mercy that honours the human dignity of our migrant and refugee sisters and brothers. Within our Basilian Congregation, a similar action has already been undertaken locally by the St. Joseph’s College community in Edmonton, which has to date sponsored two Syrian refugee families. I suggest that every Basilian house or apostolate, according to its means, sponsor the settlement of a refugee family in the cities in which we are based.

Echoing Pope Francis, Cardinal Joseph Tobin, and the St. Joseph’s College community, might I call this my challenge based on the Gospel of Mercy; a challenge not only to prevent but to counter actively yet nonviolently the spread of indifference, fear, and outright evil toward those among the most vulnerable in our midst?

From the ground to the depths of the seas to where we Basilians, religious, priests, baptized Christians minister in the name of our God who is mercy, the blood of our vulnerable refugee and migrant sisters and brothers cries out to us.

*Warren is currently on graduate studies in Paris.*



## Stirrings

*A Peace & Justice Newsletter  
A project of the Basilian Centre for Peace & Justice*

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Stirring: (noun) the act of moving or putting into motion, activity



## Saving the Earth

By Leo Reilly CSB

The good news, if you agree with Dame Julian of Norwich (1342-c. 1416), is that the earth is like a hazelnut in the loving hand of its creator. Pope Francis, coming from the global south, dedicated his first encyclical to saving the Earth, its title, *Laudato si'*, echoing St. Francis' praise of the Creator's work.

The bad news is that forty-nine out of fifty-one of the world's largest economies belong to corporations programmed to mine the earth to destruction. The poor, who make up ninety-nine percent of the earth's population, because they are kind to



one another, are inclined to underestimate the unbridled determination of the one percent to exploit the earth for their own interests. Nestlé's chairman, Peter Brabeck, for example, says that water is not a human right. This is the company that killed millions of babies in India because it refused to say that the water for its infant formula needed to be boiled before use.

Jesus' prediction that "there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known" is being fulfilled by electronic technology and social networking. The day after the inauguration of a president who boasted of his predation of women, women organized a world-wide protest, many times larger than his inaugural crowd, against the long history of women's predation. A woman's right to control her own body has unfortunately given abortion an unworthy prominence compared to her need for normal family life.

A strike in 1957 that went on for seven months against Inco, the world's largest nickel-mining company ended when the mothers emerged in large numbers to force the settlement. Women are currently leading the opposition to Canada's

predatory mining practices that are making the maple leaf a world-wide symbol of disgrace. Women members of the Israeli Knesset, says one member, struggle not against a glass ceiling but an iron gate.

The current Trump-Bannon strategy is to exhaust the opposition with a barrage of conflicting initiatives. Senator Elizabeth Warren says it is not working.

Oil still offers billions in profits even if millions are made homeless by rising seas and melting of the permafrost lets methane warm the planet beyond humanly-habitable limits.



If Trump rescinds the ban on conflict minerals in the Congo region, it will unleash a new round of paramilitaries destabilizing villages, raping women, abducting boys for child-soldiers and child-workers and allow multinational corporations to reap the profits.

If humanity prevails, a culture of justice, love and peace remains available to overcome the cultures of predation and rape.

*Leo lives at Orsini House in Toronto.*



*Edited from the artist's introduction to the exhibition of his paintings at the Art Museum of the University of Toronto, January – March 2017*

Where were the paintings from the nineteenth century that recounted, with passion and empathy, the dispossession, starvation, incarceration and genocide of the Indigenous people here on Turtle Island? Museums across the continent hold in their collections countless paintings that depict and celebrate the European settlers' expansion and "discovery" of the North American landscape, but very few, if any, historical representations show the dispossession and removal of the First Peoples from their land. This version of history excised Indigenous people from art history, effectively white-washing the truth from Canada's foundational myths and school curriculums.

When invited to create a "Canada 150" project for the Art Museum at the University of Toronto, I leapt at the opportunity to represent a critical perspective on the last hundred and fifty years of history of Turtle Island. I wanted to activate a dialogue about the impact of the last hundred and fifty years of European cultures on Indigenous peoples, and about Indigenous resilience in the face of genocide.

Up until the final report from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, published in 2015, most Canadians were ignorant of the severity and trauma of residential schools: thousands

# Shame and Prejudice: A Story of Resilience

By Kent Monkman

upon thousands of children abused, with estimates as high as 30,000 dead or missing. It is almost impossible to imagine the damage to children forcibly removed from loving families, and the agony felt by the parents. Surviving sexual and physical abuse, many were starved, and sometimes used as guinea pigs for medical experiments. They were forced into free labour, made to feel shame about who they were, and in the process lost their languages and ties to their cultures.



The last federally funded residential school finally closed in the 1990s, but the intergenerational trauma of these experiences continues to reverberate in our families and communities in varying degrees of psychological and social disfunction. Through the witness of many thousands of residential school survivors in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Canadians have now been confronted with the dark past that haunts this nation.

My paternal grandmother, Elizabeth Monkman, was a survivor of the Brandon residential school in Manitoba. I grew up not knowing much about her experiences, and wasn't encouraged to ask. As I began to assemble

this exhibition, I reflected on the impacts of the residential school system in my own family: the removal of children, the cyclical violence and abuse handed down from one generation to the next, the loss of our language and cultural knowledge, the impact of the Church, the destruction of addiction, and incarceration. If all this was present in my own family, the impact of colonization on Indigenous families and communities across the continent is statistically so staggering it's nearly impossible to comprehend.

Can this country begin to heal, reconcile, and offer restitution for the hundreds of thousands of shattered lives and damaged families, and for each individual life?

The main theme for this exhibition, however, is resilience. The greatest evidence of resilience lies in the creativity of Indigenous artists across this continent who are overcoming the intergenerational impact of genocide and transforming

their troubled experiences into many forms of transcendent art and expression. I hope my paintings will function as a critique of colonization, authorize Indigenous experience in art history, and excite people with enduring power and possibility of history painting, perhaps even reaching across the next hundred and fifty years.



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# “Increase our Faith!” (Luke 17:5)

## *Reflections on forgiveness in the context of occupation*

Rev. Carrie Ballenger Smith

There is no Christianity without forgiveness, and yet the practice of forgiveness continues to be a spiritual challenge for followers of Jesus today. Recently a small group of Palestinians and local internationals met at the Sabeel office in Jerusalem to reflect on the meaning of forgiveness in this particular time and place. We prayed together, read Scripture, and reflected on what forgiveness looks like in this context, amid ongoing occupation and state-sponsored oppression.

Some common themes emerged from this conversation. How do we understand forgiveness when the violation is not in the past, but is ongoing? Is repentance required to receive forgiveness? Is it required in order for us to give it? Does forgiveness help or hinder the cause of liberation and justice? Jesus said, “Forgive them, Father, for they know not what they do.” But what if our oppressors know very well what they are doing?

How do we find the courage/strength/faith to forgive?

First, it must be said that for many, it seems premature to be discussing forgiveness in this context at all. As someone in our small group stated, perhaps we should have waited until the occupation is over. In the context of oppression, conversations about forgiveness necessarily lead to discussions of justice, reconciliation, and reparations.

One of our group shared with us the story of standing with a resident in the rubble of his family business, which had been destroyed by Israeli soldiers—again. Not once, but many

times. How does one forgive injustices that are not in the past, but are ongoing even now?

When we look to Scripture, we read that Jesus has said we must forgive “as many as seventy-seven times.” When we consider this in the context of the occupation of Palestine, we wonder: Would Jesus ask a man to forgive the demolition of his home seventy-seven times? We know that when the disciples of Jesus heard this teaching, they responded in disbelief,



saying, “Increase our faith!” To our ears, this command also sounds unbelievable, maybe even unhelpful. Does forgiving let the offenders “off the hook?” Would forgiving these sins diminish the possibility of achieving justice?

We started discussing forgiveness, and as you can see we have already moved to repentance, justice, and reparations! We really don’t understand how to forgive while our families, our neighbors, and our communities are not yet free—and we cannot let go of our desire for justice. For this reason, we join the disciples in praying to Jesus: “Increase our faith!”

Although forgiveness is never

simple or easy, it is always simpler when the offense is in the past. It’s also much easier if the offender shows repentance. But what if there is no repentance at all? Are we still required to forgive? Is it even possible to forgive in this circumstance? What would such forgiveness look like?

So where does this leave us? How do we understand forgiveness in the context of occupation? What have we learned through our praying, studying, and reflecting together?

Forgiveness will not end the conflict. Forgiving the occupiers will not close the book on our grief, nor does it release them from responsibility for their actions. It does

not take away our passion for justice. Sometimes we are so burdened by our own anger that we become stuck. Perhaps when Jesus commands us to forgive, it is to release us from the prison of grief, anger, and bitterness, so we are freed to pursue justice for our neighbors.

Forgiveness is very important for our faith, and for our context, for when we forgive, we are the ones who are liberated. When

we forgive, we take away the power the oppressor has over us. When we forgive, it is out of a responsibility to break the cycle of violence.

Jesus taught us to pray: “Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.” Jesus has also called us to seek justice, to liberate the oppressed, and to speak truth to power. We seek to be faithful in all of these commitments, and so we pray along with the disciples: “Show us the way. Increase our faith!”

*Rev. Carrie Ballenger Smith is currently serving the English-speaking congregation at the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, Jerusalem. This article is edited from **Cornerstone** Issue 75 - a publication of Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center in Jerusalem.*

## Corporatocracy's Anti-Beatitudes

Adapted from John Dear's  
*Beatitudes of Peace*



## Beatitudes of Jesus

Adapted from  
*Matthew 5*

***Blessed are the Rich:*** who make as much money as they can. They've learned how to work the system. Their money is their security. Because they reign in this world, they do not need God.

***Blessed are those who Never Mourn:*** who make themselves comfortable, blind to the plight of the poor. Because they do not grieve for others, they never need to be comforted.

***Blessed are the Violent:*** who swear by the myth of redemptive violence – that violence can save them and peace is gained by war. Their violence will destroy the planet. They shall not inherit the Earth.

***Blessed are the Greedy:*** who are unconcerned for the poverty their life-style inflicts on others through cheap labour and stolen resources. They will always want more. They will never be satisfied.

***Blessed are the Ruthless:*** who know how to get what they want; the strong who consider the weak undeserving of their concern. Showing no mercy, they feel no need for mercy.

***Blessed are the Spin Doctors:*** who sacrifice truth for wealth and power, and ignore what the culture of greed is doing to their hearts. They cannot see the kingdom of God around them. They are blind to God's presence.

***Blessed are the Warriors:*** always ready to fend off their enemies. They claim God is on their side and pray "God bless the troops!" They forget that war brings death. They live always in fear.

***Blessed are those who put Security first:*** They never rock the boat and are never insulted, because they mind their own business. By not joining the struggle for justice they are disconnected from the human race.

***Blessed are the Poor:*** who are deemed worthless in the eyes of the powerful and stripped of their dignity. They, and those who walk in solidarity with them, are always held in God's hands.

***Blessed are those who Mourn:*** who live with the sadness that things are not as God would have them. They shall be consoled in the confidence that ultimately God's Dream will be accomplished.

***Blessed are the Meek:*** they are the gentle ones, who walk nonviolently on the land seeking God's way in this war-torn and violent world. They are the real children of the Earth.

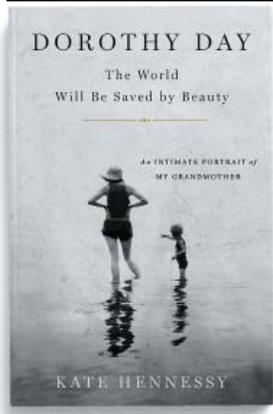
***Blessed are those who thirst for Righteousness:*** who persistently labour for justice in the midst of an unjust world. They shall drink fully of God's grace. Their thirst shall be satisfied.

***Blessed are the Merciful:*** who lavish God's compassion on a world soaked in cruelty and revenge. Seeing God's image in everyone, they shall enjoy forever the abundance of the mercy of God

***Blessed are the Pure of Heart:*** who set their hearts on what is right and hold fast for the journey. They seek first God's reign. They are the truth-tellers. They are close to the heart of God.

***Blessed are the Peacemakers:*** who courageously confront war makers while refusing to call anyone enemy. With active and lived love of enemies, they are truly God's children.

***Blessed are the Persecuted:*** the risk takers, willing to accept danger in the struggle for justice and peace. They trust their safety to God's care. They already live in God's hands.



## Review by Peter Steinfels

This is a beautifully written, deeply revealing, and spiritually insightful book; and I can't begrudge the author for an instant that it is mistitled. It should be called *Dorothy and Tamar* and subtitled *An Intimate Portrait of My Mother and Grandmother*.

Kate Hennessy is the youngest of nine children of Tamar and David Hennessy. Tamar was of course the daughter of Dorothy Day, the child whose birth, so memorably related in *The Long Loneliness*, Dorothy's autobiography, brought Dorothy into the Catholic Church.

That turn to faith, and in particular to Catholic faith, drove a wedge between Dorothy and Tamar's father, Forster Batterham. It also led Dorothy, inspired by the itinerant French peasant philosopher Peter Maurin, to found the Catholic Worker movement.

As far back as 1952, Dwight Macdonald declared Dorothy "a secular saint" in a *New Yorker* profile, and now she is a candidate for official Catholic sainthood, too, one of four American spiritual exemplars invoked by Pope Francis before the U.S. Congress. There are things in this book that could jar anyone still inhabiting the traditional world of hagiography. For those who live in the real world, they will only strengthen the cause.

Be assured, this book is the furthest thing from a "Mommy Dearest" exposé. It is a tale sensitively, lovingly told, a tale not just of the Dorothy-Tamar dyad but of all the

families to which they belonged—the Days, the Hennessys, the Batterhams, and above all the Catholic Worker.

Tamar treasured growing up in the Catholic Worker family. In the movement's Houses of Hospitality, she learned receptiveness to the down, the out, and the eccentric. She also suffered chaos, lack of privacy, and competition for her mother's attention and energy. Not surprisingly, Tamar became a recruit for Peter Maurin's "Green Revolution," that hope-filled but frequently calamity-ridden effort at creating back-to-the-land communities.

Tamar's education was fitful—or rather Dorothy's decisions about it



Dorothy with Tamar  
and grandchildren

were. Tamar was in and out of schools; Dorothy, struggling with the demands of speaking, writing, and adjudicating Catholic Worker squabbles, oscillated between wanting her daughter tucked safely away and wanting her very close.

Tamar's bid for independence from her mother—spurred her toward marrying, at age eighteen, a man ten years her senior, David Hennessy. "Within weeks of the wedding, I knew I had made a terrible mistake," Tamar told her daughter long after the marriage ended, which happened after nine children, one miscarriage, and years of strife and isolation.

Dorothy had always tried to strengthen Tamar's commitment to Catholic teachings on marriage, but when the end came—David had put himself in a psychiatric hospital—Dorothy said simply, "I don't know how you stood it for so long." "With that," Tamar much later told her daughter, "I forgave Dorothy everything."

Much that Kate Hennessy relates about her grandmother's early life and the triumphs and travails of the Catholic Worker movement will be familiar to longtime readers of the monthly *Catholic Worker* newspaper and the many books by and about Dorothy Day. But at each stage Hennessy adds fresh episodes, details, and anecdotes, invaluable for future histories of the Catholic Worker. Her personal accounts of the deaths of Peter Maurin, Dorothy, Forster, Tamar, and stalwarts of the movement like Stanley Vishnewski are full and deeply moving.

Her portraits abundantly demonstrate the truth of that favorite quotation Dorothy took from Dostoyevsky, Father Zosima's warning in *The Brothers Karamazov*: "Love in action is a harsh and dreadful thing compared to love in dreams."

Hennessy does not avoid the harsh and dreadful, seasoning it with the beautiful and the wisely comic, for example, Stanley Vishnevski's observation: "There are the saints and the martyrs. The martyrs are the ones who live with the saints."

"So here I am," Hennessy writes, still grieving for her mother and grandmother and the shadows between them, but "led by the only thing that matters, the only thing worth writing about—love."

*Peter Steinfels, a former editor of Commonweal and religion writer for the New York Times, is a University Professor Emeritus at Fordham University. For entire review see Commonweal (22/02/ 2017)*

# Reading the Bible as a Settler

By Tamara Shantz

## **“We are the Romans.”**

I don't know about you, but when I read stories from the New Testament, I rarely identify with the Romans. I identify as a follower of Jesus so I most naturally align myself with the disciples, or whoever is seeking healing and liberation. Generally, I am drawn to the characters who lack social power and status. Every once in a while I am challenged to identify with the older son in the story of the Prodigal son, but never the Romans. I mean, the Romans are terrible! I am quite good really! Or at least well intentioned!

## ***The Romans are occupiers, my people are....***

After learning to listen for the voice of the marginalized and oppressed in sacred texts (not that I am done learning to do this!!), I hear a new invitation calling. A calling that requires me to look, with painful clarity, at the violent colonial structures of which I am a beneficiary; at the history of Turtle Island/North America that leads me to name myself a settler.

A calling that asks: What might I learn if I identify with the oppressor in our most sacred of stories? How might the text read my life if I am honest about my social location, if I come to Jesus with full awareness of my position of power?

## ***How do I read the Bible as a settler?***

This is a particularly essential consideration for those of us whose ancestors came to Turtle Island as refugees or immigrants escaping persecution and violence. Many Mennonites of European descent recognize that our communal psyche is still largely shaped by a narrative of persecution. Given our history, it is easy for us to identify with the oppressed of the Biblical narrative.

But that is no longer our reality, and upon arriving in Canada, many Mennonites came to bear the terrible double

identity of refugee and agent of displacement. We have been a lot more comfortable with the refugee part of that history. And I imagine this is true for most other non-Indigenous communities as well.

And fair enough! Who wants to claim our place in a history



of genocide – the intentional efforts that were undertaken in this nation to erase Indigenous Peoples from this land?

But here's the thing, I believe that naming our position as settlers, as the inheritors

of wealth acquired by violent means, is required for our liberation, for our healing. It is certainly necessary for the work of reconciliation.

The liberation of God is for everyone. But it won't look the same. So what does the path of salvation look like for the powerful? And how might reading Scripture from a different perspective help us?

## **“What would Zacchaeus do?”**

Jennifer Harvey, in “Wrongs to Rights,” suggests that the story of Zacchaeus is a good starting point for answering this question. She suggests that rather than asking, “What would Jesus do?” that settler Christians are instead in a “What would Zacchaeus do?” moment.

Harvey writes: “It is tempting to easily condemn Zacchaeus for agreeing to serve as the Empire's tax collector, which meant he actively implemented and benefited from the exploitative, grinding practices Rome exerted over the lives of the poor. But, we do better to admit, instead, how closely Zacchaeus' life story resonates with our own.”

I love this proposal. We truly are in a Zacchaeus moment. And Zacchaeus' response to Jesus – making economic reparations to those he had exploited – offers hope that change is possible. That no identity is fixed. That there is always the possibility for reparation and restoration – for all.

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*Pastors in Exile (PiE) is community pastors outside of church walls - an Anabaptist-rooted movement that is passionate about connecting young people in Waterloo Region with vibrant faith experiences outside and inside of church walls.*

