

Justice efforts

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triumphs, schools should emphasize that many Americans have fought such injustices as slavery, segregation, homelessness and poverty. Harding repeatedly mentioned Dorothy Day, founder of the Catholic Worker movement, and Thomas Merton, the Trappist monk and writer, as examples of Catholics she admired for speaking out against evil and as people who "should be included in the curriculum."

Harding, herself, is part of the history of struggle. She and her husband began working in 1961 as representatives of the Service Committee of the Mennonite Churches in America. The couple worked with such leaders as the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. as ministers of teaching, negotiation and reconciliation.

Exodus

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look like warehouses and gymnasiums," he said, noting that Hispanics love their churches "to be image-filled."

One positive liturgical development, Father Elizondo said, has been the incorporation of dance in U.S. liturgies. "In the Mexican tradition, dance has always been a part of sacred tradition," he commented, noting, however, that many non-Hispanic Catholics might find the emotional liturgies he conducts at San Fernando's to be unappealing.

Nonetheless, even white Catholics are leaving the church because they find the preaching and liturgy at Catholic parishes boring and abstract, focusing more on doctrinal explanations rather than on personal testimony of Christ's love and healing, the priest observed. "Our liturgies have to be a feast," he said. "If you have not experienced in every bone the joyfulness of being alive in God, you have not experienced the liturgy."

Catholic Masses can be enhanced by music and personal testimony, Father Elizondo said, noting that his parish has eight choirs, including classical, rock and children's groups. Last Easter, parishioners went to microphones to tell the Virgin Mary of their sufferings.

Increasing the sensory appeal of Catholic services does not contradict the spiritual nature of Christianity, he said. "Jesus speaks through images — the sower and the mustard seed — and the Scripture is image language, not abstract." On this point, the priest has often found himself at odds with fundamentalist preachers, who, he observed, are often uncomfortable with a sensual portrayal of Christ and prefer an "invisible God."

But God is visible through Christ, he said, and God is the author of feeling. "Licentiousness is bad, feeling is not," the priest asserted, pointing out that Christ's first public miracle was changing water into wine at the wedding at Cana, an act that would have scandalized most of today's preachers. "If Jesus had been a modern preacher, he would have told (the wedding guests) to go home... They had had enough."

Not only did Jesus give the guests reason to stay, he gave them "the best of wine," the priest said, adding with a laugh, "it wasn't just Thunderbird."

Based in Atlanta, Harding taught in the public schools and recalled that the civil rights movement crossed racial and religious boundaries, helping to create the current ecumenical climate between denominations.

"We would make copies of (the *Catholic Worker* newspaper) and spread it around everywhere," Harding said. "Dorothy Day was always a maverick — always ahead of other people."

Harding also fondly recalled several Irish nuns who marched with her in demonstrations. "They came with a great deal of sensitivity to our situation," she said. "I'm sure they came with a deeper sense because of the situation in their own country."

Catholics, along with such denominations as the Quakers, were often on the front lines of civil-rights organizing, Harding said, noting that the Catholics' status as outsiders in the Protestant South may have kindled their sympathy for blacks. "Some of (the Catholics') buildings were open for people to use. Many of the priests were quite active," she recalled.

Harding noted that during the '60s her husband often retreated at Catholic monasteries, which were often open to civil rights workers looking to energize themselves to continue the struggle.

Catholics, in general, have impressed Harding with their commitment to social justice. "It's been very impressive to me, as an outsider, to see the many martyrs on behalf of peace and justice. I just feel it's an honor and a privilege to be among peo-

ple who take their faith so seriously," she said.

Catholics in Latin America, in particular, take their faith seriously, Harding said, noting that she has traveled in Central and South America and met many Catholics active in working for social justice. "They're being murdered and killed," she said. "God have mercy!"

Mercy, and not individual self-preservation, should be the hallmark of this nation, Harding commented. She and her husband have been visiting college campuses throughout the country and are convinced that there are many young people who want to change the country for the better.

"Young people have a very clear idea of what's needed. They're not only looking for answers, they're helping to create them," she said. She recently met a group of upper- and middle-class college graduates in Washington, D.C., who have decided to work in poor areas of the city. This kind of commitment can only come from a belief in God, she said. "To see them literally giving up jobs that could bring them prestige in the world — most come from some religious background."

Possibly, Harding suggested, the recent liberalization of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, and the revolt in China will make Americans realize how important their nation's ideals are to others and may reignite the nation to tackle such problems as homelessness and poverty. "They're saying 'We shall overcome' (in China.)

They're taking leadership now, and we can be inspired by them," she remarked.

Harding saw no contradiction in a life devoted to Jesus Christ and to activist politics. "There's always a radical wing running through most denominations," she asserted. "I've just been attracted to those who seem to take a more radical position on Jesus' teaching."

"Maybe it seems more consistent with Jesus' intent," she continued. "I think He came to reconcile all the dualisms we have — to bring an end to oppression. If we're going to have peace, we have to have justice. He exemplified that kind of radicalism in that what He spoke, He lived."

"Now I'm preaching," she joked.

Mercy chapter

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pices of the Sisters of Mercy of Rochester; to approve a position paper on poverty; to endorse a reading and study project on poverty; to establish a theological reflection committee; and to establish the task force on homelessness, which will undertake relief efforts and advocacy on behalf of the homeless and poor.

The Chapter also affirmed the plans of Our Lady of Mercy High School's Board of Governors to strengthen the school financially and academically.

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