



## Not to be silent

By Joe Michael Feist  
NC News Service

On a cloudy, cool and rather dreary Washington, D.C., day last December, Father Rollins Lambert rode down Massachusetts Ave., past fluttering flags outside the stately embassies that line the thoroughfare. That day he had a special destination and intent: He was headed for the South African Embassy, there to demonstrate against apartheid and provoke his own arrest.

Why did this priest feel it necessary to be arrested? Apartheid, South Africa's system of racial segregation, is evil, Father Lambert said later. "To be silent in the face of such evil may look like acceptance of it; to make a statement or gesture in protest is

the least one can do," he added.

Father Lambert would be the first to say that working for justice does not require one to march in protests or be arrested. But what does it require?

In a recent interview, Father Lambert, African affairs adviser for the U.S. Catholic Conference Office of International Justice and Peace, talked about this.

"In a positive sense, justice and charity do begin at home," Father Lambert said. "We have to think about what others in the family have a right to or a right to expect."

This includes, but is not limited to, material goods such as food, clothes and shelter. But there are

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also emotional and psychological rights, Father Lambert indicated.

"It really is unjust for a husband or wife to deprive each other of the time and attention and love that they are entitled to, or to deprive their children of these things. For example, if one member or the other spends all his or her time working or in some recreational pursuit, that's unjust," he said.

The next step, for church and society, continued Father Lambert, "is to extend the search for justice beyond the family" — to the neighborhood, nation and world.

Father Lambert thinks there must be awareness of "structural injustice," such as exists in South Africa. There, he said, the whole system is designed to subjugate the black majority population.

To begin working for justice, it is of course necessary to know and understand a given situation, he said.

"Ignorance is an excuse for not doing anything," said Father Lambert. But when that ignorance is penetrated by whatever means, the person is under somewhat of an obligation to become informed and act for justice.

Again using South Africa as an example, Father Lambert said that once informed, every U.S. citizen "has three people in the Congress to turn to." At the least, he added, the individual can communicate general feelings and let his representatives know apartheid is considered a serious problem.

It is vital, the priest believes, for people to organize to fight injustices.

"Suppose you have racial or ethnic tension in a community. People can organize to combat the injustices that are usually the cause of the tensions. It might have to do with delivery of services, police action or inaction, or enforcement of city housing laws. Sometimes a parish group can tackle these things and get some action," said Father Lambert.

To Father Lambert, a Chicago archdiocesan priest, it is very important for Christians to be concerned about public affairs. Here he quotes from the New Testament letter of James:

"If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and no food for the day, and you say to them, 'Goodbye and good luck! Keep warm and well fed,' but do not meet their bodily needs, what good is that? So it is with the faith that does nothing in practice. It is thoroughly lifeless" (2:15-17).

(Feist is associate editor of Faith Today.)

## Variations

By David Gibson  
NC News Service

Justice: the word is heard so frequently in today's church that it appears to rank among the priorities of Christian living.

But what is justice? Who does the work of justice — and why?

To study about justice is not at all like learning to type or taking swimming lessons, in which cases, if you pay close attention, things will fall into place rather quickly and neatly.

Instead, the field of justice is intricate — interrelating some of the most important and complicated concerns of the human family: It is concerned with protecting human rights; fostering human dignity; promoting access by all people to the resources and life of society.

So, where do discussions of justice begin? What are some building blocks for group discussions of justice?

•First, many discussions of social justice examine the belief that there are connections — vital links — among all people: a common concern to be respected and listened to; a common hope for the world's future; a common desire for happiness.

This attitude regarding the connections among people is seen in someone like Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who not only thinks the poor should be served, but

## The

By Father John Castelot  
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Amos was a shepherd who also tended sycamore trees, incising the young fruit to speed its maturation. His lifestyle differed almost totally from that of the people living in the sophisticated cities of the northern kingdom of Israel, which had split from the south after King Solomon's death.

But the story of Amos reflects the truth of what St. Paul was to write much later: "God chose those whom the world considers absurd to shame the wise; he singled out the weak of this world to shame the strong" (I Corinthians 1:27).

It was Amos, a man from Judea's hills, that God sent to prophesy to the northerners. But Amos had three strikes against him before he even began.

He was a southerner sent to preach in the north, a rustic sent to admonish city slickers, an uncomplicated person given a mission to people for whom he had