

“From his deep experience in both Mennonite and Catholic circles, Gerald Schlabach explores well the transforming initiative of the church’s evolving ‘turn to active nonviolence’ and offers a challenging reflection on the messy complexity of the just war framework’s ‘traditional righteousness.’ This book should be required reading for all of us involved in the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative.”

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Co-President of Pax Christi International (2007–2019)  
Executive Committee of Pax Christi’s Catholic  
Nonviolence Initiative

“More than any book on active nonviolence and peacemaking, Gerald Schlabach’s *A Pilgrim People* offers a profound and solid theological foundation for this essential Christian mission. It shows that active nonviolence is demanded not only by the process of globalization but also, and more urgently, by Christ’s command to his disciples to cross borders of all types to bring about God’s reign of justice, peace, and love. It is a must-read for social activists as well as scholars. A timelier book for our Age of Migration can hardly be found.”

— Peter C. Phan  
Ellacuría Chair of Catholic Social Thought  
Georgetown University



# A Pilgrim People

Becoming a Catholic Peace Church

*Gerald W. Schlabach*



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Dedicated to the legacy of  
Dom Hélder Câmara,  
Archbishop of Olinda and Recife, Brazil, 1964–1985,  
whose stirring call, “Abrahamic minorities unite!”  
invited me on pilgrimage from  
my Mennonite origins  
toward my Catholic horizon



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## Acknowledgments

Authors regularly worry out loud on pages like these that they will fail to acknowledge everyone to whom they owe the intellectual and personal debts that have made their books possible. For me the exercise is especially fraught. As I have been writing this book I have sometimes joked to friends that “I am trying to synthesize every Mennonite and Catholic thought I’ve had over the last thirty-five years.” Where, then, to start or stop? In chapter 7, I will cite Cardinal Peter Turkson’s definition of justice as “respect [for] the demands of the relationships in which we live.” I doubt I can do justice to all the relationships with mentors, influencers, and debating partners that have helped shape this book. What I hope at least to do is to chart my pilgrimage through many clusters of relationships and conversations, trusting that all those whom I should also have named will at least recognize themselves in their networks. Whatever the contributions I have been able to make as a peace practitioner, scholar, and teacher, it has been a rich life. Simply to trace in rough chronological order my journey through the clusters of relationships that have formed me will hint at both my intellectual and spiritual journeys through an expanding web that obviously began in Mennonite community, but that soon extended inexorably outward. To say even this much prompts me to acknowledge—first and above all—my gratitude to God.

No doubt the deepest imprint of the creative “Abrahamic” tension running throughout salvation history that I name and celebrate repeatedly in these pages came from being part of a family, in a community, in a generation endeavoring with quiet urgency to discern how to be faithful to its Anabaptist-Mennonite identity as a peaceable people, while offering “alternative service” to the larger social order.

When my father, Theron F. Schlabach—the first in his family not only to go to college but to earn a doctorate—had a letter published prominently in a Madison, Wisconsin, newspaper in the early 1960s explaining why he did not let me or my brothers play with toy guns, he was doing both. When he and my mother, Sara Kauffman Schlabach, led a unit for Goshen (Indiana) College of what, to the best of our knowledge, was the first international studies program in the United States that was required of all students (giving me my start in Latin America, by the way) they were doing both. Indeed, for more than a century the motto of Goshen College, where my father dedicated his career, has reflected the hope of its stream of Mennonites that they could serve their Lord more faithfully precisely by engaging “culture for service.”

A couple of years after graduating from Goshen College myself, I sought to put this legacy into practice by entering voluntary service with Mennonite Central Committee—the relief, development, and peacebuilding arm of Mennonites, first in North America and now global. Two years at its Pennsylvania headquarters working in its Information Services department gave me an informal master’s degree of sorts in all kinds of issues in development ethics, international Christian solidarity, and the politics of social change. International program directors Edgar Stoesz and Herman Bontrager then entrusted my new wife, Joetta Handrich, and me with a formidable task that took us to Nicaragua and Honduras for five years—to represent the organization, and in a way the tradition, by figuring out how to hold out hope for nonviolent means of working for justice and peace amid revolutionary situations throughout the Central American region in the 1980s. We were still in our mid-twenties. Perhaps we needed to be young, adventurous, and idealistic to take on such a challenge, but still, what were we thinking? Those five years were some of the most difficult of our lives—but also the most formative. I am especially grateful to the Honduran Mennonite Church—especially Ovidio Flores, Isaías Flores, and Juan Angel Ochoa—and to the leadership of the then-fledgling Central American Mennonite seminary SEMILLA, based in Guatemala—especially Gilberto Flores and Rafaél Escobar—for the support and encouragement that made our work realistic and fruitful after all, rather than merely idealistic. Key ideas in these pages were forged in the cauldron of those years.

The very shape of the work drew us into wider and wider ecumenical relationships, after all, and in retrospect I recognize that even as a Mennonite, the Roman Catholic Church of the Second Vatican Council was already defining the horizon of my Christian life. Along with Mennonite churches in the region, primary partners were in Nicaragua's Protestant organization CEPAD, then under the leadership of the late Dr. Gustavo Parajón and Gilberto Aguirre. But among our best expatriate friends in Nicaragua were Maryknoll sisters and lay missionaries, while Catholic nonviolence activists soon became close associates. With Nicaraguan Moravian Church leaders such as the Rev. Norman Bent, we founded a local chapter of Servicio Paz y Justicia (SERPAJ); aiding us were consultants Creuza Maciel from Brazil and Hildegard Goss-Mayr, the veteran Catholic peace activist who played a key role behind the scenes at the Second Vatican Council, along with her husband, Jean, and others, encouraging the church to begin reappraising its attitude toward war.<sup>1</sup> Collaboration in the founding months of the organization for nonviolent solidarity, Witness for Peace, led to continuing work with Catholic peace activist Philip McManus and to the book that he and I eventually coedited on nonviolent movements in Latin America, *Relentless Persistence*.<sup>2</sup> Just as auspicious was the archbishop I never met in person but did meet in print in these years, Dom Hélder Câmara of Brazil; to his legacy I have dedicated this book.

It was not until a few years later at the University of Notre Dame that I began to weave my growing number of Catholic connections into the longer threads of the Catholic tradition. Here my guides were Jean Porter and John Cavadini especially, along with Todd Whitmore, Blake Leyerle, and the late Catherine LaCugna. Porter and LaCugna introduced me to Thomas Aquinas; Leyerle and Cavadini to patristics. Porter and Cavadini guided me into the deeper engagement with Augustine that persists, even in this book, against the tide of his ill-repute in Catholic peace activist circles.<sup>3</sup> Of my difficult but unavoidably influential relationship with the late John Howard Yoder, leading Mennonite theologian of his generation then at Notre Dame, I will say more in a bit.

Though I had gone to Notre Dame because Catholicism seemed a far more interesting conversation partner than mainline Protestantism, not because I was consciously exploring becoming Catholic, I

did increasingly come to think of myself as a “Catholic Mennonite”—until in 2004 at the Pentecost Vigil, I flipped noun and adjective to become a “Mennonite Catholic” and enter into full communion with the Roman Catholic Church. To say only that much is to abbreviate greatly, of course, but I have written of the process of discernment elsewhere.<sup>4</sup> What is especially relevant to this book is the companionship that the grassroots organization for Mennonite-Catholic dialogue, Bridgefolk, has offered along the way. My fellow cofounders, Marlene Kropf, Weldon Nisly, and above all my dear friend the late Ivan Kauffman, deserve special mention, along with Abbot John Klassen and Fr. William Skudlarek of Saint John’s Abbey in Minnesota, Margie Pfeil, and the late Alan Kreider. Another way that I was able to bridge Mennonite and Catholic communities in these years was participation on the international Peace Committee of Mennonite Central Committee, which was gracious enough to let me continue on the committee and do major work on peace theology even as my move into Catholicism became public; thanks go especially to Robert and Judy Zimmerman Herr, Alain Epp-Weaver, and Duane Friesen.<sup>5</sup> Also supplying key materials for bridging traditions was the late Glen Stassen, a Christian ethicist in the Baptist (but also *Anabaptist*) tradition, whose help will be quite evident in my final two chapters.

By now, to be sure, many of my most constant conversation partners are fellow Catholics. Fr. Drew Christiansen, SJ, and I occasionally joke that we have become a tag team in our insistence that if Catholics are to take church teaching seriously, peacemaking must become “church-wide and parish-deep.” Christiansen is currently the Distinguished Professor of Ethics and Global Human Development in Georgetown’s School of Foreign Service and a senior research fellow at the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs. No one has done more to tease out the development of papal teaching concerning peace and war, and the emergence of nonviolence as a clear norm for the church, than Fr. Christiansen. As will be especially evident in chapter 2, despite a few ongoing disagreements I have learned much from him and cannot imagine having written this book without his direct and indirect help. Tobias Winright, a peer in graduate studies at Notre Dame who now holds the Hubert Mäder Endowed Chair at Saint Louis University, has continued to be a regular conversation partner despite a bit of friendly sparring about how best to frame

and promote the notion of “just policing.” Gerard Powers, who coordinates the Catholic Peacebuilding Network (CPN) as part of his portfolio at Notre Dame’s Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, and who previously directed the Office of International Justice and Peace of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, welcomed me on to the CPN coordinating committee a few years ago and has become a good friend. That committee in turn introduced me to veteran peace activist Marie Dennis, copresident of Pax Christi International, who has steadily drawn me into what is now known as the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative (CNI), which in conversation with the Vatican’s Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace—now folded into the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development—has been spurring fresh debate over the adequacy of the Catholic just-war tradition. The CNI has also provided the context for conversation and collaboration with Eli McCarthy, who teaches peace studies at Georgetown University and directs the justice and peace office of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men in the United States, and with Lisa Sowle Cahill, the J. Donald Monan, S.J., Professor at Boston College.

Of course, my colleagues in the Theology Department at the University of St. Thomas in Minnesota have offered invaluable support since I joined them in 2000. Bernard Brady, Paul Wojda, John Boyle, Kimberly Vrudny, and Michael Hollerich have first of all been good friends, but also always available to bat around ideas and suggest resources. William Cavanaugh has now moved on to DePaul University, and Massimo Faggioli to Villanova University, but they have also played these roles. To John Martens and Corrine Carvalho, I owe specific debts for helping me double-check my biblical scholarship at points, and to my former colleague Tisha Rajendra, now at Loyola University Chicago, I am indebted for a critical review of my chapter on immigration issues. I am also grateful to faculty in the Department of Justice and Peace Studies with whom I was associated for a few years—Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer, Michael Klein, and Amy Finnegan.

Without the financial and logistical support of three institutions, this book almost certainly could not have come to fruition. The Faculty Development office of the University of St. Thomas channeled institutional funding at various stages of this project, first by facilitating a sabbatical, and later through a major University Scholars Grant. For generous external funding that allowed that sabbatical to extend

for a full year, I am grateful to the Louisville Institute. Providing an ideal location and camaraderie with fellow scholars was the Collegeville Institute, an apostolic ministry of Saint John's Abbey in Minnesota.

Another kind of support—technical, though always somewhat more than that—has come from the scrappy company that built an elegant tool for scholarship years ago when I was just beginning my scholarly career, and that has continued perfecting it ever since: The Nota Bene word processor, bibliographic organizer, and note indexer has streamlined and structured my work for over three decades, and allowed an intuitive, big-picture thinker like me to act as though he had an eye for details. Gratitude goes both to Steve Siebert, its creator, and to the erudite community of Nota Bene users around the world that has kept this irreplaceable tool alive and helped it get better and better.

But now I must turn to that more freighted acknowledgment of my debt to the late John Howard Yoder, one of my teachers at both the Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Indiana,<sup>6</sup> and ten years later at Notre Dame. At the time, he was a towering figure in Anabaptist-Mennonite theology and a leading spokesman for Christian pacifism ecumenically. Today his legacy is rightly suspect—as in, subject to trenchant hermeneutics of suspicion—due to his now-well-documented sexual abuse, which he used his brilliant theological mind to rationalize.<sup>7</sup>

If I knew how to expunge all traces of Yoder's influence, I would. I have broken with him in various ways that might give me an excuse, after all. He was not particularly pleased when I turned to Augustine to solve the central problematic of my doctoral dissertation. I knew enough about the reasons for his estrangement from Mennonite Church leadership before details began to become public during my years at Notre Dame in the early 1990s that I began even then to deepen my own hermeneutic of suspicion about how his abuses might have vitiated his ecclesiology with regard to pastoral leadership.<sup>8</sup> Our personal relationship was strained at Notre Dame; though he served on my dissertation committee, almost all communication went by way of my adviser, Jean Porter. I was writing one of the most important articles in my early career at the time of his death in December 1997; in it I questioned the explanatory power of "Constantinianism"

as what seemed in Yoder's thought to be the most basic problem for Christian social ethics.<sup>9</sup> Even at the point where he advocated for a "Jeremianic" model of Christian social engagement and thus influenced my turn to "diaspora ecclesiology" in this book, a reader who knows his thought well might notice the ways that I stretch his thought toward greater appreciation for Christian vocations of governance. Yet however convenient it would be to distance myself from Yoder still further, to expunge all traces of his thought would be to commit a sin of my own—the scholarly one of plagiarism.

Make no mistake. John Howard Yoder betrayed many—none more than the survivors of his sexual abuse, but also those of us who had learned breakthrough concepts from him. Still, as I have written elsewhere concerning my relationship with Yoder and his legacy, "only those we need can betray us."<sup>10</sup> (To explain by way of contrast, prominent Protestant theologian Paul Tillich was also an egregious sexual predator. But while his abuses were surely scandalous and tragic, for me they do not constitute a *betrayal* because I am not at all a Tillichian who needs his words to trace or understand my own.) Few have done more than Yoder to show why and how even Christian pacifists should engage just-war thinking. None was more persistent in rebutting the claims of Reinhold Niebuhr that to renounce recourse to war and other forms of nation-state violence necessarily means rendering oneself politically irrelevant, nor did more to enumerate alternative forms of power by which a "creative minority" that does so might actually do more to serve the common good. These are the matters that have always interested me the most and that pertain to this book. Yoder's willful blindness to still other forms of power that he himself wielded to the great harm of those women who are his survivors deserves all the scrutiny and critique that it is receiving. But while I would be glad to stand corrected, to the best of my self-awareness I do not believe that the building blocks in this book that owe something to Yoderian thought lie in the vicinity of Yoder's intellectual mistakes or moral failings. If I am wrong, I hope that I have at least been intellectually honest and transparent enough to allow readers to decide, and for the painful conversation about what we do with Yoder's legacy to go forward.

Finally, and more happily, I must of course thank my wonderful wife of nearly four decades, Joetta Handrich Schlabach. Our interests,

styles, and vocations have been close enough to allow us to support one another richly, yet different enough to allow our relationship to be a welcome reprieve when necessary. We traveled and worked together through those difficult-but-formative years in Central America. We have been partners in the great adventure of raising our delightful sons, Gabriel and Jacob, then welcoming their own life partners, Valerie and Angie, into our family. Joetta's hospitality has drawn me out of my bookish introversion as surely as it has drawn others into new circles of friendship. Whatever else it may accomplish for me to finish this book and send it out to God's pilgrim people, I am especially glad that we can now look forward to new adventures together.



# PART I

## Becoming Catholic Again for the First Time

My thesis is this: In so far as our outlook is really based on today and looking towards tomorrow, the present situation of Christians can be characterized as that of a diaspora; and this signifies, in terms of the history of salvation, a “must,” from which we may and must draw conclusions about our behavior as Christians.

—Karl Rahner, SJ, “The Present Situation of Christians” (1961)

Above all the Gospel must be proclaimed by witness. Take a Christian or a handful of Christians who, in the midst of their own community, show their capacity for understanding and acceptance, their sharing of life and destiny with other people, their solidarity with the efforts of all for whatever is noble and good. Let us suppose that, in addition, they radiate in an altogether simple and unaffected way their faith in values that go beyond current values, and their hope in something that is not seen and that one would not dare to imagine. Through this wordless witness these Christians stir up irresistible questions in the hearts of those who see how they live. . . . Such a witness is already a silent proclamation of the Good News and a very powerful and effective one. Here we have an initial act of evangelization. The above questions will [be asked, whether by] people to whom Christ has never been proclaimed, or baptized people who do not practice, or people who live as nominal Christians but according to principles that are in no way Christian. . . .

All Christians are called to this witness, and in this way they can be real evangelizers. We are thinking especially of the responsibility incumbent on immigrants in the country that receives them.

—Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975)



## Chapter 2

# Taking Catholic Social Teaching into Diaspora

Above all the Gospel must be proclaimed by witness. Take a Christian or a handful of Christians who, in the midst of their own community, show their capacity for understanding and acceptance, their sharing of life and destiny with other people, their solidarity with the efforts of all for whatever is noble and good. . . . All Christians are called to this witness, and in this way they can be real evangelizers. *We are thinking especially of the responsibility incumbent on immigrants in the country that receives them.*

Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* §21 (emphasis added)

Pope Paul VI would seem to have left us something of an “Easter egg.” For computer programmers, filmmakers, and their aficionados, an Easter egg has come to refer to a hidden message or feature, the promise of which entices dedicated users to go deep into a game, or viewers to pay keen attention. The papal puzzle is this: As Paul VI penned an apostolic exhortation in 1975 to guide the church’s evangelization and mission work, his thoughts turned “especially” to immigrant Christian communities and their special responsibilities. Why?

The occasion for Pope Paul’s *Evangelii Nuntiandi*—or in English, *Evangelization in the Modern World*—provides certain clues. Significantly, the release date for the apostolic exhortation was December 8, 1975, a decade to the day after the close of the Second Vatican Council, that momentous gathering of bishops from around the world that had sought to guide the Roman Catholic Church into a new

relationship with the modern world. Vatican II had indeed opened up the church in various ways, but after ten years of changes both invigorating and disorienting for Catholics, it was time for some clarifications. The council's declaration committing the church to interreligious dialogue, *Nostra Aetate*, had assured people of other faiths that it recognized all that was true in their religious traditions, and affirmed that those faiths can aid anyone who authentically seeks a saving relationship with God.<sup>1</sup> So then, did Catholics still need to proclaim the Gospel, and if so, how to do so in a respectful manner? Likewise, the council's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, had promised to accompany humankind "unreservedly" in a spirit of solidarity amid the exciting discoveries and troubling perplexities of modern life.<sup>2</sup> But didn't friendly accompaniment and a willingness to affirm all that was life-giving about the exciting discoveries of modern culture sometimes require the church to resist modernity too, at points? The twentieth century had shown that technological achievement could "recoil" against humanity, after all, and accelerate ancient patterns of violence and exploitation.<sup>3</sup> In these and many other cases, the challenge for Christians was to simultaneously challenge and affirm—to somehow be both countercultural and pro-cultural at the same time.

Paul VI left other clues as to why he may have been thinking "especially" of immigrant Christian communities as a preeminent model for all Christian witness in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. The only footnote in section 21, where he left us his Easter egg of a remark, takes us back to challenges facing Christian communities in the centuries before they gained official acceptance from the Roman emperor Constantine. Early Christian apologists such as Tertullian and Minucius Felix, to whom the footnote referred, had needed to explain the faith and practice of fledgling Christian communities in the face of questions both curious and scandalized. Likewise, according to Pope Paul, the ways that a Christian community embodies its faith and mutual love today through acts of solidarity, both within churches and within the larger society that hosts them, should continue to provide occasions for verbalizing and explaining the Christian faith. To make that point, however, Pope Paul had mined near a deep vein in early Christian thought, in which some of the most influential of Christian thinkers (the "church fathers" or "patristic" theologians) had explicitly thought of themselves as a people living as though in exile, spread through

many nations, yet all the more loyal to the one commonwealth of humanity as a whole.<sup>4</sup>

And so—whether deliberately or inadvertently or through the mysterious inspiration of the Holy Spirit—Pope Paul VI had diaspora on his mind. Appropriating words of Jesus (John 17:11 paired with John 15:19) Christians have often spoken of themselves as called to be “in the world but not of the world.” An appropriate aphorism for all Christians, this in-but-not-of experience is daily, concrete, and existential for any new immigrant community, Christian or otherwise, at least when it continues to identify with a homeland elsewhere. This is what diaspora is. Derived from the Greek word for “dispersal,” diaspora is the social pattern by which members of a community, ethnic group, or even a nation that is separated from (or that never has had) a nation-state of its own, now lives scattered among many nations, yet seeks to maintain some kind of group cohesion.<sup>5</sup> Unless its members are trying to assimilate and melt into another society as quickly as they can, their challenge is to structure their common life in hundreds of ways, small and large, according to the primary allegiance of one identity, while respecting and winning the respect of a host society that has its own laws, customs, and expectations. Sometimes this means conflict. Sometimes this means service. Always it requires faithful narration of the community’s story, and careful navigation of competing demands.

Could this be a clue? Indeed it is—a clue for how *all* Christian communities, not just immigrant communities, are to be a living witness to the Gospel, a people of peace that serves the world in justice, a people that knows how to explain itself to itself and to others, a people with a supple and coherent social ethic, a people that knows and celebrates its primary identity as a community of redeemed disciples of Jesus Christ, a people nonetheless aware that to follow a crucified Lord means that the faithful can only preserve such an identity by putting it at risk on behalf of others as they travel through the many times and cultures of history. A pilgrim people.

### **Four interlocking theses**

Indeed, only a church that embraces life in diaspora can be a global Catholic peace church. An adequately Catholic theology of peace depends on deepening the church’s self-identification as a truly global

people that has loosened every nationalistic loyalty, sees itself as living in diaspora among other nations, but is all the more prepared to serve the common good of every nation thereby. Amid all the interlocking arguments in the pages that follow, and all of the ethical practices to which they will point, these convictions will serve as their guiding center.

And become a peace church more truly we must. Reflecting on how the heroic nonviolent witness of “many Pastors, entire Christian communities, individual members of the faithful, and other people of good will” had unexpectedly ended the Cold War, brought down a totalitarian empire in 1989, and offered hope of peaceful change around the world through “dialogue and solidarity, rather than . . . struggle to destroy the enemy through war,” Pope John Paul II insisted that actually, such efforts are not simply for a heroic few at all: “This is, in fact, a responsibility which falls not only to the citizens of the countries in question, but to all Christians and people of good will.”<sup>6</sup> Bishops in one part of the world captured that conviction in a pastoral letter soon afterward when they wrote,

Our biblical heritage and our body of tradition make the vocation of peacemaking mandatory. Authentic prayer, worship and sacramental life challenge us to conversion of our hearts and summon us to works of peace. These concerns are obviously not ours alone, but are the work of the entire community of faith and of all people of good will.<sup>7</sup>

So how shall a distinct “community of faith” work together with “all people of good will” for peace? The beauty and possibility of life in diaspora is that it simultaneously grounds a people in their core identity *and* opens them up to cultural engagement in endlessly and wonderfully diverse settings. More than either scriptural proof-text or rational syllogism, what will thus offer the ultimate warrant for the theology and ethics in this book will be the overarching coherence of the interlocking arguments and the practical wisdom that these pages offer as they demonstrate the capacity to guide Christians through multiple puzzles and life situations. Appropriate to life in diaspora, the argumentation that follows must necessarily be at once complex yet simple<sup>8</sup>—wide-ranging yet looping back home.

The simplicity-within-complexity of what follows should be quite manageable for readers if they notice now, and then continue to bear in mind, how our core thesis works in tandem with three others:

Christian moral theology in general, and Catholic social teaching in particular, has always been stretching toward the challenges of global solidarity; this may only have become obvious in the age of globalization, but that is now merely *obvious*, not *new*.

For a church that calls itself catholic and names its very presence in the world as the sacrament of human salvation, how to be a global church in the age of globalization and how to *be* a social ethic in accord with Catholic social teaching are virtually the same question.

In order to be Catholic in deed and not just in name, a global church must be a peace church, committed to engendering the virtues necessary to practice normative nonviolence and extend active love to enemies.

So it is that we loop back to the core thesis:

*Only a church that embraces life in diaspora can be a global Catholic peace church—or really a truly catholic Catholic Church at all.*

Indeed, as we embark, the burden of the book's opening chapters will be to show why each of these four theses entails the others. Globalization is merely making obvious something that has always been true of Christ's church: Namely, we are properly a diaspora people and must embrace this identity in order to practice Christian love of neighbor through global solidarity in all the ways to which Catholic social teaching has been calling us, thus to become a catholic peace church.

In one way, therefore, this book is an introduction to what Catholic social teaching has always been about. But in another way it is a constructive proposal for how Catholic social teaching must work itself out in practice. New appropriations of ancient Christian insights are especially necessary, after all, considering that "close ties of dependence between individuals and peoples are on the increase world-wide nowadays," as the Second Vatican Council described globalization before that term came into wide circulation.<sup>9</sup>

In one way, this book is very much in the genre of Christian social ethics. But in another way, this book's very approach to social ethics requires it to anticipate inculturating the fullness of the Gospel by learning to be church in many and diverse cultures, and thus "the sacrament of human salvation" within history.

In one way, this book builds that proposal by arguing that the only viable way both to be a global church and a peace church is through a social ethic that embraces life amid diaspora. Indeed, it invites us to do so in celebratory rather than grudging fashion. Such a calling invites us to share the peace of Christ in the world by working actively and nonviolently in collaboration with all people of good will, while keeping our primary loyalty clear. For in another way, this book builds that proposal by arguing that the Vatican and the Catholic faithful alike will be following through on the trajectory of recent popes who have been leading them to confirm their age-old calling to be a people of peace.

### **Catholic peace theology: quiet, relentless, developing**

"Once again, no one noticed." Hinting at frustration, so remarked Drew Christiansen, SJ, in 2008 as he surveyed the developing commitment to peacemaking within Catholic social teaching. In a 1991 encyclical commemorating a hundred years of such teaching in the modern Catholic Church as well as the events that led to the end of the Soviet empire in 1989, Pope John Paul II had recognized active nonviolence as the decisive factor in those events, and endorsed it as relevant to public affairs—"but no one seemed to notice." Two years later, Catholic bishops in the United States had followed up with a pastoral letter that "identified nonviolence as the foundation of Catholic teaching on war and peace and argued it should be the basis of a state ethic as well as of personal witness." This was nothing short of "a genuine shift in teaching." But "once again, no one noticed."<sup>10</sup>

Of course, that is not quite right. Christiansen himself had noticed. As former director of the Office of International Justice and Peace for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and later editor-in-chief of the influential Jesuit magazine *America*, few people have traced the subtle yet remarkable changes in official Catholic teaching with regard to the ethics of war and the Christian vocation of peacemaking



more carefully than he.<sup>11</sup> Since the role of the *magisterium* (or teaching authority) in the Roman Catholic Church is usually to ratify a doctrinal or moral consensus that has emerged from the grassroots of the church and benefited from experiences in many locales, Christiansen did not believe that Catholic peacebuilders should expect an encyclical or other high-level papal document to provide an authoritative teaching on peace and war just yet.<sup>12</sup> Still, having traced a clear line of official teaching that has been developing since decades prior to the Second Vatican Council in the early 1960s, Christiansen had no doubt that a significant evolution is underway.

The Vatican has, if anything, led the way toward an increasingly restrictive use of the church's tradition of just-war analysis, Christiansen has argued. Active nonviolence as a means of resisting evil has gained increasing respect and urgency. Indeed, a presumption against war and in favor of nonviolence is the common ground that undergirds what Christiansen sees as "a hybrid of just-war and non-violent components, with the honest exhaustion of nonviolent means a necessary requirement for use of force in the last resort."<sup>13</sup> If the use of violent military force is ever justifiable, the only clear reason that remains for intervention appears to be to thwart genocide and other egregious violations of human rights. While the Vatican does continue to recognize the right of nation-states to defend themselves through military means, national self-defense is receiving far less emphasis. And if active nonviolence has a role to play not only among individuals and in social movements but in public affairs, so too does forgiveness, however reluctant governments are to apologize or vindictive cultures to forgive.

### *The Vatican II watershed*

As with much else in the twentieth-century Roman Catholic Church, the Second Vatican Council that gathered the world's bishops from 1962 through 1965 was a watershed for Catholic peace theology. Multiple streams flow into and shape any watershed, however, then exit in a wider stream or even a new river. The devastations of two world wars and the specter of nuclear war had already led Popes Pius XII and John XXIII to condemn "total war" as morally indefensible, given its indiscriminate effects on entire populations and not simply combatants.<sup>14</sup> In the very weeks of 1962 in which the council

opened, the Cuban Missile Crisis brought the world as close to the brink of nuclear annihilation as ever before or since. As men who had come of age amid world war, leading cardinals at the council had witnessed firsthand the horrors of modern warfare. Even the leader of a conservative bloc of cardinals famous for resisting most Vatican II developments—Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani, head of the Holy Office and successor to the Inquisition—passionately urged the council to make the strongest possible condemnation of modern war and drew a long, thunderous applause.<sup>15</sup>

To be sure, when the council formally called for “the avoidance of war” in its pastoral constitution, *Gaudium et Spes*, it was far from ready to reject its long-standing tradition of thinking deliberately about what might or might not justify warfare. That framework of just-war theory is quite sufficient to offer a devastating critique of the devastations of modern war. Saturation bombing of entire cities during World War II had already demonstrated the indiscriminate character of modern warfare, even before the advent of the atomic age.<sup>16</sup> And when warfare fails to meet criteria needed to qualify as just war, it really can bear no other name than murder, thus joining together with “all offenses against life itself” that the council lamented as all too characteristic of the modern world—including “genocide, abortion, euthanasia,” and “all violations of the integrity of the human person,” from torture to degrading living conditions, to slavery, human trafficking, and exploitative working conditions that turn human beings into “mere tools for profit.”<sup>17</sup> So although Vatican II otherwise eschewed the genre of anathema that had so often characterized earlier councils throughout the history of the church, it issued one of the single most forceful condemnations in the entire corpus of conciliar documents when it joined with recent popes to declare most solemnly:

Every act of war directed to the indiscriminate destruction of whole cities or vast areas with their inhabitants is a crime against God and humanity, which merits firm and unequivocal condemnation.<sup>18</sup>

That council fathers continued to work within a just-war framework should not obscure other streams flowing into and out of the Vatican II watershed, however. Despite precedents from the earliest

centuries of Christianity, Catholic theologians of recent centuries had sometimes treated Christian pacifism as nothing short of heretical.<sup>19</sup> A movement of Catholic pacifists had grown in the twentieth century nonetheless, and some of its best representatives—such as Dorothy Day, Gordon Zahn, and Hildegard and Jean Goss-Mayr—attended the council as observers working behind the scenes not only for the condemnation of weapons of mass destruction, but for recognition of pacifism and conscientious objection to military participation. In the end, the council fathers did indeed express “admiration for all who forgo the use of violence to vindicate their rights and have recourse to those other means of defence,” and called for “laws [that] make humane provision for the case of conscientious objectors who refuse to carry arms, provided they accept some other form of community service.”<sup>20</sup> To be sure, as Christiansen has noted, at this point the sort of principled nonviolence that the church was prepared to honor was essentially the witness of personal holiness and heroism, not an ethic or a strategy that might guide action in the public arena, much less affairs of state.

Ultimately most momentous, then, is the way that council fathers invited further debate and discernment to flow out from the Vatican II watershed. When the Roman Catholic Church speaks at its highest levels, as it did in the Second Vatican Council, it hardly ever makes pronouncements unless they represent settled understandings that have formed through a long and careful deliberative process. It is all the more striking, therefore, that on the matter of war the Second Vatican Council departed from long-standing practice and deeply Catholic sensibilities in order to *launch* a churchwide process of discernment instead. After surveying the growing violence and potential for catastrophe wrought by modern warfare, the bishops famously declared:

All these factors force us to undertake a completely fresh reappraisal of war.<sup>21</sup>

Even in the pursuit of justice, the world’s bishops thus endorsed the view of Pope John XXIII that war was becoming obsolete as a means to vindicate human rights.<sup>22</sup> If the means to abolish and prevent war were less than clear in a sinful world that is easily tempted to false rather than true hope,<sup>23</sup> that simply meant that “it is our clear

duty to spare no effort" to work both for alternatives to war as a means to resolve conflict and for the social, economic, and cultural conditions necessary to prevent war.<sup>24</sup> Precisely in this context the bishops promised: "The church . . . intends to propose to our age over and over again, in season and out of season, the apostle's message: 'Behold, now is the acceptable time' for a change of heart; 'behold, now is the day of salvation.'" <sup>25</sup>

The work of Catholic peace theology was only just beginning.

### *Reevaluating war amid challenges to peace*

"Peace is more than the absence of war," the council fathers recognized; it grows from more than a balance of power for it is the fruit of righteousness and justice, as human beings order every part of their lives and society through "the deliberate practice of friendliness."<sup>26</sup> This "more than" of peace is crucial to the still-unfolding story of Catholic peace theology. Whenever war presents itself as a means to resolve our human conflicts, its allure is its promise that through the one grand action of a military campaign or strike, we might somehow set the billiard balls of history rolling in such a way that all our other problems begin to fall into place. Peacebuilding, however, does not simply wage a military campaign through a different grand strategy. Rather, it anticipates the need for many means. It is really peace-nurturing—something far more organic than the mechanistic causality of billiard balls.<sup>27</sup> Far from one grand action, peacebuilding requires thousands upon thousands of actions, many behind the scenes and away from media attention. Indeed, peace is really the fruit of all that makes for healthy thriving human communities. *Shalom*, the Hebrew word for "peace" bespeaks this dynamic far better than our English word, for it can just as easily be translated "health," "well-being," or even "prosperity" in the full sense of "thriving."

Thus, in the twenty-five years that followed the Second Vatican Council's call for a fresh reappraisal of war and untiring work for peace, in and out of season, that work proceeded in multiple ways. Pope Paul VI captured the need to combat poverty and ensure social conditions that favor peace, for example, when he proclaimed in his 1967 encyclical *Populorum Progressio* that "development is the new

## PART III

### Maps for Peacebuilding by a Pilgrim People

This Sunday's Gospel contains some of the most typical and forceful words of Jesus' preaching: "Love your enemies" (Lk 6: 27). . . .

This Gospel passage is rightly considered the *magna carta* of Christian non-violence. It does not consist in succumbing to evil, as a false interpretation of "turning the other cheek" (cf. Lk 6: 29) claims, but in responding to evil with good (cf. Rom 12: 17-21) and thereby breaking the chain of injustice.

One then understands that for Christians, non-violence is not merely tactical behaviour but a person's way of being, the attitude of one who is so convinced of God's love and power that he is not afraid to tackle evil with the weapons of love and truth alone.

Love of one's enemy constitutes the nucleus of the "Christian revolution," a revolution not based on strategies of economic, political or media power: the revolution of love, a love that does not rely ultimately on human resources but is a gift of God which is obtained by trusting solely and unreservedly in his merciful goodness. Here is the newness of the Gospel which silently changes the world! Here is the heroism of the "lowly" who believe in God's love and spread it, even at the cost of their lives.

—Pope Benedict XVI

February 18, 2007, *Angelus*, St. Peter's Square



## Chapter 7

# Guesthood and the Politics of Hospitality

It is essential to draw near to new forms of poverty and vulnerability, in which we are called to recognize the suffering Christ, even if this appears to bring us no tangible and immediate benefits. I think of the homeless, the addicted, refugees, indigenous peoples, the elderly who are increasingly isolated and abandoned, and many others. Migrants present a particular challenge for me, since I am the pastor of a Church without *fronteras* [Spanish for borders], a Church which considers herself mother to all. For this reason, I exhort all countries to a generous openness which, rather than fearing the loss of local identity, will prove capable of creating new forms of cultural synthesis.

—Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, §210

Shaping this book has been a guiding assumption that however urgent the tasks of peacebuilding may be, we will only get our *doing* of peace right if we first attend to what God calls us to *become* and to *be* as a people of peace in the world. Still, eventually we must also attend to our *doing* too, of course. Fortunately, all the work we have done to embrace Christian life in diaspora turns out to have a practical payoff. Not only does it allow the pilgrim church to return like T. S. Eliot's explorers to see again for the first time that it has always meant to be a global, catholic church—ecclesiology; it also offers maps to guide our action—ethics. Life in diaspora, after all, always requires codes and practices of hospitality and of guesthood.

Hospitality is not just about being good hosts; it is also about being good guests. And there is the rub. For many reasons, Christian thinkers and activists alike have been paying increasing attention in recent

decades to the biblical call, ancient traditions, and saintly models of hospitality toward strangers, refugees, the poor, and other “others.” All this is surely welcome. Yet whenever theological and philosophical work on hospitality focuses mainly on the responsibilities of hosts, it continues to assume a position of power.<sup>1</sup> And that actually hints at the deepest taproot of nationalism, fear-goaded violence, and ultimately war—indeed it might even reinforce it. Namely, we may not really want to be guests.

By now, the reader may be wondering how to flesh out life in diaspora anyway. The promise all along has been that a diaspora ecclesiology would help us find ways to navigate the “tension between the particular and the universal” that Pope John Paul II recognized as intrinsic to human nature. The motive for peacebuilding may be a universal regard for all human beings—perhaps prompted among Christians by Jesus’ reminder in Matthew 5:43-48 that to take on the character of their heavenly Father, their love must extend far beyond their own kind. But that very regard must simultaneously respect the human rights and synchronize the just claims of particular peoples, persons, communities, nations, and cultures.<sup>2</sup>

The promise is this: Precisely as it guides the life of that *transnational* nation called church, a diaspora ecclesiology will refuse to mark Christians off in any kind of sectarian enclave. A diaspora ecclesiology frankly celebrates and preserves the particular communal identity into which Christians have been baptized. It names that identity as nothing short of citizenship within the transnational *nation* called church, which is to supersede all other tribal and national identities. Yet the Gospel itself simultaneously requires an inculturation that embraces, redeems, and offers Christian suffering service to those same particularities of human identities in tribe, nation, and culture.<sup>3</sup> The very identity of this people is to be a gift to the nations and a source of fresh and life-giving cultural creativity, after all. Like Jeremiah’s exiles who became the Babylonian civil servants in the book of Daniel, Christians living out a diaspora ecclesiology by means of a diaspora social ethic will contribute all the more to the common good of their host cultures because they know who they are and refuse to bow down to any proud and idolatrous pretensions of their hosts. A diaspora ecclesiology, in other words, promises to show Christians how to participate widely in public policy debates and



work for the common good even when they cannot assume control. Which actually is always.

### An ethic of guesthood

For an Iraqi man, the anniversary was a bittersweet one at best. The U.S. journalist interviewing him on the occasion was not a soldier, but to the Iraqi man he nonetheless represented the nation that had invaded his country in March 2003, and remained an occupying force. The man was glad that Iraq's longtime dictator Saddam Hussein was gone, but he did not want to live under foreign occupation forces. "Go home," he said to the journalist who to him stood for all Americans, "and then come back as my guest, so that I can be your host."<sup>4</sup>

Hospitality is always an elaborate but delicate dance. Hosts must welcome others into their cultural spaces. Guests may transform those spaces. Gracious hosts may invite guests to help prepare or serve a meal, thus allowing guests to join them in hosting. Guests may sometimes prove such engaging conversationalists that they become honorary hosts. And yet "guests" who take over other people's spaces violate implicit codes of hospitality; they become intruders, invaders, or occupying forces instead. True guests, after all, do not relocate the furniture, or revise the menu, or occupy a bedroom uninvited, or overstay their welcome. As warmly as a host may welcome a guest, invisible boundaries and norms remain. In Latin America, "*esta es su casa*" or "this is your house" is a common welcome, but a guest would be boorish to take that greeting literally. Any "radical hospitality" that discredits all boundaries and disparages all such norms in the name of totally unfettered "inclusivity" will thus breed resentment as quickly as a bumbling but imperious foreigner who somehow expected the standard Latin American welcome to bring with it a legal title to the *casa*.

Any actual, functioning, life-giving ethic of hospitality, in other words, must come with a corresponding ethic of guesthood. Heir to codes of ancient Middle-Eastern hospitality that have endured for millennia, the Iraqi man in the interview was signaling this. He wanted to offer the rich and elaborate practices of hospitality that his culture shares with many—indeed most—ancient and indigenous cultures. But a boorish guest will strain if not break the code of

hospitality. Indeed, it is doubtful that anyone can be a very good host who has not first learned to be a very flexible and generous guest. For, if anything, the capacity for guesthood is basic to a capacity to host.

### *Hospitality rediscovered*

Even before refugees and immigrants became one of the most prominent and divisive political topics in Europe, the United States, and elsewhere in the early twenty-first century, Christian theologians had begun recovering the neglected theme of hospitality in Hebrew, early Christian, and ongoing church tradition. Hospitality speaks directly to a wide range of situations, after all, from parish life and outreach, to public policy at national and international levels. It names a Christian community's basic stance not just toward migrants but toward the poor, the marginalized, and those long despised. It invites a transformation of relationships with "bothersome" homeless people, long-suppressed sexual minorities, other races, and strange or apparently threatening religions. And the transformation it invites is happily entry-level. A parish cautious about being so unpatriotic as to challenge its nation's foreign policy might still feel called to sponsor a refugee family. A congregation divided about the role of government in alleviating poverty might still agree to open its own doors and pantries to struggling families in its neighborhood. Critics might rightly worry that such simple acts of charity will prove paternalistic; they may insist that much more is needed to counter the injustices and alter the systems that are the source of poverty, marginalization, and displacement. Yet those same critics often owe that very analysis to biographies in which simple acts of hospitality, whether given or received, initially broke them out of their own enclaves; entry-level hospitality is often what led to new relationships that transformed their own worldviews and prompted their now-trenchant analysis and persistent advocacy. Even as Pope Paul VI promoted the need for human development, economic justice, and structural change on nothing short of a global scale, therefore, his 1967 encyclical, *Populorum Progressio*, underscored this: "We cannot insist too much on the duty of welcoming others—a duty springing from human solidarity and Christian charity—which is incumbent

both on the families and the cultural organizations of the host countries."<sup>5</sup>

Examples, models, and calls to hospitality abound in both the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures. Abraham, the archetype of faith for Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, has also been the archetype of hospitality in the lore of all three traditions since he and Sarah welcomed three mysterious visitors in Genesis 18.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, the faith and the hospitality of Abraham are arguably inseparable. Joshua Jipp has emphasized that "at least some early Christians thought Abraham was justified by his faith *and hospitality to strangers*."<sup>7</sup>

For Christians the supreme model and source of hospitality is of course Jesus himself. The great christological text of John, chapter 1, is more than an announcement of a new metaphysical formula for understanding how the Word became flesh; the Incarnation had become known to us through the narrative of Jesus coming to us as "the heavenly stranger" who had made his home or "tent" with us (1:14, *eskēnosēn*) despite our unwarm welcome (1:11), thus mediating God's own hospitality.<sup>8</sup> As Jesus then inaugurated his ministry according to Luke 4, hospitality was the very core and character of that ministry as he proclaimed what is sometimes translated as "the year of the Lord's *welcome*." As Jipp has explained, "The programmatic function of Jesus's Nazareth sermon [in Luke 4] invites the reader to pay attention to the way in which the entirety of Jesus's ministry *and particularly his meals with strangers* enact divine hospitality to the poor, the captives, the blind, and the oppressed."<sup>9</sup> Encounters in which Jesus was guest, yet also proved to be the true host, ran throughout his ministry—as many have noted—along with sayings and teachings in which table sharing is prominent.<sup>10</sup> Jesus' climactic self-disclosure at the table in which he had just washed his disciples' feet in welcome, and then offered them his very body and blood in the form of bread and wine, thus became the preeminent place by which Christians through the centuries believe themselves to be encountering the real presence of the risen Christ in the Eucharist.

The gospel writers were not simply chroniclers, though; they always highlighted themes such as Jesus' hospitality with a view to the life of the early church.<sup>11</sup> Luke's vision is especially apparent because he carried his narrative forward into the Acts of the Apostles, where, as John Koenig has put it, he "pictures the first church in

Jerusalem as a banquet community and documents its expanding mission to the Roman world with a long string of narratives about guests and hosts."<sup>12</sup> Paul, both as portrayed in Acts and by his own account in 1 Corinthians 9, carefully navigated the codes of hospitality he found in each cultural setting—alternately accepting hospitality as a guest, paying his own expenses, and taking up communal leadership as host himself—in order to do whatever would advance the gospel message and build up the fledgling Christian communities in each locale.<sup>13</sup> And by all accounts, the message and the practice of hospitality took root. As Christine Pohl has summarized,

The richness of the story of hospitality continues beyond the many biblical texts. Early Christian writers claimed that transcending social and ethnic differences by sharing meals, homes, and worship with persons of different backgrounds was a proof of the truth of the Christian faith. In the fourth century, church leaders warned clergy—who might be tempted to use hospitality to gain favor with the powerful—to welcome instead the poorest people to their tables. In doing so, they would have Christ as their guest.<sup>14</sup>

Biblical hospitality is not simply a matter of individual or familial acts of charity, however, nor merely a missionary technique that young churches found useful for recruiting new members. The *Torah* or Law of Moses had encoded hospitality toward strangers and foreigners into legal protections and rights that were akin to those of citizens. Having been slaves in Egypt, Israel was to do justice to resident aliens or other vulnerable groups (Deut 24:17-18; 27:19). Agricultural profits were not to be maximized, precisely so that resident aliens, widows, and orphans could glean from fields of harvest, olive groves, and vineyards (Deut 24:19-24; cf. Ruth 2). In Leviticus 25:23, the entire premise of Jubilee provisions for the redistribution of land every fifty years was that Israelites and the resident aliens among them had virtually the same status.<sup>15</sup> While the *Torah* certainly made careful distinctions among the rights of resident aliens,<sup>16</sup> and while those who were merely passing through enjoyed the fewest privileges, citizenship was very much a continuum; the foreigner whom Exodus 23:43-49 initially seemed to exclude entirely from the identity-marking meal of Passover was to be “regarded as a native of the land”

once male family members were circumcised.<sup>17</sup> Exodus 23:49 underscored the essential principle: "There shall be one law for the native and for the alien who resides among you."

Although Jesus neither found nor placed himself in a position to promulgate new laws,<sup>18</sup> he clearly promised in Matthew 25:31-46 that God would judge the nations according to whether they treat the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, and the prisoner in ways that we may quite fairly describe as alternately hospitable or inhospitable. Many ancient peoples had considered hospitality to be one of their most basic moral expectations, given the vulnerability of travelers in pre-modern times and the desire for reciprocal protection.<sup>19</sup> But Christian communities in the church's first centuries went noticeably further, as the Gospel stretched ancient codes of hospitality to include those who had often been ignored or feared. Pohl has underscored this distinction. Hospitality in all cultures,

because it was such a fundamental human practice, always included family, friends, and influential contacts. The distinctive Christian contribution was the emphasis on including the poor and neediest, the ones who could not return the favor. This focus did not diminish the value of hospitality to family and friends; rather, it broadened the practice so that the close relations formed by table fellowship and conversation could be extended to the most vulnerable.<sup>20</sup>

Lucien Richard has thus gone so far as to propose that we think of "hospitality to the stranger" as "a shortcut formula expressing the core of the Christian vision."<sup>21</sup>

### *The metaphysics of guesthood*

Indeed, the ground of all human hospitality turns out, upon fuller reflection, to be God's own. Human hospitality is ultimately but a response to God's hospitality. In the gift of creation, God first set the table. In the exodus, God dramatically acted to rescue enslaved Israel and lead the people into a land of milk and honey where they were never to forget that they had been strangers and aliens themselves. For Christians, as we have noted, the Incarnation itself is nothing less than Jesus "the heavenly stranger" coming to sojourn

among alienated human beings, “enabling them to partake of the hospitality of God.”<sup>22</sup> In his life and ministry, then, Jesus is “the divine host who extends God’s hospitality to sinners, outcasts, and strangers and thereby draws them—and us—into friendship with God;” it is in response that “our friendship with God [becomes] the foundation of and cause for our friendship with one another.”<sup>23</sup>

But there is another implication. Preaching on the duty of hospitality, Augustine put it this way:

You receive a stranger, whose companion you yourself also are on the road, because we are all foreign visitors [or resident aliens]. Those people are the real Christians who realize that both in their own homes and their own country they are foreign visitors. Our native country is up above, there we shall not be strangers. I mean here each one of us, even in his own home, is a stranger. If you are not a stranger, you don’t move on from here; if you are going to move on, you are a stranger. Don’t kid yourself, you’re a stranger.<sup>24</sup>

After all, as Pope Francis much more recently has reminded us: “We are not God. The earth was here before us and it has been given to us.”<sup>25</sup> Citing Leviticus 25:23 on the Jubilee, and speaking to the care of the earth in his encyclical *Laudato Si’*, the blunt lesson that Francis drew from this also has far-reaching implications for how we think about borders and the spaces into which we either invite others, or exclude them, or enter as guests. As Francis continued: “God rejects every claim to absolute ownership.”

It is not that no claim to ownership or private property *whatsoever* is legitimate; Francis’s reminder concerned *absolute* ownership. As we will explore later in this chapter, ownership and thus inevitable boundaries of some kind are in fact a necessary condition for hospitality. Yet we will only negotiate ways to own and host and share and live at peace with one another if we first recognize that fact of our existence that should be most obvious, but that we in our fear of mortality are so prone to suppress: Namely, human beings are first of all—ontologically, metaphysically, ever and always fundamentally—guests.

We think we can control. We desperately want to control. For we want to survive. But we will not survive—not forever, anyway, except

as God gives us the *gift* of eternal life and *welcomes us* into that new heaven and new earth to live as a city of communion in which God is all in all.<sup>26</sup> To deny our status as guests is thus to deny our very creaturehood. As Lucien Richard put it on his way to explaining why “‘hospitality to the stranger’ is a shortcut formula expressing the core of the Christian vision,”

The refusal of creaturehood involves the refusal to be interdependent, the avoidance of the limiting conditions of relationship; it denies the possibility of being shaped by something other than our own choice; it is the refusal of indebtedness. Creatureliness, and therefore contingency, historicity, and finitude characterize human existence. . . . While for-otherness is constitutive of personhood, so is from-otherness. That we derive from others, that we live from others, is fundamental. It is through being loved that we learn to love; we have to receive in order to be able to give.<sup>27</sup>

Absolute ownership and control themselves, in other words, are not simply wrong, they are illusory. Ownership is only ever temporary. It is really but a mortgage or a lease, not a permanent holding. At best we secure it through peaceable negotiation embedded in trusting relationship.

Even when Israel came into “possession” of the land, God’s people were to remember this reality in order to stay in right relationship to God, other inhabitants, and the land itself. In a succinct yet thorough article titled “The Alien According to the Torah,” Georges Chawkat Moucary has traced a thread of reminders in the Hebrew Scriptures that suggest that even when God fulfilled the promise of land to Abraham, Sarah, and their descendants, “possession” was never absolute because they themselves were to live as resident aliens and guests of God.<sup>28</sup> Readers easily assume that the opening move in salvation history by which God called Abraham into exile from his native land (Gen 12:1-3) was only stage-setting—a necessary prelude to owning the real estate that God promised only a few verses later (Gen 12:7). Yet when Abraham began taking up residence he did so by way of peace treaties that acknowledged his status as a resident alien (Gen 21:22-34), and when he actually negotiated the purchase of his first parcel of land in order to bury Sarah his wife, he reiterated

his status as a guest (Gen 23:4).<sup>29</sup> Both Isaac and Jacob continued their migrations even before famine forced the family of Israel-née-Jacob to flee to Egypt. “Twice an alien or immigrant” and counting—as Moucarry put it—Moses later recognized this identity during his refuge in Midian by naming his son Gershom, meaning “I have become an alien in a foreign land.”<sup>30</sup>

Of course, the obvious question is whether all this changed with the conquest of the Promised Land, so that the land became theirs, simply and unequivocally. Not according to the law of Jubilee, which insisted: “The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants” (Lev 25:23). “In other words,” Moucarry observed, Jubilee provisions were “given to remind the Israelites that their conquest of the Promised Land did not make them its owners, but rather its caretakers. . . . With one stroke, the law placed the Israelites in a right perspective of their relationship to God.”<sup>31</sup> Even when the kingship of David seemed to be allowing Israel to settle fully in the land and secure the nation’s tenure through political domination of the region, David himself insisted upon a spirituality of guesthood:

And now, our God, we give thanks to you and praise your glorious name. But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to make this freewill offering? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you. For we are aliens and transients before you, as were all our ancestors; our days on the earth are like a shadow, and there is no hope.<sup>32</sup>

Right relationship with God in turn required right relationship with other immigrants dwelling in the land; hospitality included the extension of legal minimums aiming to prevent their exploitation and abuse. Moucarry listed at least sixteen examples of laws that extended to them in some way, together showing “that aliens living in Israel were closely associated with and even integrated into the national life.”<sup>33</sup> When the *Torah* did make distinctions in the status and treatment of resident aliens, the intent was not so much to exclude them as to protect them in light of their vulnerability. Hence the constant reminders that the Israelites had been aliens in Egypt and should thus treat strangers in their midst in ways corresponding



to God's gracious liberation of them.<sup>34</sup> As Leviticus 19:34 made clear, "The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God."

We should not have needed phenomena like globalization to recognize these biblical and theological truths. But now we have no excuse. As the Vietnamese-born theologian Fr. Peter C. Phan has put it, "We all are migrants, or better, co-migrants now," and the very distinction between natives and migrants has become "otiose," for "we are all pilgrims, not back to where we came from (the countries of origin) nor to the foreign lands (the countries of destination) because neither is our true home."<sup>35</sup> What Jipp has said of the apostle Paul applies also to us: If we, like Paul, seek truly to evangelize, we must do so by "embodying and extending God's hospitality" to others—but for that we must actually begin not by hosting but by "intentionally [entering] into the role of the guest."<sup>36</sup>

### *If we too are guests*

So we too are guests. This simple recognition offers a key for unlocking a number of puzzles of peacebuilding as a people of peace. Our friend the stymied Iraqi host hints at why. He could not offer his culture's rich tradition of hospitality so long as his potential guests were occupiers instead. Motivating the U.S. occupation were a stew of potentially noble, frankly economic, and crassly nationalistic intentions, such that even if the stated desire to liberate Iraq from a repressive regime was authentic on the part of some American leaders and ground troops alike, he had ample reason to suspect otherwise. He was not saying that outsiders had nothing to contribute; nor should we conclude that solidarity across borders always has ulterior motives. But outsiders who know themselves to be guests will be in a far better position to offer "help" that is truly helpful. And those who recognize themselves as guests even in their own lands will have been developing the capacity for cross-cultural relationships that propose without imposing—to cite Pope Paul VI.<sup>37</sup> They will better know how to celebrate the gifts of their own cultural identities without the jingoism that prevents them from exchanging gifts with other peoples.

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