The Energy Transition: Religious and Cultural Perspectives

with Larry L. Rasmussen, Normand M. Laurendeau and Dan Solomon, "Introduction to 'The Energy Transition: Religious and Cultural Perspectives,'" Normand M. Laurendeau, "An Energy Primer: From Thermodynamics to Theology," William B. Irvine, "Overcoming Energy Gluttony: A Philosophical Perspective," Anne Perkins, "Conservation: Zero Net Energy Homes for Low-Income Families," R.V. Ravakrishna, "Sustainable Energy for Rural India," Fletcher Harper, "Greening Faith: Turning Belief into Action for the Earth," Drew Christiansen, S.J., "Church Teaching, Public Advocacy, and Environmental Action," and Larry L. Rasmussen, "Energy: The Challenges to and from Religion"

CHURCH TEACHING, PUBLIC ADVOCACY, AND ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION

by Drew Christiansen, S.J.

Abstract. Adapted from the six 2010 Star Island Chapel Talks, the paper introduces the readers to contemporary Catholic Social Teaching and its application and implementation, particularly in the fields of environmental justice and human rights. An opening vignette explains how ideas about the common good contributed to the defeat of "Takings" legislation aimed at undoing environmental regulation in the 104th Congress (1995–1996). The teaching is presented as a vision of society centered on the communion of persons and creation rather than a discrete set of principles, with human rights and charity being the twin pillars of an evolving tradition. The interaction among ideas, historic events, and social movements is stressed throughout.

Keywords: Bishops' Conference (USCC, USCCB); Catholic social movements; Catholic social teaching; charity; environmental justice; global community; human rights; option for the poor; private property; public advocacy; social mortgage; takings; tradition; unity of the human family; universal common good

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A Case Study: Private Property and Environmental Regulation

The November 1994 elections swept the Republican Party into Congress with Congressman New Gingrich at its head and the Contract with America as its platform. When the new Congress came into office the following January, its agenda included rolling back environmental legislation. Four initiatives, dubbed by their green opponents "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse," aimed to undercut the federal government role in environmental protection going back to Richard Nixon and before him to Theodore Roosevelt. The gravest threat among them came from "Takings" legislation, named after the Fifth Amendment provision (Article 6) prohibiting the taking of private property without compensation. The legislation proposed to eliminate environmental regulation by making any loss in property value, diminishment in profits or in future profitability due to regulation a "taking," thereby making regulation so costly it would simply have to be withdrawn.

Owners whose property had been ruled as wetland, for example, would have been entitled to compensation for the lost development value of the land. Firms whose profits had been curtailed by having to internalize the costs of pollution by reducing harmful emissions would have been empowered to sue for lost profits. Developers whose hope to open up new properties had been thwarted by the preservation of habitat would be entitled to compensation for denial of future profits.

The environmental community, including religious environmentalists and the newly organized National Religious Partnership for the Environment, was enormously anxious over the threat "Takings" presented to the achievements and future prospects of environmentalism in the United States. I then worked at the United States Catholic Conference as director of the Office of International Justice and Peace, and among my duties was overseeing the conference's environmental activities. On "Takings" and other hot button issues, other religious denominations could usually take rapid action. As a matter of design, Conference responses were always slower and more deliberate.

First, the bishops' agenda was selective. They instinctively understood Paul Ramsey's complaint in *Who Speaks for the Church?* (1967) that the World Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches sometimes spoke as if they had their own Department of State. Part of getting a serious hearing for the Catholic Church was avoiding pressures to stake out a position on every issue that came along. More importantly, there was a question of process. Any statement had to be vetted across offices within the conference, then by the relevant committees (of bishops), in this case the Domestic and International Policy Committees, and then, to receive approval of either or both the Administrative Committee and

a full assembly of the bishops. On a complex and controversial issue like "Takings" care would have to be taken in educating all these groups before the conference would address the issue in the public forum.

So, my colleague Walter Grazer, then manager of our environmental justice program, and I set out to try to lay the groundwork to educate the three hundred bishops, who were, as the staff used to say, our primary constituency, about "Takings." We arranged for a Boston College graduate student, David DeCosse, to draft a paper for us on private property and the common good (1995). In our turn, we re-worked the paper, giving it further ethical refinement and adapting it to the current Washington debate. But, before we could circulate a draft even to our colleagues on the conference staff, we got a request from the Clinton White House to take a look at it. We begged off, explaining that the paper had not been reviewed, but White House officials insisted they just wanted to read it. So, I reluctantly agreed to share the paper, in the language I learned from diplomats, as "a nonpaper." In other words, it was a completely unofficial document and deniable. If anyone asked, it did not exist.

Kathleen McGinty, the chair of the White House Council on Environmental Quality read the nonpaper, and she shared it with Vice President Al Gore. The Vice President read it and shared it with Senator Majority Leader Bob Dole. Dole read it and promptly withdrew the legislation from consideration. "Takings" was dead. The following spring when representatives of the National Religious Partnership, under the chairmanship of Bishop James Malone of Youngstown, Ohio, met at the Old Executive Office Building to report on their first full year of activity to Vice President Al Gore, a co-founder of the Partnership, the vice president opened his remarks by extending his "thanks to the Catholics" for helping end the apocalyptic threat to environmental law.

"Takings" and the Social Mortgage. I start with the "Takings" story, in part because it is an exceptional story of nonlobbying lobbying in the sense that it was simply a sharing of the Catholic teaching on private property, nothing more. There was no formal representation, no public campaigning, no application of political muscle. The influence took place solely on the level of ideas.

Catholic Social Teaching at one time did aspire to carry out its work primarily by the strength of its ideas. It was intellectualist, in the way that Fabian Socialism was intellectualist. If public leaders can get the ideas right, then a better, more moral policy will follow. Of course, that never was the whole truth. From the beginning, social movements, such as labor unions, have stimulated Catholic social teaching and in turn been its carriers. World events, such as the nuclear arms race, the emergence of the global South, and the ecological crisis, have repeatedly occasioned new teaching. For present purposes, what is pertinent is that Catholic social teaching consists

of a more or less coherent set of principles about social life and policy that amount to an intellectual tradition.

In the case of the "Takings" dispute, the Catholic argument was rooted in what is called "The Common Purpose of Created Things," that is, the theological conviction that the whole of creation is intended to be shared for the good of all (Flannery [1975] 1987, 975–76).[1] Private property is the ordinary way in which men and women are able to utilize the resources to sustain themselves and advance their personal development. But, since the Common Good requires that everyone has the means to survive and flourish, private property is under "a social mortgage" (O'Brien and Shannon 1992, 425–26). That is, private property may be limited so that everyone can enjoy an equal basic share for his or her livelihood and be equally protected from fundamental harms. Limits on private property are permitted, therefore, in the interest of the general good of community.

A Tradition of Ideas

Catholic Social Teaching, today officially called "Catholic Social Doctrine," is a genuine tradition, an historical dialogue drawing from different schools of thought, with its own canon of documents and schools of interpretation, key figures, internal debates, and different approaches to politics. The principle of private property is itself an example of evolving tradition.

The modern Catholic social tradition dates itself to Pope Leo XIII's encyclical letter *Rerum novarum* (On the Condition of Labor). It is best remembered now for its support of organized labor, but it erroneously understood the right to private property as absolute in accord with the Whig apologists of the Liberal political tradition (Coleman 1981, 35–36). That articulation was a break with centuries of a more communitarian understanding. Early Christian ideas about a limited right to private property, where property was first for subsistence and then for sharing, had been modified in late antiquity and the medieval period by the Christian notion of the fall, so that private property gained greater moral weight as a concession to fallen human nature.[2] The Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) and Pope Paul VI (1963–1978) returned to the early church fathers in their teaching on private property, so that surplus wealth beyond what is needed for basic welfare, by their reading, is intended for sharing to satisfy the needs of all before any other purpose (Flannery [1975] 1987, 975–76; O'Brien and Shannon 1992, 245, 250–53). A quarter century later Catholic Neo-Conservatives spun Pope John Paul II's encyclical "On the Hundredth Anniversary of *Rerum novarum*" (*Centesimus annus*, 1991) as an endorsement of unfettered capitalism, though it was intended simply as guidance for Eastern Europeans adapting to free markets after the collapse of Communism in 1989; and they completely neglected several

paragraphs in which the late pope listed the lessons still to be learned from Marxian economics (O'Brien and Shannon 1992, 469–71). The point is that the Catholic social tradition is more an on going tradition than a strict system of thought.

Catholic Social Teaching in Practice. The role of the laity in the implementation and elaboration of Catholic Social Teaching are two of the contested aspects of the social teaching in recent times. Traditionally, it was assumed that moral principles are laid out for policymakers to make their own judgment. That is an ancient tradition that can be traced back through Aquinas, to the Stoics, Aristotle, and Plato, where political authorities must make their own prudential judgments as to how to apply the principles of justice. Even as late as Pope John Paul II's encyclical "The Gospel of Life" in 1995, a difference is allowed between principles, the expectations of the Church, and the possibilities and limits of politics (John Paul II 1995, 133–45). The distinction between the moral weight of principles and the lesser certainty of their applications was made most famously in the U.S. bishops' nuclear pastoral "The Challenge of Peace" in 1983 (O'Brien and Shannon 1992, 552–53). Though that document condemned the doctrine of nuclear war and gave conditional toleration to nuclear deterrence—two rather demanding applications—the bishops avowed the fundamental distinction between the moral principles taught by the church and their application by policymakers was essential to moral-political argument.

With respect to the role of the community of believers in the implementation, I want to note the interaction between Catholic social movements and Catholic teaching. I have already remarked in passing on the role of labor unions publicizing and implementing the teaching. Another important contributor has been the Catholic peace movement. Pax Christi, formed to build reconciliation between Germans and French after the First World War, moved the Second Vatican Council to condemn total war, praise nonviolence, and encourage a full re-assessment of war. These developments continued to advance under Pope John Paul II (Shannon 2008, 4). More recently, Focolare, an international Catholic lay group contributed to the ideas and the real-life business models that provide alternatives to the frenzied drive for profit that prompted Pope Benedict's proposals for an "economy of gratuity and communion" in "Truth in Love" (Benedict XVI 2009). So, the interaction between Catholic social teaching and Catholic social movements continues today. Ideas cannot be separated from the communities that generate and carry them out.

The U.S. bishops' two great pastoral letters of the 1980s on peace and economics point to a second dimension of the public teaching of the Church, namely, public involvement in its articulation (O'Brien and Shannon 1992, 522–23). A strong case can be made, I think, that those two

documents are, sociologically speaking at least, among the most influential church teaching documents of the modern period, precisely because they were hammered out in public, with the public welcome to comment on successive drafts. (Of greater public influence worldwide, in my judgment, would only be John XXIII's "Peace on Earth" [*Pacem in terris*, 1963] and the Council's Pastoral Constitution on the Church and the Modern World [*Gaudium et spes*, 1965]). The open deliberation brought the pastorals of the 1980s a degree of attention and later buy-in by Catholics and the wider public that very few documents delivered from the hierarchy alone possess. I would argue the hierarchy has seldom, if ever, enjoyed such intellectual as well as moral authority in the United States or globally as in the open deliberation that produced the peace and economic pastorals.

Lastly, Pope Paul VI and the conciliar-era advisers who were architects of a more active Catholic social engagement were keenly aware that partisan differences could arise over alternative social analyses and various options for social change. For that reason, Paul repeatedly appealed to the primacy of charity and unity among Christians over any political choices they may have made. In "A Call to Action" (*Octagesima adveniens*), he wrote: "In concrete situations, and taking account of the solidarity in each person's life, one must recognize a legitimate variety of options. The same Christian faith can lead to different commitments. . . . 'The bonds that unite the faithful are mightier than anything which divides them'" (O'Brien and Shannon 1992, 284–85). In the American church, sadly, this is an admonition that in recent years has been ignored by significant sections of the church that possess a narrower vision of church than Pope Paul. Down the ages, the primacy of charity has been for Christians a guiding principle for responsible living with differences. There is every reason for it to continue to be so today.

Catholic Social Vision: Human Rights and Charity

For many years, the advocates of Catholic Social Teaching used to call it "the Church's best kept secret." It might also be said that the promotion of human rights is a very well-kept secret of the church's contemporary life. It is quite surprising, I suppose, that having only made a rapprochement with Enlightenment political philosophy in the social teaching of Pope John XXIII (1958–1963), within a few short years, the Catholic Church became one of the world's foremost proponents of human rights; but this is what happened. In 1963, Pope John put Catholic political thought on an entirely new basis, that of human rights, in his encyclical letter "Peace on Earth" (*Pacem in terris*). It was a revolutionary document not only for Catholics, but for many other people as well. For nearly 20 years, the publisher Norman Cousins ran *Pacem in terris* conferences at the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions in Santa Barbara to publicize

and elaborate its teaching. For the past five decades, the contemporary Catholic Church has been deeply affected by its commitment to human rights inaugurated by Pope John XXIII.

Ten years after the publication of "Peace on Earth," the military coup against Salvador Allende in Chile led church leaders there to establish the Vicariate for Solidarity, which became a model of human rights centers in Latin America and elsewhere. They included the Archdiocesan Human Rights Office in Guatemala City, Tutela Legal in El Salvador, and the Bartolomeo de las Casas and Miguel Pro centers in Mexico. Catholic lay people, priests, and bishops have been leaders in defense of human rights, and Catholic centers have been the source of data for other international human rights organizations. One Chilean activist, Jose "Pepe" Zalaquett, became president of Amnesty International. Several Catholic human rights activists are Nobel Peace Prize winners: Lech Walesa, Kim Dae Jung, Mairead Corrigan Maguire, and Bishop Felipe Ximenes Belo. In 1998, after he delivered a report on rights violations during Guatemala's civil war, Bishop Juan Gerardi of Guatemala fell as a martyr of conscience under an assassin's blows.

Human rights is one of two overarching themes that have deeply affected Catholic Social Teaching in the last 50 years. The other is charity, Christian love. While human rights represented a shift in modern official Catholic thinking that responded positively to one line of Enlightenment thought and politics, what is odd about charity is that this cardinal Christian virtue had so little influence on the teaching between Pope Leo XIII in the 1890s and Vatican II in the 1960s. What led to the return of charity to its place of primacy in Catholic social thought was the Vatican Council's turn to biblical and early theological (patristic) thought, in addition to and often in preference to the philosophical currents, especially Scholastic philosophy, that had been utilized in earlier periods. Theology, if you will, became a source for Catholic social thought as it had not been since the age of the church fathers.

Human rights and charity have each woven their way into the cosmic vision of community that is "the deep theory" underlying Catholic social thought.[3] Charity, of course, has affinities to "communion," which is central to the Catholic social vision; but human rights theory amplifies the personal dimensions of human community in ways that the post-Reformation Catholic tradition failed to do. When the Second Vatican Council came to articulate how the church sought to serve the world, it singled out the defense of human rights and the promotion of unity for special notice (Flannery [1975] 1987, 940–43). I would like to indicate briefly how these two themes have enriched the central vision of communion guiding the tradition.

The Rights Revolution. Let me begin by talking directly about the work for the U.S. bishops' conference on the human rights front. I met Bishop Juan Gerardi in my first overseas mission for the conference in the fall of 1991. The Guatemala bishops' conference had asked us to send a delegation to gather information and show support for a national reconciliation program then headed by a senior Guatemalan bishop, later Cardinal Rodolfo Quezada Toruno. It was the kind of solidarity delegation many church groups run. Alongside the reconciliation program, however, the Archdiocesan Human Rights Commission was already assembling data on disappearances, torture, and other violations, and our delegation carried some of its data with us on our return for contacts in Washington and New York.

We did similar work in Chiapas, Mexico, during the Zapatista rebellion in the late 1990s; in Croatia and Bosnia during the Yugoslav civil war; later in Kosovo and repeatedly in the Holy Land, on the West Bank, and in Gaza. With Lawyers for Human Rights, we worked on religious liberty in China, and with the Presbyterians we helped provide training to U.K. civil servants in doing fair employment evaluations in Northern Ireland. In 1994, we ran a workshop for 16 African bishops who had been official national conciliators in long running civil disputes. (At that time more than 30 bishops worldwide had served in that capacity.) As a result of the meeting, we discovered what peace-building specialists are only now learning that reconciliation and defense of human rights, more narrowly, prosecution of perpetrators are often in tension. The African bishops' experience was that their public prominence and credibility had come from being advocates for the rights of the oppressed, but once they became conciliators they had to surrender their advocacy role.

In short, the defense and promotion of human rights has been integrated into the public life of the church. In many places, special commissions have been instituted to promote human rights activities, and bishops' conferences collaborate with one another, and with governments and international organizations in implementing them. While there are gaps, especially in applying the principles uniformly (especially internally within the church) and there appears a tendency in the developing world to emphasize socioeconomic rights over civil and political rights, Pope John's human rights revolution has thoroughly altered the Catholic Church's active presence in the world.

The Option for the Poor and Global Community. It is too much to summarize *Pacem in terris* and Catholic official human rights theory in this short piece. I will touch on just two points: concern for the poor and ethics in the world community.

First, while governments ought to uphold the rights of everyone, Pope John was especially concerned that public authorities "give more attention

to the less-fortunate members of community, since they are less able to defend their rights and to assert their legitimate claims" (O'Brien and Shannon 1992, 140). This proviso hearkens back to the gospel mandate to care for "the least of these," and was later formulated by Pope John Paul II, in a borrowing from Liberation Theology, as the church's "preferential option for the poor" (O'Brien and Shannon 1992, 425–26). In addition, John observed that the whole range of rights tended to be eroded where inequality was growing. He wrote: "Experience has taught us that, unless these authorities take suitable action with regard to economic political and cultural matters, inequalities between citizens tend to become more and more widespread, especially in the modern world, and as a result human rights are rendered totally ineffective and the fulfillment of duties is compromised" (O'Brien and Shannon 1992, 141). One of the functions of government, therefore, is to help hold inequalities in check, in a policy University of Pennsylvania President Amy Gutman calls "relative equality" (1979).

Second, the new Catholic political theory espoused by Pope John and the Catholic Social Teaching tradition after him saw that the system of state-centered international politics was unsuited to the increasing interdependence of the modern world and the dynamics of "socialization"—the multiplication of relationships—in a globalizing world (Flannery [1975] 1987, 907, 926, 982–84). So, after applying his human rights theory to international relations, a field that still retained much validity, Pope John turned in *Pacem in terris* to discuss the world community. The international community is a point, naturally enough, where human rights and political ethics meet the fundamental Catholic social vision.

It is at this intersection that Pope John proposed a new principle for Catholic Social Teaching, namely, "the universal common good," marking the transition from a state-based public morality to a global or cosmopolitan one (O'Brien and Shannon 1992, 152). Historically, the notion of the common good had applied to existing political entities: city-states, empires, nation-states. The novelty of the universal common good is that there yet existed no political authority with global reach. Pope John wrote, "Both the structure and the form of governments as well as the power which public authority wields in all the nations of the world must be considered inadequate to promote the universal common good" (O'Brien and Shannon 1992, 152). There are problems of global dimensions, such as climate change, nuclear proliferation, failed states, global terrorism, migration, and the protection of refugees, which nation-states fail to remedy and for which some transnational authority or a set of transnational regimes are needed to address them. This is a challenge the international community has only begun to meet, and the question is whether global instrumentalities, such as the International Criminal

Court, can be devised soon enough to prevent a series of cascading crises.

Society and the Gospel of Love. Catholic Social Teaching offers a vision of cosmic communion rather than, as too often depicted, a shopping basket of various social goods (political freedom, economic participation, the dignity of labor, and the integrity of the environment). The teaching on human rights greatly enriched that vision by proposing how the dignity of human persons is realized through the enjoyment of their rights, and how human community, especially political community, is ordered to their realization. At the same time, the church has regarded the expansion and intensification of human relationships in our times as a manifestation of the drive of the human family to unity. This is a central tenet of contemporary Catholicism, because the Second Vatican Council defined the church as a sacrament of union with God and of the unity of the human family (Flannery [1975] 1987, 903–04). Across the shifting themes and formulations in the recent tradition, the conviction that a dynamic toward unity is to be found in human experience, particularly in the growth of globalization, remains very strong. Love is the heuristic through which the social tradition interprets history and evaluates our social and political institutions. This religious insight puts in focus what is already a human reality (Flannery [1975] 1987, 925–26, 931–32). So, even though there are many countervailing forces, the tradition holds that the dynamic of love is present and widely available in human experience.

This heuristic of love may be found, for example, in Pope John Paul II's "Social Concern." Commenting on the growth of interdependence, he identifies solidarity as the moral virtue ordered to the demands of growing interdependence. He finds it wherever the advantaged "feel responsible for the weaker" and are "ready to share with them" what they possess. He finds it among the poor who in solidarity with one another claim their rights but also work for the good of all. He also finds it in international relations and the growth of responsibility of nations for one another. Only at the end does he discuss "the *specifically Christian* dimension (in solidarity) of total gratuity, forgiveness and reconciliation" (O'Brien and Shannon 1992, 421–24).

More recently, Pope Benedict XVI utilizes the same optic of love and the dynamics of unity in treating globalization in "Love in Truth" (*Caritas in veritate*). Writing in 2009 in the wake of the worldwide economic crisis, he contends that the dynamics of commercial exchange driving globalization were not able to sustain themselves because of a failure of trust. Globalization cannot work without "the establishment of true fraternity," he writes. "The human community we build by ourselves," he remarks, "can never purely by its own strength, be a fully fraternal community, nor can it overcome every division and become a truly universal community"

(Benedict XVI 2009, sec. 34–39). To do those things, for globalization to realize its promise, requires charity expressing itself in an economy of "gratuity and communion." One field in which an individualist ethic has particularly failed and one where the principles of the universal common good and "an economy of gratuity and communion" need to be applied is planetary ecology.

Care for Planet Earth

In their 1992 pastoral statement "Renewing the Earth," the U.S. bishops adapted the principle of the universal common good to the ecological crisis under the title of "the planetary common good," noting that some of the gravest environmental problems are global in nature. "In this shrinking world," the bishops wrote, "everyone is affected and everyone is responsible, though some of those most responsible are least affected" (United States Catholic Conference 1992, sec. III.D). The notion of a planetary common good had practical implications for priorities for the U.S. church's advocacy on environmental issues, placing special emphasis on issues of the commons such as water, air, and marine fishery resources. One of the indirect results of the pastoral letter and the subsequent environmental justice project, for example, was The Columbia River Pastoral, an eco-regional project authored by bishops from several states in the Pacific Northwest and one Canadian province on the multiple environmental problems of the Columbia River Basin.

Corresponding to the planetary common good was a plea for "a new solidarity" between developed and developing nations. "Only with equitable and sustainable development," the 1992 statement said, "can poor nations curb continuing environmental degradation and avoid the destructive effects of the kind of development that used natural resources irresponsibly" (United States Catholic Conference 1992, sec. III.D). The ties between rich and poor nations in the quest for a sustainable future are a constant theme of the letter as they are of papal teaching on the question. This pervasive concern led to the conference's lobbying Congress with the National Religious Partnership for the Environment on behalf of aid to island and coastal states to respond to the impact of rising sea levels, a policy clumsily named "international adaptation."

Campaigning for Environmental Justice. I have had to condense here the treatment of the genesis and growth of the Catholic social tradition, in ideas and in programs, I endeavored to give in the 2010 Star Island Chapel Talks. So, allow me to close with just a note on how the USCC, now the USCCB, went about building ownership for the teaching on ecology in the Catholic community.

The conference advances its social policy agenda in many ways: parish education programs; letters to and meetings with political leaders; public statements; joint efforts with other denominations, NGOs, and sometimes even governments; and occasionally with campaigns, all-out efforts with a variety of tools to build a constituency on an issue or set of issues. In my time, to name just three, we ran campaigns on Northern Ireland, on antipersonnel land mines, and on support of the Christians in the Holy Land.

With support from the National Partnership, our Renewing the Earth Environmental Justice Program took a multifaceted approach engaging the U.S. Catholics in work on environmental justice. We prepared packets for parishes including liturgies, model homilies, and suggestions for a variety of parish committees and pastoral ministers. We held seminars for college and university professors to stimulate research and curriculum development, and workshops for diocesan social action directors. And perhaps most successful of all, we ran a small-grants programs to stimulate and promote grassroots activity. In the end, not just local activists, parish, and school groups, but dioceses and entire regions of the bishops' conferences (consisting of several dioceses) were applying for start-up money. We aimed to reach not just the average Catholic in the pew, but those of different interests and levels of learning and responsibility as well.

Once to my surprise, while speaking in Michigan, I discovered that the grants programs had supported a number of groups around the Great Lakes Basin, some of them award-winning projects publicized by Public Broadcasting, that had focused on urban sprawl. I had to stop for a minute and think: Urban sprawl? Why, of course! It touches on land use, agricultural preservation, water use and pollution, air pollution, and urban planning. At that point, I suppose, I knew "Renewing the Earth" had taken hold among the Catholic people. I rejoiced in learning how much the people of the Heartland had taken the teaching of "Renewing the Earth" to heart.

The conference's environmental justice program and particularly its small grants had a role in promoting these activities in the Great Lakes Basin. The immediate catalyst, however, was a 1993 pastoral letter by a Cleveland, Ohio, bishop, Anthony Pilla, that led to dialogues and initiatives in the metropolitan region on problems of urban decay, urban sprawl, and their solutions.[4] "The Church in the City" initiatives were examples of how the church (and bishops) can serve as convenors across a segmented society in addressing common problems and their solutions. The Midwest focus on sprawl also illustrates the circle of inspiration where local activists and advocates awaken a concern in their church leaders who, then, through their teaching, inspire a wider social movement. The Catholic social vision is realized when teaching and social movements come together.

Notes

1. On "the Common Purpose of Created Things," see Vatican Council II, "The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World" (*Gaudium et spes*), sec. 69 and Pope Paul VI, "Development of Peoples" (*Populorum progression*), sec. 22 in O'Brien and Shannon (1992).
2. See Avila (1983). The terms "absolute" and "relative" natural law were proposed by Ernst Troeltsch in his *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, vol. 1, trans. Olive Wyon, foreword by James Luther Adams (John Knox, 1982) to distinguish between the natural law as experienced in creation and after the fall. The "relative" natural law made allowances for the weakness of sinful humanity, for example, allowing for the holding of private property as contrasted with sharing of possessions on an equal basis as intended in the original creation. The latter would have been the position of early fathers such as Lactantius, the former of church fathers, such as Augustine, and medievals, such as Aquinas. Specific appeal is made to the early patristic interpretation in "Pastoral Constitution," no. 69 and "Development of Peoples," no. 22–23.
3. I take the notion of "deep theory," meaning an underlying outlook, from Dworkin (1977).
4. On the letter and the process it initiated, see Anthony M. Pilla, "The Moral Implications of Urban Sprawl," a speech before the City Club of Cleveland, June 17, 1996 at http://www.citc.org/speeches.htm

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