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# HOMELESSNESS AND HOSPITALITY ON THE GROUND

## A METHODOLOGICAL PROPOSAL FOR CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

Daniel Franklin E. Pilario, C.M, Ph.D.

*“If only we had a better house, if our house had a stronger door, it would have not been easy for the police to enter and shoot my husband.”*

(Widow of a victim of extra-judicial killing in the Philippine ‘War on Drugs’)

What resources, perspectives and experiences can we draw from formal Catholic Social Teaching and broader Catholic social thought to help us understand and interpret street homelessness in a global context?<sup>1</sup> In order to answer these questions, I have at least two options. First, I can survey the official body of Catholic Social Teaching and see where and how it talks about homelessness. Second, I can retrieve and examine some concrete stories in the Christian social tradition and see how they can inspire us to respond to homelessness in our times. The first option is not very promising. The *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* cites “housing” and/or “homelessness” in only four numbers (166, 365, 482, 535) – mostly in a passing mention as both a basic human right and a pressing situation. Beyond the sporadic mention of “homelessness” in the encyclicals and speeches of the popes, we find in the international magisterial level the following documents: Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *What Have You Done to Your Homeless Brother? The Church and the Housing Problem* (1987); Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant Peoples, *Guidelines for the Pastoral Care of the Road* (2007). There are also several bishops’ conferences which issued some statements on this theme (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1975, February 20; United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1988, March 24; Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines, 1997; Irish Catholic Bishops’ Conference, 2018). Since these sources are not substantial, many writers are at a loss where to find resources on homelessness in official

documents. Thus, I proceed with the second option in the hope that these “movements from below” can lead us toward more fruitful reflection. It is not a new insight that official social encyclicals were first inspired by ordinary Christians and movements who were trying their best to respond to the social challenges of their own times (Krier Mich, 1998).

As it is impossible to survey the whole history of the Christian social tradition, this short reflection will only look at three instances from different periods of the Christian history where individuals or groups of Christians responded to poverty and homelessness from the inspiration they received from the Gospel. The three narratives are those of the *Basileias* of Cappadocia initiated by Basil the Great; the *Houses of Hospitality* started by Dorothy Day; and the housing project *Gawad Kalinga* (2018) of the Philippines originally run by a charismatic group called the Couples for Christ. After recounting their stories, I intend to draw lessons from their praxis towards some methodological proposals for rethinking Catholic Social Teaching.

### 1. THE BASILEIAS OF CAPPADOCIA

These days have brought us naked and homeless people in great number; a host of captives at everyone’s door; strangers and refugees are not lacking, and on every side, there is begging and stretched out hands are there to see. Their house is the open-air; their lodgings are the arcades, the streets, the deserted

corners of the market; they lurk in holes like owls and birds of the night. Their clothing is tattered rags; their means of subsistence depends on the feeling of human compassion. Their food is anything thrown by the passers-by; their drink is the springs they share with the animals... They live brutal and vagrant life, not by habit but as a result of their miseries and misfortunes. (Rhee, 2017)

This is not a news item from Manila or Calcutta, Rio de Janeiro or Lagos, though their situations sound similar. It comes from the homily of St. Gregory of Nyssa, one of the Cappadocian fathers, written sometime in 378 CE describing the situation of Cappadocia in Central Anatolia at heart of present day Turkey.

Beyond their usual association with the theology of the Trinity or the Arian controversy, the Cappadocian Fathers (Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa) were the foremost champions of the poor in early Christianity (Daley, 1999, 2007). Cappadocia experienced intense famine sometime in 368 CE onwards; they were experiencing dry summers and harsh winters. On the one hand, there was acute lack of food and the hungry poor were unprotected from the cold, children were left at church doors, lepers were not taken care of. On the other hand, merchants were hoarding and the wealthy did not want to share while the Emperor was persecuting the Christian believers. We see two main Christian responses of the Cappadocian fathers to the situation: prophetic preaching and practical advocacy.

Because of limited space, let me focus on St. Basil of Caesarea. He was born to a rich family (ca. 330 CE), studied philosophy in Constantinople and Greece and came back to Caesarea to become a teacher in rhetoric. He toured Egypt and Palestine and was later associated with a certain ascetic community led by Macrina, his elder sister. He later came back to Caesaria to be ordained priest and succeeded Eusebius as bishop in 370 CE.

The first Christian response was Basil's preaching on stewardship of property, the use of wealth and

the temptation of greed: "On Greed"; "Against the Wealthy"; "A Homily Delivered in Time of Famine and Drought" (Hollman, 2001, 2008). Probably delivered in 368, these homilies were strong words when most of the area suffered from drought, hunger and famine while the rich were not willing to share. A member of the aristocratic class himself, Basil exhorted the wealthy to share their worldly goods as their way to salvation. He used stories from the Bible – the rich fool who hoarded wheat in his barn, the young man who went away sad because he has a lot of possessions, and other passages to bring out his point. He also used everyday metaphors. To bring out sharing as natural tendency, he described sheep grazing together in one field yet yielding to each other in order live. To exhort his hearers against greed, he pointed out that rivers overflow to the banks in order to nourish the surrounding fields. But to connect greed for wealth and greed for power, he resorted to the same river metaphor but highlighting a contrary tendency, i.e., the power of water can destroy and dominate the lands and plants around it. "Nothing can withstand the force of wealth," Basil preached, "everything bows to its tyranny, everything trembles before its lordship... He drives away your yokes of oxen, he plows and seeds your field, he harvests what does not belong to him. And if you speak out in resistance, you are beaten; if you complain, you are held for damages and led away to prison" (Daley, 1999, p. 445).

Against private property, Basil pointed out how they make private what is in fact common, how they "take individual possession of what belongs to all. We should be put to shame by what is said about the philanthropy of the Greeks: among some of them philanthropic law decrees a single table, and a common meal, and they have formed what amounts to a single household for a large population" (Daley, 1999, p. 445). And echoing what St. John Chrysostom said in another context, Basil also preached:

Who is the one who deprives others? The one who hoards what belongs to everyone. Are *you* not greedy? Are *you* not one who deprives others? You have received these

things for stewardship, and have turned them into your own property! Is not the one who tears off what another is wearing called a clothes-robber? But the one who does not clothe the naked, when he was able to do so—what other name does *he* deserve? The bread that you hold on to belongs to the hungry; the cloak you keep locked in your storeroom belongs to the naked; the shoe that is moldering in your possession belongs to the person with no shoes; the silver that you have buried belongs to the person in need. You do an injury to as many people as you might have helped with all these things! (Daley, 1999, p. 445)

Basil of course was preaching to his own kind – the aristocratic class of his time. It was not to incite people to revolution and topple the existing order as in Marx’s later views. It was an exhortation to generosity toward the community-unity ideal of the early Christian communities. “Let us imitate the first band of Christians,” he said, “when all things were held in common—when life and soul and harmony and the table all were shared, when fraternity was undivided, and unfeigned love formed many bodies into one” (Daley, 1999, p. 445). Through his persuasive rhetoric, Basil caused the opening of the merchants’ grain storage and “apparently brought about a more equitable distribution of the local reserves. He also opened a kind of soup kitchen, using contributed food, for the poor of all ages, and worked in it himself, along with his household servants and fellow clergy, providing its visitors both with simple fare and—as one might expect from Basil—with ‘the nourishment of the Word’” (Daley, 1999, p. 445).

This brings us to Basil’s second response: the construction of a “new city” which Gregory of Nazianzus calls the *Basileia*. This impressive practical initiative is a complex of guesthouses and a hospice located at the outskirts of Caesarea on the land donated by Emperor Valens himself and of Basil’s own family. The settlement complex included a home for the poor and foundlings,

some kind of hospital, a workshop in which to hone skills among the poor; and hostels for travelers, etc. (Smither, 2012). With resources coming from the wealthier classes, there was free medicine for patients, home for the homeless and training workshops for trades and livelihood that capacitate the poor, e.g., farming, carpentry, weaving, metal work, etc. In his funeral oration for his bishop-patron Basil, St. Gregory of Nazianzus said:

Go a little outside the city, and gaze on the new city: the storehouse of piety, the common treasury for those with possessions, where the superfluities of wealth as well as necessities lie stored away because of his persuasion—shaking off the moths, giving no joy to thieves, escaping struggles with envy and the onrush of time—where disease is treated by philosophy, where misfortunes are called blessed, where compassion is held in real esteem. (Daley, 1999, p. 432)

In a new context after the rise of Constantine in the fourth century, the aristocratic leaders – of whom Basil was one – tried to apply their Greek learning into the Christian frame made visible in their concrete response in the social challenges of Cappadocia. “What I would like to argue,” writes Bryan Daly, “is that the large and complex welfare institution on the outskirts of the Cappadocian metropolis that came to be known as the *Basileias* represented a new and increasingly intentional drive on the part of these highly cultivated bishops and some of their Christian contemporaries to reconstruct Greek culture and society along Christian lines, in a way that both absorbed its traditional shape and radically reoriented it” (Daley 1999, p. 432). Beyond the dominant cenobitic ideal within strict monastic enclosures, Basil’s monastic social enterprise – despite its traditional rhetoric – signaled a new prophetic direction toward an engaged monastic spirituality of his time.

## 2. HOUSES OF HOSPITALITY: DOROTHY DAY

In September 1933, Peter [Maurin] wrote a letter

to the Bishops which was printed on the first page of *The Catholic Worker*. It spoke of the hospices of the middle ages; it spoke of the need of Houses of Hospitality... Within the month we had started the first women's House of Hospitality. Already we had rented an old apartment in a condemned tenement on Fourth Street to put up three of the men who had joined with the work. Already three more were sleeping in the little store on Fifteenth Street which was also an office, a dining room and a kitchen where meals were being served. Teresa and I slept in an adjoining apartment here... Margaret came back from the hospital with her baby to this apartment and we all participated in the care of the baby when she was ill. (Day, 1939, May)

This is the account of Dorothy Day on the first 'house of hospitality' in New York in 1939, six years after its first foundation by the *Catholic Worker* movement. Founded by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, the *Catholic Worker* was first a newspaper publication that aimed "to popularize and make known the encyclicals of the Popes in regard to social justice the program put forth by the Church for the 'reconstruction of the social order'" (Day, 1933, May, p. 4). With Catholic social teaching as inspiration, Dorothy and Peter wanted to educate the workers on the Church's teaching on laborer's rights, war and peace, justice and other issues of the day. Under the editorship of Day, *Catholic Worker* also carried items on crucial issues of the day: pacifism, racial discrimination, and other issues of the day. By 1938, its circulation reached up to 190,000. However, it also had its critics from all sides – from communists, it was too bourgeois and pacifist; from traditional Catholics, it was too radical and communistic.

The paper encouraged the creation of "houses of hospitality" in all dioceses to give shelter to the homeless poor. And to "walk their talk", the members of the *Catholic Worker* movement rented apartments in New York and opened the first house of hospitality serving as an editorial office, homeless shelter, community meeting area, feeding center, and prayer gathering space. Dorothy and the members were the first ones to live there together with the poor that they took care of.

Originally, these were conceived of as halfway houses where the homeless and unemployed get temporary shelter and be transferred to rural farms when they are ready. As it developed, it was also the place of long breadlines serving more than 1000 persons at a time, a workers' school, and many other purposes. So there were three pillars to the *Catholic Worker* movement: the newspaper, houses of hospitality and small sustainable rural farms; the latter, however, did not quite materialize. In 1939, there were only 23 houses and 4 farms under the *Catholic Worker* movement. At present, there are already 216 communities in the United States, 33 in other parts of the world (Catholic Worker Movement, 2018).

I have three observations about these houses of hospitality: First is the emphasis on *littleness* "because we wish each house to be run on a family plan rather than like an institution" (Day, 1939, p. 3). Students and scholars live together with the poor and the homeless. Everyone was invited into the house activities during the week, e.g., study sessions, manual work, prayer times. The first houses were located in the poor immigrant districts, among Chinese and Italians who later helped them despite initial prejudices – a case of the poor helping the poor. Littleness, family spirit and personal approach to charity were a concrete application on the philosophy of personalism which lies the foundation of Catholic Worker movement. Influenced by French Catholic philosophers, Jacques Maritain and Emmanuel Mounier, Peter Maurin values the human person as the center of all social, economic and political structures. The *Catholic Worker* movement proclaims that the person who is created as the image and likeness of God possesses unalienable freedom. It is on this freedom that one's responsibility for the other is founded.

Dorothy Day transformed Maurin's personalism into the care of the actual human person through the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. Against the agency of the State to which works of "charity" are relegated in both capitalism and communist systems, she argued for the personal care that each Christian must do. "No, we are not denying the obligations of the State," she



wrote, “but we do claim that we must never cease to emphasize personal responsibility. When our brother asks us for bread, we cannot say, ‘Go be thou filled’. We cannot send him from agency to agency. We must care for him ourselves as much as possible” (Day, 1939).

The second observation is the emphasis on the transcendent dimension of social action. Day believed that the conception of the modern State – both communist and capitalist – has lost the inherent transcendent purpose of the social body. It has fully entrusted the care of human persons to the all-powerful system losing in the process its divine dimension. Dorothy already displayed this concern on the personal level. Paul Elie writes: “Her comrades said she would never be a good Communist, because she was too religious—a character out of Dostoevsky, a woman haunted by God” (Elie, 2003, p. 17). She did not miss daily Eucharist which she considered as “the way to peace”. She wrote: “I can sit in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament and wrestle for that peace in the bitterness of my soul... and I can find many things in Scripture to console me, to change my heart from hatred to love of enemy” (Day, 1967, January). This belief in the transcendent dimension is the foundation of all her social action, her pacifist stance against all wars and her protest against two rival social systems of the time – capitalism and socialism. But above all, it is also this transcendent dimension that makes Dorothy see the poor as the image of Christ.

The third observation is the assurance of permanent commitment to the homeless who come. The contemporary word often to describe this is sustainability. “We believe that when we undertake the responsibility of caring for a man [*sic*] who comes to us,” Day wrote, “we are accepting it for good” (Day, 1939). For the work of hospitality is a work of a lifetime. “We know that men [*sic*] cannot be changed in a day or three days, nor in three months. We are trying ‘to make men.’ And this cannot be done overnight. Some, indeed, are shiftless and some dishonest; but our aim is to try to see Christ in these men and to change them by our love for them; and the more

hopeless a case seems the more we are driven to prayer, which as it should be” (Day, 1939).

### 3. GAWAD-KALINGA HOUSING PROJECT: COUPLES FOR CHRIST IN THE PHILIPPINES

The third story from the ground is that of the *Gawad Kalinga* Housing Project in the Philippines. From the 1980s up to the present, the Philippines has seen the rise of a strong Catholic family movement led by lay couples called the Couples for Christ (CFC) – a trans-parochial community which has now spread to more than a hundred countries worldwide. It presently claims a membership of around a million spread in 76 different countries. It started out as a renewal program for married couples which branched to different groups in the family (Kids for Christ, Youth for Christ, Handmaids for Christ (widows), and Servants of the Lord (widowers). It is the only ecclesial movement in the Philippines that is approved with Pontifical Right by the Vatican and considered among the International Association of the Faithful. The couples are recruited into the group through a series of grassroots seminars and, after ‘graduating’, they group themselves as “households” who hold weekly prayer meetings. Households organize themselves under one regional council; regions group themselves into national councils; and national groups recognize the leadership of the International Council (IC) whose seven (7) core members are elected for a term by the designated group of elders.

In recent years, it launched its social action arm, a housing program for informal settlers and street families called *Gawad Kalinga* (GK), which literally means “to give care”. In no time, so-called GK villages sprouted like mushrooms all over the country. It was widely recognized as an effective response to Philippine homelessness, which is one of the worst in the world. *Gawad Kalinga* – Filipino words for “to give, to care” is a successful housing program for poor informal settlers. It involves all sectors of society (academe, business corporations, government agencies, etc.) as they are encouraged to put their human and financial resources to build houses for the poor

and organize them into Christian communities sharing with them the spirituality of the Couples for Christ. Called the CFC “outreach program”, it became very successful since the CFC is present in almost all parishes and dioceses all over the country. Its leader, Tony Meloto, is a member of the Couples of Christ himself and was assigned as Gawad Kalinga head by the International Council. He has received national and international awards citing *Gawad Kalinga* as a program that effectively responds to the housing crisis in the Philippines badly hit by calamities of all kinds – typhoons, floods, landslides or volcanic eruptions.

But more recently, the Couples for Christ split and its housing outreach was disowned by its original group. The whole story is too complicated to tell here (cf. Pilario, 2013)<sup>2</sup> but *Gawad Kalinga* and its leaders were charged by the more conservative members of the movement as veering away from the group’s original spiritual mission; that they had turned the family spiritual renewal movement into social activism. They were also accused of accepting donations from companies that were allegedly manufacturing contraceptives. And when this sensitive “pro-life” chord was struck, some sectors of the hierarchy from the Bishops’ Conference level up to the Roman Curia pressured the group to abdicate the direction of the whole project. Stanislaw Cardinal Rylko, President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, was of the same opinion and reprimanded the leaders of *Gawad Kalinga*. Cardinal Lopez Trujillo of the Pontifical Council for the Family also wrote to prevent them from receiving donations from companies producing contraceptives. At the moment, the Couples for Christ movement has split into two to three groups and *Gawad Kalinga*, being disowned as a Catholic project, has been forced to transform itself into an NGO, still continuing in its project to house the homeless, but without links to its original faith inspiration.

#### **4. HOMELESSNESS AND HOSPITALITY: APPROACHES TO CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING**

What can we learn from these movements of hospitality for homeless peoples? Let me mention two methodological points: a proposal to shift the emphasis of CST from the universal to the particular, that is, to listen to narratives from the ground on how actual communities address the problem of homelessness; and to recognize the ambivalence of ‘institutionalization’ in our housing initiatives.

##### ***Catholic Social Teaching: Beyond the Universal***

Charles Curran (Curran, 2002, pp. 53-100) has already analyzed the shift in CST methodologies through time, i.e., from the deductive approaches to historical consciousness, from deriving universal teachings based on “unchanging principles” of natural law to historically sensitive methods as championed by *Octogesima Adveniens* (Paul VI, 1971).

In the face of such widely varying situation, it is difficult for us to utter a unified message and to put forward a solution which has a universal validity. Such is not our ambition, nor is it our mission. It is up to the Christian communities to analyze with objectivity the situation which is proper to their own country, to shed on it the light of the Gospel’s unalterable words and to draw principles of reflection, norms of judgment, and directives for action from the social teaching of the Church. (Paul VI, 1971, 4)

The above crucial quotation from *Octogesima Adveniens* signals a move from what was once a classicist, deductive and top-down methodological view of Catholic Social Teaching to more historically sensitive and inductive approaches. Curran also mentions the shift from a more legal ethical model to a more personalist view of the human person in its emphasis on freedom, respect for one’s conscience, equality and participation.

Posing these narratives of “hospitality from below” does two things in the spirit of the shifts mentioned above. On the one hand, these stories show attempts made by different Christian communities to “analyze with objectivity their

situation”, “shed on it the Gospel’s unalterable words”, and to draw from them “norms and principles of reflection and directives for action” (Paul VI, 1971, 4). Beyond looking for principles from “official Catholic thought”, these principles are in fact generated on the ground. For all we know, most of these movements do not have Catholic Social Teaching foremost in mind (with the exception of Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin). They were only living the Gospel in the context of the multiple challenges of their lives. In these lived experiences, one sees the actual hits and misses, successes and failures, of discernment and action experienced by these Christian communities. On the other hand, these stories also give us utopias – “forward looking imagination” by evoking the “inventive powers of the human mind and heart” as they provide a critique of present realities (Paul VI, 1971, 37).

In order to develop new CST theological resources to help us reflect on the issue of homelessness, one methodological option is to start from real stories on the ground. By parading the *Basileas*, the Houses of Hospitality and *Gawad Kalinga* in front of us, we are led to imagine (not imitate) what a Christian response should be for our times. If the Cappadocian fathers and Dorothy Day were able to do it, why can’t we? I imagine that there are millions of these narratives. I do not only mean doing a historical study of the past history of the whole Christian social tradition. I also mean asking present persons and communities to narrate how they engage as Christians the issues and problems of homelessness in their own contexts. We can propose different platforms for people to tell their stories – in film or in print, in the form of personal accounts, community reflections or pastoral strategies. For these lived experiences are theologies in themselves – real acknowledged sources for Catholic social teaching.

These stories from the ground can be discerned in two directions – as concrete applications of Christian social tradition but also as critical appropriation of Catholic Social Teaching in context. There is a running thread in all the narratives we have seen above: all these initiatives

were applications of Jesus’ command: Whatever you do to the least of my sisters and brothers you do it to me... I was homeless and you made me welcome (Matthew 25). All these attempts were contextual: Basil being an aristocrat himself challenged the wealthy by being a prophet who unmasked the hypocrisy of his own kind. Dorothy Day, for her part, lived the social injunction from below, starting from her own experience of loneliness and alienation, and living with the homeless in spaces which she has considered home for the rest of her life. In fact, she died in one of them. *Gawad Kalinga* is a concrete response of an acute situation of homelessness in a Third World country inspired by the families’ encounter with the gospel in their lives. It is considered an “outreach”, to borrow their language, because the Good News could not just be contained within families. It needs to reach out to other families.

However, these concrete narratives from the ground can also critique, challenge, augment, move forward the conceptualization of housing and homelessness in Catholic Social Teaching and even in the secular discourses about them. One observable development in our contemporary times is the assertion of housing as a “human right” not only in the *Compendium of Catholic Social Doctrine*, but also in many United Nations documents. The provisions and conditions therein are hopeful and laudable: security of tenure, availability of services like drinking water, sanitation, energy for cooking, waste disposal, affordability, habitability, accessibility to employment, schools, child care, protection from forced evictions, etc. But the standards are so ideal that in most cases, especially in Third World contexts, they are unattainable.

In the present context of the Philippines, for instance, a house is not only a basic human right, it is also a pre-condition to the most basic of all rights – the right to life. In recent years of President Duterte’s administration when the police forces are into the program of “cleaning society” of drug addicts, innocent lives are lost and many still in danger. There is an estimated number of more than 27,000 persons killed without trial.



Police forces just barge into houses even in the middle of the night and shoot their targets. The words of a widow whose husband was summarily killed inside their house while he was sleeping keeps haunting me: “If only we had a better house, if our house had a stronger door, it would have not been easy for the police to enter and shoot my husband” (Espina-Varona, 2017, September 2; De George 2017, November 16; Pilario 2018, March 29; Watford 2018; Phöner 2018).<sup>3</sup> Housing in this context is not only a human right; it is a precondition to one’s right to life. What is needed is not much – a roof, a wall and door to protect them from the forces of death – a view which highly complicated debates among international housing advocates on “adequate housing” can easily forget (Mercy Law Resource Center, 2018).

### *Hospitality: Beyond the Institutional*

One lesson from the narratives above is the need to address homelessness through sustainable social structures which recent Vincentian initiatives call “systemic change” (Famvin Vincentian Encyclopedia, 2018). The Cappadocian *basileas*, houses of hospitality and *Gawad Kalinga* were their concretizations in history. The *basileas* were self-sustaining communities; they still existed at least one century after Basil’s death (Sterk, 2004). Dorothy Day’s breadline or *Gawad Kalinga*’s housing project would not have survived without some level of organization and structural commitment. But the move toward institutionalization is also ambivalent. Day insisted on “family spirit” and “littleness” from the start, to use some current words, on mutuality and inclusivity. For it has been always recognized that institutions by nature already push others to the fringes; instead of being welcoming, they tend to exclude, as Max Weber already warned us in the “routinization of charisma” (Weber, 1947).

This brings us to recognize the limits of institutions which Vincent de Paul was already aware of in his time. When the Royal Edict of 1656 was issued to round up the homeless beggars of Paris and force them to live inside institutions, in what Michel Foucault calls the “Great Confinement”, St. Vincent employed all

the influence he could muster to avoid cooperating with this violent and unjust Royal decree (Pilario, 2018, March 29). What was officially dubbed as the “greatest charitable enterprise of the century” was in the eyes of Vincent a disrespect of the human dignity of the poor.

It was against the backdrop of the ambivalence of the institution that the Cappadocian fathers exerted their prophetic sermons that struck at the heart of the system – the wealthy, the usurers, and indirectly the church leaders and the Empire. Even within the context of the same feudal aristocratic class, Basil claimed the Gospel as platform of his prophetic denunciation. The expulsion of *Gawad Kalinga* from the Catholic fold is a concrete illustration of Christian hospitality turning itself into exclusion because the Church institution favored the purity of its doctrines over and above the dignity and lives of the homeless.

Dorothy Day and the *Catholic Worker* Movement also turned the critique toward the Church institution itself: “The Church is the cross on which Christ was crucified.” Thus, even as she decided to be baptized in the Catholic Church, Dorothy also believed that “one must live in a state of permanent dissatisfaction with the Church”. The following realization needs to be quoted in full as we can discern from here a painful wrestling with the ambivalence of our own institutional Church reality.

I loved the Church for it is Christ made visible. Not for itself, because it was so often a scandal for me. Romano Guardini said that the Church is the Cross on which Christ was crucified; one could not separate Christ from His Cross, and one must live in a state of permanent dissatisfaction with the Church... I felt that it did not set its face against a social order which made so much charity in the present sense of the word necessary. I felt that charity was a word to choke over. Who wanted charity? And it was not just human pride but a strong sense of man’s dignity and worth, and what was due to him in justice, that made me resent, rather

than feel proud of so mighty a sum total of Catholic institutions... When I see the church taking the side of the powerful and forgetting the weak, and when I see bishops living in luxury and the poor being ignored or thrown bread crumbs, I know that Jesus is being insulted, as He once was, and sent to his death, as He once was. (Day, 1952, p. 149)

Charity is a word “to choke over” because what is needed is justice. If we translate Basil’s sermons in the context of homelessness, it is the same message: our big houses and buildings are not ours; we stole it from the homeless. And if the institutional Church remedies this situation a little through our faltering housing programs, we are not doing “charity”. We are only giving them back what is theirs in justice. And one must do it not in the spirit of condescension but in love. To borrow an expression of Vincent de Paul in the movie *Monsieur Vincent*, “It is only for your love alone that the poor will forgive you the bread you give to them.”

I do not intend to give a conclusion to these reflections as they are meant to be exploratory. It is intended to be an invitation to share narratives of hospitality on the ground vis-à-vis the problem of homelessness in the global world. Unlike top-down approaches, there are no clear principles to be applied; only concrete stories with all their frictions, ambiguities and difficulties hoping that God’s inspiration can reveal itself on the rough grounds where people walk in fidelity to the Gospel. To end, a quotation from the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein may be a helpful guide to our modest proposal: “We have got on to slippery ice where there is no friction and so in a certain sense the conditions are ideal, but also, just because of that, we are unable to walk. We want to walk: so we need friction. Back to the rough ground!” (Wittgenstein, 1953).

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> This article is a revised version of a paper presented at the conference on “Homelessness and Catholic Social Teaching” organized by the Institute of Global Homelessness (De Paul University, Chicago) in Rome on November 29 – December 2, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> I have written about this controversy in D. F. Pilario, “Catholic Social Movements in the Philippines: Clashes with Institutional Powers,” *Journal of Catholic Social Thought* 10, No. 2 (2013): 383-399.

<sup>3</sup> For my personal involvement in resistance against the violent program on Duterte’s “war on drugs”, refer to the indicated sources.

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