

Info Alert 137

December 12, 2017

"The joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted in any way, are the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well. Nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo in their hearts." (Vatican II, *The Church in the Modern World*)

Education: the Poor, Rationale for Speaking Loudly

On this feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, we are challenged to listen to the words of Juan Diego to the bishop, the message of Our Lady, to "build a church where the cries of the poor and the oppressed will be heard." With shock and disbelief, the bishop hears these gospel-laden words and demands tangible signs to know if this is true. And so, the roses! The message? The church must turn its institutional attention from *its needs* to the solitary voice of one poor man. This word is not a condemnation of strategies or theologies, but a **direction for the church** to move from the status quo operations of the day and to build up a place where the prayers, the cries, the heartbreak of people can be heard. The church to be built is symbolic of the age-old faithful word of God: *to be with the people*. Mary's very appearance, as one of the poor, aligns her with them. Guadalupe's proclamation can be seen as God's option for the poor. (adapted from Arturo Perez in Advent Sourcebook, LTP)

Today this challenge confronts us in a society where legislators publicly disdain low-income people--the poor and much of the working class. According to one senator, getting rid of the estate tax recognizes those who invest their money "as opposed to those who are just spending every darn penny they have, whether it's on booze, women, or movies." A governor wants drug tests for those with food-stamp eligibility. A PA state representative, in 2007, proposed a law to fingerprint and drug-test anyone receiving cash welfare or food stamps, now known as SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program). He wanted to weed out fraud, but could never find any fraudulent welfare cases.

An economist, Director of the Center for Poverty Research at the U. of Kentucky, claims, "We don't trust people who need help and we classify the poor as criminals." Susan Fiske, psychology professor at Princeton U. , recently wrote that disliking the poor is the most negative prejudice--even greater than racism."

So, we Gospel women, dare to identify with and speak for the poor by our active nonviolence, through phone calls, emails, messages, rejecting any tax bill that destroys any support system--CHIP, SNAP, medicaid, medicare, all so critical to the poor and to us. Pope Francis begs, "Do not remain silent." Call your senators, your representative to vote NO to the proposed tax bill that threatens health care for many citizens.

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Prayer: O God of infinite compassion, you have revealed your most tender mercy in the consoling words spoken to your servant, Juan Diego, by Our Lady of Guadalupe. Bless all the native people of the Americas and of every land. May we all come to realize that our true and lasting integrity is in Jesus, our loving Savior. Amen
(PCB for the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe)

Action: Suggested action above in the Education section.

Upcoming events: Sabbath to prevent Gun Violence (Dec. 15 to Dec. 17) Check site for resources at local churches, etc.