

“In *A Prophetic, Public Church*, Mark Doak provides an ecclesiology of the church based less on what the church ‘is’ than what it ‘does’—and what it does, or should, is be a prophetic sign and instrument of the ways of being human together that God has always hoped for us. Without shying away from the past failures of the Christian community to be that effective sign, particularly in relation to anti-Semitism and misogyny, Doak provides a theology of hope in the church’s potential to transform our public life. In highlighting the potential of the church to challenge injustice in our economic life, our responses to climate change, and our treatment of migrants in our midst, Doak demonstrates her own participation in our church’s vocation to be the sacrament of the reign of God in our world.”

—Brian Flanagan
Marymount University

“From its very beginnings, Christianity has utilized women and Jews in its texts and teachings to represent the abject ‘other’ or second-class creatures to be redeemed within salvation history, with devastating effects. Doak challenges Christians to confront their contribution to the justification of abuse of women and Jews in history and current contexts when they retain them as symbols rather than allowing them to represent themselves. Expect to read a book not only about being better churches but also about being better human beings.”

—Cristina Lledo Gomez
BBI - The Australian Institute of Theological Education

“Set in the context of our fractured society, Mary Doak analyzes the challenges to the Church’s mission of being a sign and instrument of communion. Blind spots which distort Christian faith include its traditional supersessionist anti-Judaism and devaluation of women, as well as today’s neoliberal idolatry of the market, degradation of the environment, and hostility towards the millions displaced or forced to migrate. Profoundly researched, she draws on numerous studies and contemporary scholars, some of them controversial. But Doak’s approach is always nuanced, wise, and deeply Catholic. This is a major ecclesiological work that should be widely read.”

—Thomas P. Rausch, SJ
Emeritus T. Marie Chilton Professor of Catholic Theology
Loyola Marymount University

“In this highly readable book, Mary Doak offers a passionate and engaged discussion of the great issues facing today’s church. Drawing on the writings of Vatican II she focuses on the church as a prophetic agent of political, social, and economic change. In what is an ecclesiology of doing rather than being, she offers a hope-filled vision that will provoke and challenge those inside and outside the churches as they seek the transformation of society.”

—Mark D. Chapman
Professor of the History of Modern Theology
University of Oxford

“Only a public theologian of Mary Doak’s scholarly achievements and a burning sense of justice can produce a book such as this. *A Prophetic, Public Church* examines the most pressing issues of our day, including religious anti-Semitism, misogyny, global economy, climate change, and global migration. Digging deep into the teachings of Vatican II and Pope Francis, it offers a prophetic voice that calls for repentance and transformation both within and without the Church. An unparalleled scholarly *tour de force*, this book is a must-read for all Christians, especially those living in the United States, as they confront the moral challenges of the twenty-first century and seek the prophetic wisdom of the Bible and the Tradition to meet them with justice. I recommend this book with the greatest enthusiasm.”

—Peter C. Phan
The Ignacio Ellacuria, SJ, Chair of Catholic Social Thought
Georgetown University

“Mary Doak speaks out of a deep and mature love for the Catholic Church. She calls for all Christians to renew their sense of community and mission to the world by acknowledging in thought and action what it means to follow Jesus in the face of contemporary crises. By focusing on the historical mistreatment of Jews and women, as well as the urgent present matters of global inequality, climate change, and migration, Doak has her finger precisely on the point where many critical lines of the church and the world intersect. In all cases, Doak strives for balanced and inclusive positions without abandoning her passionate, prophetic commitment to Christian faith and the urgent call to justice. I am glad to have this book to which I can refer the many people, young and old, who express to me their struggles over the very issues addressed here.”

—Dennis M. Doyle
Professor of Religious Studies
University of Dayton

A Prophetic, Public Church

*Witness to Hope Amid the Global
Crises of the Twenty-First Century*

Mary Doak



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This book is dedicated in love and hope to my daughter, Sara,
whose generation will have no choice but to deal with
the ecological, economic, and political challenges of
the twenty-first century;

to my husband, Phil, whose commitment to a faith-based
response to the climate crisis inspires the church to be
what it is called to be;

and to the memory of Gerard Mannion (1970–2019), whose life
exemplified the joyful community that is our best hope.

Let Your Perpetual Light Shine upon Him

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Introduction

A Prophetic yet Public Church

The joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted, are the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well.

—*Gaudium et Spes* (GS) 1¹

There is a great need for community today, especially in the United States and, I suspect, in many of the other so-called first-world countries. Harvard sociologist Robert Putnam noted the deterioration of community bonds in American society over twenty years ago, a phenomenon he termed “bowling alone.”² Individualism’s promise of freedom to pursue one’s own goals and desires, unhindered by responsibility to others, has not resulted in the self-fulfillment envisioned. Instead, the young are experiencing high rates of anxiety, with depression, addictions, and even suicide becoming widespread. Putnam’s further warning that individualism is depleting the social capital of mutual good will is borne out by

1. Vatican II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes* [GS]) 1. Quotations of documents of the Second Vatican Council are taken from Austin Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations; The Basic Sixteen Documents* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2014).

2. Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000), 15–137.

the current polarization of society.³ Animosity toward those of different race, class, gender, or political persuasion is so common and vicious in the United States that it is reasonable to wonder whether sufficient commitment is left to sustain a shared national life.

At the same time, the world is more interconnected and interdependent than ever before. Videos posted on social media “go viral” and are watched by people on the other side of the planet. More problematically, the capitalist economy has become a truly global system, so that any serious economic disruption in one country will have consequences—perhaps devastating ones—for other nations around the world.

It is an irony of contemporary life that we find ourselves so solitary and lonely while interconnected to an extent unimaginable only decades ago. Is there a better emblem of the modern condition than the ubiquitous sight of people staring at their cell phones, texting and surfing the web while oblivious to those around them? So much of our day is spent interacting with devices that mediate the connections and communications of contemporary life that little time is left to be truly with others, or even with oneself. Perhaps the most apt description of the solitariness of contemporary life is “texting alone.”

An ongoing theological tragedy in all of this aloneness is that Christianity, which is fundamentally oriented to healing relationships and building the harmonious communion of God’s reign, is widely interpreted through the lens of individualism. Especially in the United States, Christian faith often is reduced to a “me-and-Jesus” relationship, a matter of one’s own inner state (or spirituality) that has no relevance to society. Alfred North Whitehead’s definition of religion as “what the individual does with [one’s] own solitariness”⁴ is generally assumed, and faith commitments are commonly considered a private matter, of no concern to anyone else and certainly not in need of the support of the frequently disparaged “institutionalized religion.”

3. Putnam, *Bowling*, 287–363.

4. Alfred North Whitehead, *Religion in the Making* (New York: New American Library, 1926), 16.

This state of affairs is disastrous for the church as well as for the world. Even among those who are committed to Christian faith, church membership is often of low—or no—importance. If spirituality can be cultivated on one’s own and without the irritation of stuffy ritual, then why bother getting out of bed on Sunday morning? There is no longer enough social prestige attached to being seen at church to make it worthwhile; not surprisingly, membership in nearly all churches in the United States is dropping.⁵

Yet the human race faces crises requiring global cooperation for their solution. Even though nations are riven with conflict and competition, humanity must find a way to work together for the common good of the whole planet. The current global economy is leaving nearly half of the world’s population struggling to meet basic needs while burning fossil fuels at a rate that is disrupting the environment and dramatically changing the conditions of life on earth (often in ways that most hurt the poorest).⁶ These problems can be resolved only if people around the globe put the interests of the long-term, global common good above their immediate personal benefit, even though a capitalist economy encourages people to seek their own short-term good above all else.

This divided, hurting world is in dire need of forces able to strengthen communities and build coalitions dedicated to solving our common problems and working for the greater good. Even considered solely from a sociological perspective, churches are significant as institutions that reinforce social bonds. Churches such as the Catholic Church—which has extensive organizational structures that establish community, identity, and coordination not only locally but also at national and international levels—are especially significant. Given the global dimensions of the economic and climate challenges we face, churches and other religious groups could play an important role in healing animosity and bridging divisions.

5. Pew Research Center, “U.S. Public Becoming Less Religious,” October 29, 2015, https://www.pewforum.org/2015/11/03/u-s-public-becoming-less-religious/pf-2015-11-03_rls_ii-84/.

6. World Bank, “Nearly Half the World Lives on Less than \$5.50 a Day,” press release, October 17, 2018, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2018/10/17/nearly-half-the-world-lives-on-less-than-550-a-day>.

Despite the lamentable divisions within Christianity, a consensus on the purpose of the church is emerging that is directly relevant to the current need for relationships and community. Drawing on established Orthodox theology, the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) developed an understanding of the church’s mission that is increasingly accepted by Protestant Christians as well: the church is called to be a sign and instrument of the union of all in God.⁷ That is, the church serves the world through its witness to what it means to be a community united in love, while also working to increase that unity of justice, peace, and love throughout society.

These two dimensions, sign and instrument (or prophetic witness and public agent), of the church’s mission are properly understood as inseparable. The church cannot be a faithful witness to God’s desire for the unity of all while also adopting a sectarian stance that rejects any responsibility for “the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties” of the rest of society (GS 1). Nor can the church be a credible agent of greater justice and peace in the world if the church cannot manage to live as a (more or less) just and harmonious community itself. For Catholic Christians, of course, the language of “sign and instrument” is sacramental language referring to the graced experiences through which the healing and transforming presence of God is both signified and communicated. The church is supposed to be a sacrament of the communion of *all* in God.

To fulfill this mission, the church must be prophetic in its opposition to the injustices and corruptions that are the antithesis of the loving community of God’s reign. The Hebrew Bible prophets condemned as an outrage to God the injustice and inequality that had become established in their society. Today, the devastation of the natural world, the suffering inflicted on workers and animals, and the inequality that leaves so many at the margins of society demand that the church speak and witness prophetically against these abuses that are too often taken for granted as integral to the global economy.

Yet at the same time, the church’s task is not only to denounce but also to be an instrument of transformation. This requires a public church, by which I mean one that engages the current po-

7. Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium* [LG]) 1.

litical processes in order to develop policies and structures that decrease suffering, that preserve the earth, and that support human dignity, equality, and inclusion.

In what follows, I will describe the witness of loving ecclesial communion in the church primarily as the church's "prophetic" function, in order to emphasize that the church's alternative way of being as a community should be a sign that reveals and disrupts the distortions of the world. I will discuss the church's work to increase harmony and justice in the broader world as its "public" activity, especially insofar as this work involves ecclesial engagement with others beyond the church and with the current governing structures of society.⁸

Of course, there is no such neat division between prophetic and public, just as there is no clear separation of sign and instrument. The church's witness is a public sign that is visible to the larger society and may in fact do more to transform the world than Christians' efforts to change public policy. Similarly, the church's public work, cooperating with non-Christians to effect change for the good of all, is a prophetic witness against the tribal divisions afflicting humanity. Nevertheless, given the prophetic quality of the church's role as sign and the public character of the church's work as instrument, I find it helpful to accentuate the prophetic dimensions of the witness of loving communion within the church, while stressing the public aspects of ecclesial social and political efforts, especially cooperation with others for more just sociopolitical structures and policies.

It is a fair question whether the church can in fact be both prophetic and public. Is it possible to be involved in political processes without becoming corrupted by the power politics of the current system? Is not such an engaged church already compromised in its witness against the injustices of the status quo?

To be sure, there is a real danger that the church will become so intent on preserving its public role that its prophetic vision will be muted, if not lost altogether. This is a temptation the church has succumbed to time and again. But the alternative temptation to

8. My use of the terms *prophetic* and *public* is thus largely consistent with that of Kristin E. Heyer in *Prophetic and Public: Social Witness of U.S. Catholicism* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2006).

stand over against the world in self-righteous purity is not acceptable for a church that proclaims a God who refused to abandon the world to its sin but rather became incarnate in this suffering world to share its pain and to transform it from within. I remain convinced, and will argue below, that there is no inherent contradiction between the prophetic and public functions of the church. On the contrary, these tasks are inseparable: the church cannot credibly denounce injustice and division while refusing to cooperate with others to make the world more just. God's grace is intended not for the condemnation of the world but for its salvation.⁹

A Practical/Political Ecclesiology: Prioritizing Mission over Nature

The ecclesiological approach of this project differs considerably from that of most theologies of the church, even though the work here is based on a widely accepted understanding of the mission of the church. This difference arises because ecclesiology frequently centers on the nature of the church, with delineation of the church's proper offices and structures based on the presentation of the church's nature, or what the church *is*.¹⁰ While there is much of

9. "Christ . . . came into this world . . . to save and not to judge, to serve and not to be served" (GS 3).

10. Even when the church is primarily defined as mission or as sacrament, the ecclesiology developed tends to focus nevertheless on the nature of the church so commissioned rather than on the commission itself as integral to understanding the church. See, for example, Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974). In my judgment, the dominance of nature and structure over mission in the history of ecclesiology is also evident in the magisterial works of Roger Haight, *Christian Community in History*, 3 vols. (New York: Continuum, 2004–2008); and Richard P. McBrien, *The Church: The Evolution of Catholicism* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), though McBrien's approach includes the church's mission as central to ecclesiology. See also Thomas P. Rausch, *Towards a Truly Catholic Church: An Ecclesiology for the Third Millennium* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005). For emerging ecclesiological emphases privileging mission, in addition to McBrien above, see the essays in Richard R. Gaillardetz and Edward P. Hahnenberg, *A Church with Open Doors: Catholic Ecclesiology for the Third Millennium* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2015). Richard R. Gaillardetz, *Ecclesiology for a Global Church: A People Called and Sent* (Mary-

value in this theological work, I argue here for a different approach, one that begins instead with the mission of the church, with what the church is *for* and is called *to do*. Starting from the church's purpose in history sheds new light on church offices and structures, especially as these serve or impede the church's mission, though that important study will not be undertaken here. Instead, this book will take up the more fundamental project of clarifying that the church's mission is inseparable from the problems of a deeply divided, individualistic, and yet increasingly globally connected world. This point is obscured in theological reflections focusing on the church's supposedly unchanging nature, and so remains only inchoately grasped by much of the church.

Beginning with the church's mission further emphasizes that the church exists to serve the world and is integrally involved in society and even in the world's politics. So-called Catholic social teachings will remain marginalized as the Catholic Church's "best-kept secret" as long as the church is defined in primarily static terms—that is, by what the church is—and apart from the church's mission in and to the world.¹¹ Societal injustice then appears as a secondary or even a minor concern that does not affect the church in itself. The problem may be less that Catholics are unaware of official Catholic social teachings than that the qualification of these teachings as "social" has rendered them subordinate or marginal to the life of the church. We need to be more consistent and consciously aware that the church is inherently involved in all aspects of society because, as persons-in-community, human beings cannot be redeemed apart from the community relations that are essential to who we are.

The approach to ecclesiology here is practical/political also because it presumes that we cannot know what it means to be a sign and instrument of communion in the broken world of our day without engaging the major obstacles to, and the great opportunities

knoll, NY: Orbis, 2008); and Gerard Mannion, *Ecclesiology and Postmodernity: Questions for the Church in Our Time* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007) are also concerned to incorporate the church's mission more clearly into an ecclesiology focused on the nature and character of the Christian community.

11. Edward P. DeBerri et al., *Catholic Social Teaching: Our Best Kept Secret*, 4th ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2003), 3–5.

for, more just and loving communion. At this moment in history, globalization is the source of unprecedented possibilities and challenges for the harmonious unity of humanity. In this respect, globalization is not only a sociological fact but an ecclesiological demand: Christians can truly know what it means to be church-as-sign-and-instrument-of-communion only by living in witness to and working for greater global harmony today. The current realities of economic inequality, global climate change, and massive human migration are thus properly ecclesiological issues as well as topics for Christian social ethics.

A Note on Terminology

Church is a notoriously ambiguous term, used to refer to specific ecclesial communities as well as to the community of all Jesus' disciples. This ambiguity risks conflating the church as a whole with one particular church, an error I try to avoid below. Even though this project is engaged primarily with the texts and traditions of the Catholic Church to which I belong, the ecclesiological conclusions are intended to apply to all who strive to follow Jesus. The term *church* should be understood here as designating the entire body of Christ's disciples and/or all mainstream churches and ecclesial traditions, unless the context clearly indicates a more narrow meaning. When the Catholic Church or another specific ecclesial body is intended, the particular name will be used rather than the general term *church*, again excepting when the context determines otherwise.

Outline of the Argument

The first major task undertaken in chapter 1 is to provide a nuanced understanding, as developed in the documents of Vatican II and in some later ecclesiologies, of the church's mission to be a sign and instrument of the union of all in God. While this perspective on the church's mission is now commonly found in statements about the church across Christian denominations, including in the work of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, few have developed the meaning of this mission as fully as Vatican II

has.¹² Especially important for this project are the emphasis on unity-in-diversity and the theological anthropology of persons-in-community, as these are fundamental to the proper enactment of the church's mission amid the diversity of the contemporary world. Notwithstanding its rootedness in the Catholic tradition, Vatican II provides a solid basis for a consensus Christian understanding of the mission of the church, a clear foundation on which not only Catholics but most Christians can better witness to and work for global communion in our time.

Because the church must be a sign as well as an instrument of unity, chapters 2 and 3 address two of the church's signal failures to maintain unity-in-diversity. Chapter 2 is concerned with the religious anti-Semitism that was present as early as the New Testament period and continues to distort ecclesial self-understanding today, even though the most explicit of these teachings of contempt have been repudiated. The church cannot fully serve God's plan of unity-in-diversity in the contemporary world without overcoming its ongoing failure to make theological room for Judaism (and, by extension, for other religions as well). The second historical failure, discussed in chapter 3, also begins in the New Testament period: the teachings and practices that position women as less than full members of the church. While Christian contempt for Judaism impedes unity with the religious diversity beyond the church, Christian misogyny fails to achieve an internal unity that fully incorporates the diversity of women within the church.

Both religious anti-Semitism and misogyny continue to influence church beliefs and practices, even though few mainstream Christians intentionally embrace either. This is a serious problem: a church that cannot fully embody unity-in-diversity with its primary other outside of the church or with half of those within the church will not be a very compelling or prophetic witness to the world of what true communion might be. Moreover, solutions for the major global challenges to unity-in-diversity today require cooperation across religious differences and, because these global issues affect women

12. See, for example, World Council of Churches, *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, Faith and Order paper no. 214 (Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 2013).

in distinct ways, adequate solutions cannot be based on the assumed normativity of men. In other words, the historical failures to affirm Jews and women continue to undermine the church's ability to be a sign or an instrument of unity-in-diversity in the world. Neither anti-Judaism nor misogyny can be set aside as of marginal relevance in any ecclesiology appropriate to the twenty-first century.

Chapters 4–6 discuss the major issues confronting the world today. Chapter 4 focuses on being church in the midst of a global economy that could make it possible for all people to enjoy the world's resources, yet more often disrupts local economies and increases inequality and exclusion. Chapter 5 addresses global climate change, the most pressing problem the world faces today and one that threatens to change irrevocably the conditions of life on this planet. This issue demands that the church develop a concept of unity that recognizes the intrinsic value of creation, and thus, as Pope Francis has argued, is more adequate to the unity envisioned in the Bible as well as to the challenge of ending environmental degradation. Chapter 6 explores the widespread human migration that is destabilizing the communities that lose members while also placing pressures on the established communities that receive the migrants.

These three issues are clearly interrelated aspects of globalization, since it is the global economy's use of natural resources, especially fossil fuels, that is driving climate change, and both economic and climatic shifts are forcing population migrations. Furthermore, each of these affects women distinctly: for example, women overall have access to fewer resources, often feel the impact of global warming more directly in their efforts to secure food, water, and fuel for their families, and are especially vulnerable during migration to being trafficked. When the church ignores the specific conditions of women's lives, it fails to pursue the communion that will unite all of humanity in their diversity. A truly prophetic, public church must be a feminist church actively engaged in overcoming the various and interrelated failures of communion in the world today. A prophetic, public church must also work with people of other faiths and of no faith, and it must do this in a way that relinquishes triumphalism, including the remnants of Christian supersessionism, evincing instead the mutually enriching dialogue and respect that the church seeks to increase in society.

Again, the discussion of each of these issues will begin with the most developed Catholic documents on the topic because, though I will argue that they remain imperfect, they provide nuanced arguments that incorporate much of contemporary theology while nevertheless serving to provide common ground on which Christians should be able to agree. The detailed and developed—and even somewhat conservative—character of official Catholic documents makes them a gift to the whole church, as they reflect deeply and carefully on the meaning of Christian faith in a way that is clarifying yet consensus oriented. While Pope Francis emerges somewhat as the hero of this book for his degree of theological insight into the issues this book addresses, it should be remembered that he builds on a well-established tradition of thought, including the work of Vatican II; of his immediate predecessors, Pope St. John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI; and of bishops and theologians around the world.

The book's conclusion provides a summary of the need for ecclesial witness to and work toward unity amid these global crises. Poverty, migration, and environmental degradation are by no means new issues for the church, but they are now occurring on a global scale and with an unprecedented impact on human life and on the planet itself. The church must therefore do church differently to fulfill its ecclesial mission to be a sign and instrument of genuine community in the twenty-first century.

Chapter 4

A Prophetic, Public Church in a Global Economy

In his recent book *The World Is Flat*, Thomas Friedman describes the global economy through an old African story about the lion and the gazelle. A lion who wants to eat must outrun the slowest gazelle, while the gazelle who wants to survive has to outrun the fastest lion. The point, we are told, is that regardless of whether you are a lion or a gazelle, when the sun comes up, you'd better start running.¹

In other words, Friedman contends that the contemporary global economy is a competition of each against all for economic survival. Those who work longer, harder, and smarter will succeed by producing goods or services more efficiently—thus driving other businesses into bankruptcy.

Friedman sees a positive side to this economic reality: the global competition enables people in some of the world's poorest countries to compete—and to succeed—in ways previously denied them. People in India, for example, no longer have to migrate to find good jobs as intellectual workers, since they can provide consumer services to people around the world via telephone or send their engineering designs through the internet from sites in their home country.² Competition also lowers costs, at least in the short term, as the more

1. Thomas L. Friedman, *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*, rev. ed. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006), 137.

2. Friedman, *World Is Flat*, esp. 50–200.

efficient displace entrenched but less efficient producers. It is arguable that this globalization has not only led to less costly goods and services for consumers but has been the predominant force behind the dramatic decrease in the numbers of destitute people in the world, a decrease that is certainly to be celebrated.³

Yet there are reasons to see this economy as deeply problematic. Even if global capitalism is lifting many out of extreme poverty, there can be no doubt that the economy as currently structured has increased inequality to an almost unimaginable degree. The abundance of the earth is not evenly shared: By the end of 2016, 8 men together owned as much as the poorest 50 percent of the world—that is, more than 3.6 billion people!⁴ Additionally, as the drive for greater profits supplants other concerns in this worldwide race to be among the economically successful, globalization is also undermining local cultures and many of the traditional values that have sustained human communities for centuries if not millennia. Moreover, this global economy is unsustainable in its rate of resource depletion and is creating massive environmental problems, including the life-threatening global climate crisis caused by the release into the atmosphere of high levels of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases (the topic of our next chapter).

There are other issues here as well. The pace and extent of work in this 24/7 economy is absorbing all nonwork time. If global capitalism requires that “when the sun comes up, you’d better start running,” what kind of life is that? Where in the midst of an economic life-and-death competition is there time for love, for prayer, or for strengthening community bonds? It is surely no wonder that

3. Extreme poverty, defined as living on less than \$1.90 per day, has decreased in absolute numbers as well as in percentage of the growing world population. See World Bank, “Decline of Global Extreme Poverty Continues but Has Slowed: World Bank,” press release, September 19, 2018, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2018/09/19/decline-of-global-extreme-poverty-continues-but-has-slowed-world-bank>.

4. Deborah Hardoon, “An Economy for the 99%,” Oxfam International, January 16, 2017, <https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/economy-99>. See also Oxfam International, “An Economy That Works for Women,” March 2017, https://www-cdn.oxfam.org/s3fs-public/file_attachments/bp-an-economy-that-works-for-women-020317-en.pdf.

globalization is fostering not only international cooperation among economic elites but also more open xenophobia and tribal hostility on the part of those worried about being left out or left behind when production moves somewhere with lower costs.⁵

The current globalization of the capitalist economic system cannot be a matter of indifference to the church, which is charged to work for the unity of all in God. The global economy is knitting the whole world together more thoroughly than ever before in a complexly interconnected flow around the planet of goods, services, and capital. This could and should be a contribution to the human community, a means of increasing the unity of the human family through an economic system in which the earth's resources benefit the whole world. Unfortunately, such a harmonious economic unity is far from our reality, as global competition in a system seemingly controlled by market forces increases the opportunities for inequality, division, and oppression.

The church has long been concerned with the economic conditions that cause unnecessary human suffering and deny impoverished people the means to a life with dignity. God's preferential option for the poor is unmistakable in the laws and prophets of the Hebrew Bible, in the incarnation of God as a poor peasant preaching the beginning of God's reign from among the discounted and discarded in Galilee, and in the care for those in need that has been acclaimed a central virtue throughout the church's history. Modern Catholic social teaching has further developed this central concern for the poor and vulnerable in response to the injustices of industrial and postindustrial society, proclaiming the option for the poor, the dignity and priority of labor, and a social mortgage on the right to private property.

But contemporary global capitalism is a new reality, as Pope Francis recognizes, and one that begs for sustained attention to how global economic processes and structures affect unity among

5. United Nations General Assembly, "Racism, Xenophobia Increasing Globally, Experts Tell Third Committee, amid Calls for Laws to Combat Hate Speech, Concerns over Freedom of Expression," press release, November 1, 2016, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2016/gashc4182.doc.htm>.

humans and with creation.⁶ What does it mean to be a sign and instrument of communion in this global reality? What can and should Christians do, as church and as disciples of Christ, to witness to and work for a just and humane economy, especially when our current economy operates according to complex global forces that no one seems able to direct?

The question of this chapter is what it means to be a public and prophetic church serving the reign of God amid the unprecedented challenges of our global economy. However, as argued in the previous chapters, the church cannot be a genuine sign and instrument of unity-in-diversity without paying particular attention to the diversity of people of other religions and of women—the church’s external and internal others. Aspects of the church’s sacred texts, history, and structures continue to incline the church toward an ecclesial triumphalism and an androcentrism that contradict the church’s mission to be a sacrament of communion enriched by difference. This is especially relevant to the task of being church in the current global economy because women have higher rates of poverty than men and often experience their poverty differently, with fewer options and more family responsibilities. Given that advances in a region’s economic prosperity do not necessarily increase the economic well-being of women, a just and humane economy cannot be established without taking into account the specific economic challenges that women face.⁷ At the same time, and as generally acknowledged in Catholic social teaching, constructing a better world depends upon considerable cooperation among people of all faiths and none. Religious perspectives are critically important to

6. Pope Francis develops his astute criticisms of global capitalism especially in his apostolic exhortation, *On the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today’s World (Evangelii Gaudium [EG])*, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html. See also the essays in Gerard Mannion, ed., *Pope Francis and the Future of Catholicism: Evangelii Gaudium and the Papal Agenda* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

7. Bureau of International Information Programs, “Chapter 1: Women and Poverty,” in *Global Women’s Issues: Women in the World Today* (US Department of State, 2012), https://static.america.gov/uploads/sites/8/2016/05/Global-Womens-Issues_Women-in-the-World-Today_English_508.pdf.

a public that has lost its capacity to consider any value greater than profit, so Christians must bring, and encourage others to bring, their particular religious perspectives to the public work of developing a humane globalization.

This is not a task for the church alone, because creating a more just global economy requires the concerted efforts of governments and international organizations. Moreover, the church cannot be a witness to the unity-in-diversity of the reign of God by mimicking the separatist tribalism so common today; it can do so only by reaching out to form community beyond the church.

Of course, many other issues beg for attention. Justice includes overcoming racism, which is a global reality as well as an especially virulent force of division and dehumanization in the United States. Indigenous peoples continue to be marginalized in their own homelands. Sexual minorities regularly have their rights and dignity denied, as do others who are discounted because they do not fit the norm of the healthy, able-bodied adult. The reign of God must be truly inclusive, celebrating the diversity of all humanity and, finally, of all creation.

An adequate treatment of all of these issues of exclusion and division is beyond the scope of this work, unfortunately.⁸ The specific focus here will be on women, who comprise approximately 50 percent of the world's population, yet too often remain invisible when their gender difference is dismissed as unimportant by society and by male-dominated church teachings and practices. We will also attend to the challenges of working not only within but beyond the Christian community. The history of Christian abjection of the original Christian other, Judaism, stands as a reminder of the ongoing imperative to affirm a distinct Christian identity that stands in loving unity-in-diversity with—rather than vilifying—the religiously different.

To explore what it means for the church to be a prophetic and public sacrament of unity in the current global economy, this chapter will begin with Catholic social teaching, as this body of thought

8. A good beginning in exploring contemporary exclusions is available in Dennis M. Doyle, Timothy J. Furry, and Pascal D. Bazzell, eds., *Ecclesiology and Exclusion: Boundaries of Being and Belonging in Postmodern Times* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2012).

provides carefully argued consensus positions around which Catholics and most other Christians ought to be able to unite in their ecclesial work and witness. Pope Francis's perceptive analysis of the idolatry of global capitalism, especially in his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, is an especially significant recent addition to this tradition. We will then turn to some further questions that have not been dealt with adequately in ecclesial teaching, particularly with regard to the economic situation of women and the difficulties of maintaining a healthy subsidiarity that balances local initiatives with national and global concerns. This will provide a basis for underscoring the importance of what Christians can and must do, as church and as disciples of Jesus, to be more fully prophetic signs and public instruments of a truly humane economy.

Catholic Social Teaching, Pope Francis, and the Idolatry of the Market

Modern Catholic social teaching begins with Pope Leo XIII's reflections on the ethical demands of industrialization and the rights of workers in his 1891 encyclical *Rerum Novarum*.⁹ This is the first of many papal and episcopal documents addressing the issues raised by industrialization and by the development of modern economic systems. Prior to the Second Vatican Council, as Charles Curran aptly describes, this body of modern Catholic social teaching assumed a two-missions approach in which the clergy had the important task of divinizing the world, while the laity had the less significant responsibility to humanize it.¹⁰ Many Catholics continue, unfortunately, to think along these lines of primary and secondary missions, with the result that the church's social teachings are frequently considered peripheral to a life of Christian faith. Vatican II, however, reframed these purposes as one ecclesial mission of uniting all in God through building up that unity within the church

9. Leo XIII, On Capital and Labor (*Rerum Novarum*), http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum.html.

10. Charles E. Curran, *The Social Mission of the U.S. Catholic Church: A Theological Perspective* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2011), esp. 57.

(the clergy's primary vocation) and in the world (the proper focus of the laity). Justice is no longer "preevangelization," or "pre" anything, but rather is a constitutive dimension of the harmonious unity-in-diversity Christians are called to witness to and to work for in history.¹¹

Gaudium et Spes articulates some of the fundamental principles of Catholic social teaching regarding the kind of economy consistent with the communion of all in God. Instead of seeking one's own benefit (or "voting one's pocketbook"), Christians should work for policies they judge will best serve the common good and enable everyone to have a share in the world's resources. The right to personal property is endorsed as integral to human freedom, dignity, and responsibility, but this right comes with a social mortgage such that this property must not be used contrary to the good of others in the community. Since all people have a right to what they need to live with dignity, those who refuse to pay a just wage or to share their excess with people in need are guilty of theft and even—if the poor die in their need—of murder, as the Hebrew prophets and early church fathers warn. Furthermore, the right to personal property must also be balanced with the greater right to work, through which people develop and express themselves, contribute to the good of the wider society, and support themselves and their families. Ultimately, labor should have priority over capital because people are more important than things (GS 64–72).

More recent social teachings have clarified that seeking communion in the context of inequality involves a "preferential option for the poor," the poor being those most easily discounted, marginalized, and excluded. God's special concern for the poor and the powerless is evident throughout the Bible, and the implications for Christian discipleship of this divine concern have been acknowledged throughout Christian history. However, the indispensability of the option for the poor, especially as requiring a priority of attention and inclusion that is more than charity, was articulated by

11. In addition to Curran, *Social Mission*, 57, see the succinct discussion of the development from preevangelization to evangelization in E. F. Sheridan, ed., *Do Justice: The Social Teaching of the Canadian Catholic Bishops* (Toronto: Jesuit Centre for Social Faith and Justice, 1987), 28–29. See also *Evangelii Gaudium*, chap. 4.

liberation theologians after Vatican II and further clarified by the Conference of Latin American Bishops (CELAM) in Medellín, Colombia, in 1968, and in Puebla, Mexico, in 1979.¹² Pope St. John Paul II introduced this option for the poor into papal writings, especially in his 1987 encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, and Pope Francis cites the writings of Pope Benedict XVI as well as of John Paul II in reiterating that the option for the poor is a well-established tenet of Catholic social thought.¹³ Francis further contends that the option for the poor is a personal and not only a collective responsibility of Christians, maintaining that “no one must say that they cannot be close to the poor because their own lifestyle demands more attention to other areas” (*Evangelii Gaudium* [EG] 201). A life of genuine Christian discipleship cannot outsource the option for the poor.¹⁴

Pope Francis also develops Catholic social teaching with his trenchant criticism of the injustice and deformations of the now-dominant global capitalist system. Despite the good this global economy does, it has come to function as a potent force of counterevangelization, since the interests of the economy have become the central and often unquestioned value in much of public life. Francis astutely notes that the market has at times become the prevailing idol for society as well as for individuals; the economy, he contends, is then a false god who demands sacrifices of ourselves, our lives, and nature, while fostering divisions that oppose the reign of God (EG, esp. 55–59).

The Idolatry of the Market

There is nothing new, of course, in the recognition of the powerful temptation to make money and wealth one’s greatest value, an idol that takes precedence over all else in one’s life. The book of the

12. Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988); Gustavo Gutiérrez, “Option for the Poor,” in *Mysterium Liberationis: Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology*, ed. Ignacio Ellacuría and Jon Sobrino (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993), 235–50.

13. John Paul II, On the Twentieth Anniversary of *Populorum Progressio* (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*), 42, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30121987_sollicitudo-rei-socialis.html; EG 198.

14. I develop this point in my “Evangelizing in an Economy of Death,” in Manion, *Pope Francis*.

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