The Bishop John S. Cummins Institute for Catholic Thought, Culture & Action

VERITAS

Vol. 5 {2013, March} No. 1

Deepening Appreciation of the Beauty, Wisdom, Vitality & Diversity of the Catholic Tradition

THE MISSION

The Bishop John S. Cummins Institute for Catholic Thought, Culture and Action seeks to deepen appreciation among all constituents of the campus community for the beauty, wisdom, vitality, and diversity of the Catholic Tradition. We do this by:

Fostering a conversation between the Catholic tradition and contemporary intellectual life.

The Institute understands the tradition of Catholic higher education as one of providing a context in which *fides quaerens intellectum*, "faith seeking understanding," can take place. The Institute is a resource for integrating the search for faith and reason throughout the curriculum and the academy.

Promoting a sacramental understanding of reality and the vision that this world is "charged with the grandeur of God."

The Institute understands that Catholic faith is not about the intellect alone, but that it manifests itself also in rich and varied cultural expressions: in liturgy and ritual, in literature and art, in music and dance, as well as in our daily lives as a campus community.

Supporting all members of the community in leading lives that are respectful of human dignity and responsive to social justice concerns.

The Institute promotes the principles of Catholic Social Teaching and endorses initiatives developed by its representative groups and other members of the community that aim to inculcate habits of the heart and faith and zeal for transforming lives.

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On the cover: "The Brickpile", The Oakland Campus

From 1889 to 1928, Saint Mary's College was located in Oakland. The main building was referred to as The Brickpile. This photo was taken while the building was dressed in honor of the 1913 Golden Jubilee Celebration.

All photos in the Copeland article feature the Saint Columba Catholic Church Gospel Choir performing at Saint Mary's College Chapel for the 150th Celebration of the Emancipation Proclamation.

Letter from the Chair

Greetings in the new year, the 1700th anniversary of the Church's legal recognition in the Roman Empire granted by emperors Constantine and Licinius by the Edict of Milan in language that anticipates the "free exercise" of religion clause of the First Amendment of the U. S. Constitution. The emperors declared "amongst those things that are profitable to mankind in general, the reverence paid to the Divinity merited our first and chief attention, and that it was proper that the Christians and all others should have liberty to follow that mode of religion which to each of them appeared best; so that God, who is seated in heaven, might be benign and propitious to us, and to everyone under our government" (www.earlychurchtexts.com/public/edict_of_milan.htm).

This year is also the sesquicentennial celebration of the College, founded in San Francisco in 1863. The anniversary has already provided us with rich memories of lectures and events, from the Fall Homecoming to the January celebration of Black Roman Catholicism on the occasion of remembering the Emancipation Proclamation. The featured speaker of the January event organized by the College's media relations director Michael McAlpin was Father Edward Burns, chaplain of Lyke House in Atlanta, Georgia, who reminded listeners that Black, in the context of African-Americans, is not a color but a culture. He distinguished the Black Catholic experience as one that is mindful of roots that go beyond the faith born from the suffering of slavery, all the way back to the New Testament and the introduction of Christianity to Africa reported in the Acts of the Apostles (8:26-40) in the story of Philip and the court official of Queen Candace of Ethiopia. (Later tradition named the official Bachos or Simeon Bachos).

The Cummins Institute made its own contribution to the sesquicentennial already in October with the visit of Bishop Marcelo Sanchez Sorando, chancellor of the Pontifical Academies of Science and the Social Sciences. Bishop Sanchez led a panel of local Catholic luminaries in a discussion of Catholic higher education before lecturing in the evening. His remarks and the substance of the panel discussion will form the central piece of our next issue of Veritas. Our Spring event will be part of the "Great(est) Conversations" series sponsored by the provost and will be dedicated to meaning and reception of the Second Vatican Council fifty years after its opening. For this occasion the Institute will be bringing Massimo Faggioli of the University of Saint Thomas who is the author of two books published last year on the meaning of the council. Professor Faggioli will be in conversation with students and faculty in the afternoon and in the evening he will be in dialogue with two participants from the Council, Bishop Remi De Roo, retired from Victoria, Vancouver, and Bishop John S. Cummins, retired from Oakland, California. For more on this much-anticipated event see the closing pages of this edition of the journal.

As the Institute finds itself at the beginning of its second decade of existence, the members are minded to take stock of its place and purpose in the College community. We have scheduled a retreat for February out of which experience we hope to renew our selves in our commitment to and understanding of our service to Saint Mary's. We have engaged Brother Michael French, F.S.C., internationally renowned facilitator of adult formation programs, to guide us in our self-exploration. Stay tuned for new and renewed pathways of the Institute, which I hope to describe in the next chair's letter.

Best wishes for a spiritually fruitful Lenten and Paschal season.

Brother Charles Hilken, F.S.C.

"Who is My Neighbor"

by Dr. M. Shawn Copeland

Introduction

"Teacher," the lawyer asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" The lawyer answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live."

But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.' Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise" [*Luke* 10:25-37].

This is a parable from the Gospel of Luke with which we are all so very familiar. "Who is my neighbor?" Answering this question performatively, that is, through concrete action, presents Christians, religious believers of all faiths, and all women and men of good will with a most complex challenge in the twenty-first century: Complex because electronic and technological progress has generated a global village. The Internet, twenty-four hour global news reporting, and relatively inexpensive travel have made it possible for the world's peoples to increase their experience of one another, even if that experience is superficial, to encounter one another in ways unimagined even fifty years ago. Complex because such development has unleashed among those of us around the globe, who are relatively privileged, a self-regarding selfishness of such intensity and scope that, whether intentionally or not, the aspirations, hope, and survival of marginalized others—our neighbors has been thwarted.[1]

"Who is my neighbor?" Answering the question is complex because our cultures, that is, the meanings and values that inform our ways of life, are changing rapidly. Moreover, in our quest for ongoing development, we have limited progress to the material signs and products of modernization, novelty, and innovation. This limitation confuses and undermines the critical thinking and evaluation so necessary for the creation, critique, transformation, and transmission of authentic culture. A little more than a decade ago, Morris Berman wrote a book entitled The Twilight of American Culture in which he argues that American culture is collapsing underneath

1 Pierre Bourdieu, *Acts of Resistance: Against the Tyranny of the Market*, trans. Richard Nice (New York: The New Press, 1998); bell hooks, *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations* (New York & London: Routledge, 1994); Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1997); and Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).

> accelerating social and economic inequality; declining marginal returns with regard to investment in organizational solutions to socio-economic problems; rapidly dropping levels of literacy, critical understanding, and general intellectual awareness; and spiritual death—the emptying out of cultural content and the freezing or repackaging of it in formulas kitsch, in short.[2]

Although Berman levels a stunning critique, I think our situation presents an opportunity for new gestures, not only toward God but also toward one another. Thus, our situation also proffers an opportunity to ask again, "Who is my neighbor?" and to reflect theologically on social sin.

Such reflection, then, forms the basic aim of this evening's lecture. This lecture, sponsored by the Cummins Institute, takes inspiration from the Institute's stated mission:

> [To support] all the members of [the Saint Mary's College] community in leading lives that are respectful of human dignity and responsive to social justice concerns. The Institute promotes the principles of Catholic Social Teaching and endorses initiatives developed by its representative groups and other members of the community that aim to inculcate habits of the heart and faith and zeal for transforming lives.[3]

By asking and answering the question, 'Who is my neighbor?' this lecture seeks to contribute to the ongoing work of the Institute through an analysis of racism as a pervasive and vicious form of personal and social sin. I understand this lecture as an opportunity for us to think together about our common humanity and our common destiny as planetary creatures, who form an integral rather than superior aspect of God's creation.

This lecture brings together some twenty-first century concerns about race, racism and our common humanity in all its splendid and damaged particularities. My remarks are organized in two parts: The first part takes a cue from the work of the sociologist W. E. B. Du Bois, or rather from one of his most provocative sociological judgments. I hope to open up our thinking about the way in which a vicious ideology penetrates our most basic assumptions, feelings, decisions, behaviors, and actions. The second part considers the question that the lawyer put to Jesus: "Who is my neighbor?" This part takes the discussion of race and racism seriously by raising a persistent and troublesome question about our relationships to one another, about our inalienable interdependence.

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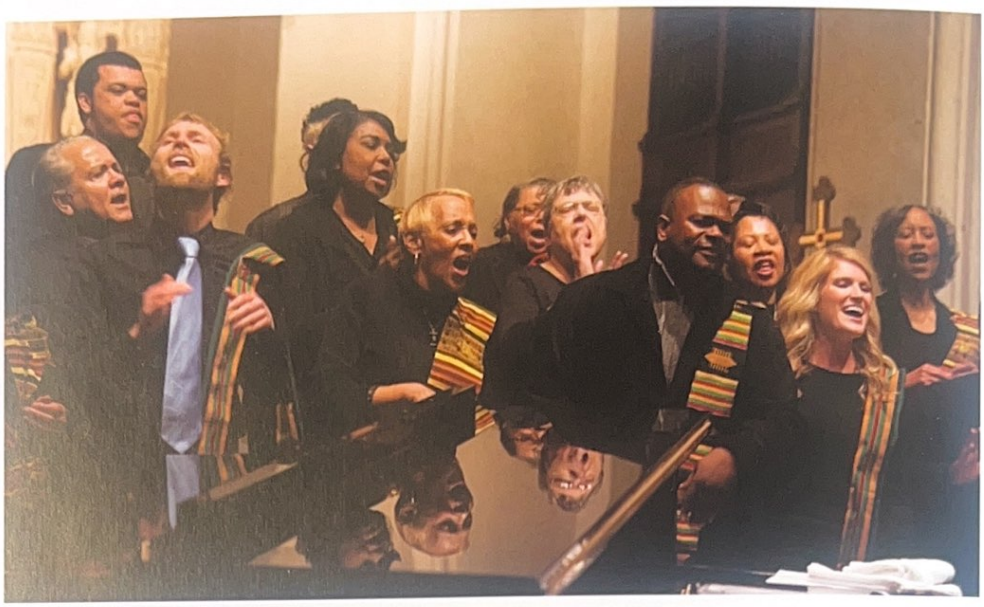
2 Morris Berman, *The Twilight of Amercan Culture* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000), 19.

3 http://www.stmarys-ca.edu/node/8018



The Saint Columba Catholic Church Gospel Choir performing at Saint Mary's College Chapel for the 150th Celebration of the Emancipation Proclamation

Race and Racism: Living the Problem

"The problem of the twentieth century," Du Bois wrote, "is the problem of the color-line—the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men [sic] in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea."[1] We well might add Iraq, Pakistan, India, Egypt, Turkey, Mexico, Columbia, Ecuador, and Guatemala to this list. Du Bois' incisive digest of five hundred years of racist imperialism, colonialism, and supremacy is as precise today as it was nearly a century ago.

The South African theologian John De Gruchy argues that when and where cultural imperialism and racism are "regimentally imposed, [they deny] the community of believers the possibility of being human and [deny—and I would add defy] the reconciling and humanizing work of Christ."[2] The Roman Catholic bishops of the United States in the 1979 pastoral letter, "Brothers and Sisters to Us," write:

> Racism is an evil, which endures in our society and in our Church. Despite apparent advances and even significant changes in the last two decades, the reality of racism remains. In large part it is only external appearances, which have changed. . . . Racism is a sin; a sin that divides the human family, blots out the image of God among specific members of that family, and violates the fundamental human dignity of those called to be children of the same Father [*Brothers and Sisters*].

Racism, then, is a grave moral evil, a personal and structural or systemic sin against the neighbor.[1] The most compact definition of racism is prejudice plus power. Prejudice, as the term implies, denotes a *pre-judging*, a coming

1 W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903; New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 16, 35.

2 John E. De Gruchy and Charles Villa-Vicencio, ed., *Apartheid is Heresy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 177-78.

1 For a good structural definition see James Lee Boggs, *Racism and the Class Struggle* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970): "Racism is systematized oppression of one race of another. In other words, the various forms of oppression within every sphere of social relations—economic exploitation, military subjugation, political subordination, cultural devaluation, psychological violation, sexual degradation, verbal abuse, etc.—together make up a whole of interacting and developing processes which operate so normally and naturally and are so much a part of the existing institutions of society that the individuals involved are barely conscious of their operation" 147-148.

to judgment of something or someone *prior to* experience or knowledge of or encounter with. Bigotry denotes the intransigence, the stubbornness of prejudice. Bigotry teaches us to cling tenaciously to and assert prejudices that have been proven false. Such bigoted judgments and acts of prejudice may stem from lack of experience or knowledge or encounter; they spring up from our persistence in an ignorance that can be corrected or revised. Prejudice and bigotry are forms of bias—the more or less conscious decision to be incorrect, to repress or deny the surfacing of further insights or questions.[7]

Racism goes well beyond prejudice and bigotry to bring together and to bind attitudes or feelings of superiority to putatively legitimate and sanctioned exercises of power. In other words, racism stands as the ability of one racial group or member of that group to impose its will—whether economic, military, political, cultural, sexual, psychological, and/or religious—upon another racial group or member of that group simply because, *by virtue of race*, that group thinks itself superior to all others. Yet, racism never relies on the choices or actions of a few individuals, rather racism is structured or institutionalized. Indeed, racism is woven into the fabric of our daily human living: Racism shapes our ideas, attitudes, and dispositions; it directs our cultural norms, rules, meanings, and expectations; it guides our linguistic, literary, artistic, media representations and practices.[8]

There are so many repugnant aspects of racism, but none more daunting, more infuriating, more dispiriting than its ordinariness. Living flesh and blood children, women, and men live out their daily lives within a context structured by racism. The most mundane activities—grocery shopping, banking, registering for school, inquiring about church membership, riding public transportation, riding in a taxicab—pulse with a negative charge. This ordinariness can twist and distort the very meaning of generous and compassionate human living. Indeed, racism stands not so much as a vexing problem to be solved, but rather as a way in which we define our reality, live the most intimate moments of our lives. Racism is not something *out-there* for us to solve or fix; racism is in us, buried deep within in our consciousness.

Thus, to speak about culture as racist or racist culture is to advert to the way in which each and every human person is racially apprehended, conceived, judged, and manipulated. Each and every human person is reduced to biological physiognomy. The implications of innocuous physical traits—skin shade and color, hair texture, body shape, facial features—are identified, ordered, evaluated, exaggerated. On this basis, each woman and man is assigned a racial designation that structures her or his relations to other women and men of the same and of different races. In this set up, one racial group is contrived as 'the measure of human being,' another racial group is deemed abnormal. The meanings and values embedded in those differences, again, favor one group over another. Thus, virtue, morality, and goodness are assigned to that racial group, while vice, immorality, and evil are assigned to others.

Thinking about Katrina

Let me illustrate how race is assigned meaning and value. Think back a few years ago to Hurricane Katrina. Many of us remember the horrific events surrounding that 2005 storm—the massive and widespread destruction in the Gulf States—Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. People were disoriented, fearful, and confused. The government at levels of the city, state, and nation seemed paralyzed and unsure. Perhaps, the most shocking aspect of the event was the breech of the levees, since what the rain and water did not do, the levees actually did.

There were a few photographs that went around the Internet at that time. In one photograph, a young white man and a young white woman wade through chest-high filthy water with what appear to be groceries, foodstuff, and water. People were cut off from access to these key items, grocery stores were demolished, and so on. The caption of the photographs reads:

7 Bernard Lonergan, *Insight, A Study of Human Understanding* 5th ed., rev. aug., *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, Volume 3 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), Chs. 6, 7.

8 David Theo Goldberg, *Racist Culture: Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), 8.

"Residents find food." In another photograph, a young black man wades through chest-high filthy water with what appear to be groceries or foodstuff and diapers. The caption of this photograph reads: "A black man loots a store." Consider the meanings of the words chosen in each of these captions:

"Residents find food:" When you hear the word 'residents',' you think about those who inhabit or reside in a place, those who belong there; thus, the term 'residents' evokes the geographical. Further, the caption offers no racial designation or description. 'Find' means to discover, to come across, or to locate.

"A black man loots a store:" The caption of the photograph implies the black man is non-resident, one who does not inhabit or reside, does not belong in this particular geographical locale. Here the caption offers a racial designation or description—black man. The word 'loot' means to steal, to rob, or to burgle. The racial naming of the man evokes negativity in relation to the verb to loot.

Consider these inferences as they are applied, attached to human beings, to our neighbors: the white resident couple survives in the midst of intolerable circumstances; the black man as a looter contributes to those intolerable circumstances. Ask yourself: How was the caption writer able to determine the intention or motivation of each of the persons in the photographs?

Cases from New York City

Consider the painful experiences of our Latino neighbors in the United States. The Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR) reports data that indicates Latinos (and blacks) are disproportionately stopped and searched by police officers in New York City.[9] In fact, in 2009, the total number of persons stopped was 576,394 and 376,369 were searched or frisked. 84% of those persons were Latino (31%) and black (53%), although Latinos and blacks account for 27% and 26% of the City's population. In the judgment of the attorneys at the CCR, these numbers suggest systemic racial profiling. Or recall recent series run in daily papers by The Associated Press examining New York City police surveillance of our neighbors who are Muslims. Investigative reports examined how the police mapped out Muslim neighborhoods in nearby Newark, focusing close attention on businesses and mosques, and the monitored the actions of Muslims university students.[10]

These are our neighbors

We see race. Almost immediately when we meet another person, we notice race (along with sex). We see and we interpret. In fact, the ability to interpret race (whether black or white, red or brown or yellow), to categorize others accurately has become crucial for appropriate social behavior and social comfort; the inability to identify accurately another's race, provokes a crisis.

Racism thrives in an atmosphere of *biased* common sense. Our interpretations of race and our reactions to race are conditioned by our biased notions, which require people to act in accord with the negative *stereotypes* associated with their racial identities. The brutal truth of all this was played out in the days after the

9 CCR works to advance and protect the rights guaranteed by the United States Constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Founded in 1966 by attorneys who represented civil rights movements in the South, CCR is a non-profit legal and educational organization committed to the creative use of law as a positive force for social change (http://ccrjustice.org).

10 Joseph Goldstein, "Kelly Defends Surveillance of Muslims," http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/28/nyregion/new-york.html

terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001: Sikhs were murdered because someone thought they were Arabs—as if 'Arab' was the new synonym for terrorist. A young Puerto Rican man using a cash machine was attacked by a group of New Yorkers. A Chinese owner of a dry cleaner said, "We may not look like Americans, but we are one-hundred percent Americans." Ask yourself: *What do Americans look like*? Incidents like these expose not only how racial privilege and xenophobia shape our most

cherished institutions, but also how pernicious nationalism ('my country right or wrong') perverts the virtue of patriotism and marginalizes immigrants, despite our praise of culture diversity. Neither badges of American citizenship, nor trappings of merit served to deter the enraged and biased individuals who murdered someone's lover or husband or son or father or a brother or uncle or friend—substituting revenge, retaliation, and fear for justice. *We see; we interpret; we react*. A racialized social structure shapes racial experience and expectation even as it conditions racial meaning and racial response—even in religion. Such is the challenge of living a response to the question, 'Who is my neighbor?'

Race, Racism: 'Who Is My Neighbor?'

How is the Christian, a woman or man of faith, who lives within a racially structured society, to live *differently*? Jesus of Nazareth challenges us to take up a 'way' to live differently, a way that resists and contests mere conformity to the status quo. Wanting to justify himself, the lawyer asks Jesus, 'Who is my neighbor?'

Jesus answers the first question, by turning it back on to the lawyer, who answers without hesitation. Still, the lawyer persists: "Who is my neighbor?" We need not consider this question as motivated purely by selfishness or the attempt to avoid censure or responsibility. "If," as Ian McFarland suggests, "nothing less than eternal life hangs on my love of neighbor, then it is only natural that I should want to determine just who my neighbor is.[11]

11 Ian A. McFarland, "Who Is My Neighbor?" *Modern Theology* 17:1 (January 2001): 59.

Jesus answers by telling a parable: a man (presumably, but not necessarily, Jewish) whose journey begins in Jerusalem is assaulted on the way to Jericho and left dead by the roadside. A priest and a Levite, perhaps concerned about possibilities of ritual purity or cleanliness through contact with a corpse, pass him by. A Samaritan, a member of a despised cultural and religious group, seemingly unconcerned with ritual norms, helps the victim, tends his wounds, takes him to safety and shelter, instructs the innkeeper to spare no expense in his treatment, and pledges to meet whatever expenses are incurred in his recovery. [12] Then, Jesus asks the lawyer a question: "Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" The man replies, "The one who showed him mercy."

A straightforward interpretation of the parable teaches the lawyer and us that the neighbor is the one in need, the one who needs our compassion and care. Another and more subtle elucidation focuses on the command that Jesus levels at the conclusion of the passage: "Go and do likewise." This turns the challenge back to the lawyer and to us "as moral agent[s] capable of being or failing to be a neighbor to someone else."[13] Jesus does not substitute one definition of neighbor as person in need with another definition of neighbor as person who helps those in need. Instead, Jesus refrains from defining neighbor; he does not tell the lawyer, nor, by implication, does he tell us just who the neighbor is or might be. Rather, Jesus commands the lawyer and us to "imitate the Samaritan's compassion without giving any specific criteria regarding those to whom compassion is owed." [14] This means that it is up to us to discern and determine who is our neighbor in what sort of circumstances. How do we go and do likewise?

12 Ibid., 60.
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid.

The Heritage of Slavery

The gospel of Luke places the question, 'Who is my neighbor?' in the mouth of a lawyer. This narrative arrangement allows for a parallel with "our modern discussions of personhood which also tend to surface in a legal context."[15] Perhaps, the lawyer was concerned about legal or ethical liability. Most of the time, we are concerned about our ethical and legal liability for helping? What will happen to me if I stop and help someone hurt? If we put racism and the issue of the neighbor in a legal context of our own making, we might be able to think differently about what 'who' is the neighbor and about 'what' being a neighbor means. So let me think with you a bit about our country's fractious and repetitive debates about affirmative action.

Most of those of us who call ourselves African Americans, who we might call 'home grown,' cannot attribute our presence in the United States as well as that of our forebears and descendants to an ancestor's eager ambition or pressing need for emigration. Rather, we owe our presence here to some African's greed, ruthlessness, and corruption; to some European's venality, economic vainglory, and willful ignorance. We have here the beginning of *the narrative of the slave*—a narrative of privation and retrieval, of rage and struggle, of contrivance and truth, of limitation and self-transcendence. These racially distinct and diverse children, women, and men were physically, culturally, socially, and legally violated and abused for nearly three hundred years in the United States (beginning in Florida from 1565 until the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment in1865). During this time, their unrecognized, unpaid labor financed and built a country.

15 Ibid., 59.

There is another narrative, *the narrative of a 'nation within the nation.'* Emancipated and granted citizenship for another one hundred years (from 1863 until about 1964) black children, women, and men were lynched, assaulted, segregated and discriminated against with impunity by custom and by law. The intentionally vicious restrictions and racist limitations placed on their industry, courage, patriotism, and hope made it possible for the United States to prosper, even while denying them and their progeny a full share in that prosperity.

Affirmative Action

After more than four hundred years of violence and deprivation, affirmative action laws were formulated to redress this historic and ongoing structural oppression. Now suppose an acquaintance tells you that she is tired of the complaints of African Americans. "After all," she might insist, " I am not responsible for racism, nor am I a racist. I had nothing to do with the slave trade—that was a hundred years ago. My parents," she continues "are immigrants and have been in the United States only for about thirty years. I work long hours, I sacrifice, and I save. No one is giving me anything! Why penalize me? Why should blacks get something special!"

Morally and legally, I think, affirmative action laws and programs are the best way to correct past harm; but they are also full of mischief.[16] More often than not, these laws appeal to selfishness; in doing so, they provoke more hostility and bigotry as well as demands for counter legislation. But, think carefully about this. Does it not only appear as if some individual black person is getting something more than some individual white person? What we fail to understand is that the individual black person, through no fault or merit of her or his own, historically and legally has been discriminated against in the social sphere (i.e., politics, economics, technology), the cultural sphere, even in the religious sphere simply because of her or his visual (racial) identification as a member of a particular racial social group. In other words, that particular individual woman or man has been disadvantaged historically and legally simply because of her or his race. On the other hand, the individual white person, through no fault or merit of her or his own, has been the historic and legal beneficiary of this discrimination, thus, fabricating and contriving the social sphere (i.e., political, economic, technological), the cultural sphere, even the religious sphere to their advantage because of her or his visual (racial) identification as a member of a particular racial social group. All this

16 For a good, although brief, discussion of some of the complex reactions to affirmative action, see Michael Eric Dyson, "Moral Panic or Civic Virtue?" in his *Between God and Gangsta Rap: Bearing Witness to Black Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 79-84.

history has more than a little bearing on who you are or who I am, who you or I might be, who you or I could be; in subtle and insidious ways, the legacy of slavery shapes our present social situation, our culture, our interactions. At the same time, we cannot choose our parents, we cannot choose our race, we cannot choose fundamentally and basically our biological sex. We cannot choose.

Now competition is a byword in an economic system in which there are never enough jobs for everyone who wants to work. But when a society intentionally passes laws to prevent certain groups in that society from participating in the competition, then the creativity, skill, and merit of those who can and do compete are severely undermined. Racial discrimination makes a mockery of the real concrete unity of human beings. It injures blacks, indeed, all people of color; it corrupts whites. Racial discrimination degrades humanity.

Reflecting Theologically on Affirmative Action

Let me transpose the notion affirmative action into a more theological and philosophical way of thinking. Suppose that we take the concrete unity of human beings as the ground of affirmative action. Humanity is neither a simple collection of individuals, nor an aggregate of autonomous, atomized, isolated monads. Humanity is something more: We are one intelligible reality—multiple, diverse, varied, and concrete, yet *one*. Whether we are white or red or yellow or brown or black, whether we are Ogala Sioux or Irish or Cherokee or British or Australian or Liberian or Libyan—we human beings are intrinsically and metaphysically and ineluctably connected.[17]

Saint Thomas Aquinas roots our interconnectedness in our creatureliness: Human are created by God in God's own image and likeness; we are God's human creatures. This reason alone affords us an inalienable right that imposes itself upon other human beings to hold inviolate.

We cannot be indifferent to one another. Thus, as creatures human beings have the absolute duty of justice toward other human creatures, toward other human beings, in fact, toward all creation.[18] In the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Saint Thomas writes: "the act of justice consists in rendering to each that which is his [sic] own . . .. . . [W]hat is rendered to someone by an act of justice is owed to him by a necessity of right."[19]

We have colluded, perhaps unwittingly, perhaps unintentionally, in an unjust system or set of arrangements in which some of us benefit from the forcible limitation of others of us. To undue the egregious harm we have inflicted on ourselves as human beings, as a nation, we must begin to take responsibility to meet injustice with justice, falsehood with truth, complacency with struggle, social mess with social transformation. Because we are connected, we must redress the wrong. Because we are connected, it is not unjust that some of us might suffer for the actions that some others of us have committed against others of us in the past. To affirm our relatedness to other human beings challenges our individualistic ways of thinking and deciding, of acting and behaving. To affirm our relatedness to other human beings challenges our unreflected-upon allegiances to our respective racial or cultural or social or religious groups. To affirm our relatedness to other human beings challenges our fear of difference and diversity. Such an affirmation also challenges our fear of what might happen to us in encountering children, women, and men who may be different from ourselves.

17 On the notion of the 'concrete universal that is man,' Lonergan has this to say: [Humanity] is one reality in the order of the intelligible. It is a many in virtue of matter alone. Now any right and any exigence has its foundation only in the intelligible. Matter is not the basis of exigence but the basis of potentiality. The one intelligible reality, man, humanity, unfolds by means of matter into a material multiplicity of men [sic], that the material multiplicity may rise, not from itself, but from the intelligible unity, to an intelligible multiplicity of personalities. [Human beings] become from [humanity] as grapes from the one vine; if the vine corrupts, so do the grapes; but the grapes suffer no injustice from the vine; they are but part of the vine," in "A Philosophy of History," 118 (The Lonergan Center, Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA).

18 Josef Pieper, *Justice,* trans. Lawrence Lynch (London: Faber & Faber, 1957), 22-23.

19 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles,* transl. by James F. Anderson (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), II, Ch. 28, 3, 12.

Saint Thomas Aquinas on Diversity

It is difficult for many of us to appreciate difference, to enjoy diversity, to appreciate the many incarnations of human nature. Of course, there are some of us who are willing to meet and engage, even esteem, different cultures and peoples, different ideas and ideals, different meanings and values. Yet, as individuals and as a people, too often, what is different, what is immediately beyond our understanding or control frightens us. Look up synonyms for *difference*—nearly all of these imply negative qualities or conditions and negative relations:

disagreement, dissent, discord, estrangement, dissimilarity, dissimilitude, divergence, dispute, disparity, inequality, unlikeness, discrimination, discrepancy.[20] Our very language betrays us and undermines celebration of difference.

Saint Thomas' position on diversity is altogether opposite. Here is what he has to say: "Multitude and distinction are not [chance], but decided and wrought by the divine mind in order that divine goodness might be shadowed forth and shed in many measures. There is beauty in the very diversity."[21] Multitude and diversity are not simply chance or random occurrences. Multitude and diversity are intelligible—they can be understood, because there is something there to understand. Moreover, they are intentional and purposeful: they proclaim the manifold and diverse goodness and beauty of God.

To affirm our relatedness to one another challenges law-makers, public officials, educators, and employers to assume a higher and new viewpoint from which to amend and regulate not only discriminatory and unjust laws, but to lay the groundwork for our society's permanent change—the transformation of human hearts. This work of transformation constitutes a strenuous and exacting process through which society as a whole comes to change. This work of transformation is the struggle to know, to do, to incarnate—to live the truth of being and embracing one another as neighbor.

Conclusion

In this lecture I have sought to form an answer to the question, 'Who Is My Neighbor?' And as I was speaking, I hope that each of you was thinking about the various people whom you know, whom you have encountered in your college experience. What does it mean to have that person as a neighbor? The route I took in answering the same question that Jesus answered was to ask, 'In a racist culture, who is my neighbor?' To formulate my answer, I first presented some theoretical work on how racism permeates and figures in everyday life; then, I presented some cases, drawing on events related to Hurricane Katrina and to police action in New York City. Then, I adverted to the heritage of slavery as a basis for reflecting theologically upon affirmative action; from there, I turned to Saint Thomas Aquinas on diversity. My overarching concern throughout this presentation has been our humanity, our essential humanness. For, as Frantz Fanon, the Martinique, psychiatrist and writer so compassionately insisted, "racism is *not* a constant of the human spirit."[22] Our resistance to racism must be rooted in a notion of person that acknowledges our creatureliness and relatedness, our commitment to witness that all human beings bear the imprint of the divine image and likeness and have a share in the divine life. This understanding of the person acknowledges, testifies, and witnesses that our unity is incomplete unless we honor the riches of our differences that are, at once, gifts of the Spirit. In this way we come to understand something more about the world in which we live and how to live in it. We come to understand more of what it might mean for us to go and do likewise.

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20 See Joseph Devlin, *A Dictionary of Synonyms and Antonyms* (1938; New York: Popular Library, Inc., 1961), *Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language,* 2nd College Edition (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982): The noun difference denotes unlikeness; it connotes opposition, disagreement, quarrel, and dispute. Synonyms for the adjective different, include *diverse* (suggesting conspicuous difference), *divergent* (stressing irreconcilability), *distinct* (stressing different identity and unmistakable separateness), *dissimilar* (focusing on the absence of similarity in appearance, properties, or nature), *disparate* (implying essential or thoroughgoing difference, often stressing an absence of any relationship between things), and *various* (emphasizing the number and diversity of kinds, types, etc.).

21 *Thomas Aquinas Philosophical Texts,* 157, transl by Thomas Gilby (Durham: The Labyrinth Press, 1982).

22 Fanon, "Racism and Culture," 41.

"VATICAN II, FIFTY YEARS LATER"

"Council Fathers in dialogue with Massimo Faggioli"

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Tuesday, 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.
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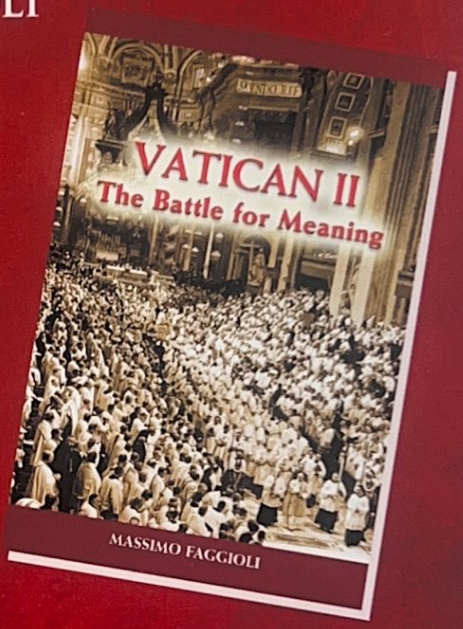

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Veritas is published by the Bishop John S. Cummins Institute for Catholic Thought, Culture and Action at Saint Mary's College of California.

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